

MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board WIOA 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. ***Note: All responses are in sections (i) and (ii)***

The following is our analysis for Hampden County, however we also wish to note that the regional analysis for the Pioneer Valley via our Regional Blueprint also provides a wealth of information. Please see our Updated Blueprint as approved by the Workforce Skills Cabinet:

<https://masshirehcb.com/ma-and-pioneer-valley-wioa-regional-planning-and-labor-market-blueprint/>

<p>458,637</p> <p>Population (2024)</p> <p>Population decreased by 7,112 over the last 5 years and is projected to decrease by 7,789 over the next 5 years.</p>	<p>223,665</p> <p>Total Regional Employment</p> <p>Jobs decreased by 10,801 over the last 5 years but are projected to grow by 448 over the next 5 years.</p>	<p>\$70.5K</p> <p>Median Household Income (2023)</p> <p>Median household income is \$8.0K below the national median household income of \$78.5K.</p>
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- As of 2024, the region's population declined by 1.5% since 2019, falling by 7,112. Population is expected to decrease by 1.7% between 2024 and 2029, losing 7,789.
- From 2019 to 2024, jobs declined by 4.6% in Hampden County, MA from 234,467 to 223,665. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 4.1% by 8.7%. As the number of jobs declined, the labor force participation rate decreased from 61.4% to 61.0% between 2019 and 2024.
- Concerning educational attainment, 16.8% of Hampden County, MA residents possess a Bachelor's Degree (4.7% below the national average), and 9.6% hold an Associate's Degree (0.7% above the national average).

Top 20 Largest Industries

Priority Industries in Pioneer Valley Regional Blueprint are Bolded & Highlighted

NAICS Code	Industry	2019 Jobs	2024 Jobs	Change in Jobs	% Change in Jobs
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	56,518	55,286	(1,232)	(2%)
90	Government	34,517	34,653	136	0%
44	Retail Trade	21,750	20,049	(1,701)	(8%)
31	Manufacturing	19,070	17,640	(1,430)	(8%)
72	Accommodation and Food Services	18,085	16,431	(1,654)	(9%)
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	11,077	10,332	(745)	(7%)
23	Construction	9,905	9,923	18	0%
48	Transportation and Warehousing	8,932	8,745	(186)	(2%)
61	Educational Services	9,030	8,233	(797)	(9%)
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	9,601	7,865	(1,735)	(18%)
52	Finance and Insurance	8,734	7,262	(1,472)	(17%)
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	6,910	7,032	122	2%
42	Wholesale Trade	6,341	6,707	366	6%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	3,990	3,625	(365)	(9%)
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	2,716	3,116	400	15%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	3,286	2,835	(451)	(14%)
51	Information	2,244	1,955	(288)	(13%)
22	Utilities	1,253	1,234	(19)	(2%)
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	443	688	245	55%
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	64	54	(10)	(15%)

Lightcast Regional Economy Overview for Hampden County; extracted 6-4-25

Largest Occupations

Priority Occupational Groups in Pioneer Valley Regional Blueprint are Bolded & Highlighted

SOC Code	Occupation	2019 Jobs	2024 Jobs	Change in Jobs	% Change in Jobs
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support	26,984	22,570	(4,414)	(16%)
31-0000	Healthcare Support	20,859	20,582	(278)	(1%)
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	17,659	17,584	(75)	(0%)
11-0000	Management	17,400	17,107	(292)	(2%)
41-0000	Sales and Related	18,621	16,919	(1,703)	(9%)
25-0000	Educational Instruction and Library	17,090	16,737	(353)	(2%)
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving	16,390	16,067	(324)	(2%)
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related	16,814	15,439	(1,375)	(8%)
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations	10,890	12,940	2,050	19%
51-0000	Production	12,670	11,291	(1,379)	(11%)
47-0000	Construction and Extraction	8,443	7,974	(469)	(6%)

49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	7,553	7,281	(272)	(4%)
21-0000	Community and Social Service	7,661	6,889	(772)	(10%)
39-0000	Personal Care and Service	7,715	6,559	(1,156)	(15%)
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	6,981	6,269	(712)	(10%)
33-0000	Protective Service	5,537	5,422	(115)	(2%)
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical	4,285	4,497	211	5%
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	3,175	3,466	291	9%
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering	3,013	2,905	(108)	(4%)
19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science	2,151	2,471	320	15%
23-0000	Legal	1,617	1,684	66	4%
55-0000	Military-only	593	529	(64)	(11%)
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	364	484	120	33%

Lightcast Regional Economy Overview for Hampden County; extracted 6-4-25

Employment Needs: Top Posted Occupations

SOC Code	Occupation	2019 Jobs	2024 Jobs	Change in Jobs	% Change in Jobs	Jun 2024 - May 2025 Unique Average Monthly Postings
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	17,659	17,584	(75)	(0%)	1,069
41-0000	Sales and Related	18,621	16,919	(1,703)	(9%)	427
11-0000	Management	17,400	17,107	(292)	(2%)	414
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support	26,984	22,570	(4,414)	(16%)	385
25-0000	Educational Instruction and Library	17,090	16,737	(353)	(2%)	359
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving	16,390	16,067	(324)	(2%)	300
31-0000	Healthcare Support	20,859	20,582	(278)	(1%)	237
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations	10,890	12,940	2,050	19%	236
51-0000	Production	12,670	11,291	(1,379)	(11%)	226
21-0000	Community and Social Service	7,661	6,889	(772)	(10%)	215
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related	16,814	15,439	(1,375)	(8%)	215
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	7,553	7,281	(272)	(4%)	191
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	3,175	3,466	291	9%	110
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	6,981	6,269	(712)	(10%)	104

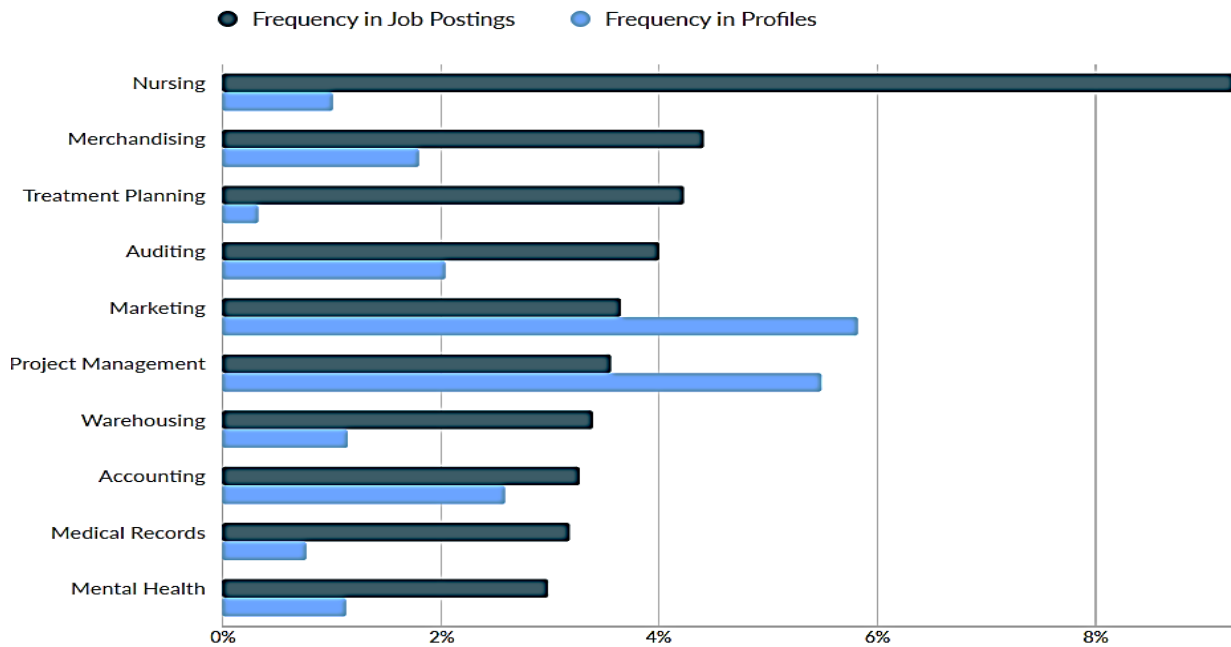
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical	4,285	4,497	211	5%	93
47-0000	Construction and Extraction	8,443	7,974	(469)	(6%)	82
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering	3,013	2,905	(108)	(4%)	69
19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science	2,151	2,471	320	15%	69
39-0000	Personal Care and Service	7,715	6,559	(1,156)	(15%)	65
33-0000	Protective Service	5,537	5,422	(115)	(2%)	59
23-0000	Legal	1,617	1,684	66	4%	24
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	364	484	120	33%	10

Lightcast Regional Economy Overview for Hampden County; extracted 6-4-25

The MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board supplements Department of Economic Research data with real-time local and regional data in priority industries as documented in the Pioneer Valley Labor Market Blueprint. The data informs MHHCWB decision-making, supports analysis of current and emerging in-demand occupations, and drives decisions on resource allocation to support a coordinated response to regional employee needs.

(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.

Top Specialized Skills



Source:

Lightcast Job Posting Analytics extracted 6-6-25

Top Occupational Certifications


Qualification	Postings with Qualification
Valid Driver's License	8,331
Registered Nurse (RN)	5,890
Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification	3,966
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification	3,844
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	1,669
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)	1,224
First Aid Certification	1,096
Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification	949
Certified Patient Care Technician (CPCT)	713
Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker	627

Source: Lightcast Job Posting Analytics extracted 6-6-25

Educational and Experience Requirements Requested by Employers


Education Breakdown

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Education Level 	Unique Postings	% of Total
No Education Listed	30,284	46%
High school or GED	16,886	26%
Associate's degree	6,988	11%
Bachelor's degree	14,418	22%
Master's degree	6,217	9%
Ph.D. or professional degree	1,563	2%


Minimum Education Breakdown



Minimum Education Level 	Unique Postings (minimum)	Unique Postings (max advertised)	% of Total (minimum)
High school or GED	16,886	0	26%
Associate's degree	4,818	1,269	7%
Bachelor's degree	10,530	3,367	16%
Master's degree	2,747	3,199	4%
Ph.D. or professional degree	656	907	1%

Experience Breakdown



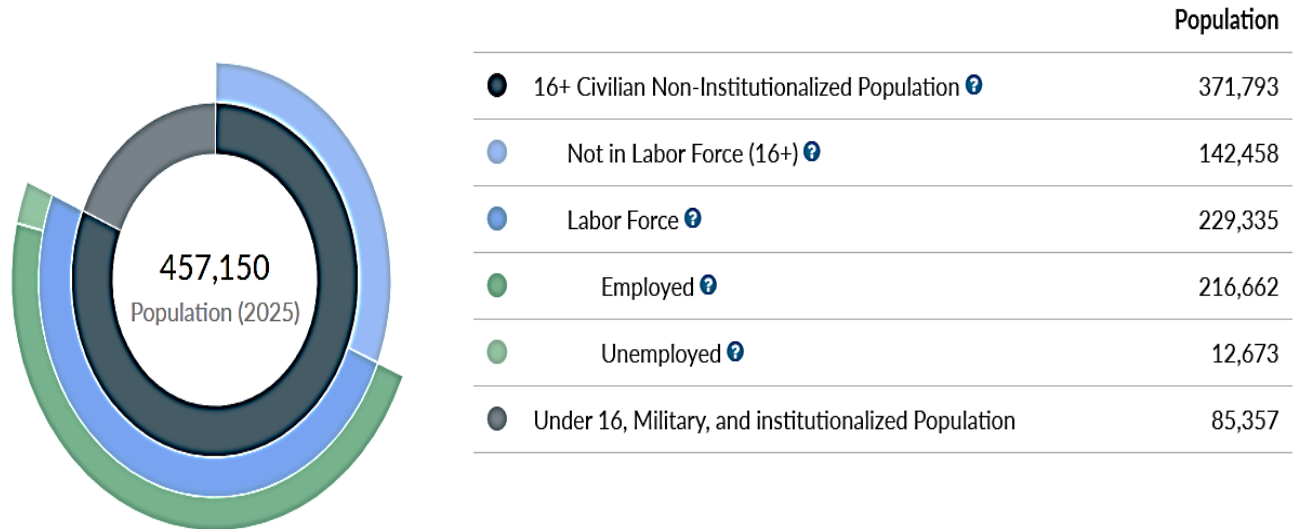
Minimum Experience 	Unique Postings	% of Total
No Experience Listed	38,604	59%
0 - 1 Years	11,324	17%
2 - 3 Years	10,283	16%
4 - 6 Years	4,242	6%
7 - 9 Years	805	1%
10+ Years	663	1%

Source: Lightcast Job Posting Analytics extracted 6-6-25

(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 unemployment rate for the most recent 13 months, from April 2024 to April 2025, averaged 5.3% for Hampden County, 6.6% for Springfield, the largest city in the county and 5.9% for Holyoke, the poorest city per capita in Massachusetts. The unemployment rate for Massachusetts averaged 4.2% for the same time period, with a high of 4.7% in January 2025.

Apr 2025 Labor Force Breakdown



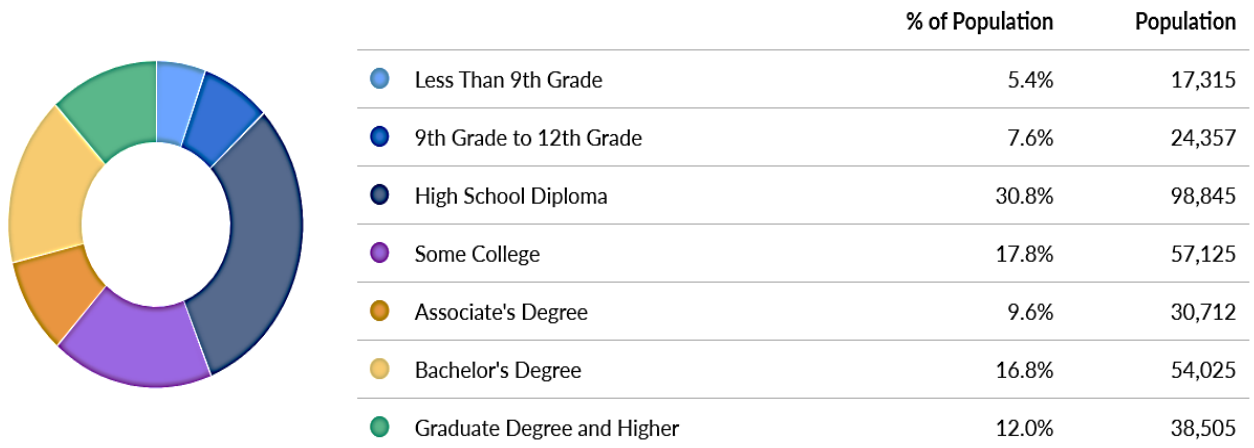
Source: Lightcast Regional Economy Overview for Hampden County; extracted 6-6-25

The following tables and charts show the educational attainment, job trends, unemployment rate trends, employment status by disability status, veteran characteristics, Limited English-Speaking household characteristics, and the region’s population in poverty and their characteristics.

Educational Attainment



Concerning educational attainment, 16.8% of Hampden County, MA residents possess a Bachelor's Degree (4.7% below the national average), and 9.6% hold an Associate's Degree (0.7% above the national average).

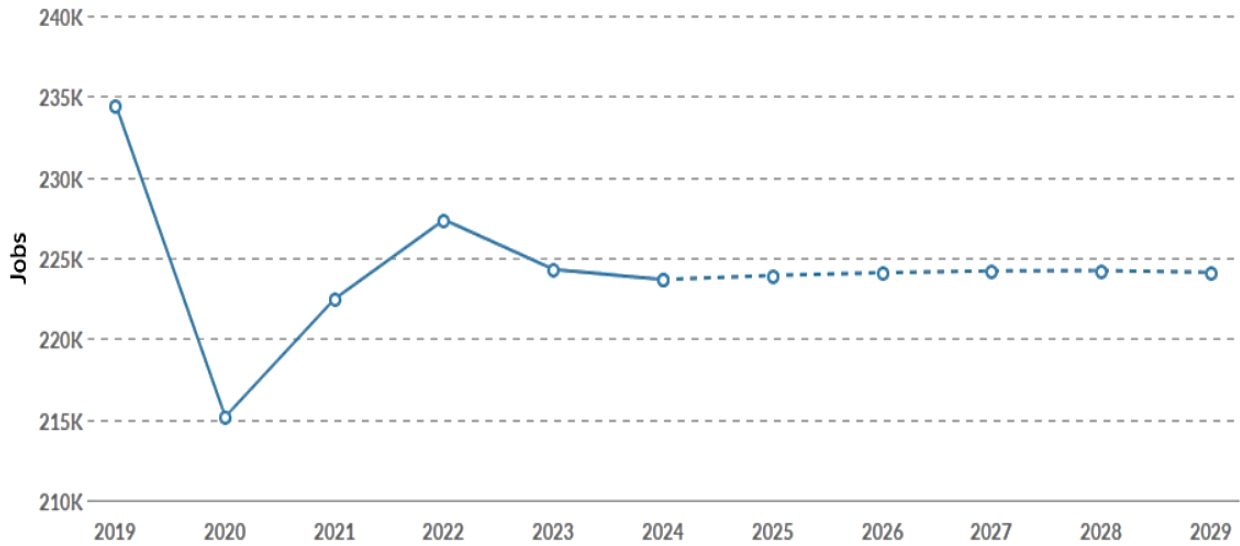


Source: Lightcast Regional Economy Overview for Hampden County; extracted 6-6-25

Job Trends

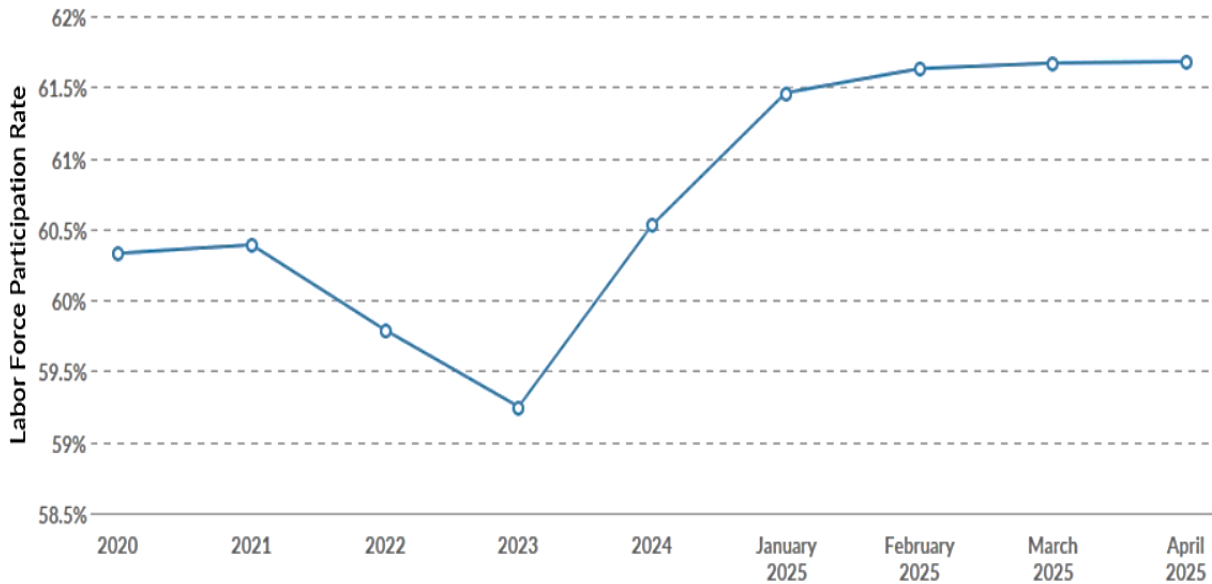


From 2019 to 2024, jobs declined by 4.6% in Hampden County, MA from 234,467 to 223,665. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 4.1% by 8.7%.



Source: Lightcast Regional Economy Overview for Hampden County; extracted 6-6-25

Labor Force Participation Rate Trends

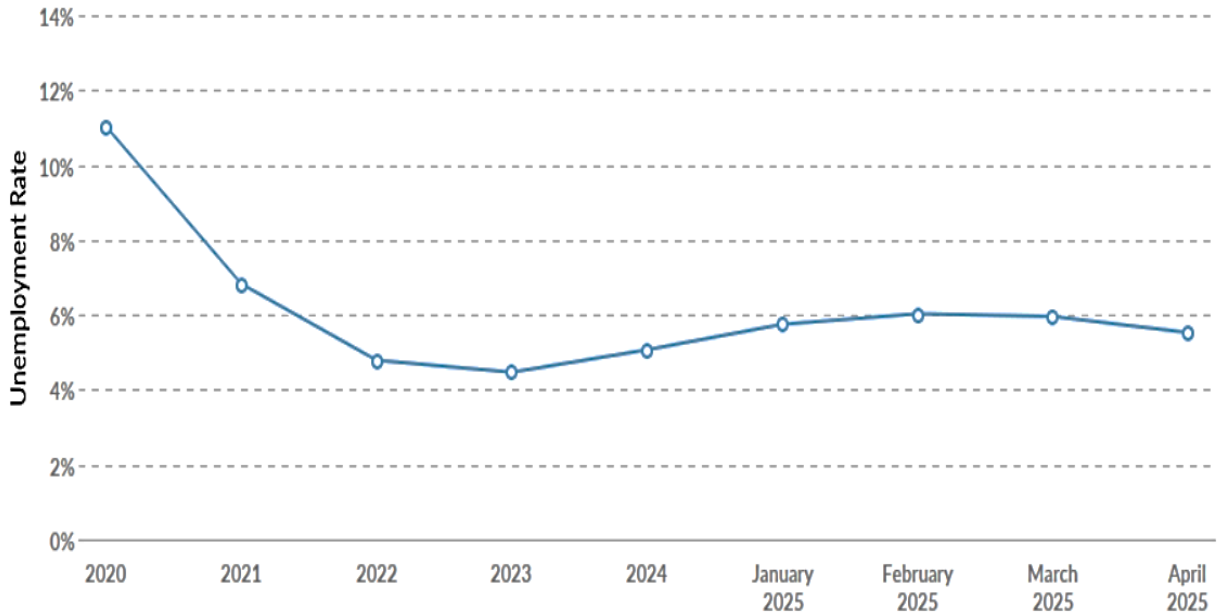


Source: Lightcast Regional Economy Overview for Hampden County; extracted 6-6-25

Unemployment Rate Trends



Hampden County, MA had an April 2025 unemployment rate of 5.53%, decreasing from 11.03% 5 years before.



Source: Lightcast Regional Economy Overview for Hampden County; extracted 6-6-25

Employment Status by Disability

	Estimate	Margin of Error
Total	283,282	±1,042
In the labor force:	217,860	±4,903
Employed:	208,515	±5,174
With a disability:	11,998	±2,306
With a hearing difficulty	2,296	±830
With a vision difficulty	2,315	±955
With a cognitive difficulty	4,859	±1,299
With an ambulatory difficulty	3,036	±867
With a self-care difficulty	1,507	±669
With an independent living difficulty	3,051	±890
No disability	196,517	±5,264
Unemployed:	9,345	±1,457
With a disability:	2,153	±815
With a hearing difficulty	0	±216
With a vision difficulty	228	±224
With a cognitive difficulty	1,249	±582
With an ambulatory difficulty	541	±468

With a self-care difficulty	199	±242
With an independent living difficulty	577	±463
Not in labor force:	65,422	±4,907
With a disability:	20,255	±2,826
With a hearing difficulty	1,187	±604
With a vision difficulty	2,505	±811
With a cognitive difficulty	9,620	±1,601
With an ambulatory difficulty	12,236	±1,993
With a self-care difficulty	5,422	±1,536
With an independent living difficulty	9,702	±1,699
No disability	45,167	±3,490

Source: 2023 Data.Census.gov: 5-Year Estimates Disability Status by Employment Status for the Population 18 to 64 Years

Veteran Status by Employment Status

	Estimate	Margin of Error
Total:	282,215	±237
18 to 34 years:	106,569	±209
Veteran:	1,104	±313
In labor force	1,011	±294
Employed	966	±288
Unemployed	45	±44
Not in labor force	93	±76
35 to 54 years:	112,288	±100
Veteran	4,429	±613
In labor force	3,747	±558
Employed	3,700	±566
Unemployed	47	±51
Not in labor force	682	±246
55 to 64 years:	63,358	±107
Veteran	4,537	±529
In labor force:	2,817	±364
Employed	2,769	±356
Unemployed	48	±59
Not in labor force	1,720	±340

2023 Data.Census.gov 5-Year Estimates Age by Veteran Status by Employment Status for the Civilian Population 18 to 64 Years

Poverty Status in the Past 12 Month

	Estimate	Margin of Error
Income in the past 12 months below poverty level:	36,562	±1,944
With a disability:	12,430	±1,178
In labor force:	2,087	±403
In Armed Forces	0	±32
Civilian:	2,087	±403
Employed	1,275	±283
Unemployed	812	±310
Not in labor force	10,343	±1,036
No disability:	24,132	±1,571
In labor force:	11,836	±1,054
In Armed Forces	0	±32
Civilian:	11,836	±1,054
Employed	8,970	±971
Unemployed	2,866	±616
Not in labor force	12,296	±1,226
Income in the past 12 months at or above poverty level:	227,644	±2,082
With a disability:	26,006	±1,501
In labor force:	12,768	±928
In Armed Forces	8	±15
Civilian:	12,760	±928
Employed	11,284	±799
Unemployed	1,476	±431
Not in labor force	13,238	±1,107
No disability:	201,638	±2,022
In labor force:	177,711	±2,377
In Armed Forces	562	±192
Civilian:	177,149	±2,404
Employed	170,752	±2,372
Unemployed	6,397	±725
Not in labor force	23,927	±1,284

2023 Data.Census.gov 5-Year Estimates Poverty Status by Employment Status for the Population 18 to 64 Years

Limited English-Speaking Households

	Total Estimate	Percent Estimate	Limited English-speaking households Estimate	Percent limited English-speaking households Estimate
All households	184,217	(X)	14,870	8.1%
Households speaking:				
Spanish	37,099	20.1%	11,175	30.1%
Other Indo-European languages	12,063	6.5%	2,521	20.9%
Asian and Pacific Island languages	3,040	1.7%	739	24.3%
Other languages	2,121	1.2%	435	20.5%

2023 Data. Census.gov 5-Year Estimates Poverty Status by Employment Status for Limited English Speaking Households

As reflected throughout this Plan, we are committed to delivering the highest quality workforce development services in collaboration with our two One-Stop Career Centers—MassHire Springfield and MassHire Holyoke—as well as a diverse network of youth programs, education and training providers, and a wide array of work-based learning opportunities.

Our region’s strength lies in the variety and depth of workforce interventions targeting key populations, including youth pipeline participants, low-income adults, dislocated workers—particularly those facing barriers to employment—and the incumbent workforce. Additionally, our strong partnerships with regional post-secondary institutions enhance our capacity to grow career pathways and credentialing programs aligned with priority industries and in-demand occupational clusters

Meeting the workforce demands of our region’s employers remains a top priority for MHCWB. We are committed to expanding employer participation within our workforce system and fostering stronger industry partnerships. In particular, the Hampden County *MassHire Business Solutions* team—a coordinated approach staffed by both MassHire Holyoke and MassHire Springfield Career Centers—serves as a central point of contact for employer services. This unified strategy enables us to respond more effectively to business needs, reduce duplication of effort, and create increased employment opportunities for job seekers across the region.

The MHCWB has been at the forefront of expanding and implementing Registered Apprenticeship programs in the region. Since 2017, the Workforce Board has sponsored over 265 healthcare Registered Apprenticeships, positioning Hampden County as a leader in innovative workforce training models.

Work-based learning—including On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Registered Apprenticeships—continues to serve as a foundational pillar of our regional workforce strategy. These models provide meaningful, hands-on training opportunities that not only meet the immediate needs of employers but also create sustainable career pathways for job seekers, particularly in high-demand sectors.

The MHCWB collaborates closely with Springfield Technical Community College and Holyoke Community College to align education and training with regional labor market needs. Both institutions play a central

role in advancing career pathways, credentialing programs, and sector-based strategies across priority industries. Through partnerships with both STCC and HCC, MHHCWB supports efforts to expand access to credit and non-credit training opportunities, particularly in healthcare, advanced manufacturing, clean energy, and IT. These programs are often stackable and aligned with industry-recognized credentials, offering career mobility for low-income, underemployed, and unemployed individuals.

Six (6) of our school districts have attained Innovation Pathway Designation status with pathways targeted to the priority industries codified in our Regional Blueprint with several school districts have multiple designations. Our workforce development eco-system is networked with our community serving organizations and non-profit agencies thereby allowing for a continuum of programming and an array of services to individuals and customers.

MMHCWB continues to expand partnerships with our vocational high schools focused on enhancement of training options in healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and education. MHHCWB provides support and guidance to secondary school districts' applications for Career Technical Initiative, Innovation Pathways Designations, Chapter 74 Partnership Programs/After Dark, and/or new Chapter 74 designations.

This regional collaboration strengthens the talent pipeline, supports credential attainment, and ensures a coordinated approach to meeting both employer needs and the career goals of Hampden County residents.

(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 MHHCWB has established the following primary indicators of performance:

- 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.
 - WIOA Adult: 69.8%
 - WIOA Dislocated Worker: 74.4%
 - WIOA Youth: 77.1%

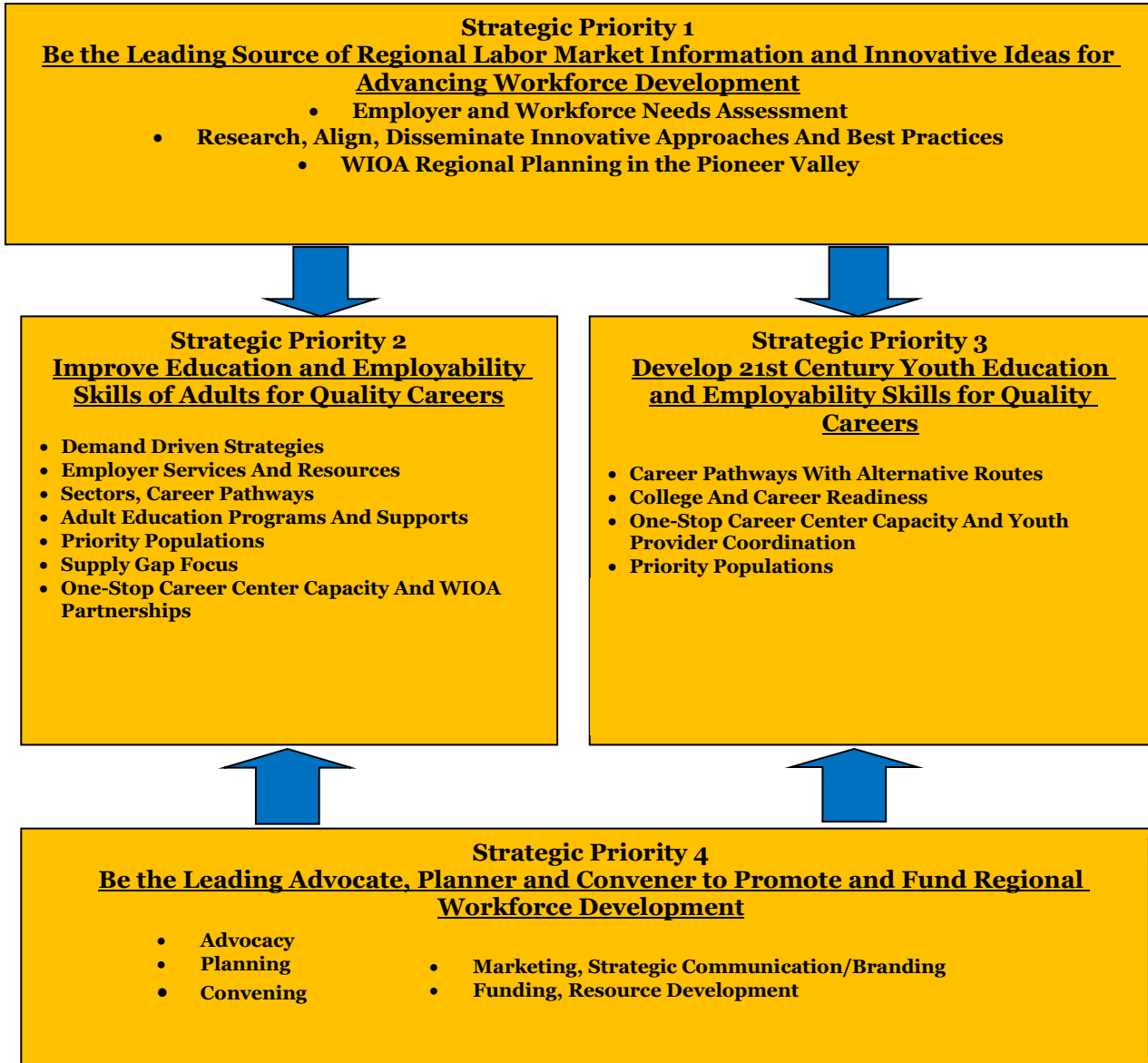
- b. **Employment Rate Fourth Quarter After Exit:** The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.
 - WIOA Adult: 71.5%
 - WIOA Dislocated Worker: 73.6%
 - WIOA Youth: 75.0%

- 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.
- WIOA Adult: \$7,254
 - WIOA Dislocated Worker: \$9,377
 - WIOA Youth: \$4,000
- 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.
- WIOA Adult: 56.4%
 - WIOA Dislocated Worker: 62.5%
 - WIOA Youth: 65.9%
- 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.
- WIOA Adult: 60.6%
 - WIOA Dislocated Worker: 65.0%
 - WIOA Youth: 45.0%

The MHHCWB has an approved Strategic Plan covering the years of July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2026 that has the following vision, mission and strategic priorities to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency:

VISION: Hampden County residents have access to and are prepared for high quality career employment opportunities at family-sustaining wages that accelerate business growth, ensure continued economic development, and strengthen our communities.

MISSION: The MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board leads a dynamic, efficient and integrated workforce development system that plans, coordinates and oversees the growth and effective use of public and private investment in workforce development initiatives for quality careers. The Board provides leadership in creating and sustaining strategic alliances that provide access to education, training and career opportunities for all workers while ensuring a skilled workforce for all employers.



Our Strategic Plan Scoreboard/Key Performance Indicators supplements our Plan with specific goals and priorities (including for adults and youth and our workforce partners, One-Stop Career Centers and Youth Providers) that support this vision. As does our recently approved Updated Pioneer Valley Regional Planning Labor Market Blueprint and our Local Plan Performance Charts as submitted to MassHire DCS annually.

(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.

MHHCWB acts as the convener of the WIOA Hampden County MOU, which outlines agreements between MHHCWB, our two Career Centers, and required and non-required partners, to deliver coordinated

workforce development services. Hampden County MOU signatories include: The Adult Program, Dislocated Worker Program, and Youth Program (Title I), as part of DCS/EOLWD; The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (Title II), as part of ACLS/DESE; The Wagner-Peyser Act Program (Title III), as part of MDCS/EOLWD; Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Program, Vocational Rehabilitation Program, as part of MassAbility and Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, EOHHS; Federal-State Unemployment Compensation Program as part of DUA/EOLWD; Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Programs, as part of DCS/EOLWD; Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program, as part of DCS/EOLWD; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program, as part of DTA/EOHHS, Employment & Training Programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, as part of DTA/EOHHS; Senior Community Services Employment Programs; Holyoke Community College; Springfield Technical Community College; Way Finders Housing; Westover Job Corps Center, New North Citizens Council (YouthBuild).

The MOU defines roles and responsibilities of all partners and is designed to meet the strategic vision and goals and produce the best possible outcomes for youth, job seekers and businesses in our region. In developing the MOU, partners worked together to define shared customers, design customer flow and service practices, identify and align resources, and develop procedures to track activities and outcomes. In the MOU (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2027), required partners will continue to collaborate to achieve outcomes for each target population, and will prioritize the development of new strategies.

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

- Wagner Peyser Labor Exchange
- State One-Stop funded Labor Exchange
- Veteran’s Programs
- Unemployment Insurance Program Services
- Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity (WIOA) Title-1 Youth
- WIOA Title-1 Adult, DW, Youth
- WIOA Core Partner Services/Programs
- Job Corps
- Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Program
- National Dislocated Worker Grants (Various)
- Rapid Response Services
- Registered Apprenticeship
- On-The-Job Training (OJT) Program
- DESE: School-to-Career/Connecting Activities and Adult Education and Community Programs
- YouthWorks: Commonwealth Corporation Summer Youth and Year-Round Programs
- Mass Tech Collaborative: Advanced Manufacturing Programs/Services
- Various Commonwealth Corporation funded Competitive Training Grants/Programs (as a Grantee and as a Partner)
- Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)

- Reentry Program

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.

MHHCWB is fully committed to advancing the strategies and four Focus Areas outlined in the Massachusetts State Workforce Board Plan and Workforce Agenda. MHHCWB will continue to collaborate with partners implementing core WIOA programs and other workforce development initiatives in the following ways:

- **Convene MOU Partners:** MHHCWB will continue to lead and coordinate the implementation of the local WIOA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), ensuring alignment and integration among core partners.
- **Facilitate Industry Partnerships:** We will maintain and grow regional industry collaborations—such as the Healthcare Workforce Partnership of Western Massachusetts—to ensure employer needs are addressed and that training programs remain demand-driven.
- **Coordinate Regional Youth Programming:** MHHCWB will continue to oversee and align WIOA Youth, Connecting Activities, and YouthWorks programs to ensure maximum impact and coordination across the region’s youth-serving initiatives.

In addition to these core strategies, MHHCWB maintains strong partnerships with Perkins-funded programs administered by our two regional community colleges. Both institutions are independent signatories to our WIOA Core Partner MOU, separate from the Adult Education programs they also operate. Our collaboration with these institutions supports the alignment of career pathway development, credentialing, and training with labor market needs.

We also actively work to align Perkins-funded secondary vocational and technical education programs with regional workforce priorities, guided by the Pioneer Valley Regional Planning Blueprint. MHHCWB staff contribute directly to this alignment by serving on Chapter 74-required Program Advisory Committees at vocational-technical high schools. These advisory roles provide opportunities to share labor market information, ensure curriculum remains industry-relevant, and strengthen the pipeline from education to employment.

(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;**

MHHCWB has collaborated closely with each partner responsible for implementing WIOA core programs to understand the specific educational and service needs of priority populations, and to ensure that all services are fully accessible to individuals with barriers to employment.

Career center services, including the frequency of workshops and level of support available for self-service resources have been made more accessible to adults with limited English proficiency, low literacy, and limited digital literacy.

Virtual service delivery, coupled with the use of technology tools and remote training platforms at both MassHire Holyoke and MassHire Springfield Career Centers, has significantly improved accessibility. These services can be accessed at any time and from any location, and participants may receive assistance from instructors, case managers, or other support staff as needed.

Job search and placement services also include culturally responsive strategies to support immigrants and refugees, including individuals who have never worked in the United States or who possess education, experience, or credentials from other countries. In addition, Career Center staff are trained in the resources available to individuals with physical and mental disabilities, visual impairments, Veterans, and mature workers.

Staff from organizations delivering WIOA core programs are co-located at the Career Centers and work in close coordination with Career Center personnel to ensure inclusive service delivery and to expand access and opportunity for all priority populations.

- b. Facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs; and improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable).**

All MOU Partners collaborate to deliver an integrated system that aligns with the needs of priority sectors and occupations in Hampden County. This system provides job seekers with education, training, employment, and support services that prepare them to enter career pathways leading to family-sustaining wages.

Career pathway models are being consistently being developed and adjusted as needed for specific industry sectors with input from local employers and labor market data, and are adapted for priority populations through multiple entry and exit points. MHHCWB is working with employers and MOU partners to develop career pathways in multiple in-demand occupations.

This collaboration includes strategies to strengthen career readiness and essential skills, and to build pathways in key occupations within the Healthcare, Advanced Manufacturing, Education and Information Technology sectors. This work is aligned with the implementation of the Pioneer Valley Regional Blueprint.

- 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.**

MHHCWB will continue to support and advance initiatives that lead to the attainment of industry-recognized, demand-driven credentials aligned with regional labor market needs. These efforts will include targeted investments through WIOA Title I funding, as well as the implementation of sector-based initiatives designed to address critical workforce gaps.

To ensure alignment with employer needs and support high-quality outcomes for job seekers, MHHCWB will coordinate closely with local businesses, industry associations, and education and training providers—including Springfield Technical Community College and Holyoke Community College. These partnerships will help ensure that training programs remain relevant, stackable, and responsive to the evolving demands of the regional economy.

(3) Please describe the strategies and services that will be used in your local area (*Please refer to the MA Workforce Agenda, Focus Area II (Talent Development) and Focus Area IV – Improve “front door” experiences for both jobseekers and employers*):

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

The MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board (MHHCWB), in partnership with its WIOA Core Partners and the two MassHire One-Stop Career Center Operators, follows a demand-driven, employer-led engagement model that is centered on developing workforce solutions and creating positive outcomes for both employers and job seekers. This approach is grounded in the priorities outlined in our Regional Blueprint and focuses on building sustainable, industry-responsive partnerships.

MHHCWB currently supports and leads several key employer-driven initiatives aligned with our Blueprint Priority Industries:

- **Advanced Manufacturing** – *Western MA Chapter of the National Tooling and Machining Association*
- **Healthcare and Social Assistance** – *Healthcare Workforce Partnership of Western Massachusetts*

We will continue to explore innovative strategies to foster meaningful and sustained employer engagement across all sectors—regardless of company size or market segment. This includes expanding outreach to small and mid-sized businesses that are well-positioned to drive innovation and job creation in both our priority and emerging industries.

In the healthcare sector, MHHCWB’s *Healthcare Workforce Partnership of Western Massachusetts* developed a [Strategic Plan \(2024–2026\)](#), which serves as a roadmap for regional employer engagement and workforce development in the HealthCare and Social Assistance industry. This plan—developed by the employer-led *Nursing Collaborative*, a subcommittee of the Partnership.

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

MHHCWB, in collaboration with the MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board through the Regional Planning process, has identified *Agriculture and Sustainable Food Systems* as a critical industry in the Pioneer Valley. This designation reflects the sector’s growing significance in regional economic development, food security, and sustainability efforts.

MHHCWB is committed to applying its proven employer outreach and engagement strategies to support this sector. We fully anticipate success in identifying and engaging a critical mass of stakeholders—including independent farmers and growers, agricultural enterprises, and farm-to-table entrepreneurs. Our goal is to build meaningful collaborations and partnerships that address their workforce needs and tackle workforce-related challenges that may impact their long-term sustainability, relevance, and competitiveness.

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

Under its respective Charters with the MassHire Springfield and MassHire Holyoke Career Centers, the MHHCW provides both technical guidance and financial resources to support the continued implementation of *MassHire Business Solutions*. This initiative represents a strategic, coordinated, and integrated approach to delivering demand-driven services—ensuring a system-wide response to effectively connect job seekers with career pathway employment opportunities.

The One-Stop Career Centers deliver services to employers in alignment with WIOA principles and the Commonwealth’s adopted standards for demand-driven workforce strategies. Both Career Centers are equipped to serve employers across a broad spectrum of sizes, industries, geographic locations, and workforce needs. Significant resources and staff efforts will be dedicated to cultivating strong, value-driven relationships with regional employers.

Employer engagement and service delivery will be coordinated closely with WIOA Core Partners and will adhere to customer service flow charts and protocols mutually established through the WIOA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and guiding operations.

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

MHHCWB and the region's economic development entities have committed to referencing their collaborative work in Regional Planning as part of all future strategic planning efforts. As a reflection of this shared commitment, each entity has embedded the *Pioneer Valley Labor Market Blueprint* their websites, ensuring visibility and alignment across planning documents and initiatives.

MHHCWB continues to work collaboratively with these partners to identify shared assets and resources, as well as to assess and address any gaps in workforce service delivery that may require strategic intervention or mitigation. This ongoing coordination strengthens the region's capacity to respond proactively to workforce challenges and opportunities.

In addition, MHHCWB maintains a strong working relationship with the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council and local municipal economic development departments. Together, we support a broad range of workforce development needs arising from business expansion, the siting of new companies, incumbent worker training, and responses to company downsizing or closures within local cities and towns.

Recognizing that regional economic development is deeply connected to initiatives at the municipal level, MHHCWB is strategically positioned to engage with stakeholders across both levels to ensure the alignment of workforce strategies with economic growth objectives.

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

Both OSCCs have UI Level 2 trained staff at their locations to facilitate linkages between UI services and OSCC services. These staff can assist Jobseekers with limited UI concerns to triage a potential solution or escalate the issue to the dedicated UI contact. The RESEA program for UI claimants is very active in both centers.

RESEA activities are provided both in person and virtually. RESEA customers to have the option to complete the electronic fillable Needs Assessment during or after Career Center Seminar. The electronic form must be submitted prior to the next customer's next RESEA Review. All services are recorded into MOSES.

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

When the MHHCWB, the MassHire One-Stop Career Centers, or the local Rapid Response contact receives formal or informal notification of a potential layoff or business closure, immediate coordination occurs among all relevant parties to ensure a unified response. The Rapid Response (RR) team also informs the region's Chief Elected Officials of any confirmed closures or layoffs. Rapid Response activities are initiated by the RR team and are coordinated closely with the MHHCWB and the two Career Centers.

Once a layoff is confirmed, MHCWB, RR, and the MH OSCCs collaboratively develop and implement a coordinated response plan. This may include:

- Scheduling and conducting information or registration sessions at the Career Centers
- Outreach to impacted individuals
- Tracking affected workers
- Establishing timelines for service delivery

When appropriate, MHCWB will coordinate with the Rapid Response team to pursue a National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) to address significant layoffs and support affected workers.

MHCWB, RR staff, and OSCC representatives also participate in regional BizWorks meetings, where information and best practices related to layoffs, recruitment efforts, and business closures are shared. These meetings often include other state agency partners.

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

The MassHire Business Solutions team follow the MHCWB Employer Engagement Framework in developing and implementing all strategic planning, process development, and allocation of staff and staff resources that pertain to the provision of Employer Services. This framework is designed to ensure a demand-driven approach that is responsive to the workforce needs of businesses across Hampden County. Key procedures include:

- **Initial Outreach and Relationship Building:** Business Services Representatives (BSRs) from both MassHire Springfield and MassHire Holyoke Career Centers conduct proactive outreach to employers of all sizes and sectors. This includes in-person visits, virtual meetings, and participation in local business networking events.
- **Needs Assessment:** Once contact is established, BSRs conduct a thorough needs assessment with the employer to understand workforce demands, recruitment needs, skill gaps, and potential training or upskilling opportunities.
- **Service Delivery:** Based on the assessment, Career Center staff may provide a variety of services including job postings, pre-screening and recruitment support, job fairs, hiring events, labor market information, and potentially access to work-based learning programs such as On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Registered Apprenticeships.
- **Documentation and Follow-Up:** Employer interactions and service outcomes are documented in MOSES, the statewide workforce data system. Regular follow-up is conducted to assess satisfaction, offer additional support, and maintain ongoing relationships.

- **Integration with BizWorks and State Initiatives:** The Business Solutions team also participates in the BizWorks initiative and other statewide efforts to align business engagement strategies across partner agencies.

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

MHHCWB, as a well-respected and strategically positioned workforce intermediary, has been at the forefront of implementing innovative job creation and retention initiatives across the region. These efforts are made possible through funding at the federal level (WIOA/U.S. Department of Labor), state level (Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Commonwealth Corporation), and local level (City of Springfield).

MHHCWB's programming is targeted toward the region's Blueprint priority industries—Healthcare and Social Assistance, Advanced Manufacturing, and Educational Services—and is designed to meet employer demand while creating sustainable pathways for job seekers.

As an approved Registered Apprenticeship Sponsor, MHHCWB continues to collaborate closely with employer partners to expand the use of Registered Apprenticeship as a practical and effective tool for both workforce entry and employee retention. These apprenticeship programs are strategically aligned with in-demand occupations and offer structured, earn-and-learn opportunities that benefit both workers and businesses, particularly within the region's high-priority sectors.

In support of incumbent worker training, MHHCWB provides ongoing guidance and technical assistance to regional employers regarding the Workforce Training Fund Program (WTFP). MHHCWB actively promotes both the Express Program and the General Program, helping businesses understand eligibility, navigate the application process, and align training proposals with workforce development goals to upskill existing employees and improve business competitiveness.

(4) Please provide a description of how your Board:

- a. Coordinates local workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities.**
- b. Promotes entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services.**

The acknowledged regional economic development entities in Hampden County have been active members of the Regional Planning Core Team and continue to serve in that role during the implementation phase of the Pioneer Valley Labor Market Blueprint. A consensus list of mutually reinforcing activities, as outlined in the Blueprint, continues to guide our collaborative work and

inform both strategic planning and tactical deployment of resources across the region. Key collaborative activities include:

- Work more closely with the regional and municipal economic development entities to implement an integrated system for gathering and reporting workforce demand needs and skills requirements to better match jobseekers with employers resulting in a reduction in the Skills Gap (Ratio) in priority occupations/groupings in the region.
- Work with economic development, educational institutions, and employers to increase paid internship opportunities at the high school and college levels that support graduate retention in the Pioneer Valley.
- Collaborate with workforce development, economic development, and employers to further recommend and assist in the development of increased paid internship opportunities at the high school and college levels that support graduate retention in the Pioneer Valley
- Collaborate on collecting and using real time regional labor market data that identifies new and emerging industries and codify future employer demand and skills requirements.

In addition to these efforts, MHHCWB is intentionally engaged in supporting regional entrepreneurial and small business ecosystems through the following activities:

- **Supporting Start-Ups and Microenterprises:** Actively support the work of key regional organizations such as Valley Venture Mentors, EForAll, FORGE, and similar entities to ensure representation of entrepreneurs and start-ups in the Blueprint implementation process.
- **Customized Workforce Programming for Entrepreneurs:** Partner with economic development stakeholders to identify and engage emerging entrepreneurs and microenterprises, providing workforce programming that includes industry-specific skills training, business development services, and support for both short- and long-term workforce planning.

Additionally, MHHCWB incorporates entrepreneurial training within our WIOA Youth programming, offering appropriate participants the opportunity to explore self-employment and business ownership as viable career goals.

(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.**

The MHHCWB follows the State’s Policy for Initial and Subsequent Eligibility for approving eligible training providers and placing them on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Verifiable performance in the areas of Training Completion Rate, Entered Employment/Placement Rate, and Placement Wage are supplied by the provider and must meet minimum state-mandated standards.

In addition to these baseline metrics, when determining Subsequent Eligibility, MHHCWB also reviews the training provider’s performance specific to participants funded through MHHCWB-managed resources. If a provider fails to meet the required performance benchmarks for this specific cohort, their Subsequent Eligibility status may be negatively impacted.

The MassHire One-Stop Career Centers (MH OSCCs) supplement these data-driven reviews by collecting direct feedback from training participants regarding the quality and effectiveness of the instruction received. This participant input is used to further evaluate the overall impact of training programs.

Additionally, MHHCWB convenes sector-based initiatives that bring together employers, training providers, and workforce system partners to assess training outcomes. These forums provide critical employer feedback on the readiness and performance of individuals who have completed occupational training programs. Training providers participating in these initiatives gain direct insight into how well their curriculum aligns with industry expectations and workforce demands.

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

Access to services provided through the One-Stop delivery system is available through a variety of physical and technological access points. Both MassHire Career Centers in Hampden County ensure services are accessible on-site and virtually, meeting the diverse needs of job seekers. Remote and virtual access includes a broad range of services such as:

- Workshops/webinars on variety of topics including: computer basics, building a resume, job search tips, interviewing techniques, exploring the job market, AI Tools for Job Search, and more.
- Veteran Priority of Services information and assistance
- Case management for WIOA Title I participants and other grant-funded programs
- Services for individuals with disabilities
- RESEA reviews and triage services
- Services for Mature Workers, Re-Entry populations, and those in Recovery
- Referrals and support for individuals experiencing homelessness
- Career counseling, job development, and job matching
- Referrals for personal or job-related stress

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.

Each Center has a full time Disabilities Resource Coordinator (DRC), for individual assistance, handicapped accessible materials & a variety of accommodation equipment. The disability agency partnerships give us varied referral resources. The MHOSCC's are also a long-time member of the Ticket to Work Program and we can access the special technical assistance of the UMASS Work Opportunities program and the Institute for Community Inclusion. Investments have been made at both Centers to acquire adaptive technology that enables customers with physical disabilities to utilize and benefit from the resources at the One-Stop Career Centers. The Centers Disabilities Resource Team meet on a regular basis with other local agencies, which includes MassAbility, MCB, DMH, DMR, NEBA, Goodwill, Lighthouse, WMEC and others. Both Career Centers are ADA compliant.

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

MHHCWB convenes WIOA-required partners to identify shared customers and improve customer flow throughout Hampden County. As infrastructure funding agreements are finalized at the state level, MHHCWB oversees the local budget to ensure all partner allocations are incorporated into a comprehensive integrated budget. The Board also determines how infrastructure funding is distributed between the MassHire Springfield Career Center and the MassHire Holyoke Career Center. The MOU Leadership Team, composed of representatives from all Core Partners, meets regularly to review quarterly reports on shared customers and monitor progress toward system integration, service coordination, and performance goals.

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

The One Stop Career Centers, MassHire Holyoke and MassHire Springfield, are the hub of employment and training activities for adult and dislocated workers in Hampden County. The core of these services offered at the One-Stop Career Centers include:

Self Service/Universal Access:

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

Basic Career Services:

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

Labor Exchange Services:

- job search and placement assistance,
- career counseling,
- information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations and provision of information on nontraditional employment,
- appropriate business/employer recruitment,
- coordination of referrals/activities with Core Partners and other agencies including program and services within the One-Stop delivery system,
- other business/employer services,
- delivery of local, regional and national labor market information,
- provision of information on eligible training vendor's performance, cost, and training services by type of program and provider,
- provision of information, in usable and understandable formats and languages, about how the local area is performing on local performance accountability measures, as well as any additional performance information relating to the area's One-Stop delivery system, and
- provision of information and assistance regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation, by which the One-Stop must provide meaningful assistance to individuals seeking assistance in filing a claim for unemployment compensation.

Individualized Career Services:

- comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and service needs,
- identification of employment barriers,
- selection of career path and/or training, which will lead to employment,
- development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) to identify career planning, employment goals, barriers, skills gaps, and training needs,
- internships,
- paid or unpaid work experience,
- financial literacy services and develop short term essential skills needed to obtain employment.

Short-term prevocational or employment services can be provided in a group setting, individual one-on-one counseling, attending specific workshops and other professional conduct service to prepare individuals to successfully transition into the completion of post-secondary education, or training or unsubsidized employment.

Referral to Training Services:

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

- occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment,
- on-the-Job training,
- registered apprenticeships
- incumbent worker training,
- programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs,
- training programs operated by the private sector,
- skill upgrading and retraining,
- entrepreneurial training programs that assist qualified unemployed individuals who are seriously interested in starting a business and becoming self-employed,

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

Follow-up Services:

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

Employer Services:

WIOA emphasizes Employer Services as an integral part of a demand driven system. As such, the MHHCWB identifies the provision of Employer Services as a core component of the OSCC service delivery system. The One Stop Career Centers' coordinated business Service team provides Employer Services to all employers, covering wide ranges of size, industry, location and requirements, and will have the ability to identify and meet the needs of all employers. The Hampden County Business Services follow a Framework in developing and implementing all strategic planning, process development, and allocation of staff and staff resources that pertain to the provision of Employer Services. The Operators have an Employer Services Flow Chart that describes the linear process to be implemented to deliver Employer Services.

(7) Please provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in your area including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities. Please include an identification of successful models of such activities. (Please describe how local strategies align with Focus Area II – Talent Development Strategies for Youth)

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

In the MHCWB's Strategic Plan, there are strategic goals in four key areas to build the overall quality of our workforce are set forth. One of those is to "Develop 21st Century Youth Education and Employability Skills for Quality Careers" in which we commit to improving and expanding successful models of workforce development programs and services for youth, especially older youth who need basic skills development, English language proficiency and employment.

In order to accomplish that, the MHCWB engages community partners in collaborations that will align youth services and result in a more coordinated system of youth development; expands and improves youth work readiness services and internships and works with our One-Stop Career Center services to meet the unique employability needs of out-of-school and unemployed youth.

As such, the MHCWB has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding, covering July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2026, that is co-signed by the One-Stop Career Centers, WIOA Title I Youth service providers, YouthWorks providers, DESE School-to-Career Connecting Activities (STC-CA) funded partners, the Westover Job Corps Center, the MassAbility, MA Commission for the Blind (MRC/MCB) WIOA 15% funded youth program/activities and the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) funded youth program/ activities as they relate to the operation of youth services and programs in Hampden County.

This MOU augments the WIOA Core Partner Umbrella MOU that defines the roles and responsibilities of the OSCC Required Partners to operationalize the delivery of services necessary to produce the best possible outcomes for shared WIOA Core Partner customers, which includes youth. This MOU is designed to specifically align and coordinate the delivery of WIOA and other services to youth aged 14-24 with the other MHCWB youth-funded programs. The MOU, as well as an inventory of these successful models of the programs they are funded to operate, can be viewed, sorted, printed and/or downloaded, can be found on this link:

<https://masshirehcb.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Hampden-Youth-MOU-FY25-w-all-signatures-8-1-24.pdf>

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

MHHCWB's MOU partners—including WIOA Core Partners and youth-serving organizations—comprise community colleges, in-school service providers, and agencies such as WIOA Title I Youth, Connecting Activities/School-to-Career (STC), and MassAbility/MCB. These partnerships establish a coordinated framework for aligning strategies, services, and programs, while facilitating appropriate cross-referrals to minimize duplication and ensure efficient service delivery.

MHHCWB is actively collaborating with our two community colleges, vocational high schools, and comprehensive high schools to codify existing educational offerings, degree tracks, and certificate programs. This work aims to establish and expand clear, coordinated, and integrated career pathways for all students and individuals engaged with the workforce system in Hampden County, with a particular focus on out-of-school and disconnected youth.

MHHCWB provides support and guidance to secondary school districts' applications for Career Technical Initiative, Innovation Pathways Designations, Chapter 74 Partnership Programs/After Dark, and/or new Chapter 74 designations.

The Youth Council plays a critical role in aligning youth services across the education and workforce development systems. Through regular meetings and communication, the Youth Council collaborates with key stakeholders—including K-12 school districts, community colleges, WIOA core partners, youth-serving organizations, and community-based nonprofits.

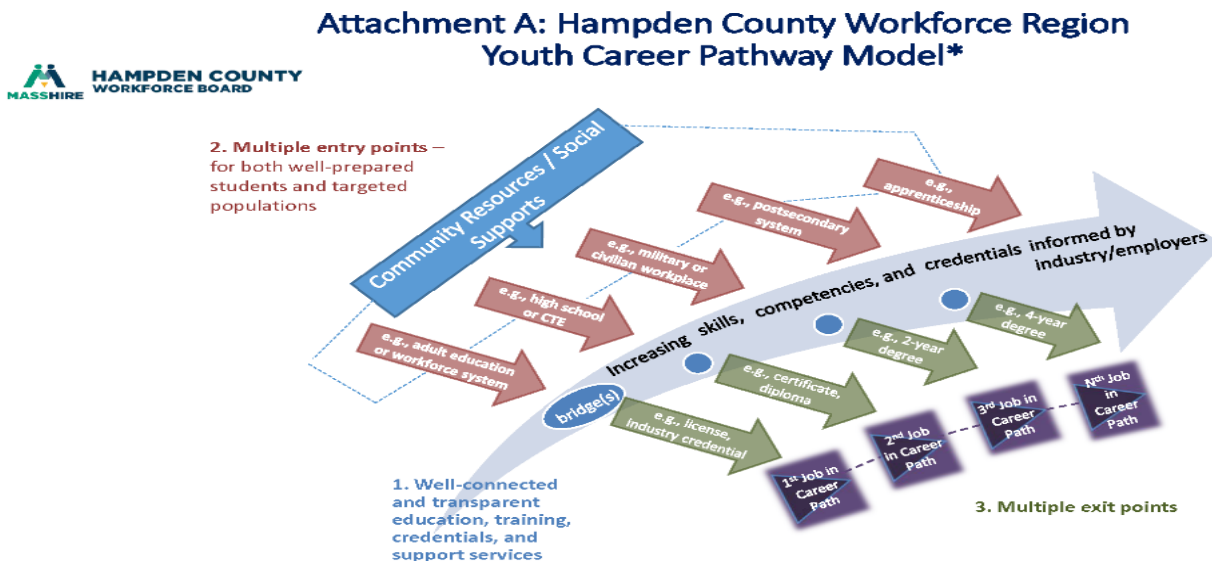
Related specifically to the healthcare sector, the Healthcare Workforce Partnership of Western Massachusetts strengthens collaboration amongst high school counselors, post-secondary higher education institutions, healthcare employers and community organizations to collectively shape and enhance the future healthcare workforce.

(9) How does the Board coordinate WIOA title I workforce investment activities with the provision of transportation and other appropriate supportive services in the local area? Please include a description of how other programs and services in your local area are leveraged to complement workforce investment activities.

The MHHCWB Title I Support Services Policy and Procedures, along with our Integrated Budget as submitted to and reviewed by MassHire DCS, outlines the provision of transportation and other necessary supportive services for Title I program enrollees. These services are delivered following a documented process that verifies participant need and tracks support through MOSES and individual case files.

In addition to direct service provision, we maintain active partnerships with a variety of community-based organizations that offer critical wraparound services. Referrals are made between these partners and our funded programs to enhance service delivery and maximize the impact of our Title I resources.

For youth participants specifically, we have further solidified this collaborative approach through our MOU—co-signed by multiple partners—which includes the following graphic illustrating the essential community supports required to promote youth success:



* As adapted from CLASP's Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Initiative's Model

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

The One-Stop Career Center operators in Hampden County are competitively selected in a manner that Wagner-Peyser services are provided directly by the operators' staff and are imbedded into the service delivery along with WIOA services and so duplication of services is not an issue. MHHCWB works closely with both Career Center operators to ensure all services including Wagner-Peyser are delivered in compliance with state, federal, and local policies and regulations.

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

MSFW signage is posted in English and Spanish on the front desk and resource center. Once identified, a MSFW would be given information specific to their specific needs, just as someone with a disability, or a veteran would. The CCS/Orientation PowerPoint presentation includes two detailed slides describing

the MSFW process. All persons coming into the centers receive access to all of the same resources, referrals, and services under “Universal Access.” Also, during the Orientation/CCS, customers learn about all the training programs and services available to them, and a slide also describes the definitions of Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers/Food Processors. Customers who think they may be MSFWs are asked to speak individually with the Orientation/CCS facilitator at the end of the session, at which time questions can be answered, and how to access “farm jobs” is explained. Customers who come to the center asking about farm jobs receive a one-to-one Orientation describing all of the career center services in addition to receiving referrals to any open farm job postings. The Farm jobs Book is kept in the Resource Center and is available, as well. All customers are told of their rights to file a complaint if they believe they’ve experienced discrimination or denied a service. Staff were provided the MSFW Desk Guides, and Spanish and English language support is available regarding EEO rights.

(12) Please describe how the Board coordinates WIOA title I workforce investment activities with adult education and literacy activities under WIOA title II. This description must include how the Board carries out the review of local applications submitted under title II consistent with WIOA secs. 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA sec. 232:

MHHCWB staff will continue to with state funded adult education programs in the following areas:

- Review of adult education applications for alignment with local and regional workforce priorities
- Participation in program quality reviews/monitoring and selected site visits
- Development of effective employer partnerships to place adult education and MassSTEP graduates
- Support and guidance to adult education programs related to the development of viable career pathways for adult learners in Hampden County
- Support and guidance to adult education programs related to the development of bridge classes and integrated education and training programs
- Support and guidance to adult education programs in serving shared customers, including processes to connect adult education students to career and employment services, resources and supports available at each Hampden County Career Center
- Support and guidance to the adult education staff located at both Career Centers

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

Peter Farkas, President & CEO, pfarkas@massshirecwb.com, 413.755.1362

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

MHHCWB follows its approved Procurement & Contracting Policies and Procedures, pursuant to MA Issuance 100 DCS 01.102 and 100 DCS 03.114.1 (and any subsequent updates to these issuances) and as a non-profit organization, 2 CFR Part 200.317-200.326 for the competitive procurement to any sub-grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities. We procure WIOA Youth

Providers every two years, and One-Stop Career Center Operators, every four years. The MHCWB will promote and maximize the competitive procurement process. All competitive procurements will:

- appropriately target resources based on approved job training plans;
- be made impartially and at "arms length";
- be based upon demonstrated performance
- include a determination of cost/price reasonableness; and
- be in compliance with all related federal and state laws, regulations and policy.

Youth and OSCC Operators will be selected via Request for Proposal process. Some WIOA funded services may utilize a Request for Qualifications process. Individual Training Accounts to eligible training providers follow a different state-driven process.

From our policies:

Procurement by competitive proposals (e.g., Request for Proposals).

The technique of competitive proposals is normally conducted with more than one source submitting an offer, and either a fixed-price or cost-reimbursement type contract is awarded. It is generally used when conditions are not appropriate for the use of sealed bids. The MHCWB will primarily utilize a Request for Proposals (RFP) method when competitively procuring services over \$150,000. The RFP process for formal proposal solicitation will ensure adequate competition and reasonable price. When using the RFP method, the following requirements apply:

- Requests for proposals will be publicized and identify all evaluation factors and their relative importance. Any response to publicized requests for proposals shall be honored to the maximum extent practical;
- Proposals will be solicited from an adequate number of qualified sources;
- The MHCWB will develop impartial review teams of Board members and/or other local experts for conducting technical evaluations of the proposals received and for recommending awardees; and
- Awards will be made to the responsible firm/organization whose proposal is most advantageous to the program, with price and other factors considered

Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

The process of a Request for Qualifications is a two-part process. First, a formal solicitation is issued to obtain submissions from contractors. These submissions are then reviewed and a list of contractors qualified to provide the goods or services required is developed. The second stage of the process is the comparison of two or more qualified providers to determine which will be chosen to provide the goods or services.

Individual Training Accounts

The process of choosing a provider to train a participant through an Individual Training Account is an exception to the RFP/RFQ process. Please refer to Policy 100 DCS 14.105 "Massachusetts Eligible Training Provider List (MA ETPL) Initial and Subsequent Eligibility Process" located on MassWorkforce.org: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/dcs-policy-14-105-subsequent-eligibility-for-ita-training-provider-courses-fy26/download>

(15) Please provide the local levels of performance negotiated with the Governor and chief elected official consistent with WIOA sec. 116(c), to be used to measure the performance of your local area and to be used by the Local Board for measuring the performance of your local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers under WIOA title I subtitle B, and the Career Center system in the local area.

WIOA PERFORMANCE MEASURES	FY'25 STATE GOALS	FY'25 APPROVED
<u>WIOA Adult Measures</u>		
Employment Q2	73.5%	69.8%
Employment Q4	75.0%	71.5%
Median Earnings Q2	\$7,900	\$7,254
Credential Rate	68.0%	56.4%
Measurable Skill Gain	41.5%	60.6%
<u>WIOA Dislocated Worker Measures</u>		
Employment Q2	78.0%	74.4%
Employment Q4	81.0%	73.6%
Median Earnings Q2	\$12,000	\$9,377
Credential Rate	70.0%	62.5%
Measurable Skill Gain	45.0%	65.0%
<u>WIOA Youth Measures</u>		
Employment/Education Q2	75.0%	77.1%
Employment/Education Q4	72.0%	75.0%
Median Earnings Q2	\$4,500	\$4,000
Credential Rate	60.0%	65.9%
Measurable Skill Gain	45.0%	45.0%

Regional Combined Career Center Performance Measures	FY'24 Performance	FY'25 Goal
Job Seekers Services		
1. Total Job Seekers Served	17,654	17,000
a. Total Job Seekers Unemployed	16,128	15,000
b. Persons with Disabilities	1,319	1,350
c. UI Claimants Served	8,446	8,133
d. Veterans Served	424	400
Employer Services		
1.Total Employers Served (= 1.a + 1.b)	1,094	1,500
a. New to Career Center	414	600
b. Repeat	680	900
2. Employers Receiving Job Seeker Referrals	329	400
3. Employers Hiring from Referrals	71	60

The MHCWB utilizes the following minimum standards for approving courses:

- Positive Completion Rate for Program - 70%
- Entered Unsubsidized Employment Rate for Program (for all who are enrolled in the program and not just from those that graduate and/or successfully complete) - 60%
- Minimum Hourly Wage at Placement - \$15.00*
* Massachusetts Minimum Wage effective January 1, 2023
- Occupational skills programs must result in Certificate as defined by the USDOL-ETA Training and Employment Guidance Letter TEGL 17-05, Attachment B

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

MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board (MHCWB) has developed, implemented, and regularly updates a comprehensive local strategic plan aligned with both regional and state economic priorities. The current plan, which covers the period from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2026, is filed with the state and publicly available on our website: masshirehwcw.com/strategic-plan.

A key companion to the Strategic Plan is the Board's Scoreboard, which tracks progress through 22 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) measured on a quarterly basis. These KPIs assess our advancement toward achieving the Strategic Plan's priorities and goals. The Scoreboard is reviewed each quarter by the Board's Strategic Planning Committee to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

In FY26, the Board will begin the process of developing a new local strategic plan to guide workforce development efforts after the completion of the current Strategic Plan.

The Healthcare Workforce Partnership of Western Massachusetts is an initiative of the MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board. It is a collaboration among employers, workforce development leaders, training and education providers, community-based organizations, and philanthropic organizations. All of these partners have come together with the shared mission of strengthening the region’s healthcare workforce and enhancing the quality of patient care. The Partnership responds to the workforce needs of employers and ensures that workers have access to the education and training needed to prepare them for lifelong careers in the rapidly changing healthcare industry. The Partnership’s three working groups: *Western MA Nursing Collaborative*, *Allied Health Working Group*, and *Pioneer Valley Interprofessional Practice and Education Collaborative* are instrumental in addressing healthcare workforce shortages across the region.

a. What trainings are provided to Board members?

New members of the MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board (MHHCWB) receive a formal orientation conducted by the President & CEO. In addition, the MHHCWB website serves as a valuable resource for information and guidance on WIOA policies that may impact Board members. A dedicated “members-only” section of the website provides access to relevant materials and updates.

In addition, the President & CEO conducts “refresher orientations” at least twice a year for seasoned Board members. These sessions provide updates on workforce development policies, strategic priorities, and governance expectations, ensuring that all members remain informed, aligned, and actively engaged in the Board’s mission.

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

Our MHHCWB Board Members are actively engaged and contribute to the workforce system through several key avenues including:

- Providing Industry Insight: Business members share real-time labor market information, hiring trends, and skill needs, ensuring that workforce strategies and training programs remain aligned with industry demand.
- Driving Strategic Planning: They help set the vision and priorities for the region’s workforce system by contributing their expertise to the development of the MHHCWB’s Strategic Plan and ongoing performance monitoring through the Board’s Scoreboard.
- Supporting Talent Pipelines: Business members actively participate in youth employment programs by offering internships, hosting summer youth worksites, mentoring students, and even hiring youth as entry-level employees.
- Fostering Public-Private Partnerships: Their involvement helps strengthen collaboration among employers, educators, and training providers to build a more coordinated and effective workforce ecosystem.
- Serve on the Review Team and approve the four-year charter of MHHCWB’s two customer-focused MassHire One-Stop Career Centers
- Facilitate collaboration among local elected officials, government agencies, and community organizations in partnership with MHHCWB.

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

Our MHCWB Board members:

- Utilize various business services including, but limited to, posting open job orders, attending job fairs & employer recruitment events, and hiring career center customers
- Serve as members of the Board's One-Stop Career Center Committee that monitors the Hampden County Business Services at the two MassHire Career Centers, provides feedback to the centers through the MHCWB management team, and recommends annual re-contracting of the two MassHire Career Centers to the full MHCWB for approval.
- Provide employment data, trend analysis, and labor market information on industry needs and trends

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

All of the above activities result in collaboration that ultimately supports our workforce delivery system and helps it to better serve its job seeker and business customers as well as our region's youth.

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

a) How does the Board ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are provided?

MHCWB is responsible for reviewing and approving training programs/courses for inclusion on the State Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), in accordance with the Individual Training Account (ITA) eligibility process outlined in state guidance. Once approved locally, these programs are added to the ETPL and made available to jobseekers through our Career Centers. As WIOA participants work with Career Center case managers and are determined eligible and suitable for training, they are required to research and compare at least two training providers offering programs aligned with their career goals.

After a provider is selected, the case manager confirms available funding and prepares an ITA request package for submission to MHCWB. MHCWB then issues an "Umbrella Contract" with each approved provider, which outlines general provisions and compliance requirements under the ITA system. For each participant, an individual Face Sheet is created, detailing the specific course information and associated training costs.

(18) Please describe how training services under chapter 3 of subtitle B will be provided in accordance with section 134(c)(3)(G), including, if contracts for the training services will be

used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of individual training accounts (ITA) under that chapter and how the local board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided.

MHHCWB currently only utilizes On-the-Job Training contracts outside of the ITA process outlined above. The OJT contract is implemented with a specific employer as a sole source provider once the appropriate match is made between the Participant and Employer. The customer is involved in the selection of the employer and the development of the training plan embedded within the OJT Training Contract.

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

MHHCWB posted the draft 4-Year Plan on June 16th for a public comment period through June 23rd.

Notices of the posting were sent via email to our Local Board, Youth Council distribution list (members and regular attendees, including all our youth providers), our Bidder's list, and community partners. In addition, the draft plan was shared on X/Twitter and LinkedIn.

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

MHHCWB has worked with representatives from each WIOA Core Partner agency and both MassHire Holyoke and MassHire Springfield Career Centers to develop intake, referral, case management, follow-up and tracking processes for each target population. A referral form, point of contact, and process has been developed for each target population, and as staff increase the use of these tools and processes, MHHCWB will monitor changes in identified shared customers through quarterly reports. As partners continue to address identification of shared customers and outcomes at the state-level, MHHCWB will communicate with state and local partners to ensure accuracy and consistency in these processes.

- (21) Please describe the local policy and processes that ensure priority for adult career and training services are given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient consistent with WIOA sec. 134(c)(3)(E), § 680.600 and 100 DCS 18.101.1 (Attachment C). Please ensure response aligns with MA Workforce Agenda Focus Area I.**

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

The Local Board may establish a process that also gives priority to other individuals eligible to receive such services outside the groups given priority under WIOA, provided that it is consistent with the [Priority of Service for Veterans](#).

- The MHHCWB and our OSCC Standard Operating Procedures and Policies have been submitted to the state according to the guidance.

Priority of service status is established at the time of eligibility determination and does not change during the period of participation. With the exception of Veterans and eligible spouses, priority of service status does not apply to the Dislocated Worker or Youth populations. Priority of service are implemented regardless of the amount of funds available. Priority for individual career and training services will be provided in the following order:

- Veterans and eligible spouses who are recipients of public assistance, low income, or basic skills deficient.
- Recipients of public assistance, and/or basic skills deficient
- Other low-income individuals (in accordance with Federal Poverty Guidelines and Lower Living Level Standard Income Levels)
- Individuals who are basic skills deficient

The priority of service for Veterans and eligible spouses, public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient is a statutory priority that applies only to the receipt of individualized career services and training services in the WIOA Title I Adult program.

WIOA establishes a priority requirement with respect to funds allocated to a local area for adult employment and training activities. Under this section, MassHire OSCC staff, when using WIOA Adult funds to provide individualized career services, training services, or both.

The delivery of individualized career services and training services will be provided on an as-needed basis to customers that move to the tiers of service options. Resources for individual career services and training services will be targeted for those who are veterans, recipients of public assistance (TANF), and individuals who are basic skills deficient as follows:

- Veterans will have immediate access to individualized career services and training services, or be placed at the top of a waiting list, if any, when such services are not available.
- In regards to covered persons, the priority of provision of services would be established as follows: Available funds would not change. First to be served would be public assistance recipients and low-income individuals who are also covered persons. The second group to be served would be public assistance recipients and low-income non-veterans. Among participants who are not public assistance recipients or low-income individuals, covered persons will receive priority over non-veterans.
- Recipients of TANF will have immediate access to intensive and training services, or be placed at the top of a waiting list, if any, when such services are not available to that individual under TANF resources.

- Individuals, employed or unemployed, that are determined to be in a family that meets the "low income" definition will have immediate access to intensive and training services or be placed at the top of a waiting list, if any.

When an individual is unable to secure gainful employment through the delivery of Basic services, eligibility determination, and an initial facilitated triage of an assessment of marketability will be completed and they will then meet with a Career Counselor to receive individualized services. (Note: Only WIOA registrants who meet priority determinations described in this policy will receive such services.) These may include the following services:

- A comprehensive and specialized assessment of skill levels and service needs, as needed;
- Development of a Case Plan to identify employment goals, achievement objectives, and what combination of services are needed to achieve goals;
- Individualized job development;
- Group counseling, individual counseling and career planning (as needed);
- Short-term specialized computer skills workshops;
- Case management for participants seeking job search, re-employment services, and who participate in training activities; and
- Others that may be added based on customer needs.

When an individual is unable to secure gainful employment through the delivery of Basic and Individualized services (which for individualizes services, at a minimum, may include completion of an objective assessment, participation in an individualized counseling and career planning session and completion of a Case Plan that has identified a need for skills training), training options will be explored. These would include:

- Occupational skills training delivered by an eligible provider that has been approved for ITA's and is on the state wide ITA list or
- Occupational skills training, combined with adult education services, delivered by an eligible provider that has been approved for ITA's and is on the state wide ITA list or
- On-the-Job Training

In order to match the individual to an Individual Training Account (ITA) that will result in employment, the Career Counselor will ensure that the individual:

- Has the skills and qualifications to successfully complete the selected training program,
- Conducts labor market research to assess the availability of jobs once training is complete, submit 5 job ads indicating the training they are seeking is in demand and selects a program of training services that is directly linked to employment opportunities either in the local area or in another area to which the individual is willing to relocate,
- Assesses the quality and cost of the training provider, which will be greatly enhanced as consumer reports are made available on MOSES, and
- Is unable to obtain grant assistance from other non-WIOA sources to pay the costs of such training, including Federal Pell Grants, Mass Rehab., Vet Benefits, etc. Funds of Last Resort must be utilized.

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

In conclusion, the MHHCWB remains committed to advancing strategic initiatives that align with the Massachusetts Workforce Agenda's four Focus Areas. As the local convener and leader of the workforce development system, the Workforce Board provides essential guidance, planning, and oversight to ensure that services in Hampden County are demand-driven and responsive to the needs of both jobseekers and employers.

Serving the region through two Career Centers—MassHire Holyoke and MassHire Springfield—MHHCWB offers high-quality, integrated services tailored to a dual customer base: individuals pursuing employment and training opportunities, and employers seeking skilled talent. Through strong collaboration with partners across education, economic development, and human services, MHHCWB and the Career Centers work together to build a workforce system that fosters lifelong learning, supports quality jobs, and promotes economic growth.

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 mor