



## MassHire Bristol Workforce Board

### WIOA Local 4-Year Plan

#### 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: DIFFERENT

- Please include a description of infrastructure jobs such as clean energy, transportation, healthcare, education, and government.
- Local boards and chief elected officials in a planning region may address any local plan requirements through the regional plan where there is a shared regional responsibility. You may incorporate anything from your Regional Plan content as appropriate.

Regional plan information may be used as applicable to the local area. However, local analysis that yields information that is not in the regional plan should be included in this response.

The MassHire Bristol Workforce Board (MHBWB) has combined local labor market analysis specific to the Bristol Workforce Development Area with broader regional data captured in the *Southeast Regional Labor Market Blueprint*. In many cases, regional analysis has confirmed local employer demand and workforce skill requirements.

#### Part I – Southeast Regional Labor Market Data

The following includes data from the *Southeast MA Regional Labor Market Blueprint*.

The Southeast Regional Planning Team has engaged in extensive labor market analysis to determine priority occupations and industries within a broad geographic region. More specifically, stretching from southern

portion of Norfolk County just south of Boston southward to the entirety of Plymouth and Bristol Counties, the southeastern region shares most of the Massachusetts border with Rhode Island to the west with the eastern border primarily a long stretch of coastline from Hull to Plymouth and Wareham to Westport. The Southeast region of Massachusetts includes 56 communities encompassing four Workforce Development Areas (Bristol, Brockton Area, Greater New Bedford and South Shore) with both common and divergent labor markets. The primary concentration of population is centered in six gateway cities located within the region.

An overall examination of regional strengths and challenges, demographics and extensive labor market analysis, lead to three priority and three critical industry clusters identified in the *Southeast Regional Labor Market Blueprint*. The criteria for priority and critical industries/occupations was as follows:

<b><u>STATE CRITERIA</u></b>	<b><u>REGIONAL CRITERIA</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ High employer demand</li> <li>➤ High demand and high wage (4-5 Star Occupations)</li> <li>➤ Talent Gaps (Ratio of Supply to Demand)</li> <li>➤ Career Pathways</li> </ul>	<p>What additional criteria are important to your Regional Planning Team?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Supportive employers</li> <li>➤ Support industry resilience in the region</li> <li>➤ Aligned with regional priorities</li> </ul>

### **Southeast Regional priority industries by 2-digit NAICS**

#### **1) Health Care and Social Assistance – NAICS Code 62**

Our prioritization in this industry centers on Nursing and Residential Care Facilities (NAICS Code 623), Offices of Physicians, Dentists and Other Health Care Practitioners (NAICS codes 6211, 6212 and 6313 respectively) and Medical and Diagnostic Laboratories (NAICS code 6215). Each of these categories represent numerous clinical and healthcare support positions that are in demand in our region.

Health Care and Social Assistance represents the largest share of region’s workforce. The industry also continues to show steady growth with a 6% growth rate from 2021-2023. In terms of career development, the industry is marked by strong career pathway opportunities with accessible entry points. Strong employer engagement within this industry is evident with sector partnerships in place within the region with workforce development and education participation already in place. Primary focus in this industry is on Health Care sub sectors.

#### **2) Professional, Scientific and Technical Services – NAICS Code 54**

Our prioritization in this industry centers on Computer Systems Design and Related Services (NAICS Code 5415). This industry encompasses a wide range of occupational categories that are supported by STEM education. However, computer related services were of particular interest as the occupations included in this category typically cut across multiple industry clusters including other prioritized and critical industries.

From 2021-2023, the Professional and Technical Services sector has seen an 8.7% increase in the number of establishments, a 9.5% increase in employment and an impressive 8.67% increase in average wage. The occupations within this industry are among the highest average weekly wages within the region Meaningful career ladder opportunities are available to those who access additional opportunities. More Specifically,

significant supply gaps (0.20 to 0.8 qualified workers for each position) are evident in multiple Professional and Technical Service occupations including Computer User Support Specialists, Network and Computer Systems Administrators, Computer Systems Analysts and Database Administrators. While the top levels of the career ladder would in some cases require significant additional training and education requirements, there are opportunities for individuals with more limited skills competencies to enter the industry with relatively short-term training interventions. The industry also aligns with regional priorities such as STEM initiatives occurring among education and workforce development partners.

**3) Manufacturing – NAICS Code 31-33**

Manufacturing represents an industry important to the region’s economic success. While here is not an overall growth rate in certain manufacturing occupations, such a basic statistical analysis would not tell the complete story of future demand within the industry. More specifically, the manufacturing sector is marked by an aging labor pool in the southeast with approximately one third of the workforce over the age of 55. As a result, the industry faces large scale attrition over the next 10 years exacerbated by the fact that the region, despite expansion of training capacity in this sector, still has a limited training pipeline to develop the future workforce in this industry. Still, it should be noted that over the past three years, manufacturing has seen and impressive growth of 4,749 new jobs added in the Southeast.

Manufacturing features highly accessible entry points with strong entry level wages for positions that can be obtained without advanced degrees (70% of the region’s manufacturing workforce have less than a Bachelor Degree). Occupations such as CNC Machinists and welders can be accessed through relatively short-term training programs and feature strong entry level wages.

While many occupational categories cut across a wide array of manufacturing categories, the following represents the largest subcategories in the Southeast and will receive particular attention.

<b>Category of Manufacturing</b>	<b>Total Southeast Employment</b>
Computer, Electric Components	7,878
Miscellaneous	6,745
Metals	5,403
Petroleum, Chemical, Plastic, Rubber	3,807
Food and Beverage	3,647
Textile and Apparel	3,213

**Southeast Regional Priority occupations or occupational groups by SOC code (4-8 digit)**

Health Care Practitioners and Technical Occupations (SOC 29)

**Dental Hygienists/Assistants (SOC 29-2021)**

- Demand STARS - 4
- Annual median wage significantly above regional median wage
- Existing supply gap in the region with approximately 0.7 qualified employees per opening.
- Accessible entry point with less than a bachelors degree required for entry level employment

## Health Care Support Occupations (SOC 31)

### **Home Health and Personal Care Aides; and Nursing Assistants (SOC 31-1100)**

- Demand STARS – 3
- Existing supply gap in the region with approximately 0.7 qualified employees per opening
- Accessible entry points with short-term, widely available training in the region
- Strong career ladder opportunities in the Health Care sector
- Increase specializations desired by employers has resulted in increased entry level wages

### **Physical Therapy Assistants (SOC 31-2021)**

- Demand STARS – 5
- Annual median wage is 36% above regional median wage
- Notable supply gap in the region with approximately 0.4 qualified employees per opening
- Intermediate Career ladder opportunities: Physical Therapist is a 5 Demand STAR occupation in the Southeast with high wages and a significant supply gap.

### **Construction Trades Workers (SOC 47-2000)**

- Demand STARS – 5n (Electrician, Carpenter)
- Among highest vacancy rates in the region
- Classified as High Demand
- Offers a highly accessible career path for individuals without a college degree with opportunities for career advancement
- Features a strong average weekly wage in comparison to the regional average

If you would like to describe **occupations** that are notable in your region but will not be prioritized during this regional prioritization process, please list them here.

### **Computer User Support Specialist (SOC 15-1151)**

- Demand STARS – 4
- Annual median wage - \$55,342 (30% above regional median wage)
- Offers career ladder opportunities to multiple 5 Demand STARS occupations in the region.
- Offers skill sets that are transferable to multiple industry sectors throughout the region.

### **Heavy and Tractor Trailer Truck Drivers (SOC 53-3032)**

- Demand STARS – 5
- Very High Demand
- Strong Entry Level Wages
- One of the highest supply gaps of all occupations in the Southeast

### **Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Behavioral Health Social Workers (SOC 21-1023)**

- Demand Stars – 3
- Strong Career Ladder Opportunities
- Region's Employers demonstrate strong commitment to talent development

- Supply gap has widened in past five years

### **Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers (SOC 51-4121)**

- Demand Stars – 4
- High Demand
- Strong training capacity in region
- Short term training required for entry
- Strong entry level wages

\*Demand Star Ranking: Ranking of highest-demand, highest-wage jobs in Massachusetts, based on short-term employment projections, long-term employment projections, current available openings from Help Wanted Online, and median regional wage.

\*\*Indexed Employer Demand: Short term openings from replacement and growth (2017), long term openings from replacement and growth (2024), and online postings, averaged.

### **Additional Important Industries and Occupations**

The construction industry offers a highly accessible career path for individuals without a college degree with opportunities for career advancement through the expansion of apprenticeships. The region offers strong educational capacity for this industry through workforce development partnerships with the region's vocational technical high schools. Construction also aligns with regional economic development priorities. For example, major transportation projects have resulted in increased hiring activity in the southeast. In addition, the emerging off shore wind industry promises to employ many construction workers in its expansion. There are a large number of potential candidates for employment in this industry through the region's Career Centers. The industry also features a strong average weekly wage in comparison to the regional average.

Financial services is an important industry in the southeast region, particularly in its northern tier, having impact on all other sectors through capital and finance provision. According to a study by Mass Insight, banks and other financial institutions account for \$36 billion, or 9 percent of the state's total economic output. The industry represents almost 9% of the southeast region's total wage output. In addition, wages in this industry are showing the highest growth rates with over 6% per year from 2021-2023.

Emerging Industries: The Southeast Team will closely evaluate emerging industries over time to determine if additional attention is warranted. For example, the "Blue Economy" has become a regional priority in the southern part of the region. While not a stand-alone priority industry, it includes construction, production and technology jobs that will likely see growth in this region. This would include the developing wind energy industry which may emerge as a significant part of the region's manufacturing industry in the southern part of the region. Emerging industries such as these will have a strong need to intersect with workforce development, economic development and education to meet their workforce needs.

### **Part II – Local Labor Market Data**

The following analysis primarily centers on the Bristol Workforce Development Area which includes the cities

of Fall River, Taunton and Attleboro and the towns of Berkley, Dighton, Mansfield, North Attleboro, Norton, Raynham, Rehoboth, Seekonk, Somerset, Swansea and Westport.

Within the Workforce Development Area’s communities, employment is offered in several groupings. The following chart attempts to illustrate the long-term trends in employment by sector through a comparison of data from 2000 - 2025.

	Bristol MHBWB Community Audit (2000)	DCS Data (2006)*	DCS Data (2012)*	DCS Data (2024)
<b>Trade, Transportation &amp; Utilities</b>	32.6%	25.5%	26.9%	27.0%
Manufacturing	23.7%	14.8%	11.2%	10.2%
Health	10.2%	13.9%	17.3%	18.3%
<b>Government</b>	10.7%	11.4%	11.2%	13.4%
Leisure and Hospitality	9.2%	10.2%	10.2%	10.3%
Professional & Business Services	2.2%	9.2%	8.6%	8.0%
Construction	3.0%	4.5%	4.3%	5.8%
Other Services	3.0%	4.2%	4.8%	3.3%
Financial Services	3.6%	3.5%	3.3%	2.5%
Information Services	1.2%	1.8%	2.0%	1.1%
Natural Resources	0.6%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%

\*Employment and Wages (ES-202) Reports

The above charts illustrate regional trends that have remained somewhat consistent throughout the past decade. Analysis shows a continued decline in the percentage of the workforce employed in manufacturing.

Consistent with prior years, an industry cluster that continues to show steady growth in Bristol is healthcare. The field of health care and social assistance clearly remains an important employment cluster in the Workforce Development Area. In terms of growth, it has risen from 10.2% of the region’s workforce in 2000 to 18.3 in 2024. The Workforce Development Area provides a variety of jobs in its hospitals, nursing homes, group homes and physicians’ offices. Historically, the MHBWB has provided training and employment to hundreds of individuals in these institutions annually. Additionally, the MHBWB has worked with area health care employers in recent years to expand employment opportunities in this field through such initiatives as the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund and Workforce Training Fund Program. The MHBWB will continue to prioritize allied health in its workforce development strategies.

Healthcare also represents roughly 37% of total job growth in the southeast over the past three years. The industry has the largest share of total wages paid by a large margin with \$1,553,041 in wages paid representing 17.9% of the regional total. Multiple Healthcare occupations are projected to show long term growth of greater than 10%, in some cases approaching 35% in parts of the southeast region. (Department of Unemployment Assistance – Long Term Occupational Projections). Population trends will only add to the demand for Health Care services.

The priority of healthcare is also supported by the fact that career opportunities and wage potential are stronger in health than in other growth industry clusters. For example, it is noted in past Bristol labor market profiles that two of the region’s largest sectors, Retail Trade and Leisure and Hospitality “had wages that were considerably lower than the Bristol average wage.” In contrast, there are many positions within allied health that exceed the average annual wage in Bristol.

The above charts illustrate regional trends that have remained somewhat consistent throughout the past decade. Analysis shows a continued decline in the percentage of the workforce employed in manufacturing.

Despite these declines, Bristol still maintains a higher percentage of manufacturing jobs than many other Workforce Development Areas. As noted in the *Southeast Regional Labor Market Blueprint*, this decline has slowed considerably with a 2.5% loss in total employment between 2019-2024. This is far short of the more dramatic employment loss of 16.2% during 2007-2009 in the midst of a recessionary economy. Despite these declines, the southeast still maintains a relatively high percentage of manufacturing jobs with fifth highest employment share in the region with its 10.2% share. It is important to note that the larger reductions and layoffs in manufacturing 10 or more years ago were related to positions that were lower skilled and did not afford the affected workers with significant transferable skills to other industries.

However, the current face of manufacturing occupations shows a need for higher skills sets. This comes with opportunity as wages in demand occupations such as CNC machinists and welders have increased even in recent months as evidenced by roughly 15-20% increase in entry level wages over the past two years for individuals placed out of Workforce Board coordinated specialized manufacturing training programs

**(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.**

Within our region, it should be noted that many of the highest growth industries require associates degrees or higher. This is supported by the following:

- Of the 20 fastest growing occupations, 12 are concentrated in health care and information technology
- An additional three are found in life sciences
- The remaining are primarily community service, social service and personal service jobs
- 14 of 20 fastest growing occupations will require an associate’s degree or higher

Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) data further cites the Massachusetts Industries that will generate the most jobs through 2030.

Hospitals, Private	22,400
Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting	19,200
Computer Systems Design and Related Services	18,100
Food Services and Drinking Places	16,200

Individual and Family Services	12,800
Residential Care Facilities	11,300
Offices of Health Care Practitioners	10,500
Colleges and Universities	10,200
Scientific Research and Development Services	9,200
Home Health Care Services	9,200

As the region’s economy has evolved, the strongest growth occupations with high wages and career ladder opportunities are increasingly those with higher skill set requirements. The majority of southeast MA-based employment (64) currently requires a high school diploma or less but again this is not indicative of priority and growth industries. Of the 160 occupations that achieved a four or five STAR ranking (i.e. high growth, high wage) in the Southeast region, 110 required at least an Associate Degree. This translated as well to priority industry sectors with 2/3 of healthcare, and almost 3/4 of professional scientific and technical services requiring at least some post-secondary education.

According to Mass Inc.’s report *Reconnecting Massachusetts Gateway Cities*, it was noted that over a four year period, the City of Fall River generated a 7.1% increase in knowledge industry employment, while the Fall River region recorded a 26.5% increase. This gain of 450 higher-paying jobs for the city and 2,400 jobs for the region offers new opportunities for individuals who can bring solid occupational skills to the table. Other data sources show increasing demand for individuals skilled in knowledge based industries. According to the Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District’s (SRPEDD) *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy*, Biomedical / Biotechnical or Life Sciences already make up a majority of employment within the knowledge and technology-intensive industry clusters throughout the state and region. This same report cites efforts throughout the region to attract bio-tech companies to the area, further noting that the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council (MBC) ranks several area communities as *BioReady* including Attleboro, Fall River and Taunton.

To obtain good jobs and economic self-sufficiency, many of the job seekers in our region will need intervention in the following areas:

- Help in getting a HiSET/GED or high school diploma and/or Basic Skills upgrading;
- Job readiness training and work maturity skills;
- Labor market information;
- Skill assessment and career counseling;
- Basic job search skills training;
- Computer literacy and skills training;
- Initial occupational skills training;
- Occupational skills re-training; and/or
- Job development and job placement services

In addition to the occupational clusters identified in the Southeast Regional Labor Market Blueprint, the MHBWB will target the following occupations. The chart below also notes the training requirements.

Occupations	Skills Needed	Training Needed
Human Service Workers	Disability sensitivity, Customer	On the job, short term;



	service skills, some require first aid certification	Longer vocational training (6-24 mon) is an option
General Maintenance & Repairs (especially plumbing and heating)	Customer service skills, some fields require certification or state licenses	Vocational training (6-18 mon)
Computer Network Engineers, Network Administrators, Programmers, Support Technicians	Computer literacy, Networking requires Microsoft Certification	Vocational training (6-24 mon); Some require college degree
<u>Trades</u> : Construction, carpentry, cabinet making, electricians, welders, metal fabrication	Customer service skills, some fields require certification or state licenses	Vocational training (6-24 mon)
Internet Programmers	Computer Literacy, Advanced reading & writing, Customer service skills	Vocational training (6-24 mon); some positions require a college degree
Truck Drivers	Clean driving record, CDL licenses required for most	Vocational training (6 mon)
Licensed Practical Nurses	Advanced math, reading, writing, science, Customer service skills	Vocational training (12 mon)
Medical Assistants	Bilingual a plus, Customer service skills	Vocational training (6-12 mon)
Home Health Aides & Personal Care Aides	Bilingual a plus, Customer service skills, some positions require certification	Short term training (one mon)
Nursing Aides	Bilingual a plus, Customer service skills, requires certification	Short term training (one mon)
Therapy Aides: Physical, occupational & respiratory	Bilingual a plus, Customer service skills, requires certification	Associates Degree or higher
“Green Jobs” including Weatherization and Energy Auditing	Customer service skills, certification or licenses	Vocational Training (6 -24 mon)

**(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.**

The above data becomes important within the context of the educational attainment rates among the region’s population. The Southeast Regional Labor Market Blueprint reveals the following data; within the Southeast, Bristol and Plymouth County data (ACS gathered from American Factfinder) educational attainment rates that are most often at the lower end of the Commonwealth’s regions. The regional differences in high school graduation are relatively modest. Within Bristol and Plymouth Counties the percentage of age 25-64 population with at least a high school diploma or equivalency is 87% and 94% respectively. As we move to post-secondary education, the differences between the southeast and the remainder of the state become more pronounced. In fact, Bristol County has the lowest percentage of adults with some post-secondary education (57%) within the state range of 57-78%. Finally, the percentage of Bristol County adults with a bachelor’s degree is only 28%. This puts the majority

of the southeast region at the low end of the range (27-56%) of MA Counties. In looking at the combined southeastern regional data, 41% of individuals 25 or older have a high school diploma or less, 27% have some post-secondary or an Associate Degree while 27% hold a Bachelors or higher (American Community Survey 5 Year Averages). In examining job seekers served at the seven Career Centers in the region, the numbers are lower still with 35% holding a high school diploma or equivalent, 15% with some college, 9% with an associate's degree and 16% with a bachelor's degree (EOLWD-Career Center MassHire Career Center Access Reports).

Data gleaned from the U.S. Census as well as the MA Department of Career Services (DCS) shows local parallels to the regional data, indicating that more than half of the region's labor force has an education level below the state average. In fact, nearly half the residents of Fall River (43.%) do not have a high school diploma.

In addition to education levels, it is also important to note that a significant portion of residents require language or basic skill remediation in order to access specialized occupational training or post-secondary education. An examination of averages reveals that 9% of the 18 and over population in the southeast are Limited English Proficient. Similarly, 10% of the 18+ population lack a high school diploma with approximately half of these at less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade level in basic skills attainment. Within the Bristol Workforce Development Area, the number of Limited English Proficient adults is slightly higher at 9%. The obvious implication to this data is a clear need for integrated Adult Basic Education strategies with contextualized curriculum, increased intensity (more hours per week) and potentially integrated ABE/Occupational training programs.

To provide additional illustration at the local level, examination of the general Career Center population within Bristol reveals that most job seekers have one or more significant barriers to attaining education, training and employment goals. Statistical data through the end of Fiscal Year 2024 shows the following; of adults served at the Career Center, 18% lacked a high school diploma and 44% were basic skills deficient (testing below a ninth grade reading or math level). Of dislocated workers served, 19% had less than a high school diploma and 36% were basic skills deficient. Of the youth served, 25% were disabled, 51% were basic skills deficient, 3% were ex-offenders and 11% were pregnant / parenting.

There is an obvious correlation between education levels and earning ability and this is confirmed by area wage data. In the southeast, the median wage is approximately 19% below the state median wage and 27% below Greater Boston which borders the region to the north. The average annual weekly wage within the Bristol Workforce Development Area is approximately 35% below the state average.

As noted in the Southeast Regional Labor Market Blueprint, it is also useful to examine the demographics of the region's population within the context of priority regional industries. In examining how this might affect priority industries, it is important to note that the oldest workforce is within the manufacturing sector with 34% of its employees over the age of 55. In comparison, Professional and Technical Services, Construction, and Health Care, only 21-27% of the workforce is over the age of 55. Accommodation and Food Service represents the youngest workforce in the region though many of the positions are part-time, entry-level and low wage.

Within Bristol, the additional challenge of unemployment rates that are historically higher than the state should also be noted. In June 2021, the unemployment rate in the Bristol Workforce Development Area was 5.8% with its largest city (Fall River) at 8.2%. The Massachusetts rate during the same period was 5.4%.

In examining this data, particularly the skills deficiencies among many in the region, it is important to note that additional surveys and focus groups of some of the region's largest employers also provided further evidence that basic skills were necessary among the region's workforce. Based on this analysis, it appears likely that a significant portion of our customers will be deficient in the education, basic skills, computer

literacy and occupational skills necessary to successfully negotiate and navigate the rigors of today's and tomorrow's employment exigencies.

**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.**

A critical area of emphasis that will continue to be a focus of the MHBWB is to ensure that training and employment activities are maximized to reach as wide a group as possible. To that end, the MHBWB will continue to implement a multi-pronged strategy that will include the following activities.

- Identify additional public and private resources outside of "traditional" funding streams to increase availability of services
- Coordinate multiple grants and funding streams, particularly in the area of at-risk youth, to maximize service and avoid duplication of effort
- Utilize partnerships to access services available through partnering agencies
- Identify regional high demand, skilled positions that can be accessed with certificate and Associates Degree programs
- Expand cross regional partnerships with other Workforce Development Boards to address workforce and training issues of mutual concern and opportunity
- Examine alternate modes of training such as computer based and Adult Basic Education-Occupational integrated training

Expanding education and training opportunities for area jobs seekers in particular, at-risk populations has and will be a major area of emphasis. One area of service expansions will likely result from recent MHBWB activities in connection with the Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) division of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The MHBWB Executive Director has in past years participated in an ACLS planning group established to strengthen the connection between the Adult Basic Education and Workforce Development systems. This group has made recommendations that continue to result in a stronger integration of workforce development components (i.e. contextualized curriculum, greater intensity of service, integration of job readiness activities) into Adult Basic Education programs. Through ongoing efforts, increased career development and workplace readiness opportunities have taken place.

Based on an evolving job market, it is important to assist customers in making appropriate career and training choices. The MHBWB and the local MassHire Career Centers will work to identify additional training opportunities and strengthen its existing training programs. This will take several forms. To

address the need for shorter, but still meaningful, training options, the MHBWB and Career Centers has encouraged the development of integrated basic skills-occupational training options over the traditional linear approach. This has already resulted in private training vendors, the local Community College and local community based organizations developing integrated ABE-GED-ESOL-occupational training components. As a result, job seekers with both basic and occupational skills deficiencies will be able to move to employment at a far quicker rate.

It is also important to ensure that training investments, particularly if limited, are targeted toward growth industries. In addition to the labor market analysis documented above, work history trends of Career Center clients will be captured through DCS (i.e. claimant characteristics) and locally customized reports. After major occupational clusters of participants are analyzed, the Career Centers examine if there are skills sets within these occupations that can be readily transferred to areas of growth as identified within our respective strategic plans and by our region's employers. Another tool that can be of assistance are several, locally developed career ladder documents. For example, the MHBWB worked with a group of health care and manufacturing employers to identify career ladders in many areas of health care employment within the local area. This included skill sets required for advancement in administrative, professional and clinical tracks. By matching up skill sets that are common among current participants with these career ladder documents, participants can be given access to training areas in which they have a better chance to secure gainful employment.

In addition, continued examination of newly available occupational clusters will drive the MHBWB to seek out established non-traditional programs in these areas. For example, Bristol Community College provides training programs in "Green" technologies such as Offshore Wind Power Technology.

Expansion of existing training programs to encompass skills sought by employers will continue. For example, the board surveyed area health care employers to determine skills sets lacking among recent graduates of Certified Nurse's Aide programs. This resulted in the board working with Bristol Community College to develop expanded CNA training which included additional curriculum around serving patients with development disabilities, computer training and work ethic issues. This work has continued with the Southeast Boards developing expanded healthcare training cohorts for FY'24 and FY'25 throughout all areas of the region.

Another training opportunity for Career Center clients is in skilled positions that require targeted training and are in demand throughout the region. This has in recent years come to the surface among area manufacturers who are having difficulty filling such occupational clusters as welders and CNC machine operators. This resulted in the MHBWB securing sector grant funds to continue CNC Machinist and Welding training programs for unemployed adults at Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School in Fall River and Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical School in Taunton. Importantly, the Board has been able to sustain specialized manufacturing programs for more than ten years through Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund grants as well as state funding (MA Tech Collaborative) secured through a partnership of the Southeastern MA Workforce Boards. Similarly, the MHBWB is planning to run its additional cycles of textile and apparel training through partnership with Merrow Manufacturing. This program is truly demand driven, meeting a critical need for Textile and Apparel manufacturers who have no other formal talent pipeline in the region training to turn to for skilled workers. The MHBWB has also

worked with area high schools to implement welding training through the MA Career Technical Initiative.

In order to access occupational training programs, as well as certificate and degree programs available from local post-secondary institutions, Bristol must continue to aggressively address language and basic skills deficiencies through the utilization of intensive ESOL and GED classes funded through multiple sources. This includes the utilization of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) funding to establish intensive, 20 hour per week classes in order to meet this critical need. With the MHBWB driving the strategic priority of intensive ABE programming, the region has been successful in moving job seekers more quickly through basic skills remediation. These programs are provided by Bristol Community College and a local Community Based Organization, SER Jobs for Progress. Private proprietary schools in our region now offer such intensive education programs as well. These classes have open entry start dates and we are able to access slots on an individual referral basis. This structure allows significant flexibility in addressing the basic skill needs of our clients on an expedited basis without the need to establish group funded activities in this category. Finally, our WIOA funded Youth Programs will include a HiSET/GED/skills upgrading component. Ultimately, if many of Bristol's job seekers are to move along a continuum of services, adult basic education activities must be available in an intensive, widely available manner. Job seekers within Bristol will access these classes, not as a standalone activity, but as part of their overall Individual Service Strategy.

It is also likely that area job seekers will access referrals to occupational training often offered through Bristol Community College, ensuring a strong connection to post-secondary education. This becomes a natural connection when analyzing Bristol's targeted occupations, many of which require an Associate's Degree. A strong relationship with Bristol Community College will continue to offer area job seekers with access to a multitude of certificate programs and post-secondary educational activities. The MHBWB executive director has previously sat on the College's Perkins Advisory Board and the Board has worked to foster additional partnerships with the College to support area job seekers. This includes an emphasis on stackable credits to allow individuals in credit certificate programs to stack their credits to associate degree programs.

Another initiative with Bristol Community College is to improve methods to increase client retention in academic programming. This would include development of a new tracking system for such clients which would result in issues such as absenteeism, academic issues or other issues affecting student progression being reported to the relevant Career Center Counselor. In this way, the counselor can work to address any issues through appropriate intervention. This will ideally have an impact on program retention and completion rates.

The MassHire Bristol Workforce Board has been active in collaborating with its region's Vocational Technical High Schools and comprehensive high schools with Chapter 74 programs to expand training opportunities under the Career Technical Initiative. This has covered all three cities in the Bristol region through partnerships with Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School, Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical High School and Attleboro High School. This has resulted in expansion of training opportunities in priority and critical industry clusters.

Work maturity or “work ethic” skills have increasingly been cited by area employers as a critical need. This need has been expressed both individually and in employer focus groups convened by the Board. As well, newer employers to our area require skills such as presentation skills, teamwork, customer service skills and leadership.

The Bristol MHBWB has required integration of work maturity skills within its youth programming and has attempted to design initiatives to address this issue. These activities stem from the conclusion if high tech companies are going to be attracted to the local area, Bristol must be able to demonstrate that it can provide employees with the skills sets that are common and in demand among these companies.

To allow for a cost effective delivery of training, the Career Centers will continue to utilize their computer orientation labs to deliver basic computer skills to a large number of participants. As basic computer skills represent a requirement that cuts across multiple industries and occupational clusters, job seekers will be able to take advantage of computer labs at our local Career Centers.

Consistent with past practice, the board will ensure that WIOA resources utilized for Individual Training Accounts will center on in-demand and targeted occupational clusters. Ongoing labor market analysis will be undertaken to determine if training programs are continuing to address the skill set needs of area employers. Also, emerging industries identified through this process will draw additional attention. An example of this is the MHBWB’s support of a UMASS Dartmouth grant to expand the Marine Technology Industry in SE Massachusetts.

With regard to weaknesses, the MHBWB recognizes the need to make advanced training opportunities (i.e. healthcare degree programs) more accessible to program participants who may face barriers such as transportation, financial issues and need for basic skills upgrade. The *Southeast Regional Labor Market Blueprint* includes strategies (i.e. stackable credits, increase in training capacity, etc.) that will be adopted by the MHBWB.

(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). The primary indicators of performance include:

- a. Employment Rate Second Quarter After Exit: The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
- b. Employment Rate Fourth Quarter After Exit: The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.
- c. Median Earnings Second Quarter After Exit: Median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.
- d. Credential Attainment: The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attained a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its

recognized equivalent, during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program.

- e. Measurable Skill Gain: The percentage of participants who, during a Program Year, are in education or training, and who achieve academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress towards such a credential or employment. **(NEW)**

The MHBWB has established quantitative and qualitative measures designed to measure progress toward the five primary indicators established through our strategic planning process. The goals of the MHBWB will be reviewed by the full board and its subcommittees. The following metrics will guide the board in judging which strategies are successful and those that need adjustment or additional effort. Ultimately, achievement of the following goals will have a positive impact on the primary indicators of performance as cited above.

**1. Raise Awareness of the MHBWB and MassHire Career Center’s role in workforce development.**

Quantitative Measures

- Development of formal outreach plan
- At least four informational inserts annually in two regional newspapers
- At least two guest articles per year in Chamber of Commerce newsletters
- At least six speaking engagements/presentations per year
- At least three employment information events per year
- 25% improvement in Bristol MHBWB website usage
- At least two television appearances per year
- At least two op-ed pieces in local newspapers per year
- Development of updated outreach materials for employer and job seeker services

Qualitative Measures

- Key stakeholders gain a greater understanding of workforce development system and actively utilize its services
- MHBWB becomes the key driver of workforce development policy discussion and partnership development in the region
- MHBWB becomes recognized leader in workforce development among community leaders and partnering organizations

**2. Expand education, training, employment and career opportunities for at-risk target populations.**

Quantitative Measures

- Establish at least two new “middle-skills” programs in regional critical industry clusters with non-WIOA resources
- Work with local provider network to establish at least four integrated Adult Basic Education-Occupational Skills training programs in targeted industry clusters
- Work with Career Centers to hold at least four job fairs annually
- Increase number of employer on-site recruitments by 10%

- Secure at least 30% additional funding beyond Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act dedicated training dollars
- Develop one comprehensive inventory of training providers offering training/industry recognized credentials within the region's critical industry clusters

#### Qualitative Measures

- Availability of education and training opportunities expanded for job seekers
- Training programs prepare job seekers for opportunities in growth occupations
- Secured funding is coordinated and integrated to maximize level of services
- High demand positions that can be accessed with certificate and Associate Degree programs are identified

### **3. Strengthen services for at-risk youth.**

#### Quantitative Measures

- Serve at least 300 youth annually through all targeted youth programs/activities coordinated by the MHBWB
- Serve at least 750 youth directly or indirectly through MHBWB or partnering organization activities supported by the MHBWB
- Attain HiSET/GED/Industry Recognized Credential attainment rate of 65% for at-risk youth
- Establish at least two intensive HiSET programs for at-risk youth
- Increase the number of internships for in and out-of-school youth by 10%

#### Qualitative Measures

- Youth will be provided a continuum of services based on strong partnerships and coordinated case management strategies
- WIOA and non-WIOA funding is blended to maximize services and avoid duplication of effort
- Youth program design to include strategies that identify career ladders within critical industry clusters that offer high wage/high growth opportunities
- MHBWB is recognized as a regional leader for youth internships, job shadowing and apprenticeship opportunities
- Career and job-readiness of youth graduating from high school is positively impacted

### **4. Strengthen the connection between the region's employers and the workforce development system.**

#### Quantitative Measures

- Increase of 10% in number of new employers served at Career Centers
- Increase of 10% in number of job orders placed with Career Centers
- Increase of 10% in number of On the Job Training partnerships established
- Hold at least six industry briefings
- Hold at least six employer focus groups
- Add at least five employer advocates from within board membership
- Increase number of incumbent worker training grants by 10%



#### Qualitative Measures

- MHBWB becomes first point of contact for employers seeking qualified employees
- MHBWB becomes first point of contact for employers seeking to upgrade skills of incumbent workers
- A greater understanding of current skill set needs required by the region's employers

### **5. Develop and sustain key partnerships that strengthen the region's workforce development system.**

#### Quantitative Measures

- Establish formal meeting schedule with local economic development entities
- Increase number of employer referrals from local and regional economic development entities by 10%
- MHBWB and Career Center develop at least two cross regional partnerships with other Workforce Development Areas designed to expand education, training and/or employment services
- Partner with at least five organizations that have not previously interfaced with the workforce development system
- Attend at least eight partner events per year (including Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours)
- Career Centers to develop at least three cross regional strategies for business service integration

#### Qualitative Measures

- Key partnerships are strengthened and new partnership are developed to align education, economic development and workforce development to meet employer needs
- Additional resources available through partnering organization are identified and utilized to increase intensity and effectiveness of services provided job seekers and employers

### **6. Utilize current labor market information to better guide resource allocation and programmatic activity.**

#### Quantitative Measures

- At least one labor market report issued per year
- At least three speaking engagements/presentations per year that include LMI component
- At least two labor market presentations to Career Center staff per year
- Update current health care and manufacturing career ladder documents
- Add one additional local career ladder publication in an additional critical industry cluster

#### Qualitative Measures

- Key stakeholders and staff understand current labor market trends and utilize this data in decision making
- Partnering organizations look to MHBWB for up to date labor market information
- Workforce development policy decisions driven by up to date LMI
- Influence local and regional discussions among partners and stakeholders on policy

**(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 MHBWB has an ongoing commitment to strengthen partnerships to achieve its strategic and performance goals. The entities within Bristol that carry out core WIOA programming are active participants in shaping workforce development services within the region. The MassHire Career Centers utilize a functional and leadership team model in the delivery of integrated Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Wagner-Peyser (WP) services. The Functional approach formulates customer service flow in a manner that expedites service and ensures that customers both job seekers and employers receive the information and services they are seeking.

Interagency cross training of Bristol County Training Consortium (Lead agency and operator of Bristol's MassHire Career Centers) and Department of Career Services (DCS) staff is on-going. To date staff have been cross trained and are actively providing services to customers in Triage, Job Ready and Skill Development activities.

Triage staff members (BCTC & DCS) provide "Basic Career Services which includes an overview of all Career Center and Partner agency programs. Team members coordinate the referral to and/or receipt of services based on an "initial assessment". Customers new to the Center or customers who inquire about staff assisted job search or skills development, meet with Triage Team members in order to determine the employment/training needs and eligibility of the individual and arrange those services to be provided to the customer. Triage staff utilize a variety of "Basic Service" methods and tools available at the Career Center to determine with the customer their appropriate Workforce Services Pathway. Most Customers who meet with a Triage staff will be referred to either the Job Ready team or Skills Development team. Some customers may choose self-service activities. Veteran and disabled customers may be identified through the initial assessment process and will be referred to the on-site veterans' representative or appropriate partner staff if needed.

Job Ready focused staff provide integrated Job search Services to both job seekers and employers. Staff coordinate on-site employer recruitments, industry briefings, perform outreach to new and existing companies, and organize job fairs. The integrated Job Ready staff also provides job seekers with job referrals and facilitate job search workshops. Team members serve as the bridge between customers seeking employment and employers looking to fill positions.

Business Services Team - The business services team consists of BCTC & DCS staff. The Business Services staff along with assigned job ready team members outreach, identify, and recruit business customers within the South Coast Region to encourage Career Center membership and identify employment opportunities for job seeker customers.

Skill Development focused staff (BCTC & DCS) The Skill Development staff consists of BCTC & DCS career counselors. Each team member provides individualized career services including training services to WIOA title I eligible customers. Team members enroll customers in Title I utilizing MOSES, complete a comprehensive assessment, apply priority of service policy if appropriate, develop an individual employment

plan, case manage each customer's progress, assist customer in choosing a formalized training option, and perform follow-up services once the customer is exited from Title I.

Through continued cross-training of partner agency staff, and in an effort to secure additional leveraged resources we continue to work with our partners to further integrate services. The following is an example of the region's commitment to partner integration of services; BCTC holds regularly scheduled meetings at the MassHire Fall River Career Center for each functional area (Triage, Job Ready, and Skill Development), which partner staff are invited to and attend.

BCTC staff participates in regional meetings with the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) to discuss programs and shared customers who participate in the DTA, WPP and CIES programs facilitated at the Career Center. Staff reviews successes and issues, and methods for resolution, as well as agency policies, and procedures for providing services to DTA customers. The regional meetings are a result of a coordinated effort by BCTC and DTA directors to continuously coordinate services to the DTA population.

BCTC, DCS and MassAbility staff have developed pilot programming to prepare MassAbility customers for employment and provide job Search assistance with an ultimate goal of securing employment.

**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.

**Core Center Partners- There are four (4) Core Program Partners:**

- WIOA Title I. B: Adult, Dislocated Workers and Youth
- WIOA Title II: Adult Education and Literacy (including ESOL)
- WIOA Title III: Wagner-Peyser
- WIOA Title IV: Vocational Rehabilitation
- The Bristol Area Career Centers will also partner with local DTA Staff.

**Other required One-Stop partners** who participate in the operation of the Career Center include:

- Career & Technical Education
- Title V Older Americans Act
- Job Corps
- Migrant Seasonal Farm workers
- Veterans
- Youth Build
- Trade Act
- Community Services Block Grant
- Housing and Urban Development
- Unemployment Compensation
- Second Chance Programs

The following are the organizations that are signatories to the region's Career Center Partners Memorandum of Understanding.

- 1. The Adult Program** (Title I), as part of the Department of Career Services (DCS), Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD)  
Organization represented: Massachusetts Department of Career Services
- 2. The Dislocated Worker Program** (Title I), as part of DCS/EOLWD  
Organization represented: Massachusetts Department of Career Services
- 3. The Youth Program** (Title I), as part of DCS/EOLWD  
Organization represented: Massachusetts Department of Career Services, Youth Build
- 4. The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program** (Title II), as part of Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS), Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Executive Office of Education (EOE)  
Organizations Represented: Bristol Community College, SER Jobs for Progress, Inc. and Bristol County Sheriff's Office
- 5. The Wagner-Peyser Act Program** (Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by Title III), as part of DCS, EOLWD  
Organization Represented: Massachusetts Department of Career Services
- 6. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program** (Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV), as part of MASSABILITY and Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB), Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS)  
Organizations Represented: MassAbility and Massachusetts Commission for the Blind
- 7. Federal-state unemployment compensation program**, as part of the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA), EOLWD  
Organization represented: Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance
- 8. Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Programs** (Activities authorized under chapter 2 of Title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.)), as part of DCS, EOLWD  
Organization represented: Massachusetts Department of Career Services
- 9. Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program** (Programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.) as part of DCS, EOLWD  
Organization represented: Massachusetts Department of Career Services
- 10. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program** (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) as part of Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), EOHHS  
Organization represented: Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance
- 11. Employment and Training Programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**, (Programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C.2015(d)(4)), as part of DTA, EOHHS;  
Organization represented: Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance
- 12. Senior Community Service Employment Program** (Programs authorized under Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))  
Organization represented: Citizens for Citizens, Inc.
- 13. Second Chance Program** (Programs authorized under Sec. 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007)  
Organization represented: Bristol County Sheriff's Office

- 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.*

Building cross-agency partnerships has been a clear objective of the MHBWB. Partners have been engaged at various stages to ensure multiple entry points for shared customers. These discussions have occurred at the MOU Steering Committee level where all partners are represented.

The MHBWB maintains vibrant partnerships with the region's Perkins Career and Technical Education Act program providers. Since 2013, the MHBWB has partnered with the region's two Vocational Technical Schools (Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School and Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical High School) to establish multiple advanced manufacturing programs geared toward unemployed adults and at-risk youth. These programs run after hours and have resulted in participants accessing numerous employment opportunities among area manufacturers. In addition, the Career Center is connected to Diman's Licensed Practical Nurse program with participants regularly referred to this training opportunity in the healthcare field. In addition, WIOA eligible youth have participated in Chapter 74 programs through BMC Durfee High School in Fall River.

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

The MHBWB continues to work closely with core partner programs to increase Access to employment, training and education. These teams have a role in career pathway implementation and are the groups that spearhead changes in operations to meet evolving needs of the region's employers.

Through our local MOU process, we conducted asset/resource mapping of partners and subsequently attempted to determine potential roles of each partner to support local career pathways. While there were obvious roles such as providing each agency's supports (case management, financial, counseling, etc.) to participants moving along career pathways. Examples include:

Adult Basic Education partners supporting individuals in obtaining HiSET or GED, Developing contextualized ABE/ESOL curriculum for priority industry clusters with work in this area already

completed in manufacturing and healthcare.

Education Partners (Bristol Community College) assisting with financial aid, occupational training curriculum development, develop programming with multiple entrances/exits. As well, the Community College and Vocational Schools play an important role in adapting existing programming and establishing new training programs in response to changing employer demand.

Department of Transitional Assistance working with Career Center to provide advanced job club models that prepare participants who often face multiple barriers to moving along a career pathway, with preparation to move onto next steps toward meaningful education, training and employment.

The above are only several examples of initiatives that have resulted from Career Center partner support of local career pathway models. As data sharing capabilities are improved, our partnership will seek to use performance data to demonstrate progress and impact of our local career pathway models.

Multiple entry points to local career pathways are available to job seekers at different stages.

Career Pathway Initial Stages: Assessment, Career Exploration: At this point all partners are able to identify individuals who are prepared to embark upon a local career pathway. Referrals to joint activities such as TORQ and various interest aptitudes can be delivered at the Career Centers or partner sites. Activities such as joint job fairs and industry briefings afford a wide range of partner customers the opportunity to engage in exploration and career activities. Joint assessment and case management activities further allow customers to enter career ladder progression from multiple partner sources such as ABE, DTA, MassAbility, etc.

Career Pathway Education and Occupational Skill Building Stages: HiSET Preparation, OJTs/ITAs, Specialized sector grant skills training (i.e. manufacturing training such as machinist and welding), post-secondary education.

The local career ladders outline sequenced skills and credentials: While many shared customers will begin this stage at the ESOL or HiSET preparation level, the model allows for a wide range of entry points for individuals to enter the career pathway. For example, the development of “middle skills” sector based training allows individuals with a high school diploma or equivalency to access relatively short term training that results in placement within high demand occupations within the region. As well, the MHBWB worked with local providers to develop integrated education/occupational training programs. Alternatively, traditional Associates Degree programs can be an entry point for some, the availability of customized training at Bristol Community College, developed in partnership with the MHBWB, offers a greater variety of start dates than traditional semester schedules offers yet another entry point to local career pathways. On-the-Job Training has been established in our region within the Manufacturing and Professional and Technical Services industries as another route to employment in priority industry clusters. In summary, the MHBWB has worked diligently to offer a mix of both existing, traditional education/training services with customized and alternative models that allow for greater access and adaptability to change with the evolving skill set requirements of the

region's employers.

Supporting career ladder development and implementation, the MHBWB has developed local career ladder documents within manufacturing and healthcare that were developed with input directly from employers. Through our Southeast Regional Planning Blueprint development process, we have identified career ladder opportunities in additional priority industry clusters (Professional and Technical Services, Financial Services) and have committed to developing regional career pathway strategies and associated career ladder documents for these industries which will include skills sets and credential necessary to progress along the pathway. This work will include our regional planning team with representatives of the workforce development, education and economic development sectors. These activities ultimately lead to joint outcomes, specifically attainment of industry recognized credentials and job placement within a priority industry cluster.

(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.

Meeting the needs of area employers is a main priority for the MHBWB. Supporting area employers' retention and expansion efforts is a necessary component in the board's overall efforts. Through continued convening and facilitation, the Board will get direct input from employers within high growth and critical industry clusters to ensure the local workforce system meets their specific needs. The workforce development system in Bristol will ensure the delivery of quality and customized services to employers throughout the region. Board activities in this category will include the following:

- Convene industry cluster based employer focus groups in priority industry clusters to identify skill set shortages, training needs, hiring processes and other relevant data
- Engage in regular outreach to businesses to provide information regarding available services and resources in the workforce development system
- Establish the local MassHire Career Centers as a human resource arm for area employers
- Assist employers in accessing incumbent worker training resources
- Connect employers to available services through partnering organizations such as economic development agencies
- Target training resources toward occupations in demand among area employers
- Lead sector initiatives that result in applications for funding to support local industry needs

To strengthen employer participation in the workforce development system, it is fully anticipated that the MHBWB will return to the formation of sector partnerships. This will assist the board in aligning training activities with high-growth industries and critical industry clusters. The Bristol MHBWB has had past success in building such industry cluster partnerships. These included the Southeastern Massachusetts Manufacturing Partnership (SEMMC) and the Southeast Health Care Collaborative (SEHCC). The MHBWB was able to secure grants to address the incumbent worker training needs of these partnerships, securing funds for multiple successful grant applications. In addition, talent pipeline grants in advanced

manufacturing were secured through funding sources such as state funded Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund programs.

In partnership with the Southeast MassHire Boards, The MHBWB will be an active leader in continuing the work of our manufacturing partnership (now known as the Southeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium) and expanding our Southeast Healthcare Partnership through our current HealthCare HUB grant. A multi-faceted effort has been undertaken including on-the-job training, customized training and exploration of apprenticeship models. With additional grant opportunities on the horizon for Workforce Board led employer consortiums through such grants as the Workforce Training Fund Program, Bristol will continue to address talent pipeline needs in a proactive, aggressive fashion. By increasing our assistance to employers in accessing incumbent worker training funds as well as continued efforts at securing sector based occupational training grants, it is anticipated that additional resources will be secured for the region.

Career Center activities:

To increase employer usage of the local MassHire Bristol Career Centers, Career Specialists will directly market all the employer services that are available including:

- Access to Professional Account Representatives and Account Management Services
- Organize and assist with job fairs, industry briefings, employer Recruitment Services
- Post job openings for employer utilizing Mass JobQuest,
- Market the positions via: the “hot jobs” distribution list and the Bristol Career Center Social Media page.
- Conduct Pre-screening of Applicants Prior to Referral, and “job matching” activities in MOSES to assist employers with identifying potential qualified job seekers;
  
- Research Labor Market Information, Information on Applicant Pool and Qualifications of Potential Applicants
- Access to Talent Bank
- Maintain up-to-date Information on Local Availability of Training Grants, Skill Development Opportunities and State Funding Resources i.e. MA BizWorks program, State Rapid Response Team and RSI Solutions Initiative
- Provide Information on Working With Individuals With Disabilities

It should be noted that it will not only be the Career Centers that market these services, but employers themselves. Several employers who have utilized the local workforce development system have agreed to support Career Center employer outreach efforts. For example, the local Stop & Shop distribution center as well as Anderson Windows have provided support letters and spoken with other employers about the effectiveness of Career Center employer services. Other employers, such as Millstone Medical and Merrow Manufacturing have participated in past MHBWB employer information sessions to describe their connection with the local workforce development system. This is certainly an area that can be expanded to achieve the Board’s strategic goals.

The MassHire Bristol Career Centers plans to intensify efforts to identify as many valid employment opportunities as possible. Selected staff will focus more directly on employment outreach and job development services. Determining the long term hiring estimates as well as the skill sets required for these employment opportunities is essential. This information will also assist the Career Center in



identifying training areas for Career Center participants and may also alert the Center to any potential group training needs.

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

Agricultural businesses represent a small percentage of employment within the Bristol Workforce Development Area. More specifically, 0.3% of the region's workforce is employed in agricultural occupations. The Bristol region includes several food processing and manufacturing plants that regularly utilize the MassHire Career Centers. Two of these businesses have been members of the MHBWB in the past and provide ongoing feedback on their hiring needs. Each utilizes the Career Centers to address their hiring needs.

MBWB along with the MBCC's have developed opportunities to address and improve services to these companies in this sector. For example, the Bristol County Agricultural High School has been a partner in our MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education *Connecting Activities* program. Programming in horticulture, animal lab science, natural resource management and agricultural mechanics offer opportunities to not only assist area employers in tapping an emerging talent pipeline but also provide potential sector based adult training models. The Board will explore possible ways to replicate the training programs it has developed for unemployed adults at the region's vocational technical high schools in order to increase the talent pipeline for area agricultural businesses.

In addition to working with local food processing and manufacturing plants the Workforce Board ensures the MassHire Bristol Career Centers follow Mass Workforce Issuance 100 DCS 21.106 regarding policies on "Agricultural employers seeking to hire workers under the H-2A program". MDCS obtains Agricultural employer job orders and forwards to the local Career Centers. MassHire Career Center staff assists H2A employers by providing labor market information, recruitment services and referrals. Local area career center management will ensure recruitment is conducted by providing notice to jobseekers and partners of the job opportunity(ies). MassHire Career Center staff work with the local employers as needed or requested and record referrals and outcomes via MJQ. MDCS and MCCs will be able to report on referral and outcomes for DOL, employers and any other required or interested stakeholders.

- c. To support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses. Meeting the needs of businesses in the area begins with the services received through the region's MassHire Career Centers. Our goal is to ensure that the business community regards the Bristol MassHire Career Centers as trusted brokers of talent, matching their workforce needs with qualified job seekers.

In an effort to ensure we meet the needs of business partners, the Bristol MassHire Career Center Career Specialists will:

- Conduct continuous analysis of the workforce in the Local Area, including current labor force employment (and unemployment) data
- Research Information on labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in the Local Area, including individuals with barriers to employment

- Assess and understand the job tasks and activities in detail, the educational and skill requirements of each business and industry as well as business cycles and other economic forces impacting business success. The Assessment will also include understanding the culture of the business and any training needs of the current workforce
- Possess a comprehensive understanding of the numerous programs and services available to business customers

#### Additional Services

- Coordinate directly with other Workforce Development areas within the region
- Serve as a business services expert for new and existing companies, as a liaison among all partners, and the “point-person” for all new business inquiries and service needs.
- Assist employers with job restructuring and helping employers deal with layoffs
- Build and maintain ongoing, long-term relationships between all partners and businesses.
- Schedule and attend meetings with Center partners, regional Career Specialists, and Mass State BizWorks staff as needed.
- Facilitate and/or coordinate business service workshops for employers.
- Provide remote employer services such as virtual job fairs. Emphasis is placed on providing businesses with quality resources and professional services.

#### Conduct Employer Outreach

Career Specialists outreach, identify, and recruit business customers within the South coast Region to encourage Career Center membership and identify employment opportunities for job seeker customers. Employer outreach is conducted by Career Specialists through membership in the local Chambers of Commerce, and attendance at meetings of industry associations. Business customers that are new to the area or have recently received small business loans are also contacted by our Career Specialists. Additionally, management has created a Crystal report which shows companies that have recently had turnover in positions. Our marketing and engagement strategy focuses on three priorities: 1) employers new to the area, 2) industry specific, and 3) when a particular need is emerging such as a significant expansion.

#### Identify and Match Job Seeker Customers

To address the immediate “labor exchange” needs of the businesses for talent, the Centers review their candidate pools for individuals that have the qualifications for the vacant positions and can contact the job seeker on behalf of the business and make a direct referral. The Centers will pre-screen candidates for any employer that requests this service.

To address longer term incumbent worker development and training needs, staff makes sure that businesses are aware of the resources available at the MassHire Career Center, and work with them and the MHBWB to provide easy access to these services.

#### Maintain up-to-date Labor Market Information

Another important mechanism to ensure that the Board adopts policies to meet the ever evolving workforce needs of local businesses is to utilize labor market information to better guide resource allocation and programmatic action. The MHBWB will devote sufficient staff time and resources to engage in ongoing labor market analysis. This has obvious benefits in guiding the MHBWB toward policy

decisions around investment of training resources, the focus of job development activities, curriculum design in area education and training programs and assistance in customer choice.

While the Board does engage in such analysis, the process and outputs need to be further formalized. More specifically, the MHBWB will issue at least one formal labor market report annually. As well, the Board will offer LMI presentations to partners within our region. Presentations have already included the Rotary Club, Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District, Career Centers, and other entities. Certainly, the value of accurate LMI is of benefit to many stakeholders in the region as evidenced by the regular inquiries for such data that the Board receives on a frequent basis. For example, regular requests have increased from local economic development entities which has served to further strengthen the workforce development-economic development partnership throughout the region.

Data sources that will be utilized include, but are not necessarily limited to the following:

- United States Department of Labor Data
- MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development data
- Local and regional economic development organizations' data (i.e. Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District)
- Data gleaned through MHBWB facilitated Employer Focus Groups
- Data from labor market reports through other sources
- Job placement and training completion data within the Massachusetts MassHire Employment System (MOSES)

Through this formalized process, the MHBWB will not only strengthen its ability to respond to changes in the local market through policy development and recalibrating services but will also position the organization to be the recognized as the local source for current labor market data in the region.

- c. To better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development.

To achieve its strategic goals, the MHBWB will continue to strengthen its partnership with local economic development offices. MHBWB will continue to partner with area economic development agencies to increase employment opportunities for participants. For example, the region's economic development offices have agreed to inform newly established companies of the services available through the Career Center and arrange for these companies to visit the Career Center. In addition, the Board receives information from local economic development entities regarding employers express needs related to job vacancies and other workforce development issues. Also, any businesses that create positions through the local MicroLoan programs and Tax Increment Financing are advised to utilize the local MassHire Career Centers to meet their hiring needs.

These partnerships with economic development will be strengthened by setting up a regular meeting schedule with identified economic development staff. As well, these staff will be invited to participate in Workforce Board sponsored employer information sessions as well as Board led strategic planning meetings.

The MHBWB Board will continue to work on a cross-agency basis with entities that meet with businesses investigating the possibility of locating in the region. These include the local economic development entities, the southeast regional offices of the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center and Massachusetts Office of Business Development to share information, outreach to business and better coordinate the various services available to employers.

- d. To strengthen linkages between reemployment assistance and unemployment insurance programs.

The key to strengthening linkages between the Career Center delivery system and unemployment insurance programs is to continue cross training and integration of all Career Center staff. Bristol MassHire Career Center management is committed to ensuring all staff is fully trained in providing reemployment services to unemployment insurance customers including via the UI RESEA Program.

Individuals filing UI claims are active job seekers who, through the state's RESEA Program, are made aware of the variety of reemployment services that are available to them. As part of the Career Centers integration of services, BCTC and Wagner-Peyser staff attend State sponsored training sessions on unemployment insurance services, as well as training on facilitating RESEA workshops.

The reemployment needs of UI claimants and the prevention and detection of improper UI payments are partially addressed through the UI RESEA Program. The UI RESEA Program provides claimants an entry point to reemployment services available at MassHire Bristol Career Centers, thereby decreasing the amount of time it takes for the RESEA customer to return to work. RESEA customers learn about the full array of services available at the career center including training opportunities.

- e. Describe how your Board coordinates workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide Rapid Response activities.

Within Bristol, the MassHire Career Center managers and Rapid Response staff coordinate Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Activities regularly as needed. The following outlines the areas of integration designed to benefit workers dislocated by company closure or downsizing.

#### **Company Closure or Downsizing**

Rapid Response generates a weekly report which is forwarded to all Career Center managers. The report notifies staff of Rapid Response activities for the week which includes notification of impending company closings or downsizing activities. The report also identifies companies that have applied for TAA, been approved by DOL for TAA, or NDWG's. If Career Center managers are notified of a company closing or downsizing and Rapid Response has not been notified the manager immediately contacts the local Rapid Response representative. On the other-hand, when Rapid Response is notified of a company closing or downsizing, the local RR representative contacts the appropriate Career Center manager.

Upon notification, it is the responsibility of the Rapid Response Manager or designated Rapid

Response Coordinator to:

- o Make the initial contact to the identified company to verify the information regarding a layoff/closing
- o Investigate possible layoff aversion strategies
- o Determine labor union involvement
- o Introduce the company to potential services
- o Request the scheduling of an initial on-site company meeting, and
- o Coordinate the scheduled meeting with assigned Career Center staff

- **Supportive Services**

At a minimum the Rapid Response Team will deliver on-site employee meetings that provide workers with information and access to unemployment compensation benefits, comprehensive One-Stop Career Center system services, and employment and training activities including information on the Trade Adjustment Assistance program (TAA) and National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWG). Career Center Staff coordinate and actively participate in these meeting.

- **Outreach**

Rapid Response staff gathers information on affected workers and forward the information to the Career Center. Additionally, RR enters affected worker demographic information in MOSES under the employer record. Once the Career Center has a list of the affected workers, Career Center staff send each affected worker a letter inviting them to the Career Center to access job search and/or training services. Additionally, Rapid Response staff refers dislocated workers to their local Career Center.

When a customer comes to the Career Center, they follow the triage process in place for all customers. When an affected worker comes to the Career Center for services, they are referred by front desk staff to a Career Specialist for an Initial Assessment. The initial Assessment helps rapid response, and Career Center staff determine if the customer would benefit from Individualized services and/or training, Job Search assistance, or other services provided by partner staff.

- **Eligibility**

Title I WIOA eligibility is determined by MassHire Bristol Career Center Staff.

If Career Center staff determine the affected worker is eligible and suitable for Individualized services, the customer will be enrolled in WIOA Title I and a Comprehensive Assessment will be completed.

In deciding when to move a customer from one service to another within the WIOA program, the Career Specialist will add any relevant information gathered about the customer's needs. This could include services received from other Workforce Development service providers including Rapid Response. The Career Specialist completes a Comprehensive Assessment and develops an EDP.

- f. Please describe procedures to offer MassHire Career Center Business Services programs to local businesses.

Through extensive Business research and on-hands experience, Bristol's MassHire Career Centers have created a proven Business Service model that identifies company needs on a case by case basis and allows for flexibility in approaching and delivering services. Our Business Services Model adheres to three tenets:

- Establish 1 firm point of contact
- Build trust and relationship everyday
- Listen to company needs and act quickly

Through the implementation of this model, Career Specialists, successfully assist employers with hiring thousands of job seekers in an organized and efficient manner. The Career Centers continue to use this model to strengthen the connection between the region's employers and the workforce development system.

Career Specialists also provide company representatives with information about enhanced business resources available at the Career Center. The business resources available include private office space, a conference room, recruitment space, computer access and the availability of audio-visual equipment. Also, businesses are assigned an account representative responsible for posting job orders, pre-screening candidates, assisting with recruitment activities and industry briefings. The Career Center will also extend hours of operation for significant recruitments if needed. Expansion of remote employer services such as virtual job fairs has offered additional service options for local businesses. Emphasis is placed on providing businesses with quality resources and professional services.

Additionally, to further enhance the level of services provided to business customers, a Business Service Center (Area) has been established, and is located at the Fall River Career Center. This approach is designed to provide employers with information and assistance on accessing a variety of business services and programs available through a variety of sources. Our objective is to increase employer usage of the Career Center and to educate employers on the numerous services and programs offered through the Career Center, local workforce development agencies, and State programs such as Mass BizWorks

- g. 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.

The MHBWB will continue to take a proactive approach to implementing a variety of strategies to address the workforce needs of area businesses. Extensive marketing of the MA Workforce Training Fund Program has enabled numerous local businesses access funds to upgrade the skills of their incumbent workers. To that end, the MHBWB regularly assists businesses in needs analysis and completing WTFP applications. The Board has also utilized On-the-Job Training programs with multiple companies over the past several years with customized training plans that address immediate and

critical skills set needs. Recent coordination with the Greater New Bedford Workforce Board Apprenticeship staff has centered on expanding apprenticeships to the local area. A pre-apprenticeship program in the building trades established by unions in the area has offered another creative opportunity for pipeline development in a critical industry cluster.

The MHBWB will continue to seek training funds to support industry and sector strategies. Successes in this area include Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund grants and MA Housing and Economic Development grants to support pipeline manufacturing training provided as the region's Vocational Technical High Schools directly tied to employer needs.

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

As noted above, the MHBWB will continue to partner with area economic development agencies to increase employment opportunities for participants. For example, the region's economic development offices have agreed to inform newly established companies of the services available through the Career Center and arrange for these companies to visit the Career Center. In addition, the Board receives information from local economic development entities regarding employers express needs related to job vacancies and other workforce development issues. Also, any businesses that create positions through the local Tax Increment Financing are advised to utilize the local MassHire Career Centers to meet their hiring needs.

The MHBWB Board will continue to work locally on a cross-agency basis to meet with businesses investigating the possibility of locating in the region. In addition to the MHBWB, these teams include the local economic development entities, the MA Office of Business Development and Mass Development. These activities provide employers with the wide range of services (identifying talent, hiring assistance, training assistance, financing, tax incentives, access to capital, permitting, etc.)

The MHBWB has also partnered with MA Office of Business Development, the MA Small Business Development Center, MA Office of Business Development and local economic development entities to connect employers to access microloans and other specialized loan programs, business plan assistance, securing government contracts and other relevant services. Representatives of each of these organizations have presented at board meetings and the MHBWB has referred companies to these organizations.

With regard to entrepreneurial programs, the Bristol region is fortunate to have access to Community College Business programs, with an emphasis on entrepreneurial ship that are State and federally approved for Adults, Youth and Dislocated Workers. Bristol's career counselors actively refer interested customers who are eligible under the WIOA funded programs.

Bristol Community College presently offers a Business Administration Career/ Entrepreneurial Associate Degree, and a General Studies Business and Entrepreneurial Studies program. “Bristol Community College is the home of the Academic Center for Entrepreneurship. It works to assist people starting a business as well as to encourage local high school and middle school students to consider entrepreneurship.”

In addition to the College, our customers have access to the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network. “The MSBDC is committed to helping businesses succeed in Massachusetts. They provide free, confidential, one-to-one business assistance and free or low-cost educational training programs to prospective and existing small businesses throughout the Commonwealth. The MSBDC fosters the start, growth and sustainability of small business by providing high-quality, in-depth advising, training and capital access.”

In addition, the MHBWB has partnered with “Entrepreneurship for All” to provide entrepreneurship workshops at our local MassHire Career Centers to area jobs seekers who have expressed interest in starting their own business.

Our goal is to further promote entrepreneurial skills training as well as other business development or microenterprise services. To help achieve this goal, Career Center counselors will continue to work with the Section 30 department of DUA, and the State’s Trade department to maintain approval for entrepreneurial programs so dislocated workers will continue to have access to this training. Additionally, Youth Counselors will continue to promote and encourage youth to participate in entrepreneurial skills training opportunities as entrepreneurship components are included in local WIOA Youth programming.

(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.

With regard to eligible providers, the MHBWB utilizes a process of desk review and on-site review to ensure that the training programs delivered by eligible providers are in compliance with contract requirements and provide quality services that meet the demand of area employers.

Site Visits For Contract Oversight:

The MHBWB Director of Planning and Youth Systems Coordinator, depending on program type, are responsible for the following monitoring:

Individual Training Account providers and Youth program sub-recipients are visited at least once per year. MHBWB staff utilizes the monitoring tool identified in its monitoring policy. The tool includes assessment of compliance with administrative and programmatic contract terms, and compliance with WIOA. The tool includes verification that the contracted training, and/or other products are being delivered



according to providers' entry in the Massachusetts MassHire Employment System (MOSES). The tools require review of attendance, activities, progress and outcomes, as well as identification of deficiencies or violations of the contract terms and conditions, and any resulting corrective action.

Quality Issues: During on-site monitoring, the MHBWB Director of Planning review the quality of services for each contract, in the frequency specified above. At least one participant or ten percent of the enrollees will be interviewed. Classroom instruction or program operation is observed. Program staff are interviewed. Coursework materials are reviewed, as well as enrollee classwork and grades. At minimum, the following elements are reviewed (if contractually required):

1. Applicant enrollment/intake/orientation
2. Participant counseling
3. Participant assessment and service
4. Planning standards
5. Training/education/instruction
6. Job search, development and placement activities
7. Participant support and follow-up services

Corrective Action: The MHBWB Director of Planning, in conjunction with the Youth Systems Coordinator where appropriate, will develop and initiate corrective action plans based on monitoring: Corrective action may be initiated in the case of findings of contract in compliance, unsatisfactory program quality, enrollee safety concerns, violations of law or regulations, violations of state or local policies, fraud or other issues. It will be the responsibility of the MHBWB Director of Planning to follow-up on issues to assure compliance, except in the case of serious problems, which will be handled by the MHBWB Executive Director.

The procedures outlined above, allows the MHBWB to closely examine the education, job readiness, training, credential attainment, post-secondary and employment outcomes in order to determine the overall effectiveness of services provided to participants enrolled in training.

To help ensure that programs meet the employment needs of local businesses, workers and job seekers, the MHBWB ITA approval process will incorporate the following:

MHBWB Director of Planning (or designee) will evaluate programs according to the following minimum evaluative criteria:

1. The application shall contain all data necessary for review of the program.
2. The applicant shall demonstrate the financial capacity needed to provide quality training which includes all the proposed curricula and proposed training duration.
3. The program of training shall be for demand occupations.  
"Demand occupations" will be defined as those occupations in demand or which have a high potential for sustained demand in the local area (or in another area to which an adult or dislocated worker receiving such services is willing to relocate). These demand occupations are identified in the MassHire Bristol Workforce Board's *Workforce Development Business Plan*, the

MA Workforce Skills Cabinet's approved *Southeast Regional Labor Market Blueprint* and the MassHire Bristol Workforce Board's Strategic Plan. The MHBWB may also take into account other labor market information in determining approval of specific programs. The approved list of training areas will be reviewed annually (or more frequently if needed) by the MHBWB and modified as needed to meet any changing workforce training needs in the region.

4. The program shall demonstrate the following minimum performance levels (using data from ITA application process):
  - a. Successful Completion Rate: 75%
  - b. Entered Employment Rate: 70%
  - c. Licensure, Credential or Competencies Rate: 60%

- 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 is an issue that remains a primary concern to the MHBWB. Recognizes the challenges faced by many job seekers in the region regarding transportation and other barriers, the MHBWB maintains three Career Centers within the cities of Fall River, Taunton and Attleboro. In addition, there is a Youth specialized center (Youth Connections office) located in Fall River. Partner outstations at these centers further increase access for area job seekers. Moving forward, the MHBWB will continue to put an emphasis on increasing virtual access points with increased usage of technology. This included all job seekers workshops available virtually, virtual employer recruitments, virtual partner outstations and virtual meetings and case management with career center customers.

- 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.

In examining client flow in the region, it is clear that our local One-Stop Career Centers serve a diverse range of customers. These include individuals with a variety of educational and work backgrounds as well as individuals with a wide range of disabilities and support needs.

Any universal design strategy must start with the incorporation of strategies to address individuals with a wide range of disabilities. To that end, the Career Centers of Bristol County are in compliance with physical, programmatic, and communication accessibility requirements as established in the non-discrimination regulations related to Section 188 of the WIOA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Title II of the ADA. BCTC Center managers ensure that staff receive all pertinent Massachusetts Workforce Issuances pertaining to ADA and WIOA to ensure that individuals with disabilities are provided the same opportunities to participate in services as non-disabled individuals.

Bristol's Career Centers ensure each Career Center has an accessibility workstation equipped with assistive technology and software programs which allow individuals with a wide range of disabilities to

access services. Customers with disabilities have access to Basic, Individualized, Training and Follow-up services as all other customers.

## **Special Accommodations**

The following Adaptive equipment is available in our Resource Areas:

- Jaws-Screen, Kurzweil 1000-Scanning Reading Software, Zoomtext-Magnification software, and CCTV- A closed circuit TV that electronically magnifies printed materials for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.
  - Dragon naturally speaking-Hands free voice-activated software, and TTY-Telecommunications device for individuals who are deaf or hard-of hearing.
  - A height adjustable table-Accessible workstation.
  - Center staff are also always available whenever it is needed or required.
- In addition to the availability of adaptive equipment, Career Center staff coordinates with local Agencies providing services to the disabled to help meet the special accommodation needs of customers.
- Mass Commission for the Blind has counselors available to assist staff in providing services for sight impaired customers.
  - MassAbility is co-located at each Center and a staff member is available to answer questions or assist Career Center with information on providing special accommodations.

Additionally, individuals with disabilities receiving Center services are registered in the Massachusetts One-Stop Employment System (MOSES) database. MOSES registration affords the customer an opportunity to disclose a disability. Once disclosed, the customer is then asked by staff if special accommodations are needed. If needed, staff works with partner agency staff or the center manager to obtain reasonable accommodations during training, and referrals to support services that can provide assistance during the training process and subsequent job search.

It is recognized that while serving individuals with disabilities effectively is a clear goal of universal design, it must also be implemented to ensure services for Career Center customers who have a broad range of abilities, reading levels, learning styles, and culture. Our Universal design strategies incorporate a number of elements in Career Center client flow.

### **Welcoming Environment**

- All first time visitors are greeted at the front desk and initial triage is offered.
- Customers are informed that assistance with completing the registration form is available. Staff makes this offer to everyone, not just people they feel may need help.
- Signs are displayed to direct customers to the location of resources.
- Display signs clearly indicate the availability of assistive technology and accommodations.
- Provide the option of registering and/or signing up for orientation, workshops, and classes online or by telephone ahead of time so that orientation can be accomplished upon the first visit.
- Limited or non-English speakers are connected with multi-lingual staff and are provided with information sheets in their native language.

## Intake

- Use private space when helping a person fill out forms
- We have basic registration form as an option for individuals to complete if they are not computer literate. Job seekers will register with Job Quest

## Orientation

- Orientations are hosted in a room with ample seating, allowing space for wheelchair mobility.
- Orientations are available in multiple language formats
- Career Center staff provides a comprehensive overview of all services available with clear and specific information on how to access these services, and eligibility criteria.
- Disability-specific services information is consistently provided verbally and in writing to all customers. Customers are informed how to access these resources. However, customers are informed that that they can still use any other One-Stop services for which they are eligible, whether or not they use services targeted to people with disabilities.
- Career Centers provide a list of assistive technology available at the One-Stop, both verbally and in writing.
- Staff presents information about the policy and procedure for requesting help or reasonable accommodations, both verbally and in writing.
- The Career Center is prepared to provide an extensive, private orientation to the One-Stop if a customer prefers one.

## Workshops and Classes

- Staff uses concrete, basic language that is easy to understand.
- Verbal presentations cover all of the information included in handouts to facilitate learning by people with vision impairments, people who do not read, and people who can get distracted due to learning disabilities.
- Career Center staff defines terms and concepts that may not be familiar to everyone (e.g., networking, marketing, recruiter, affirming language, job fair, temp agencies).

## Print Material

- Career Centers utilize at least 12-point size font on all calendars and handouts.
- Basic materials (such as orientation materials, basic job seeking guides, etc.) have been translated into the most common languages spoken in our service area.

## Resource Areas

- The Resource Area, has posted signage regarding the availability of assistive technology (e.g., alternative keyboards and mouse, specialized software) and how to access/obtain them.
- Resource Area staff are aware of the various assistive technology devices available, and how to use them.
- Resource Area staff are aware of the various pre-installed accessibility features on all computers (e.g., sticky keys, filter keys, toggle keys, mouse keys, screen enlargement, pointer enlarger, etc.), and how these can be used to meet individual customer needs.

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

Career Center operator Bristol County Training Consortium (BCTC) along with the MHBWB, the Board's Chief Elected Official, and WIOA Partners developed and released an Umbrella Memorandum of Understanding designed to further integrate or enhance staff sharing of resources and services.

BCTC's management actively participated in the development and release of the (MOU). Since its execution, and in an effort to ensure all partners continue to work together, operational meetings are held at the Career Center, where partners work towards a goal of full implementation of the terms and assurances as agreed upon in the MOU.

Relationships between Career Center partners remain productive. To date, meetings have resulted in the development of inter-agency referral processes and cross training sessions. The referral process will be used in conjunction with telephone and in-person contact to further ensure a smooth and seamless transition of customers from one agency to another. The objective is to assist in identifying customer barriers to employment and to help develop strategies for providing specialty services to targeted populations.

Each partner agency has a designated or point person who is available to assist agency staff or customers in need of services. If the designated "Point person" is not available in person at the Career Center, they are available via telephone. The designated point person is available to answer questions, provide referral documentation and/or provide other information as needed to access services at their respective agency.

Additionally, joint staff meetings have resulted in inter-agency cross training sessions whereby staff from each partner agency, receive an orientation and training on all program services as well as the eligibility requirements of each. BCTC, DCS, MassAbility, and DTA staff have participated in the cross training sessions with BCTC and DCS currently implementing a common intake process. An professional development plan for inter-agency training is included in the Bristol region's current MOU.

The following partner organization have been co-located at the Career Centers to maximize the effectiveness of shared customer services:

- **WIOA Title I - Adult**- Staff providing WIOA Title I Adult services include BCTC & Wagner-Peyser staff. Staff determine Adult eligibility, enroll customers in the Title I Adult program, and provide WIOA Title I Adult services, including skill development and training services. Staff providing Adult services also partner with Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MASSABILITY), Adult Literacy agencies, and Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) staff to provide services to shared customers.
- **WIOA Title I –Dislocated Worker**-Staff providing WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker services Include BCTC & Wagner-Peyser staff. Staff determines DW eligibility, and enroll customers in WIOA Title I DW programs, and provide DW services including skill development and training services. Staff providing Adult services also partner with MASSABILITY, Adult Literacy agencies, and DTA staff to provide services.
- **Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)**-Customers are screened by Triage Team members for potential eligibility under the TAA Program. Career Center staff work with State DCS staff to complete trade contracts for trade eligible customers, who are also eligible as dislocated workers.
- **WIOA Title I Youth**-Staff providing WIOA Title I Youth services are located at the Youth Connection (a designated center for youth seeking workforce services) as well as the Attleboro, Fall River and Taunton

Career Centers Staff determine Title I Youth eligibility, enroll in the Title I Youth program, and provide youth services. BCTC staff partner with staff from other workforce and human service agencies serving youth such as Fall River Recreation, People Inc., YouthBuild, Job Corps, local High Schools, and south coast youth court programs (PAACA, Inc). Staff from these agencies screen youth for potential WIOA eligibility and refer accordingly.

- **Wagner-Peyser staff (DCS)**- Wagner-Peyser staff along with BCTC, provide Job search services to Job seeker and employer customers. Together with BCTC staff, WP staff facilitate the RESEA, workshops, and organize job recruitments. Wagner-Peyser staff are also integrated as members of the Triage and Skill Development teams, and are cross trained to determine Title I eligibility, and provide Title I Individualized services including Training. Additionally, Wagner-Peyser staff coordinate services with other required partner staff who are co-located at the center, or available via telephone.
- **Jobs for Veterans**- Although the Disabled Veterans Representative (DVOP) is a DCS employee all Career Center staff are responsible for providing veteran customers with appropriate and desired services. Both SBE and Non-SBE veterans are registered in MOSES by Triage/Eligibility staff, and have their DD214 reviewed by the DVOP. Veterans with Substantial Barriers to Employment (SBE) are identified by Triage staff and referred to the Veterans Representative for additional services. All staff working with veterans are fully aware of the “Priority of Service” policy and ensure that veterans receiving services are placed at the top of the list for appointments, workshops, the computer lab, funding, and any other service provided in the center.
- **Vocational Rehabilitation Program (MassAbility)**- MassAbility staff work with BCTC and DCS staff to track and monitor shared customer progress, and service needs. Interagency referrals are made via in person at the Career Center, or via telephone contact to a designated agency “point person”. MASSABILITY staff participates in monthly Center meetings with other required partners, and continue to cross train with a goal of Integrating as members of the Career Center Triage Team. In the past, MASSABILITY and both BCTC and DCS management developed a Pilot Program to share employer customers and service MASSABILITY customers at the Career Center, with specialized job search activities and Placement assistance.
- **(MCB)**- Mass Commission for the Blind has counselors available to assist staff in providing services for sight impaired customers. Both the Career Center and MCB have a designated “point person” responsible for ensuring MCB customers are directed to and receive appropriate and desired Career Center services.
- **Adult Education and Family Literacy**  
Career Center customers are referred to Bristol Community College and SER Jobs for progress, Inc. following an initial assessment and determination that a customer is in need of Literacy and Numeracy services. BCTC Career Counselors meet with BCC staff co-located at the Career Center to discuss the customers service needs, and/or contact the designated BCC point person via telephone to schedule an appointment for the customer to meet with a BCC counselor.
- **Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)** DTA and BCTC staff coordinate to provide interagency referrals. DTA customers are referred to the Center by social workers who have identified their customers who may benefit from Career Center programs and or services. Triage Team members identify DTA customers seeking Center services on their own, and assist the customer with obtaining a DTA referral from their social worker. As a means of further collaboration, twice per week, BCTC staff attend a DTA orientation in an effort to outreach to DTA customers. DTA staff provide information regarding Career Center programs and services.

Once DTA customers receive Career Center services, they are enrolled in the MOSES database. The DTA full-engagement workers co-located at the Career Center have access to MOSES to assist them with tracking customer progress and attendance in Career Center programs.

- **Senior Community Service Employment Program**-Citizens for Citizens is the local. Authorized agency for Title V services. BCTC works with Citizens for Citizens and provides CFC Title V eligible elders with on the job training opportunities at the Career Center. CFC regularly provides outreach and employment sessions on-site at the Career Center.

### **Intake, Assessment and Referral**

Partners have participated on the Career Center Triage Team which has helped them become more aware of the Career Center flow but has also ensured that general information regarding Career Center and partner programs, services, activities and resources are made available to all customers as appropriate. The partners have also worked to improve direct links or access to other Career Center partner staff that can provide meaningful information and services, through the use of co-location, and cross training of Career Center staff. Important work on mapping common intake information has led to work on aligning intake forms between the Career Centers and Adult Basic Education providers. This pilot will be expanded to our other partners.

### **Job Readiness**

Partners agree have worked to coordinate job readiness activities to prepare customers for active job search and employment. The Workforce Readiness Bootcamp model Prepares job seekers to excel in today's competitive job market with a comprehensive bootcamp. Job seekers gain essential skills, master interview techniques, and learn effective job search strategies. The model aims to transform a job seekers career journey and unlock their full potential with hands-on workshops, expert guidance, and valuable networking opportunities.

### **Job Placement Assistance**

Closer coordination of employment activities includes increased and more formalized sharing of job opening and other employment information. Partners have been informed of on-site recruitments and job fairs and nearly all have referred participants to these hiring events. In addition, in the past, the Career Centers have piloted a program with MassAbility to prepare shared customers in a customized job club model that prepares them for placement at select employers in the region. This includes the Career Center and MassAbility sharing employer accounts. In Bristol's MOU, partners have agreed to sharing employer postings where appropriate. This is a significant step in join employer services that helps increase the talent pipeline for area businesses.

- (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.

Adult and Dislocated workers seeking services at the Career Centers, have access to numerous employment and training activities. Some activities are specific to an Eligibility determination, while other services can be accessed without staff assistance. Additionally, there are other services available at the Career Center that requires minimal staff assistance. Customers also have access to services provided by Partner agencies co-located at the centers, including MASSABILITY, DTA, and BCC. Specialized veterans

services are also available for customers who are veterans or a spouse of a veteran.

## **Individualized**

If one-stop center staff determines an Adult or Dislocated worker is WIOA Title I eligible, staff will complete an initial assessment and WIOA eligibility screening to determine if intensive Individualized career services are appropriate for the customer to obtain or retain employment. These services are made available to the individual and may include any of the following:

- Short-term pre-vocational services
- Workforce preparation activities
- Training (including OJT and Apprentice)
- Internships & Work Experience
- Transitional Employment
- Out-of-area job search & Relocation assistance
- ELA acquisition & integrated ED & training programs
- On site Work readiness Boot Camp
- On site basic computer skills mini clinic

Additionally, WIOA enrolled customers receive:

- A Comprehensive Assessment
- An Individual Employment Plan (IEP)
- Case management (Career Plan)
- Job Search Assistance
- Follow-Up Services.

Adults and Dislocated Workers who through an initial assessment have been determined not in need of Intensive Individualized Services, have access to Basic Career services available at the Career Center.

### **Basic Career Services** (Self-Service/Informational & Staff Assisted & registration)

Basic Career Services are provided in coordination with other one-stop center partners, and are available to all job seekers, and employers.

- **Self-Service and Informational**  
Self Service and Informational Basic Career Services are services that customers access on their own (computers, copy and fax machines, and meetings with an employer). Self-Service and Informational Basic Career Services do not require a Title I eligibility determination, but customers utilizing the Career Center will need to be registered members. These customers will utilize "Job Quest" to Self- register.
- **Minimal Staff Assistance**  
Customers may access Basic Career Services that require minimal staff assistance. These services are designed to inform and educate individuals about the labor market and their employment strengths, weaknesses, and the range of services appropriate to their situation. Customers receiving staff assisted Basic Career Services are registered members of the Career Center.



**Staff Assisted Basic Career Services include**, but are not limited to the following:

- Job search and placement assistance
- Career counseling
- Staff-administered initial assessment of skill levels (including literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency), aptitudes, abilities (including skills gaps), and supportive service needs
- Workshops (interviewing, resume, orientations)
- RESEA

A variety of training opportunities are available to area job seekers. Our Eligible Training Provider list includes numerous training options within priority and critical industry clusters. In addition, the MHBWB has been successful in securing grant funding for specialized sector based training in manufacturing and professional and technical services. As well, our WIOA youth sub-recipients provide occupational training components in addition to career exploration, basic skills remediation and work readiness. Finally, the main campus of Bristol Community College is located in Fall River with additional campuses in Taunton and Attleboro, affording Career Center customers with access to numerous post-secondary education certificate and degree programs. Indeed, each campus works closely with Bristol's MassHire Career Centers to transition individuals into post-secondary programs.

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 Yout)*

The MHBWB and its Youth Committee place a strong emphasis on the employment and training needs of youth in the region. These youth will determine the future economic well-being of the region; how successful they are will be measured by their ability to fill high growth jobs in emerging industries that require more educational and technical skills than the jobs their parents held. The MHBWB's Strategic Plan outlines how our region will work toward ensuring that all Bristol youth will have access to the resources and support needed for educational advancement, skill development, and employment attainment, allowing them to become self-sufficient and productive adults.

- Develop more intensive and effective programs targeted to serve the most at-risk youth.
- Develop youth programming around career ladders and critical industry clusters to serve regional economic development needs and provide youth entry into career pathways, instead of low wage/ low growth jobs.
- Establish the MHBWB as the regional leader for youth internships, job shadowing opportunities, and apprenticeship opportunities
- Engage community leaders, educators, youth service providers, and Career Center youth staff around a cohesive strategy for youth workforce development.

- Reduce dependency on subsidized wages for youth programming and improve employment brokering for youth.
- Focus regional and funding on employment brokering and more effective work-based learning. This will create a multi-level service strategy that will lead to more systemic workforce development for youth.

Our guiding concepts in our comprehensive youth service strategy centers on five priorities.

### **Priority # 1 - High Expectations**

Service providers shall demonstrate high expectations for youth, including the most at-risk youth by presenting long-term integrated service strategies. Goals for youth will include both educational and occupational attainments.

### **Priority # 2 - Systems Development**

Youth Providers within our system will strengthen the regional workforce development system and must consider critical industry clusters, employer needs, career ladders, and the educational occupational training required to enter those industries. All workforce development funds are used as leveraged resources in order to maximize the scope and effectiveness of services provided to youth.

### **Priority # 3 – Partnership Development and Seamless Service Delivery**

Priority is given to a continuum of services based on strong partnerships and coordinated case management strategies. WIOA requires the provision of youth elements that center on breaking barriers to success. These include tutoring/study skills, alternative secondary school services, paid and unpaid work experience, comprehensive guidance and counseling, leadership development, supportive services, adult mentoring, follow-up services, financial literacy education, entrepreneurial skills training, services that provide labor market and employment information, activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and education offered concurrently with workforce preparation and occupational training. In addition, job readiness skills and job search assistance are also critical components of an integrated youth service strategy.

It is clear that a single provider attempting to deal with even some of these elements through a purely WIOA funded program would face significant challenges in meeting the needs of at-risk youth. It is even clearer that a partnership leveraging outside resources and providing the multiple areas of expertise offered by its members would be far better equipped to develop a service strategy that addresses the aforementioned youth elements in a comprehensive way.

As a result, the MHBWB has partnered with youth serving agencies, community and faith based organizations, employers, local high schools, alternative schools, vocational schools, community colleges and other institutions of higher learning, School-to-Career Partnerships, and the MassHire Career Centers and their core MassHire partners.

### **Priority # 4 - Career Development**

Placing youth in jobs without growth potential does not serve either the youth or the workforce needs of the region. Youth program design within our region is designed to include strategies that identify career

ladders within critical industry clusters that offer high wage/high growth opportunities. High priority is placed on establishing brokered, paid employment opportunities for youth within these clusters. Brokered employment refers to negotiated opportunities that youth would be unable to secure on their own. Negotiated elements could include job coaching, work-based learning plans, internship to employment arrangements, on the job training, or other services to support successful transitions into the workplace.

#### **Priority # 5 - Positive Performance and Measurable Results**

The MHBWB and the local Career Centers of Bristol County are performance driven agencies. Consequently, all providers must incorporate the performance measures as defined by the board within its Youth Service RFPs and plan.

The process of youth accessing the region's workforce development opportunities and programs begins via a progression through MassHire Career Center Youth eligibility and assessment. The following outlines the process.

- **Determination of Youth Eligibility**
  - All local Career Center staff is responsible for program intake and eligibility. Staff is trained and well versed on all State and local policies and procedures per WIOA Section 129(a)(1).
  - Eligibility documentation is collected from all customers receiving Title I Youth services and kept in an individual case file.
  - Eligibility documentation is reviewed and verified by Management Information Systems staff. During the review process, paper files are matched against MOSES database.
  
- **Objective Assessment**
  - Assessment begins with a review of basic skills, education, work history, occupational skills, employability, interests, aptitudes, financial situation/need, developmental needs and supportive service needs. Much of this information is gathered via interview. Objective tools include, but are not limited to:
    - Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE): measures participants' math and reading proficiency levels in order to understand their assets and challenges, and therefore better plan their goals for the program.
    - Online Interest Profiler: identifies interests and potential careers.
    - MassCIS (Massachusetts Career Information System): provides information on career assessment and planning, occupations, labor market, occupational outlook, and educational/training options. Includes financial literacy tools. One of three modules targeted to youth.
    - Mynextmove.org: assesses occupational interests and skills; provides information on tasks, skills, salary information, targeted to those new to the labor market.
    - TORQ – Transferrable Occupational Relationship Quotient: Based on the knowledge, skills, and abilities from previous jobs and education, TORQ recommends occupations, training programs, and jobs matched to each individual.

Additionally, youth are required to attend the Career Exploration workshop so that they are informed about the breadth of services available at Youth Connection, the Career Centers and Career Center

partners.

- **Individual Employment Plan (IEP)**
  - Based on results of the objective assessment, a formal training and employment strategy or IEP is developed between the participant and case manager. The IEP is developed with the participant upon the enrollment into a WIOA Title I Youth program. It is reviewed and updated as needed as the youth participates in the program, and reviewed formally at least twice annually.
  - The IEP includes:
    - Education history
    - Work history
    - Basic academic skills
    - Career interests and skills
    - Occupational skills
    - Assets and strengths
    - Labor market information
    - Support services
    - Goals with a plan of action
    - Fourteen elements activities
    - Progress notes
  
- **Enrollment and Case Management**
  - Once enrolled in WIOA Youth services, staff guides youth to establish realistic, measurable and obtainable goals. Participants receive intensive case management, meeting monthly with their case manager to discuss barriers that need to be resolved along with the goals that need to be met.
  - When youth participate in paid work experience, Case Managers have the weekly opportunity to engage with youth as BCTC requires the youth to pick up their paychecks at the Youth Connection.
  
- **Recordkeeping**
  - All goals and progress toward goals must be updated in both MOSES and the IEP in a timely manner.
  - BCTC require youth vendors to complete a Monthly Progress Report that is submitted by the vendor to the Youth Connection. This includes a brief description of activities that occurred during the month, progress on IEP goals, attendance, goal attainment and other achievements. Any significant change in the physical, educational, emotional or career status of the youth must be communicated between Youth Connection and the vendor immediately to ensure that appropriate action can be implemented as quickly as possible in support of the youth.
  
- **Follow-Up**

Follow up Services are required and designed to provide continued assistance to youth as needed after participating in their transition to or retention in employment or further education. Follow up occurs whether the youth as completed the programs successfully or not. They are unique to the

individual and designed to meet the participant's needs. Examples include but are not limited to connections to supportive services, comprehensive guidance and counseling, mentoring and leadership activities. Follow-up, entails monthly progress in relationship to a participant's IEP goals and, where necessary, a recommendation for obtaining additional services, either through the Youth Connection or related partners.

Our menu of services and overall structure of our youth system supports the above five priorities. The Career Center operator provide critical framework services including initial youth triage, intake, eligibility determination, objective assessment and referral to partners and funded programs.

Our WIOA funded sub-recipients provide the fourteen youth elements as listed above in addition to the provision of work readiness skills, employment brokering, job coaching, outreach, guidance, and vocational counseling all contribute to achieving increased outcomes for area youth.

To achieve its established youth goals, MHBWB blends WIOA and non-WIOA funding to maximize services and avoid duplication of effort. This includes strong integration of among youth services throughout the region including School to Career Connecting Activities (STC), *YouthWorks*, and the local *Charles E. Shannon Community Safety Initiative*. It is important to note that MHBWB partnership in each of these areas dovetails with local goals established by numerous youth service agencies and core partners.

School to Career Connecting Activities (STC), funded by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), is strongly integrated into our youth service delivery system. Our local STC partnerships provide valuable employment brokering services, initiate the MA Work Based Learning Plan for numerous youth, and receive remediation grants and connect youth to these grants.

*YouthWorks* funds, provided by the state of MA, are utilized extensively throughout our region to expand work and learning opportunities for area youth in both summer and year round operational periods.

The MassHire Bristol region is a partner in and receives funding from a local *Charles E. Shannon Community Safety Initiative*. The *Shannon Grant* targets youth at risk for gang involvement through the provision of outreach, guidance, and vocational counseling. Another large youth program that the MassHire Bristol area is involved with is the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI).

The integration of these activities and the supports provided by all the youth partners in each initiative have strengthened our youth systems and provide critical supports in achieving the above goals. The provision of work readiness skills, employment brokering, job coaching, outreach, guidance, and vocational counseling all contribute to achieving increased outcomes for area youth.

Our core partners all benefit to some degree from our local youth system. HiSet preparation is integrated into our out-of-school WIOA programming and both service providers are also DESE funded Adult Basic Education providers including Bristol Community College.

Coordinated Activities -----Drop-out prevention

South Coast Educational Collaborative (SCEC) provides out of district placements to local youth

who have disabilities and may be at higher risk of dropping out. The Youthworks program's subsidized employment provided incentive for students to attend school throughout the summer (in accordance with their IEP). Students completed academic requirements and then worked at one of the schools' worksites, developing employability skills and earning wages. Youth have been introduced to Career Center services at Youth Connection and will continue to work with the Career Specialist during the school year to develop job search skills. This outreach expedites the path to training and job placement that leads to financial independence.

- 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.

Youth are referred to the Youth Connection by MASSABILITY vocational counselors. Other youth may be identified by Career Counselors following an assessment, as needing MASSABILITY services. If a youth is identified as needing MASSABILITY services, they are scheduled to meet with a MASSABILITY Vocational Counselor at the Career Center. Once per week, an MASSABILITY vocational counselor is co-located at the Career Center to provide information and referral services. Youth identified by Career Counselors in need of services are referred to the on-site Mass Ability representative.

As part of a coordinated outreach service, Career Center staff members are out-stationed at the Fall River and Taunton Department of Transitional Assistance offices on a regular basis to promote Career Center services and meet with DTA customers interested in Career Center programs. To further enhance outreach efforts, a DTA Full Engagement Worker (FEW) is co-located at the Career Center to assist DTA customers and Career Counselors. This outreach expedites the path to training and job placement that leads to financial independence.

Mass Commission for the Blind has counselors available to assist staff in providing services for sight impaired customers. Both the Career Center and MCB have a designated "point person" responsible for ensuring MCB customers are directed to and receive appropriate and desired Career Center services including services to youth.

- (7) 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.

Coordination with secondary education programs is spearheaded through our DESE funded Connecting Activities (CA) programming. Partner schools include the following:

- Attleboro High School
- Bristol County Agricultural High School
- Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical High School
- Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School
- B.M.C. Durfee High School
- Resiliency Preparatory Academy

- North Attleboro High School
- Norton High School
- Seekonk High School
- South Coast Educational Collaborative
- Taunton High School
- Taunton Alternative High School
- Westport Junior and Senior High School

The degree to which each school participates will vary based on different factors including existing capacity, need, program alignment to plan goals and commitment of school leadership. However, all partner schools work with the MHBWB, MH Career Centers and CA service providers as follows:

- All partners will support demand driven education and training strategies across K-12, secondary and post-secondary education that directly address the workforce needs of the region's priority and critical industries.
- Our partner schools will work to expand education programming and career exploration activities in each of the identified priority and critical industries to support increased capacity for area students.
- Our partner schools will coordinate efforts on aligning and expanding work readiness and career exploration activities within the region. This may include piloting aligned career readiness activities.
- Our partner schools will promote progression of the region's in-school youth along career pathways with credentialing and lifelong learning strategies.

Core current secondary school partnership components and strategies are being increasingly targeted to support career advancement into STEM and Priority/Critical Industry clusters. This would include the following:

- Work with partner schools to support/organize local industry tours primarily in STEM industries and statewide STEM related events.
- Work with schools to develop new internship opportunities for students in their careers of interest. The focus will be particularly to increase STEM and Trade (identified as a critical industry cluster in the regional blueprint) related internships for the Career and Technical Education programs at the schools. This will also allow an increase in the number of placements with corresponding Work Based Learning Plans.
- Work with existing internship programs that are already part of the various schools' curriculum and that align with priority industry clusters such as the DECA School Store, the Attleboro and Taunton High School Bank (Financial Services) and the Senior Internship Program and Business Department Internships.
- Collaborate with school administrators to identify new areas to implement Career Awareness/Exploration Activities supported by Work Base Learning Plans to be targeted toward priority/critical and STEM industry clusters.
- Work with partner schools to help coordinate Job and/or Opportunity Fairs with an emphasis on alignment to industries cited in the *Southeast Regional Labor Market Blueprint*.

- Build on existing Career Awareness and Exploration activities, work readiness seminars, work readiness seminars, college and industry tours to ensure concentration in targeted industry and occupational clusters identified in the regional blueprint and STEM priority areas.

The MHBWB has identified a number of new strategies and approaches to advance the key goals established to increase collaboration and support with our secondary schools. One of most important aspects of addressing the regional workforce needs identified within the *Southeast Regional Labor Market Blueprint* is the need to increase the participation of businesses within established priority and critical industry clusters, particularly those within STEM. To that end, the MHBWB has committed to increase staff capacity for direct employer outreach. Establishment of an employer outreach plan, centered on priority/critical/STEM employers that strengthens coordination of such entities as the MHBWB, the region's Chambers of Commerce, local and regional economic development entities and the MassHire Career Centers will be completed in year one. In addition to utilizing these partners for outreach (i.e. Chamber newsletters and events), the aim is to ensure that each of these stakeholders are fully aware of CA employment activities so that they can connect employers to CA staff whenever an employer expresses issues with their talent pipeline.

As additional employers are identified, the partnership will seek to identify employer champions/advocates that will participate in the planning and delivery of targeted STEM/priority industry activities around job shadows, industry briefings, career fairs and similarly situated activities. These employers will also assist in the ongoing recruitment of additional private sector partners through various industry associations.

Career Readiness refinement will be another component of our overall CA Blue Print strategy. Our Partnership will align with activities undertaken by the *Southeast Regional Labor Market Blueprint* Planning Team including surveying the existing work readiness components utilized among workforce development and education entities (Connecting Activities, vocational technical high schools, comprehensive high school technical programs, etc.) and working to see areas of alignment. The development of a better aligned work readiness curriculum with some concentration on skill sets required by priority/critical and STEM occupations will assist in meeting key goals within our plan.

Teacher externships have been established at multiple companies within the region, all in priority or critical industry clusters. Teachers from partner schools participated and feedback has found this to be a highly effective way to integrate current skill set requirements of employers into existing curriculum. As a result, our partnership is committed to establishing new teacher externships in targeted industries. Employers in the area have been very receptive to the summer teacher externship program, expressing the need to bridge a disconnect between classroom content and its real world application.

With regard to post-secondary education, some coordination activities have already been documented above. It is anticipated that job seekers will access includes referrals to occupational training often offered through Bristol Community College, ensuring a strong connection to post-secondary education. This becomes a natural connection when analyzing the MHBWB's targeted occupations, many of which require an Associate's Degree. A strong relationship with Bristol Community College will continue to offer area job seekers with access to a multitude of certificate programs and post-secondary educational activities. The MHBWB has worked to foster additional partnerships with the College to support area job seekers. This



includes an emphasis on stackable credits to allow individuals in credit certificate programs to stack their credits to associates degree programs. More specifically, the MHBWB previously worked with the College on stacking credits from the Medical Assistant Certificate program to the Clinical Laboratory Science Associates Degree. As a result, 6-9 credits are now stackable to the Associates Degree program.

Other design issues the Career Centers, MHBWB and Bristol Community College will work on include implementation of self-paced, flexible and modular scheduling/curriculum to reduce time to obtain degrees, certificates, and industry recognized credentials, development of contextualized learning that combines basic skills with specific career knowledge and development of partnerships with employers that may include validation of curricula, use of equipment and facilities, and/or agreements to hire students following successful completion.

- (8) 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.

Recognizing the barriers faced by area job seekers, the MHBWB and its Career Center operator have established policies allowing counselors the latitude to address issues that may impede an individual's progress toward their education, training and employment goals.

Bristol's MassHire Career Centers do not provide supportive services if these needs can be fulfilled through other public, community or private resources. Career Specialists communicate with other agencies to ensure that any supportive services are not duplicated. This policy is designed to make the program accessible to individuals who otherwise would not be able to participate. The Workforce Development Area's rationale for this method of payment is to help reduce costs for the agency while still providing participants with sufficient means to allow them to participate in training.

Necessary supportive services are recorded in the participant's case file as a result of on-going objective assessment. Any changes in supportive services are also documented in the case file. Bristol's MassHire Career Centers make a point of assuring that DTA and other participants link up with child care providers. In cases where an appropriate service cannot be paid for by the DTA office or other community resources, the Career Center will bear the cost.

Due to decreases in WIOA funding, the Career Center coordinates with all Career Center and community partners to leverage supports available to all program participants. Through the ongoing Career Center Partner MOU implementation, mapping of available supports from all partners has resulted in supports available to shared customers. Multiple instances of co-enrollment, multiple services received, financial aid and assistance and other important services are evidence of increased alignment of partner supports. In addition, the MHBWB has included supportive service funds in nearly all the special grants it has applied for over the past several years.

- (9) 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?

### **Maximizing Coordination**

In an effort to maximize the coordination of services provided by all Career Center partners, a functional approach, overseen by a leadership team, for delivery of services is utilized as part of the Centers operational procedures. Due to the varying partner programs with different eligibility requirements, this model helps to formulate customer service flow in a manner that expedites services and meets compliance requirements for the participating partner programs. Currently, members of the leadership team includes BCTC and Wagner-Peyser staff.

When a customer receives services from more than one partner at a time, the customer is considered a “shared” customer. Shared customers are both Job Seekers and Employers. To ensure a smooth transition of customers from one agency to the other and from one functional to another, Bristol utilizes a Standard Operating procedure Handbook. The SOP is currently available to all staff. As we continue to integrate more services with partner staff, the SOP will be revised to reflect the additional agencies role in the center.

### **Improving Service Delivery**

The following agencies are co-located at the Career Center and meet WIOA comprehensive location Minimum requirements:

- WIOA Title I staff (BCTC)
- Wagner-Peyser staff (DCS)
- MASSABILITY
- Bristol Community College (BCC)
- Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)

In addition to collocation at the Career Center, staff accesses other partner agency services through a variety of other methods:

- Written Interagency Referrals
- Telephone Contact or E-Mail. Each agency has a designated staff or point person who is available either via telephone, in person at the Career Center or via email. Assigned staff is available to answer questions, provide referral documentation and/or provide other information as needed to access services at their respective agency.
- Joint Agency meetings

### **Avoiding Duplication**

Customers receiving services from more than one partner agency are considered “shared” customers. To ensure customer information is shared and services are not duplicated Title I and Wagner Peyser staff record tasks and services provided via the use of the MOSES database. All shared customers are enrolled in the MOSES database where tasks and services are documented. Currently, MOSES allows management to collect data and report on shared customers, both job seekers and employers. In addition to the Title I and Wagner Peyser staff, the DTA Full-Engagement Worker co-located at the Career Center has MOSES access and can monitor and track the progress of DTA customers. Duplication of services is also minimized due to

the use of partner written interagency referrals, and the designation of a point person for each agency.

We anticipate, once completed, the use of the Workforce System Integration Project currently being developed by the State which will also serve as a vehicle to minimize duplication of services.

The project will ultimately result in:

- Single Sign-on/Registration
- Identifying/Tracking Shared/Common Customers
- Performance Reporting and tracking of the Primary Indicators of Performance

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

MSFW customers eligible for WIOA Title I career and training services follow the same Career Center operational procedures as eligible non MSFW customers. However, assessments will be conducted in the MSFWs native language to ensure meaningful access to programs, services, and information, and when an MSFW is identified by staff, they are referred immediately to the Career Center manager to ensure the MSFW receives appropriate services and in a timely manner.

An MSFW interested in receiving career and training services, will meet with an “intake” (Career Specialist) for an initial assessment and eligibility determination. Once eligibility is determined, MSFW customers are enrolled in Title I, receive a comprehensive assessment, are enrolled in Case Management and an IEP is developed. The MSFW receives assistance with identifying training options that are in-demand, and approved by the State through the ITA Vendor list. All services will be conducted in the MSFW’s native language and will be provided in a timely manner.

Career Specialists follow WIOA guidelines for providing training services to DW customers. “Training services may be made available to employed and unemployed adults who are determined by a One-Stop operator or One-Stop partner, after an interview, evaluation, or assessment, and career planning to be:

- Unlikely or unable to retain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment through career Services;
- In need of training services to obtain or retain employment leading to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment; and
- Have the skills and qualifications to participate in training services.
- Has selected a training directly linked to the employment opportunities either in the local area or planning region, or in another area to which the individual is willing to commute or relocate
- The participant is unable to obtain grant assistance from other sources to pay for the training, including other grants such as State-funded training grants, TAA, and Federal Pell grants, or requires assistance beyond that available from other sources to pay for the cost of training.”

All MSFW customers receiving Career Center services are registered in MOSES. Prior to providing a service, staff ensures the MSFW is a registered member of the Career Center, and review the customers MOSES record for accuracy and completeness. Staff completing the MSFW’s MOSES record must check the box on MOSES indicating that the customer is an MSFW.

MSFW customers enrolled in WIOA Title I, are also assessed for supportive services and if it is determined that the customer cannot successfully participate in a program without services a support service plan will be developed. The plan may include assistance with transportation cost, childcare and a limited amount of direct assistance. Other related costs may include books, uniforms, bus passes, HiSet tests, (license Youth only), tools or related equipment necessary to participate in WIOA enrolled activities. Additionally, Career Center staff will work with the MSFW State Outreach Specialist who has developed an extensive network of organizations (i.e. faith-based organizations, social service agencies, and migrant advocate groups) to assist with supportive services. The Career Center must provide the MSFW the list of supportive services in their own language.

MSFWs enrolled in Title I will receive Follow-up services according to WIOA guidelines. Follow-Up services will be provided to MSFW customers in their native language.

- (11) 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:

In order to access occupational training programs, as well as certificate and degree programs available from local post-secondary institutions, Bristol must continue to aggressively address language and basic skills deficiencies through the utilization of intensive ESOL and HiSET/GED classes funded through multiple sources. This includes the utilization of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) funding to establish intensive, 20 hour per week classes in order to meet this critical need. With the MHBWB driving the strategic priority of intensive ABE programming, the region has been successful in moving job seekers more quickly through basic skills remediation. These programs are provided by Bristol Community College and a local Community Based Organization, SER Jobs for Progress. Private proprietary schools in our region now offer such intensive education programs as well. These classes have open entry start dates and we are able to access slots on an individual referral basis. This structure allows significant flexibility in addressing the basic skill needs of our clients on an expedited basis without the need to establish group funded activities in this category

The MassHire Workforce Board Director has previously served on local and statelevel committies to strengthen coordinator of the ABE and workforce systems. These include the Fall River, Taunton and Attleboro Community Planning Partnerships, the DESE Workplace Education Committee, the DESE Adult Career Pathways Task Force and the DESE Distance Learning Advisory Board. In addition, the MHBWB Director has participated in CALC RFP reviews and on-site program monitoring of the Bristol region's Community Adult Learning Centers.

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

Bristol County Training Consortium  
One Government Center, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Fall River, MA 02722  
Point of Contact: Holly Hill-Batista, Executive Director  
(508) 675-1161  
hhillbatista@masshirebristol.org

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

The MHBWB maintains policies and procedures that ensure an open and competitive procurement process for the award of sub grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities. The MHBWB will conduct sound planning of its procurement activities. This planning shall ensure that:

- The procurement plan is in compliance and consistent with Department of Career Services (DCS) planning requirements and with procurement policies.
- MHBWB will allow sufficient time for proposers to apply for funding and to allow for fair evaluation of proposals and treatment of proposers. The MHBWB Director of Planning, or designee, shall develop calendars which include procurement time lines and deadlines particular to each procurement package.
- All procurement activities and documents will be evaluated to assure that applicable statutory and regulatory requirements are met. This shall be achieved through staff review of procurement documents against applicable statutory and regulatory requirements and if needed, requesting technical assistance from the Department of Career Services.
- Procurement decisions, following the above ethical practices and conflict of interest guidelines, will be made impartially and at arm's length.
- Planning for fund allocation will be done on the basis of client education and training needs as the primary focus. Decisions on whether to procure services or to operate in-house service will be made on the basis of which mode of service will best serve the participants and the most reasonable cost.

Competitive Procurement Procedures:

MHBWB will conduct procurement activities which will be conducted with unrestricted, open and full competition whenever possible and which will promote and maximize the competitive procurement process. The process shall include:

- Frequency: WIOA Title I contractors shall be procured once per year. Solicitation of individual training account providers, is handled by the Department of Career Services with local approval completed by the MHBWB in accordance with its policies. The Department of Career Services accepts proposals any time during the fiscal year. Periodically, MHBWB training needs will be met through special, unscheduled RFP's.

- Handling and evaluation done impartial, at hands length and based on demonstrated performance:
  - a. Proposals will be accepted until the due date and time. Each proposal will be logged and given a number. Proposals which are being accepted will be kept in a secure location, so that the integrity of the bidding process is retained.
  - b. Copies of the RFP, the Evaluation Criteria form and copies of all proposals will be mailed or delivered to members of the MHBWB Planning or designated Review Committee.

- Evaluation Process:

- a. The MHBWB Planning or designated Review Committee will evaluate proposals according to criteria included in the procurement package. The MHBWB Director of Planning will provide performance reports for each proposer, which will be used by the MHBWB Planning Committee in proposal evaluation. Proposals will be ranked and voted upon by this committee. The Committee will make recommendations to the MHBWB, who will have final authority to approve or disapprove the proposals.
- b. The evaluation criteria shall include a determination of cost/price reasonableness and compliance with all relevant federal and state laws, regulations and policies.

- Notice:

Within 30 days of the MHBWB meeting, all proposers will be notified in writing of the MHBWB's decision regarding funding. At this time, they are given details on how to secure information on procedures for filing an appeal of the decision and/or file a grievance. Proposers who were recommended will be notified of issues, positive and negative, which will be covered at contract negotiation meetings.

- Negotiation:

The MHBWB Executive Director and/or Director of Planning is authorized to schedule and negotiate all contracts. The Director of Planning will plan negotiations to include all cost and programmatic recommendations of the Planning Committee and the MHBWB. The Director of Planning will negotiate all costs to a reasonable or competitive level and will negotiate programmatic issues so as to comply with funding source requirements and to meet planned service and performance goals.

- a. Negotiations will be scheduled for all proposers who received recommendations for funding.
- b. Negotiations shall be led by the MHBWB Director of Planning. Recommendations of the MHBWB and findings from cost/price analysis will be negotiated
- c. All significant elements of the Contract Document will be discussed and agreements will be reached. Some program design modifications may be requested.

- Contract Documents:

The MHBWB Director of Planning will create contract documents which reflect all negotiated agreements. If indicated in the RFP, multi-year contracts may be written, which will permit yearly cost evaluations and re-negotiation rights. The documents are sent to the Contractor for signatures, sent back to BCTC for the Director's signature and then sent to Fall River City Hall for the legal department and the Mayor's signature.

- Maintenance of Procurement Documentation:

Centralized files will contain adequate information to permit tracking of significant procurement history. They shall include (but are not limited to):

- a. planning records
- b. copies of the solicitation
- c. public notices
- d. bidders conference minutes
- e. all solicitation responses
- f. proposal evaluations, with conflict of interest certifications
- g. related meeting minutes to document contract review, evaluation & award

It is the intent of the staff and members of the MHBWB to ensure that all procurements are processed ethically. This shall include fair and equitable treatment of contractors and prospective contractors, while ensuring that both the employees and MHBWB members remain impartial without real or perceived preferential treatment for any individual or proposer. The procedures to assure this area as follows:

- Contractors and potential contractors will be informed of procurement plans through the following:
  - a. The ongoing maintenance and utilization of an extensive mailing list of potential service providers: Any organization requesting a solicitation package may do so by phone, by mail or in person. The list shall be periodically updated for accuracy and additional inclusions.
  - b. The predetermined utilization, during selected solicitations, of bidders conferences: Minutes of the conference will be made available for individuals who could not attend.
  - c. The use of newspaper advertisements in designated area newspapers which reach potential contractors
- Procurements solicitation plans and documents will be evaluated prior to distribution for statements or requirements which restrict competition. Requirements will not be too narrow or too broad in geography, will not require past WIOA experience, and will not include undue or excessive prescriptive program designs.

(14) 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.*

Performance Measure	FY'24 Local Goal	FY'25 Local Goal
<b>WIOA Adult Measures</b>		
Employment Q2	79%	76.8%
Employment Q4	78%	80%
Median Earnings Q2	\$6,400	\$8,0671
Credential Rate	73.5%	64.1%
Measurable Skill Gains	40%	64.7%
<b>WIOA Dislocated Workers Measures</b>		
Employment Q2	82%	75%
Employment Q4	82%	73.8%
Median Earnings Q2	\$10,500	\$13,273
Credential Rate	71.5%	77.7%
Measurable Skill Gains	45.5%	75%
<b>WIOA Youth Measures</b>		
Employment Q2	71%	62.8%
Employment Q4	68%	68.9%
Median Earnings Q2	\$3,700	\$7,500
Credential Rate	64%	67.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	44%	77.9%

(15) What are the actions and activities that support the MassHire Board's continued status as a high performance workforce board?

- a. What trainings are provided to Board members?
- b. How do business Board members contribute to workforce development in your region?
- c. How does your Board support the business services in the career centers?
- d. To what extent does inter-intra-Board collaboration result in positive outcomes for job seekers and businesses?

Board members in the Bristol region contribute to maintaining an effective workforce development system in multiple ways. With regard to training, new member orientation sessions are facilitated by the MHBWB executive director after appointments are made by the Chief Elected Official. These orientations provide an overview of the Board's work, the Board's structure including subcommittees, a WIOA



summary, system governance, MassHire Career Center overview and other information relevant to the Board's work. Ongoing participation in subcommittees and the Board's work gradually increase members' knowledge. Members are offered the opportunity to attend professional development sessions. For example, multiple Board members have attended the National Association of Workforce Boards annual conference over the years.

A majority of MHBWB private sector members have utilized the Career Center to address their workforce needs. More specifically, over the past three years, 58% of board members have posted job orders with the local Career Centers. In addition, 28% of our employers have participated in industry briefings and/or held on-site recruitments at our local Career Centers. We have utilized three members of our board to engage in applicant pre-screenings and assessments not only for entry into employment but to determine their readiness for specialized training within their respective industries. Two board members have provided internships in the manufacturing field for graduates of a local CNC Machinist training.

Businesses on the Board also act as Employer Ambassadors. Several employers who have utilized the local workforce development system have agreed to support Career Center employer outreach efforts and represent employer ambassadors. For example, the local Stop & Shop distribution center and SSTAR are employers that have provided support letters and spoken with other employers about the effectiveness of Career Center employer services. Other employers have participated in past MHBWB employer information sessions to describe their connection with the local workforce development system.

The private sector leadership from the MHBWB's executive and planning committees was the primary driver in ensuring that the board's strategic objectives around demand-driven employer strategies were articulated in the Career Center Operator RFP and taken into account during the review and selection process. These members articulated the areas of emphasis for the RFP's sections on business services through committee meetings scheduled to assist in the development of the RFP.

The RFP itself clearly outlined the level and type of employer services expected by the MHBWB. The RFP emphasized that Career Center Services that were provided to employers was a critical focus for WIOA and the MHBWB. The RFP required that the business service delivery system be highly coordinated to provide a high quality level of service to all employers. It further set the expectation that employer service staff would play a significant role in understanding the needs of employers and in communicating those needs to WIOA staff and the broader workforce system. Further, the RFP required that the One-Stop Career Centers within the Bristol WDA offer a broad range of integrated services that are provided to all employers to support economic and workforce development efforts, particularly those articulated in the board's strategic planning efforts. As well, the board's private sector leadership included the importance of services being tailored to meet the varied and sometimes unique needs of different types of businesses across multiple industry sectors. The Career Centers operator's business service strategies articulated in the proposal were expected to be adaptable to meet the need of existing businesses, new employers locating in the region, large employers and small businesses.

- Describe their experience in delivering employer services.

- Describe their approach to meeting business needs at the One-Stop Career Centers including how they would customize services to meet the needs of different types of businesses (i.e. large employers, small businesses, companies new to the region)?
- How they would integrate WIOA Job Seeker and Wagener Peyser employer services within the Bristol WDA's One-Stop Career Centers.
- How they would coordinate business services with other One-Stop partners.
- Describe their experience in working with industry partnerships and/or sector initiatives.

Also, private sector members have assisted in helping us gain an understanding of the competencies required for successful job performance. Locally, past work in developing employer acceptance of Career Ready 101 has allowed us to more fully define specific skills sets and competencies needed for different occupations.

Inter-Board collaboration with neighboring regions has resulted in additional increases in the effectiveness of our local workforce development system. The MassHire Bristol Workforce Board regularly works in collaboration with the three boards in the Southeast Region (Greater New Bedford, Brockton Area and South Shore) on a number of workforce development initiatives. These currently include the Workforce Skills Cabinet Regional Planning initiative, an Executive Office of Housing and Urban Development Advanced Manufacturing grant and the coordination of regional sector partnerships, most notably the Southeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (SAMC). In addition, the four aforementioned boards secured a Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund grant in transportation. The MassHire Bristol Workforce Board has also begun a partnership with boards in Rhode Island and Connecticut to address the workforce development needs of the submarine construction industry and the companies that make up its supply chain.

(16) 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?

Utilization of Individual Training Accounts will be consistent with MHBWB ITA policies. Job seekers are advised that ITAs are centered on training for demand occupations. "Demand occupations" will be defined as those occupations in demand or which have a high potential for sustained demand in the local area (or in another area to which an adult or dislocated worker receiving such services is willing to relocate). These demand occupations are identified in the MassHire Bristol Workforce Board's *Workforce Development Business Plan*, the MA Workforce Skills Cabinet's approved *Southeast Regional Labor Market Blueprint* and the MassHire Bristol Workforce Board's Strategic Plan. The MHBWB may also take into account other labor market information in determining approval of specific programs. The approved list of training areas will be reviewed annually (or more frequently if needed) by the MHBWB and modified as needed to meet any changing workforce training needs in the region.

Through a guided assessment process, Career Specialists assist job seekers in reviewing relevant labor market data to assist in career choices. A review of courses in Training Pro and other assistance is provided by their respective counselors.

The MHBWB has not utilized a contract for training service in place of ITAs as it has not identified an instance in which Section 680.320 would apply. The MHBWB will only utilize contract for training service if it identifies one of the five exceptions allowed for in Section 680.320. Non-WIOA resources have been utilized extensively to engage in sub-contracted, group occupational training programs.

(17) 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.

While the primary provision of occupational training will be through Individual Training Accounts, the Board may elect to provide training services contracts for services outside of its ITA process. This will occur only in specific instances. More specifically, the non-ITA service contracts will be utilized when it is determined that there are insufficient eligible training providers, when a community-based organization or other private organization offers a program of demonstrated effectiveness, or when contracting is the most efficient way to train multiple individuals in in-demand sectors.

The Board will ensure that its Career Center operator and relevant customer facing staff will be fully informed of any contracted training services. WIOA eligible job seekers will be provided all information related to available training, including both ITA and other contracted services. The goal will be to provide training within in-demand occupations in the Workforce Area while ensuring that customer choice requirements are met.

(18) 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 MHBWB posted advertisements in the three major regional papers (Fall River Herald News, Attleboro Sun Chronicle and Taunton Gazette) at the beginning of July announcing the 30 day public comment period. It was also announced at the MHBWB meeting of June 24<sup>th</sup>. The draft plan was available in either electronic or hard copy to interested parties.

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

***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.***

While progress has been made in the area of data sharing, we do recognize the need to further advance toward our MOU's goals in this critical area. Without additional strengthening of this element, the board recognizes that it will be difficult to truly maximize the alignment of services for our shared customers.

The Career Center operator primarily utilizes the Massachusetts One-Stop Employment System (MOSES) to track performance and service delivery to job seekers, including shared and employer customers. All shared customers are enrolled in the MOSES database where tasks and services are documented. Designated DTA workers have been given access to the MOSES database to track Career Center services provided to DTA customers. As noted, MOSES allows management to collect data and report on shared customers both job seekers and employers, who have been provided services. Data is shared with partners during our joint meetings.

Finally, we continue to look to any progress, at the State level, of any data sharing tools that may be developed to be used by all Core partner agencies in working with shared customers. Ideally, our local partnership hopes to work toward a system that will ultimately result in:

- Single Sign-on/Registration
- Identifying/Tracking Shared/Common Customers
- Performance Reporting and
- Tracking the Primary Indicators of Performance

It is anticipated that continued progress toward these goals will occur in coordination with larger Commonwealth wide efforts and via Bristol's MOU Steering Committee.

*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.*

(20) 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 DCS 18.101.6 (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](#).

There are several ways in which veterans and other eligible persons are informed of their priority of services. All individuals entering the MassHire Career Centers are asked if they are a veteran or spouse of a veteran. Notices are posted at Bristol's MassHire Career Centers to inform veterans of available services. A "Veterans Priority of Service" notice is published on the web based resources page in the resource room. Outreach services are provided for all veterans who file claims for Unemployment Insurance and for veterans who arrive at the Centers as a result of employer pre-screening agreements, recruitments and job fairs. The Career Center basic registration form also queries participants as to their veteran status. The Career Center will provide information during the intake process and at Career Center entry Seminars that advises veterans of the advantages of registration to access special programs and services for veterans and the availability of Disabled Veterans Outreach Person (DVOP) or Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) staff to assist with employment issues.

Veterans services will be designed to ensure seamless, maximization of resources. All veterans receiving services will be assigned a case manager to ensure they receive intensive Wagner-Peyser services. Veterans service staff is provided with first access to each new job the Career Center posts for referral of appropriate veteran customers as well as a locally developed "hot jobs" list. As well, veterans will be provided preference in accessing such services as the Career Center "job club" and the Career Center computer orientation labs. In addition, the Vet Rep acts as an advocate and makes referrals to the Career Center Vocational Counselors for possible occupational training.

In addition to veterans, the following is noted regarding priority of service. The MHBWB has analyzed spending patterns, number of low-income Adults served, demographics and barriers to employment for Low-Income Adults and average levels of service. In addition, analysis of available WIOA funds including funding trends over the past five years was completed. The Board has determined that WIOA funds are limited.

As a result, priority will be given to adult clients receiving public assistance and who are classified as low income in accordance with WIOA definitions. Other adults that may receive priority services under WIOA include individuals that meet one of the following categories: Individuals who are basic skills deficient; Individuals who are high school dropouts; Individuals who are ex-offenders; Individuals who are veterans; Individuals who have limited English skills.

(21) 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.

## Addendum Massachusetts Workforce Agenda Focus Areas

Building on the MassHire State Workforce Board’s vision and mission, the Healey-Driscoll Administration’s Workforce Agenda and WIOA State Plan include four focus 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.