



A 501c (3) agency supporting the MassHire Network

WIOA Local 4-Year Plan

(a) Strategic Planning elements, including:

(1) A regional (local) analysis of:

- (i) Economic conditions including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations; and**
- (ii) Employment needs of businesses in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations.**
- (iii) As appropriate, your local area may use an existing analysis, which is a timely current description of the regional economy, to meet the requirements of paragraphs (a)(1)(i) and (ii) of this section;**

Regional plan information may be used as applicable to the local area. However, local analysis that yields information that is not in the regional plan should be included in this response. (Please see 21 d).

The Metro South/West Workforce Development Area, made up of forty-three cities and towns, has the largest labor force in Massachusetts at 558,100 residents as of May 2025. This number has remained relatively flat over the last year, indicating stabilization post pandemic. The number of unemployed residents has increased over the past several years as the overall labor force has grown and stands at 26,353. The average unemployment rate for the region dropped from a high during the height of the Covid Pandemic of 6.8% to 4.0% in 2024. In recent months, the unemployment rate has ticked upwards and is 5.2% as of May 2025 (MA Department of Economic Research, Local Area Unemployment Statistics)

Average weekly wages for jobs in Metro South/West have continued to increase slightly over the past several years and are at \$1,989 per week. Metro South/West is home to 38,564 business establishments with the region losing 1,205 in 2024. (MA Department of Unemployment Assistance/Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages)

In the wake of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the labor market has moved into a phase of equilibrium indicated by the numbers of on-line postings for jobs remaining close to the number of unemployed residents in the region. However, since April of 2024, the labor market has shown signs of softening in the region. As of May 2025, there were 15,093 active on-line job ads (supply) while at the same time there were 26,353 unemployed residents seeking work (demand). (Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), Lightcast Technologies, Job Posting Time Series)

Industry Data:

Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, in terms of employment share, is the largest industry in Metro South/West with 85,671 jobs as the most recent available data shows. In fact, 15.4 percent of all jobs in the Metro South/West region fall under this industry. It has also become the highest paying industry, with average weekly wages of \$3,634. For comparison, the statewide averages weekly wages for Professional, Scientific and Technical Services is \$3,489.

As seen in Table 1, Health Care and Social Assistance follows closely to Professional, Scientific and Technical Services and accounts for another 14 percent of the jobs in the region. The remaining five largest industries by employment level include Educational Services, Retail Trade and Manufacturing. Of these five industries, Manufacturing is the only sector that has demonstrated a declining trend in employment, having lost 6,418 jobs since 2018. It is important to note that the majority of industries in the Metro South/West region experienced a decline in employment in 2019 and 2020 due to Covid-19 related closures which have impacted employment growth figures as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sectors by Employment, (US Census: Quarterly Workforce Indicators 2018-2024)

NAICS Sector	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Growth
<i>Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</i>	78,314	79,155	78,341	80,402	82,896	86,788	85,674	9.4%
<i>Health Care and Social Assistance</i>	74,671	76,004	70,164	72,168	74,591	75,608	78,678	5.4%
<i>Educational Services</i>	59,346	59,978	56,081	55,021	55,196	57,477	58,613	-1.2%
<i>Retail Trade</i>	59,840	59,498	54,968	56,366	56,312	56,927	57,453	-4.0%
<i>Manufacturing</i>	45,109	44,014	42,406	41,281	41,571	40,648	38,691	-14.2%
<i>Accommodation and Food Services</i>	40,412	40,966	29,974	30,835	36,018	37,640	38,174	-5.5%
<i>Administrative, Support and Waste Management Services</i>	36,853	37,999	35,024	34,074	37,755	38,491	37,900	2.8%
<i>Construction</i>	29,561	30,197	29,594	30,543	31,688	33,462	33,103	12.0%
<i>Management of Companies and Enterprises</i>	25,166	25,233	24,530	25,688	26,049	26,956	27,527	9.38%
<i>Information</i>	29,788	30,113	29,258	30,304	28,250	27,249	26,818	-9.9%
<i>Wholesale Trade</i>	25,808	26,102	24,930	25,466	26,852	26,678	26,679	3.8%
<i>Finance and Insurance</i>	20,675	21,534	21,611	21,950	24,254	25,070	26,019	25.8%
<i>Other Services (except Public Administration)</i>	19,117	19,488	16,592	16,984	18,054	17,924	18,120	-5.2%
<i>Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation</i>	16,139	16,313	10,885	11,672	14,213	15,914	17,427	7.9%
<i>Public Administration</i>	16,669	16,734	15,901	15,503	15,384	15,989	16,742	0.4%

<i>Transportation and Warehousing</i>	8,869	9,121	8,104	8,865	9,554	10,466	10,248	15.5%
<i>Real Estate and Rental and Leasing</i>	7,720	8,360	7,974	8,093	8,192	8,638	8,567	10.9%
<i>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting</i>	1,732	2,136	2,257	2,396	2,504	2,484	2,341	35.1%
<i>Utilities</i>	1,151	1,195	1,242	1,370	1,394	1,744	1,845	60.3%
<i>Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction</i>	100	85	78	60	60	63	60	-40.0%

Occupation Data:

Long term projection data indicates that by 2032 the occupations seeing the biggest increases in employment volume will be primarily software developers, healthcare occupations, managerial and food services. High numbers of projected openings in other occupations such as teachers, warehousing and construction, are indicators of a diverse industry base within the region.

As seen in the table below, Software Developers will require roughly 3,000 projected openings to be filled by 2032. As the use of AI in Software Engineering becomes more prevalent, it remains to be seen if need for Developers will stay this strong. Home Health Aides are estimated to be a critical need over the coming years as well. As eating establishments have re-opened post pandemic, Cooks are another occupation projected to have high vacancies. The region has also seen growth in product fulfillment centers necessitating the need for Order Fillers. While wages for these occupations are significantly less than Software Developers, these roles serve as entry points to career pathways in Healthcare, Food Services and Logistics.

Table 2: Long Term Employment Projections (MA Department of Economic Research/Bureau of Labor Statistics, Long Term Employment Projections)

Occupation Title	Employment Level		Change		Annual Openings	2023 Mean Annual Wage
	2022	2032	Numeric	%		
<i>Software Developers</i>	15,146	18,363	3,217	21.24%	1,209	\$149,617
<i>Home Health and Personal Care Aides</i>	12,298	15,057	2,759	22.43%	2,282	\$39,731
<i>Stockers and Order Fillers</i>	7,218	8,509	1,291	17.89%	1,388	\$40,585
<i>Cooks, Restaurant</i>	4,103	5,317	1,214	29.59%	826	\$44,006
<i>Fast Food and Counter Workers</i>	11,104	12,217	1,113	10.02%	2,773	\$35,958
<i>General and Operations Managers</i>	18,000	19,090	1,090	6.06%	1,567	\$158,606
<i>Registered Nurses</i>	8,457	9,452	995	11.77%	581	\$105,111
<i>Medical and Health Services Managers</i>	2,684	3,567	883	32.90%	304	\$161,906
<i>Financial Managers</i>	5,111	5,897	786	15.38%	446	\$193,716

<i>Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists</i>	6,378	7,142	764	11.98%	681	\$96,336
<i>Computer and Information Systems Managers</i>	4,948	5,668	720	14.55%	410	\$197,546
<i>Exercise Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors</i>	2,307	3,000	693	30.04%	555	\$59,665
<i>Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Coun</i>	2,792	3,453	661	23.67%	322	\$60,926
<i>Electricians</i>	3,849	4,476	627	16.29%	425	\$86,055
<i>Retail Salespersons</i>	14,264	14,854	590	4.14%	2,168	\$41,155
<i>Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education</i>	5,788	6,359	571	9.87%	461	\$84,211
<i>Nursing Assistants</i>	4,097	4,655	558	13.62%	676	\$44,547
<i>Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technic</i>	4,818	5,324	506	10.50%	362	\$89,841
<i>First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Worke</i>	3,460	3,926	466	13.47%	587	\$49,992
<i>Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary</i>	5,615	6,048	433	7.71%	720	\$44,699
<i>Maintenance and Repair Workers, General</i>	4,060	4,489	429	10.57%	426	\$57,980
<i>Management Analysts</i>	5,485	5,852	367	6.69%	493	\$135,199
<i>Waiters and Waitresses</i>	6,770	7,136	366	5.41%	1,475	\$41,399
<i>Project Management Specialists</i>	4,819	5,166	347	7.20%	379	\$116,120
<i>Medical Assistants</i>	1,971	2,315	344	17.45%	306	\$48,140

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

Skill gaps of applicants is an ongoing issue companies face in the region. Foundational skills for STEM occupations, IT occupations in particular, continue to be a critical need of employers based on anecdotal and empirical data. In a 2024 employer survey conducted by the 495 MetroWest Partnership and Framingham State University's Metro West Economic Research Center, 34% of business indicated their primary concern was finding qualified talent. Another 26% cited a skill gap of both current employees and new applicants.

The challenges that businesses reported in terms of soft skills included:

- A lack of professionalism, the misuse and overuse of social media in particular

- Poor business etiquette
- The inability to receive constructive criticism without being defensive or practically applying constructive feedback
- A poor work ethic where many new employees feel that the work is “beneath” them
- Unwillingness to investigate an issue or research a solution to a problem

Job posting data in the Metro South/West region over the year confirms much of what was seen in the Framingham State survey and in the Greater Boston Regional Blueprint.

The following tables were developed using job posting data compiled with Lightcast’s Developer tool over the most recent twelve-month period. For the Metro South/West region, the most prominent needs in terms of occupations, certification and skills of business seeking to fill jobs are broken out by the region’s five largest industries: Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, Healthcare and Social Assistance, Educational Services, Retail Trade and Manufacturing.

Table 3: Employer Needs Matrix (Lightcast: Developer 6/2024-6/2025)

Professional, Scientific and Technical Services Industry		
Occupation Clusters	Certifications	Skills
Computer and Mathematical (20%) Management (15%) Business and Financial Operations (11.6%) Architecture and Engineering (10.9%) Office and Administrative Support (8.8%) Healthcare Practitioners and Technical (5.8%) Sales and Related (5.1%) Life, Physical, and Social Science (3.9%) Production (3.7%) Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media (3.4%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valid Driver's License • Secret Clearance • Security Clearance • Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI Clearance) • Top Secret Clearance • Master Of Business Administration (MBA) • Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification • Project Management Professional Certification • Professional Engineer (PE) License • Registered Nurse (RN) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Management • Computer Science • Marketing • Python (Programming Language) • Data Analysis • Auditing • Finance • Workflow Management • Electrical Engineering • Automation

Health Care and Social Services Industry		
<u>Occupation Clusters</u>	<u>Certifications</u>	<u>Skills</u>
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical (41.1%) Healthcare Support (15.4%) Management (9.3%) Community and Social Services (7.1%) Office and Administrative Support (6.3%) Educational Instruction and Library Occupations (5.7) Business and Financial Operations (2.2%) Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations (2.1%) Food Preparation and Serving Related (2.0%) Personal Care and Service (1.8%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registered Nurse (RN) Valid Driver's License Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nursing Home Health Care Medical Records Nursing Care Treatment Planning Electronic Medical Record Billing Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Vital Signs Rehabilitation

Educational Services Industry		
<u>Occupation Clusters</u>	<u>Certifications</u>	<u>Skills</u>
Education, Training, and Library (44.9%) Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media (11.7%) Management (11.5%) Community and Social Services (6.1%) Office and Administrative Support (4.2%) Healthcare Practitioners and Technical (4.0%) Business and Financial Operations (2.9) Food Preparation and Serving Related (2.4) Computer and Mathematical (1.9%) Protective Services (1.7%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching Certificate Valid Driver's License Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification First Aid Certification Automated External Defibrillator (AED) Certification Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) Registered Nurse (RN) ServSafe Certification Master Of Business Administration (MBA) Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Education Individualized Education Programs (IEP) Student Services Disabilities Machinery Lesson Planning Data Collection Curriculum Development Psychology Differentiated Instruction

Retail Trade Industry		
Occupation Clusters	Certifications	Skills
Sales and Related (40.8%) Transportation and Material Moving (10.1%) Office and Administrative Support (7.4%) Management (6.8%) Healthcare Practitioners and Technical (5.9%) Food Preparation and Serving Related (4.6%) Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media (4.1%) Installation, Maintenance, and Repair (3.9%) Business and Financial Operations (3.7%) Computer and Mathematical (3.3%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valid Driver's License Certified Pharmacy Technician Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) Certification Registered Pharmacist (RPh) Master Of Business Administration (MBA) Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification First Aid Certification Cosmetology License Immunization Certification Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merchandising Selling Techniques Product Knowledge Cash Register Inventory Management Retail Operations Loss Prevention Warehousing Marketing Asset Protection

Manufacturing Industry		
Occupation Clusters	Certifications	Skills
Management (17.4%) Computer and Mathematical (14.2%) Architecture and Engineering (10.7%) Business and Financial Operations (10.0%) Sales and Related (8.8%) Production (8.5%) Office and Administrative Support (7.2%) Installation, Maintenance, and Repair (5.9%) Life, Physical, and Social Science (4.4%) Transportation and Material Moving (3.2%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valid Driver's License Master Of Business Administration (MBA) Security Clearance Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI Clearance) Project Management Professional Certification Certified Public Accountant Certified Information Systems Security Professional CompTIA Security+ Top Secret Clearance Forklift Certification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing Project Management Continuous Improvement Process New Product Development Pharmaceuticals General Mathematics Shipping And Receiving Finance Automation Data Analysis

Overall, employers have seen an increased need for Registered Nurses in the past year as seen in Table 4. Retail occupations are in high demand as well, however it is important to note that the Retail Trade industry experiences a high degree of turnover, resulting in more job postings throughout the year.

Table 4: All Occupations by Posting Volume (Lightcast 6/2024 to 6/2025)

Occupations / SOC Code	Job Posting Count
Registered Nurses	9,253
Retail Salespersons	5,350
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	3,425
Software Developers	2,842
Computer Occupations, All Other	2,560
Medical and Health Services Managers	2,478
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	2,454
Customer Service Representatives	2,130
Physical Therapists	1,953
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	1,843
General and Operations Managers	1,828
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	1,787
First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	1,764
Marketing Managers	1,742
Medical Assistants	1,739
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,735
Managers, All Other	1,701
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	1,694
Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	1,593
Project Management Specialists	1,573
Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	1,562
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	1,550
Financial Managers	1,531
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	1,515
Coaches and Scouts	1,512

(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 employment¹.

Labor Force

The labor force as defined as “residents who are either working or unemployed and looking for work” stands at 558,100. Of the Metro South/West labor force 531,747 are employed while 26,353 are unemployed. The number of unemployed residents increased from 20,904 as the labor market has

begun to show signs of softening. Of the forty-three cities and towns that make up the region, the highest number of unemployed individuals reside in Newton 1,925, Waltham 1,592, Framingham 1,591, Brookline, 1,192 and Marlborough 1,111. (MA Department of Economic Research/Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics)

Table 5: Labor Force and Unemployment Rate (MA Department of Economic Research: LAUS, 5/24 to 5/25)

Month	Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Metro South/West Rate	Massachusetts Rate
May	2025	558,100	531,747	26,353	4.7	5.2
April	2025	555,080	532,984	22,096	4	4.6
March	2025	554,344	530,799	23,545	4.2	5
February	2025	553,698	530,371	23,327	4.2	5
January	2025	555,158	533,484	21,674	3.9	4.7
December	2024	552,918	533,016	19,902	3.6	4.1
November	2024	551,675	532,326	19,349	3.5	3.9
October	2024	550,717	531,305	19,412	3.5	3.9
September	2024	546,717	528,156	18,561	3.3	3.8
August	2024	553,124	531,613	21,511	3.9	4.3
July	2024	555,844	533,342	22,502	4	4.5
June	2024	554,473	533,569	20,904	3.8	4.2

UI Rates and Claimant Data

As of May 2021, the unemployment rate for the region is 4.7%, which has been consistently lower than the Massachusetts rate which stands at 5.2%. Unemployment Insurance claimants averaged 6,530 on a monthly basis, significantly lower than over 24,000 at the height of the Covid Pandemic. The Professional, Scientific and Technical Services industry experienced the largest number of claims averaging 1,481 per month while in term of occupations, Management jobs were the most common with over 1,757 claims filed each month on average. (MA Department of Economic Research Insurance Claimant Data 5/2024 – 4/2025)

Table 6: Unemployment Insurance Claims Data, last 12 months Metro South/West Workforce Delivery Area

Metro South/West Claimant Count			
April 2025	6,729	October 2024	5,650
March 2025	7,751	September 2024	5,891
February 2025	7,855	August 2024	6,476
January 2025	7,689	July 2024	6,655
December 2024	6,247	June 2024	5,890
November 2024	5,656	May 2024	5,865

Workforce Demographics

The workforce in the Metro South/West region is older on average with 26% made up of individuals 55 or older. A challenge in this region is that younger workers able to potentially fill positions vacated by older workers are in short supply. According to Quarterly Workforce Indicators from the US Census,

there are 58,139 workers aged 14 to 24, which only comprises 12% of the workforce, roughly half of the number of the aging workforce cohort.

Table 7: Workforce by Age, (US Census: Quarterly Workforce Indicators 2024)

Age Groups	14-18	19-21	22-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-99
Workforce Count	15,971	23,221	30,174	119,592	116,018	105,113	99,940	46,217

Workers are well educated in the region. 192,682 workers have a bachelor's degree or higher, which is 40% of the workforce. At the same time, there are only 9% of the workforce who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent.

Table 8: Workforce by Education, (US Census: Quarterly Workforce Indicators 2024)

Education	Less than high school	High school or equivalent, no college	Some college or Associate degree	Bachelor's degree or higher	Educational attainment not available
Workforce Count	54,605	104,521	135,072	192,682	69,366

In terms of race and ethnicity the Metro South/West Region is predominantly White. Black or African Americans and Asians each make up the same percentage of the workforce at 9.5%. Hispanic or Latinos comprise 10.6 % of the region's workforce. These percentages have increased slightly for minorities populations over the past five years as the number of white workers has decreased by greater volume post Pandemic compared to other races and ethnicities. (US Census/Longitudinal Employer Household Dynamics 2016-2021)

Table 9: Workforce by Race, (US Census: Quarterly Workforce Indicators 2024)

Race	White Alone	Black or African American Alone	American Indian or Alaska Native Alone	Asian Alone	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Alone	Two or More Race Groups
Workforce Count	433,944	53,224	2,980	53,284	1,161	11,653

Table 10: Workforce by Ethnicity, (US Census: Quarterly Workforce Indicators 2024)

Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic of Latino
Workforce Count	59,129	497,117

Individuals with Barriers to Employment

Employment barriers that individuals in the Metro South/West face range from poverty, to disabilities, to legal issues. With more employers requiring credit checks as a part of the application process, it can be difficult for low-income workers or the "working poor" to advance. According to data from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) an estimated 45,419 households in Middlesex County are receiving

aid through the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) or an estimated 7.7% . ACS estimates also indicate that 125,491 people in the region, or 8.2%, are living in poverty.

Adult Basic Education and Limited English Proficiency

In the Metro South/West region it is estimated that there are just over 50,000 individuals with limited English proficiency and over 30,000 adults without a high school diploma or equivalent. Most recent Data supplied from the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education (DESE) and 2019 five-year estimates from the ACS indicate that Framingham, Waltham, Newton, Marlborough and Brookline are the cities and town where the biggest need for both ABE and ESOL training exists by volume.

Table 11: ABE and ESOL need by City/Town (ACS: 2019 Five-Year Estimates)

City/Town	Population	ABE NEED						ESOL NEED	
		Less than 9th Grade		9th - 12th, No Diploma		Less than 9th + 9th-12th		Limited English Proficient	
		Number	% of Pop	Number	% of Pop	Number	% of Pop	Number	% of Pop
State Total:	6,705,586	220,055	4.8%	251,050	5.4%	471,105	10.2%	525,198	9.9%
Framingham	70,443	2,639	5.4%	2,689	5.5%	5,328	11.0%	10,205	18.3%
Waltham	62,438	2,195	5.1%	2,093	4.9%	4,288	9.9%	6,551	12.2%
Newton	87,675	719	1.2%	776	1.3%	1,495	2.6%	5,869	8.6%
Marlborough	39,425	1,733	6.2%	1,321	4.7%	3,054	10.9%	4,815	15.5%
Brookline	59,132	778	1.9%	594	1.5%	1,372	3.4%	4,631	9.6%
Lexington	32,700	237	1.1%	439	2.0%	676	3.0%	1,995	8.3%
Hudson	19,602	769	5.4%	589	4.1%	1,358	9.5%	1,519	9.8%
Norwood	28,962	549	2.6%	613	2.9%	1,162	5.6%	1,505	6.6%
Natick	34,892	247	1.0%	406	1.7%	653	2.7%	1,436	5.5%
Acton	22,925	209	1.3%	196	1.3%	405	2.6%	1,362	8.0%
Dedham	25,224	447	2.5%	637	3.5%	1,084	5.9%	1,275	6.4%
Needham	29,853	88	0.4%	321	1.6%	409	2.0%	1,091	5.0%
Sharon	17,995	124	1.0%	135	1.1%	259	2.1%	979	7.6%
Wellesley	28,832	107	0.7%	179	1.1%	286	1.8%	930	4.4%
Canton	22,276	214	1.4%	277	1.8%	491	3.1%	882	5.1%
Ashland	17,159	221	1.9%	250	2.1%	471	3.9%	721	5.5%
Bedford	13,921	68	0.7%	162	1.7%	230	2.4%	650	6.2%
Bellingham	16,682	262	2.2%	500	4.2%	762	6.4%	543	4.1%
Walpole	24,796	571	3.3%	522	3.0%	1,093	6.3%	524	2.8%
Westwood	15,094	107	1.0%	181	1.8%	288	2.8%	507	4.6%

Franklin	32,731	269	1.3%	533	2.5%	802	3.8%	443	1.8%
Wayland	13,432	57	0.6%	86	0.9%	143	1.6%	433	4.4%
Sudbury	18,397	95	0.8%	74	0.6%	169	1.4%	422	3.3%
Concord	19,271	282	2.0%	556	4.0%	838	6.0%	401	2.7%
Weston	11,850	38	0.5%	76	1.0%	114	1.5%	397	4.7%
Maynard	10,459	157	2.0%	186	2.4%	343	4.5%	310	3.8%
Foxborough	17,243	183	1.5%	461	3.8%	644	5.3%	285	2.1%
Norfolk	11,660	282	3.4%	534	6.4%	816	9.9%	246	2.7%
Boxborough	5,137	0	0.0%	10	0.3%	10	0.3%	237	6.0%
Holliston	14,197	72	0.8%	210	2.2%	282	3.0%	232	2.2%
Southborough	9,909	98	1.5%	58	0.9%	156	2.4%	203	2.8%
Littleton	9,359	33	0.5%	83	1.2%	116	1.7%	194	2.7%
Millis	8,051	3	0.1%	123	2.2%	126	2.2%	183	3.0%
Hopkinton	15,925	142	1.4%	88	0.8%	230	2.2%	177	1.6%
Carlisle	5,074	27	0.8%	23	0.7%	50	1.4%	174	4.6%
Medway	13,069	142	1.6%	225	2.6%	367	4.2%	172	1.8%
Lincoln	7,270	49	1.0%	51	1.1%	100	2.1%	142	2.8%
Dover	5,814	18	0.5%	20	0.5%	38	1.0%	136	3.3%
Medfield	12,368	3	0.0%	148	1.9%	151	1.9%	96	1.1%
Sherborn	4,245	20	0.7%	20	0.7%	40	1.4%	79	2.6%
Wrentham	11,287	109	1.4%	148	2.0%	257	3.4%	68	0.8%
Stow	6,957	34	0.7%	1	0.0%	35	0.7%	54	1.1%
Plainville	8,735	75	1.2%	220	3.4%	295	4.6%	14	0.2%
Total:	942,466	14,472	2.3%	16,814	2.6%	31,286	4.9%	53,088	7.3%

Individuals Facing Disabilities

People dealing with disabilities find challenges when looking for work, while others have dropped out of the labor force altogether. In both cases, individuals with cognitive disabilities make up the largest percentage. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, a cognitive disability is any condition that sufficiently impacts learning and knowing. This includes impairments affecting the capacities to learn, process, remember, or communicate information; awareness; and decision-making. The table below from the 2023 American Community Survey breaks out the numbers of people in Middlesex County by their disability type and whether they are seeking work or not.

Table 12: Disability by Type and Employment Status

Middlesex County	Estimate
Total Population:	1,027,553
Unemployed:	29,000
With a disability:	3,183
With a hearing difficulty	737
With a vision difficulty	306

With a cognitive difficulty	1,962
With an ambulatory difficulty	1,388
With a self-care difficulty	329
With an independent living difficulty	1,411
Not in labor force:	164,624
With a disability:	33,346
With a hearing difficulty	3,339
With a vision difficulty	3,145
With a cognitive difficulty	21,643
With an ambulatory difficulty	13,931
With a self-care difficulty	8,513
With an independent living difficulty	20,122

Released from Incarceration

The majority of state-run correction facilities in Massachusetts are located in the Metro South/West Region. Data provided by the Department of Corrections put the number of inmates released to Middlesex and Norfolk Counties at roughly 1,155 for 2024. On average 327 inmates per year are released in this area. This does not include individuals from facilities under the Norfolk Sheriff's Office or the Middlesex House of Corrections.

Table 12: DOC Correctional Facilities in Metro South/West

Name	Location	Security
<u>Massachusetts Correctional Institution - Cedar Junction</u> (Closed)	<u>Norfolk / Walpole</u>	Maximum/Medium
<u>Massachusetts Correctional Institution - Concord</u> (Closed)	<u>West Concord</u>	Medium
<u>Massachusetts Correctional Institution - Framingham</u>	<u>Framingham</u>	Medium
<u>Massachusetts Correctional Institution - Norfolk</u>	<u>Norfolk</u>	Medium
<u>Northeastern Correctional Center</u>	<u>West Concord</u>	Minimum/Pre-Release
<u>Pondville Correctional Center</u>	<u>Norfolk</u>	Minimum/Pre-Release
<u>South Middlesex Correctional Center</u>	<u>Framingham</u>	Minimum/Pre-Release

(4) Please provide an analysis of workforce development activities, including education and training, in the local area. This analysis must:

- a) include strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities.
- b) address the capacity to provide the workforce development activities around:
 - i. education and skill needs of the workforce;
 - ii. individuals with barriers to employment;
 - iii. employment needs of businesses.

The Strengths of workforce development activities in Metro South/West include:

- A 2022 merger of the two non-profits, Partnerships for a Skilled Workforce (PSW) and Metro South/West Workforce Employment and Training Administration (MSWETA) has enabled more funding to go to programming versus administration.
- The adoption of the Metro South/West Workforce Board's own five-year strategic plan in 2023 has provided greater clarity surrounding workforce development goals.
- All youth career education programs, WIOA Youth, YouthWorks, Connecting Activities and other grant fund programs are consolidated under the Board's Youth Connections initiative.
- A cohesive and highly collaborative relationship between the workforce board and the career center to more effectively provide workforce development programming and services to businesses and job seekers
- An industry sector-based approach in program design, implementation and execution, with a focus on health care, computers/information technology, advanced manufacturing, retail and STEM
- Regional approach to programming and planning with Greater Boston partners, Metro North Workforce Board and the Boston Private Industry Council as well as collaboration with the adjoining Central and North Central Workforce Boards has expanded our ability to provide workforce development related services.
- Capitalizing on additional non-WIOA funding sources has led to sustained budgets and programming
- Staff levels are optimized to best secure funding and implement programs
- Sustained partnerships with adult education providers allows the region to leverage and optimize adult education services through the Career Centers.
- Commitment to the WIOA mandated partnerships and to the overarching concept of the 'shared customer' and utilization of the Career Center as a hub for services
- Ability to provide virtual services to both Job Seekers and Businesses.
- A comprehensive annual Career Center Monitoring process that focuses on program integration, team building and technical assistance.

The Weaknesses (or challenges) of workforce development activities in Metro South/West include:

1. The Metro South/West region's large size is challenging. Our 43 communities have increasingly diverse populations (across all demographic traits) and a more expensive cost of living than the state overall. Some towns have high concentrations of employers where others are mostly residential. Transportation within the region is extremely limited without a car, which makes it tough to get to and from work and to visit the two career center locations (Framingham and Norwood). Getting the attention of residents and employers in each city and town and responding to their varying needs will require more community-based solutions.

2. It's not clear to most job seekers or employers that we exist, what we offer, and how best to access our services. The state's workforce development system is opaque and difficult for the lay person to navigate. In fact, the average job seeker or employer does not think about initiating contact with the Workforce Board. Most job seekers are referred to our One-Stop Career Centers by the Department of Unemployment Assistance. We are a valuable resource to all potential workers and employers in the region, but we will have to do our own marketing to reach our intended audiences.

3. The tight labor market means that our organization faces new demands. The greying of the workforce combined with Covid-era defections mean that regional employers face unprecedented and,

in some cases, acute labor shortages. The pipeline is emptier than it has been in years. Our staff and board will need to work in a more coordinated fashion and be more pro-active about reaching out to unemployed and underemployed job seekers and potential employers. Our staff will also need to cultivate more partnerships with training providers, ESL programs, and educational institutions at all levels.

4. The large and diverse Board of Directors could and should serve a more strategic function. Federal guidelines determine multi-stakeholder board member representation, but representation does not equal participation. More can and should be done regularly to engage the members in strategic, problem-solving discussions around labor market issues and new initiatives. Members could also share industry trends and serve as community ambassadors to promote training enrollment, program pilots, and mutually beneficial partnerships.

5. Metro South/West's identity is still emerging. With the 2022 merger, we now combine employer, training, and career services under one roof. In addition, our nonprofit status provides flexibility to raise our own funds and pursue innovative solutions to the region's employment challenges. This plan proposes potential pilot solutions in Goal 4. Success will hinge on a clear vision, a renewed emphasis on partnership building, and an even higher level of internal coordination.

Additional challenges include:

- Public transportation within the region is fractured and limited, with services typically found in the larger city and town centers, with non-day shift services even more limited.
- Massachusetts One-Stop Employment System (MOSES), a data system that is over twenty-five years old, restricts the ability of the Career Centers to catalogue talent and facilitate effective labor exchange services.
- Workforce Housing is limited in the region and overall housing costs are higher than most workforce areas.
- Labor shortages have continued post-pandemic, with a larger portion of individuals age 54 and older dropping out of the labor force. Population growth and by extension the numbers of workers is projected to remain flat over the next decade.
- The number of vendors on our Eligible Training Provider list for WIOA funding continues to shrink, limiting customer choice and increasing difficulty in reaching our 30% funding requirement for training.

The MassHire Metro South/West Workforce Board (WB) has and continues to expand and develop its capacity to address the workforce development needs in the region. The WB has long taken an industry sector approach when designing and implementing programming for the region. Starting with *HealthCareWorks*, our branded healthcare sector initiative, the WB will continue to concentrate on health care, with a particular focus on supporting behavioral health occupations. As part of the Greater Boston Regional Plan, we will continue to pursue programs in the Health Care and Computer/IT sectors. Within the region, youth programs under our *Youth Connections* banner have been revamped to integrate in-school and out-of-school programs and integrate them with structured career exploration activities. This has led to stronger performance and the capacity to serve more participants as well as school districts. We will continue addressing the needs of youth/young adults at-risk and with the

greatest need. Our partnership with TRNSFR Virtual Reality has allowed us to develop and revise programs that can be delivered virtually as a way to supplement in-person services.

The WB, with the active support of the career center, is taking a new, broader approach to addressing the needs of individuals with barriers to employment. Efforts are ongoing with groups such as individuals dealing with disabilities, ex-offenders, English language learners, adults without a high school diploma or equivalency and recently dislocated workers. Establishing and/or strengthening relationships with WIOA partners such as Mass Ability, Department of Transitional Assistance, The Metro West Employment Collaboration, and Pondville Correctional Facility are key to these efforts.

The WB has actively developed and maintained business relationships within the region and has created a board level position, Director of Business Partnerships, to coordinate business engagement across the Career Center, Youth Connections and the WB. Active participation in groups such as the 495/MetroWest Corridor Partnership, Middlesex 3 Coalition, MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, MetroWest Healthcare Collaborative, Massachusetts Senior Care Foundation and numerous local chambers of commerce have helped to expand and solidify business relationships and are a vehicle for providing detailed workforce challenges and needs. We have also developed strong partnerships with local community colleges and Chapter 74 programs to better address the occupational and workplace education needs. The WB developed a Vocational Technical Education Consortium comprised of eight schools offering Chapter 74 programming and support activity through Career Technical Initiative (CTI). As an intermediary, the WB works to bring businesses, educators and supportive service agencies together to work collaboratively and effectively.

(5) Please describe your Board’s strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment), and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators described in § 677.155(a)(1). The primary indicators of performance include:

- a) **The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;**
- b) **The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program;**
- c) **Median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;**
- d) **The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attained a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program**

Our Mission: To lead the development of a dynamic workforce system for our region that advances both workers and businesses.

We do this by:

- Communicating emerging workforce trends to our partners
- Collaborating with our partners to address workforce needs
- Developing effective programs to serve customers seeking jobs and employers seeking workers

Our Vision: We envision a region in which all residents and employers contribute to and benefit from a strong local economy.

As part of the Metro South/West Workforce Board's (WB) strategic planning process, we conducted a detailed, consensus driven community needs assessment. The top needs were identified and then priorities were established.

Top 6 Needs Identified:

1. Childcare – help needed with cost, access to quality care, teacher recruitment and training
2. Private sector/public sector relationship – improve communication, help find and train workers
3. Youth programs – help youth enter the workforce, teach them about trades and other career paths
4. Low-skill workers – need targeted outreach, coaching, training, basic skill remediation
5. Construction and manufacturing – need to fill the pipeline as workers retire
6. Better marketing – all audiences need to know more about Metro South/West services, employers need one stop point of entry and concierge support

Top 5 Priorities Identified:

1. Expand youth programs – as a pipeline to jobs in the trades/industry
2. Expand Second Chance and similar programs – for job seekers in need, including those with special language or cultural needs and those who have rehabilitated from incarceration or addiction
3. Offer childcare - offer childcare vouchers, on-site care, help employers see the value
4. Motivate workforce return – support strategies for sustainable living wages, utilize retirees
5. Expand targeted marketing – reach both job seekers and employers, attract more training vendors

The Strategic Plan has identified four goals that are essential to Metro South/West's long-term success. These goals are interdependent and connected:

Goal 1. Develop skilled workers to build the region's present and future workforce

Goal 2. Increase employer involvement in the Metro South/West workforce system

Goal 3. Increase awareness of Metro South/West and of its value as a regional resource

Goal 4. Strengthen Metro South/West's internal capacity to function as a regional innovation hub

Goal 1: Develop skilled workers to build the region's present and future workforce

Objective 1: Engage more adults and youth in the career pipeline

Strategy 1: Promote pathways into high demand fields among job seekers at all education levels and career stages

Tactic 1: Prioritize multiple education pathways (e.g., alternatives to four-year colleges, apprenticeships, vocational and career tech schools)

Tactic 2: Coordinate with educators to help deliver more effective career education services for participants

Tactic 3: Employ technology when possible (e.g., virtual reality technology)

Strategy 2: Expand our capacity to engage with schools in our region

Tactic 1: Consolidate all our youth programs as a sub-brand

Tactic 2: Seek grant and private funding to support new, expanded, and more flexible youth outreach efforts

Tactic 3: Create a school-to-college-to-employment pathways group within the youth branch (including traditional schools, voc-tech schools, community colleges, and employers)

Objective 2: Reach the “hidden labor force” with creative and inclusive approaches

Strategy 1: Utilize data effectively to identify diverse populations

Strategy 2: Design and conduct a specific recruitment and support plan for individuals from special populations (e.g., justice-involved applicants, single parents, ESL speakers, new immigrants, persons with disabilities or medical conditions)

Strategy 3: Formulate a community organization outreach plan (e.g., prisons, DTA office, Community Outreach Programs, potentially co-locate)

Objective 3: Collaborate with training providers to increase student enrollment and expand the pool of available training offerings

Strategy 1: Work closely with area colleges and other partners to develop new training content, curriculum, and programs

Strategy 2: Recruit more trainers for high demand programs

Strategy 3: Encourage staff to physically visit training providers and develop relationships with them

Goal 2: Increase employer involvement in the Metro South/West workforce system

Objective 1: Cultivate more employers as partners in workforce development

Strategy 1: Collaborate with employers to shape job openings and promote job listings

Strategy 2: Foster ongoing collaboration between employers and schools/colleges

Tactic 1: Encourage and assist employers to develop/design career exploration opportunities, including guest speakers, internships, and teacher externships

Tactic 2: Align school and college curricula with employer needs

Tactic 2: Keep employers well informed of individuals graduating from training programs

Objective 2: Serve high priority industries and companies more effectively

Strategy 1: Identify high priority industries using workforce trend data and employer input

Tactic 1: Develop a decision-making rubric to guide prioritization

Strategy 2: Identify specific companies and specific jobs in those industries to target

Tactic 1: Create industry advisory working groups for our existing Career Center Committee

Strategy 3: Approach targeted companies and apply for grants to support particular industries

Objective 3: Identify, navigate, and obtain business-related resources

Strategy 1: Present a clear path for employers to follow for particular hires

Strategy 2: Work with employers to identify the appropriate partner or agency to address their needs

Tactic 1: Help employers find workers, train their existing workforce, secure grants, and identify resources to avert or mitigate layoffs

Goal 3: Increase awareness of Metro South/West and of its value as a regional resource

Objective 1: Regularly assess how Metro South/West connects with all stakeholders

Strategy 1: Evaluate current methods for reaching all stakeholders (employers and job seekers, two-and four-year colleges, training providers, and other partners)

Strategy 2: Identify opportunities to improve outreach, with particular attention to reaching diverse and underserved job seekers

Strategy 3: Set annual priorities for targeted outreach

Objective 2: Promote Metro South/West as *Your Workforce Source*

Strategy 1: Distinguish Metro South/West Workforce Board within the MassHire brand, using multiple methods to identify, target, and reach selected audiences

Tactic 1: Develop clear, understandable promotional language that all staff can use on a continual basis

Tactic 2: Regularly publicize Metro South/West achievements

Tactic 3: Form an ad-hoc committee of board and staff members to consider ways to raise visibility through the nonprofit entity

Strategy 2: Identify social media and public relations tasks and the best way to implement them on a regular basis

Objective 3: Integrate Metro South/West more closely with the communities we serve

Strategy 1: Continue to reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of the Metro South/West region in our staff and board members

Strategy 2: Collaborate with diverse community partners to address their hiring, training, or recruitment issues

Strategy 3: Organize and/or attend in-person events that highlight workforce issues and Metro South/West resources

Tactic 1: Attend community events to increase job seeker engagement at the local level

Tactic 2: Convene a summit to inform municipal and community leaders about local resources of which they can take advantage

Goal 4: Strengthen Metro South/West's internal capacity to function as a regional innovation hub

Objective 1: Improve staff coordination both internally and externally

Strategy 1: Train and encourage staff to strengthen and build relationships with community partners, employers, and other stakeholders

Tactic 1: Cross-train staff about all other Metro South/West programs and partners

Tactic 2: Develop additional metrics for process improvement

Tactic 3: Encourage staff to serve on career advisory boards (at voc-tech schools and community colleges) and other partner committees

Strategy 2: Move to a more formal meeting and communication structure, including all the branch managers, career center staff, and executive director

Strategy 3: Utilize technology to track job seekers and employers in our system

Tactic 1: Research and purchase a new CRM system

Objective 2: Develop sector-based staff positions to actively recruit training providers

Strategy 1: Utilize staff as program sponsors to help employers develop apprenticeship training programs

Tactic 1: Develop Metro South/West's Healthcare Works manager to be more involved in apprenticeship program development

Tactic 2: Create a Manufacturing Works position within Metro South/West to work with selected manufacturing companies as training partners

Objective 3: Utilize Metro South/West's nonprofit status to reduce barriers and foster innovation

Strategy 1: Fundraise independently to support flexible programming and to serve those who do not meet eligibility criteria

Tactic 1: Develop relationships with funders willing to support innovative ideas

Tactic 2: Organize an event to build publicity and raise funds, starting with youth programs

Strategy 2: Pilot a realistic project funded with non-traditional sources

Tactic 1: Monitor opportunities to offer on-site day care during training

Tactic 2: Explore the idea of forming an entrepreneur center

Tactic 3: Consider purchasing and renting space to nonprofits or small businesses

Objective 4: Leverage the Metro South/West board to drive creativity and innovation in workforce development

Strategy 1: Hold more participatory and strategic board meetings, informed by current market data and input from a range of community leaders

Tactic 1: Share staff research on other regions and states and discuss promising practices

Tactic 2: With staff, identify the most challenging barriers to regional employment

Tactic 3: Invite board members to share trends and innovative practices they see in their industries

Tactic 4: Regularly review progress in implementing strategic plan

Strategy 2: Encourage board members to serve as champions for their industries

Tactic 1: Promote Metro South/West to colleagues in similar industries, including recruiting training providers

Tactic 2: Convert the Workforce Strategies committee to a Think Tank - an ad-hoc innovation committee of board members, partners, and staff

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

The WB has implemented a cohesive, aligned and collaborative team relationship with the previous Career Center Operator, Volunteers of America and will continue with the new operator, Blue Hills Regional Technical School to establish an “Integrated Management” approach. The Career Center is responsible for providing effective core programming and has overcome significant challenges and transitions that had impacted its ability to provide mandated services efficiently and comprehensively. To address issues and support team development, the WB has created an Integrated Management Team (IMT) comprised of career center leadership (operator and state staff) and workforce board leadership which meets at least monthly. The goal of the IMT is to increase communications, engender collaboration, improve the timeliness and quality of decision making and in general, create a sense of comradery and “oneness”. The concept and acceptance of the IMT has been positive with improved practices and results evident to all participants.

The WB went through a thorough, comprehensive process of bringing required WIOA partners together, resulting in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (Appendix a.) that was signed by all partners and focuses on serving the “shared customer” with high quality services, results-oriented programming and positive outcomes. The WIOA Partners meet on a quarterly basis to address issues and share updates and best practices. In addition, the WB has created supplemental “local agreements” with key required partners which essentially detail specific processes and procedures that may be unique to the region and the customers served by the partners. Additionally, the WB maintains a series of individual meetings with key partners to clarify and address the partnership, reinforcing our desire and need to work collaboratively.

(b) 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 local area:

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

WIOA /Career Center Programs
Title I: Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth
Title II: Adult Education
Title III: Wagner-Peyser

Title IV: Vocational Rehab
Trade Adjustment Assistance
DUA - Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assessment program
MSW Board / Grant Funded Programs
Connecting Activities
YouthWorks
Innovation Pathways
Early College High Schools
Teen Mental Health First Aid – Boston Children’s Hospital
Behavioral Health Grant – Commonwealth Corporation
WIOA Partner Programs
DTA - Competitive Integrated Employment Services
DTA -Work Participant Program
Senior Community Service Employment Program

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

The WB will support workforce programs in the region through effective collaboration with our identified WIOA partners. Together our partners have agreed that successful career centers are the critical component to delivering workforces services across core programs, as previously noted in section a6 above. The partners agree to develop a system in which:

1. Career Centers are driven by the needs of employers. In Metro South/West employer needs are the top priority and there are deep relationships between the career centers and employers.
2. Training is closely aligned with employer skill requirements. In Metro South/West job seekers will engage in a combination of work and learning simultaneously to gain market-relevant skills and credentials and achieve good paying jobs with career potential.
3. Technology is employed thoughtfully to enhance services and reduce costs, freeing staff to concentrate on the content and quality of advice and services to both individuals and employers. In Metro South/West well-designed platforms support individual learning, placement, management and continuous improvement.

The Work Plan

In the agreement with our WIOA Partners, the WB will take the first steps to build an employer-driven, high-tech, high-touch career center system comprised of the following objectives:

- Integrate career center and partner services

- Ensure that facilities and equipment are accessible to the customers or consumers of the Partners both in-person and through virtual means
- Collect and analyze data and take action to respond to changing labor market conditions and to continuously improve services
- Develop a registration form and process to provide for the collection of information to be shared by the career center and its partners until such time as the state-wide intake system is fully functional
- Create and implement a system of referral to services between the career center and the Partners
- Establish a baseline of Partner referrals to the career center

The WB in conjunction with Chapter 74 / Career Technical Initiative programs will support the improvement of secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs in the region through:

- Regular communication with the region's Consortium of Career and Technical Initiative providers and writing letters of support for the development of new Chapter 74 programs.
- Providing labor market information data and consultations for Vocational Technical Education Schools and Comprehensive High Schools who are developing new programs in order to ensure programs are aligned with business and economic needs of the region.
- Serving on advisory committees in order to ensure continued quality of Chapter 74 programs.
- Providing technical assistance in regard to the development of apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs.

(2) Please describe how your Board will work with entities carrying out core programs to:

- (i) Expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment;**

With a goal of expanding access, the WB endeavors to increase the scope and effectiveness of the career center and required WIOA Partner relationships by leveraging its role as an intermediary and facilitator. This is discussed in section a6 above.

Additionally, we will build on our successful collaborative efforts with Partners such as co-authoring grant proposals or agreeing to be a supportive participant in a grant application. We are also looking to expand the pool of partners to include other agencies (such as local housing authorities and faith-

based organizations) who serve customers in need and/or have significant barriers to employment. Our goal is to create similar referral and service processes based on those used by our WIOA Partners.

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

The WB, CC and WIOA Partners continue to employ a process where co-enrollment starts with a coordinated referral process. All referrals are initiated via e-mail, then a Career Center designated point of contact ensures that a job seeker record is created in the MOSES database, as it remains primary platform to track services to shared customers.

Upon receiving a referral, the customer is contacted and invited to attend a Partner Information Session. If the customer expresses interest in services, they proceed with the intake process. Adult-eligible customers are then prioritized for assignment to a career advisor.

For Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) referrals specifically, the Career Center receives and tracks all WPP referrals and maintains direct communication with DTA staff to provide regular updates. Customers receiving only SNAP benefits may be referred to the Partner Information Session by staff or partners, after which a reverse referral is submitted to DTA as part of the SNAP Expansion initiative.

Currently, the Career Center hosts DTA, MassAbility (formerly MRC), ESOL/Adult Education, and Operation ABLE on a weekly basis in our offices. When making a referral to a partner agency, we follow their specific procedures for submitting and managing referrals.

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

The WB utilizes a two-pronged approach to this. The first being a data-driven strategy to identify potential gaps between post-secondary credentials and industry recognized certificates being most sought after by business and the availability of training providers. The second component is to increase the pipeline of jobseekers who are able to take advantage of training opportunities.

Quantitative data from job postings provided by Lightcast, combined with qualitative data received directly from companies through the WB's business engagement efforts, is reviewed. In addition, skill and credentials associated with priority occupations highlighted in the Greater Boston Regional

Blueprint are identified to provide a clear picture of where training dollars and resources can create the best return on investment. Secondly, by leveraging this data, workforce board staff will approve potentially eligible training providers that incorporate these in-demand skills to mitigate these gaps. Additional mitigation strategies include:

- Research and recruitment of new training providers as well as working with existing providers to expand credential and certificate options.
- Leveraging apprentice training models to encourage employers to provide training in the absence of an identified training provider.
- Expanding the use of technology resources and distance learning where applicable.

To increase the pipeline of jobseekers, the WB will focus on streamlining the process for individuals to receive training and developing the skills from the region's youth and adult basic education populations which will empower them to successfully complete training. To accomplish this goal, the WB will:

- Pre-package or fast track the eligibility for training for programs that offer high demand credentials, specifically credentials that support the region's most critical occupational groups, Computer and Mathematical, Healthcare Practitioners, and Technical and Healthcare Support occupations including Behavioral Health
- Work to expand our ABE and ESOL provider base. At the same time collaborate with our current providers and projects to integrate adult basic education curriculum with vocational training content. This will also enable jobseekers to take advantage of a fuller range of career pathway opportunities
- Youth programs and activity will maintain a strong STEM emphasis, which directly impacts most the region's priority occupations. Through STEM-focused career exploration, education and experiential opportunities such as internships, more young adults will be encouraged to pursue industry recognized credentials

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

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

The WB will use several sources to identify businesses to engage and market our workforce development programs to them. Using Lightcast's Developer tool will enable the WB to target employers who are actively hiring in each of our cities and towns. EconoVue from Dunn and Bradstreet is another web-based business directory the Board will use to support employer outreach. Lastly, the Board has invested in subscription service from Appollo, a business-to-business information tool to generate local business leads. All the information from these sources can be parsed by SOC and NAICS codes, which the WB will utilize to align our outreach efforts by industries and occupations critical to the region as noted in section a.

The WB will continue to be an active participant with the numerous chambers of commerce and rotary clubs that make up the region to connect with a range of businesses, most importantly, the small business community.

The WB will build upon its strong working relationship with Rapid Response staff and work to serve local employers as a team. Regionally located Rapid Response staff work one day a week out of the Board offices located in Marlborough. This serves to establish a more cohesive approach to business engagement as opposed to our respective agencies reaching out to employers individually.

The WB will continue together with our MassHire MSW Career Center to deliver a solution-based approach to each business which may include:

- Job posting and recruitment events
- Specialized hiring events and job fairs
- Industry specific training
- On-the-Job Training and Apprentice Training
- Workplace safety consultations
- Technical assistance accessing tax incentives
- Local labor market information briefings

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

According to U.S. Census data, as of 2024, the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting industry sector employs 2,341 workers in the region, which is less than half a percent of the Metro South/West workforce. As such, it is not a primary focus of the WB. However, the WB will support our workforce partners, such as Norfolk County Agricultural High School, who are engaged in this industry on an ad hoc basis.

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

As noted in the previous responses, the WB and the CC will employ a “solution-based” approach and conduct a needs assessment with each business to determine what the most effective combination of services would be.

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

The WB will continue to work directly with the two Regional Economic Development Organizations (REDO) in the region, the Middlesex 3 Coalition and the 495 MetroWest Partnership. REDOs are public-private collaboratives of businesses, municipalities and other stakeholders to primarily address economic development as well as workforce housing, transportation and the development of a skilled workforce in our shared region. Joint activities will include:

- Quarterly Municipal Economic Development Round table meetings

- Input on legislative initiatives regarding transportation and other resources
- Development of best practices to retain, grow and attract employers

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

The Division of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) is an identified WIOA Partner in the WB's local MOU. The WB will be conducting quarterly meetings as well as monthly conference call updates with WIOA partners, which will serve to give DUA a way to provide input on services delivered through the career center.

Our Framingham-based Career Center is prepared to establish full DUA in-person services one day a week in compliance with MGL section 62A of chapter 151A. We are waiting for final staffing decisions to be made by DUA.

The WB in its career center oversight role will ensure that the Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program effectively connect UI claimants to employers and that UI claimants are prioritized when recruiting talent for businesses.

a. What methods are used by the Board to identify and recruit business intermediaries

As previously noted, the WB will continue to be actively involved with chambers of commerce and rotary clubs, not only as members but as partners on special initiatives, such as the "recovery friendly workplaces" that involves the MetroWest Chamber. This will enable the WB to network with and learn about potential new intermediaries.

As our sector-based initiatives expand, the WB is actively engaging with intermediaries that support our employer partners. For instance, to strengthen our efforts in the behavioral health sector, the WB established a partnership with the Association for Behavioral Health (ABH). Through this collaboration, ABH has provided valuable industry insights and research, enhancing the effectiveness of our sector-based strategies.

The WB will also seek to expand its activity within current partnerships with industry groups including AIM, Mass MEP and other Regional Economic Development Organizations (REDO) such as the Middlesex 3 Coalition. Expanding beyond state-based intermediaries and creating partnerships with nationwide organizations such as the relationship the WB has with the National Retail Federation will be another component of this strategy.

Additionally, the WB is looking to create new intermediaries and build on a "summit" model carried out with three manufacturing firms in the town of Acton. The "Acton Manufacturing Workforce Summit" is a forum that meets regularly, made up of employers, training providers and MSW MassHire staff to address industry specific workforce challenges. The WB seeks to replicate this model in other cities or towns that rely on a particular industry sector.

b. Specifically, what procedures are in place to offer Career Center Business Services and Mass BizWorks programs to local businesses

Historically the WB has taken a lead role in business engagement, and as such has developed resources to support the Career Center that include employer contacts, needs assessments, labor market information and other qualitative data. As previously noted, we have developed a board level position, Director of Business Partnerships, to coordinate business engagement across the Career Center, Youth Connections and the WB.

We will continue to coordinate with our career center's Business Service Unit (BSU) to share and align these resources derived through our employer engagement efforts. The WB will also include the BSU on employer events through our grant funded youth programs so businesses that may initially be looking to fill a young adult internship position can also learn about the range of other business services available to them.

A BizWorks/Rapid Response staff person is co-located in our Marlborough Workforce Board office to more effectively inform staff of business dislocation events occurring in the region and coordinate delivery of layoff mitigation services, re-training and other reemployment services for dislocated workers. The WB and our Career Center will continue to participate in the Mass BizWorks Central Region's monthly meetings.

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

The WB will continue to build on its "Solution-Based" approach to business engagement. Services and programs listed above are viewed as tools in a toolbox to be appropriately implemented based upon the needs of a business on a case-by-case situation and where appropriate as informed by labor market data, scaled-up to groups of employers. This approach is predicated on board staff, our career center and our WIOA partners being aware of and well versed on the potential solutions noted above as well as apprentice training, access to Workforce Training Fund grants and detailed needs of regional businesses. The WB will integrate staff development and coordination through our Integrated Management Team model and formalized communication channels with our workforce partners and stakeholders to accomplish this.

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

- **Coordinate local workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities that are carried out in the local area**

As previously noted, the WB will collaborate directly with the Middlesex 3 Coalition and the 495 MetroWest Partnership to address regional economic development challenges. The WB's Executive

The WB Director serves on the 495 Partnership's Board of Directors, positioning the organization to effectively leverage resources and advance shared economic development goals.

In partnership with our career center's Business Services Unit (BSU), the WB will also engage with municipal economic development staff at the city and town level to ensure alignment with local priorities. Additionally, the WB will continue its involvement with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's Twin River Inter-Local Committee, which brings together economic development professionals from multiple municipalities within our service delivery area.

The WB remains committed to its collaboration with the Massachusetts Office of Business Development. We will continue working closely with the Metro South/West region's designated Business Development Director to support the effective implementation of statewide economic development incentive programs.

- **Promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services;**

While the WB does not directly fund entrepreneurial skills training, we actively support the Adult Education Centers in the region, who provide individuals with business related start-up assistance and help with navigation of the process to become a sole proprietor.

In addition, resources and information will be made available to individuals through our career center including:

- U.S. Small Business Administration resources, funding options, opportunities to receive mentoring and regional contact referrals
- Guidance on the Census Business Builder (CBB) tool from the US Census. This provides potential small business owners key data for their business plan or to better understand their potential market.

The WB will also support local economic development entities in the region, such as the Marlborough Economic Development Corporation, that promotes entrepreneurship as part of its mission.

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

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

The WB continuously reviews the Eligible Training Provider (ETPL) List to ensure training vendors maintain satisfactory performance and offer courses that meet the needs of businesses and job seekers in the region. Using job posting data from Lightcast, board staff can quickly compare the real-time skills and certification employers are seeking to those training providers are proposing to develop through their course offerings.

We also look to expand the ETPL (adding new vendors and courses) via requests from job seekers and businesses, and because of LMI studies which may indicate an imminent/future need. As with existing vendors, these new additions are vetted thoroughly to ensure that they meet our standards and needs.

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

The Metro South/West region is geographically large with 43 cities and towns. We have two brick and mortar comprehensive career center locations in Framingham and Norwood. We intend to create three to five affiliated career center sites in areas of the region that are underserved and have need but are not conveniently located to one of the comprehensive sites. We have piloted and implemented an affiliated site in Waltham Public Library. Building on this strategy, a second affiliated site is established within the Acton Library. We will learn from this productive experience with our library network partners as we establish additional affiliated sites.

Zoom is the primary virtual communication delivery platform, and the WB has provided training and a service-oriented user manual to CC staff. Microsoft Teams is used as a secondary platform but is utilized more often for internal communication and productivity than for customer service.

As remote services become more prevalent the WB has adopted more stringent cyber-security protocols. To secure confidential and personally identifiable information, the Board and Career Center use ShareFile to encrypt e-mails and safely share information. Board and Career Center staff continued to receive regular cyber-security training from a company called KnowBe4.

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

Both comprehensive CC sites are in full compliance with ADA regulations including facility access and technology-assisted services. Staff are trained to assist customers with disabilities. Additionally, MassAbility (MRC) conducts annual assistive monitoring to ensure compliance and provide guidance for improvements.

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

The roles and resource contributions of all required partners are listed in the fully executed WIOA Partner MOU (Appendix A). All infrastructure funding decisions are made at the state level and provided to the region via an Inter-Agency Service Agreement (ISA). The WB, CC and Fiscal Agent oversee the

budget to ensure that all allocations are incorporated into the local integrated budget and managed appropriately. These budget amounts are shared at the local level with our partners to foster discussion and receive feedback on creative programming that can take place to benefit the customer and positive outcomes. Quarterly partner meetings also help to facilitate productive communication and pro-active planning and programming.

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

The CC provides services in three main categories to adult and dislocated workers. These are basic career services, individualized career services, and training services. The basic services are available to all job seekers as they entail outreach, intake, and orientation. Initial assessment of skills, abilities and needs for supportive services occurs with basic services along with job search and placement assistance, access to labor market information, and in-basic information about training providers.

The next level of service includes comprehensive assessments of skills and service needs, development of an individualized employment plan, referral to training, individual and group counseling, and work-readiness literacy activities. Career Advisement for customers who are seeking training occurs here, as does soft-skills training and support.

Occupational skills training services are available through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), adult education and literacy activities, on-the-job training and apprentice opportunities, incumbent worker training and other workplace related instruction as determined necessary for the worker to find meaningful employment.

Assessment is effective when the right tools are used to help make evidence-based matches between the current skills of the worker and the skills needed for the workforce. Some of these tools include MassCIS and O*net online for Labor Market Information (LMI) and the Interest Profiler Assessment tools which help to identify potential training needs, transferable skills, identifying skills gap, salary levels and provide suggestions for training and job search opportunities that will lead to re-employment opportunities. Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) is used to assess a customer's readiness for referral to an ABE center, and for coordination with the local community college. WIOA Youth are tested for literacy/numeracy levels as well.

Numerous workshops are also available to provide support to job seekers.

Are you LinkedIn?

Career Center Seminar

Career Planning Session

Excel Fitness Level 1

Excel Fitness Level 2

How to Cut Expenses to Manage Debt or Deal with Irregular Income

How to Save to Reach your Financial Goals

Interviewing in Virtual World for Veterans
Labor Market Research – Skills, Careers, Employment Outlook
LinkedIn Beyond the Basics
Managing Your Job Search: Step-by-Step Approach
MS Word Efficient Formatting Techniques
MS Word for Windows Mail Merge
Own Your Finance Journey
Partner Information Session
Rejuvenate Your Résumé
Sharpening Your Interviewing Skills
The Basics of Budgeting
Understanding Credit
Using Age to Your Advantage
Veteran Federal Job Search
Work Smart with Outlook 365

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

The BSU of the CC, as noted, will continue to work closely with the Mass BizWorks program. One of the major services offered through Mass BizWorks is the Rapid Response (RR) program, which helps businesses facing downsizing or closings. The Rapid Response Coordinator for our region as well as two additional RR staff members spend one day a week in our Marlborough office location. In addition, the Board's Director of Business of Partnerships works directly with the local RR Coordinator to plan the outreach and delivery of services to Metro South/West companies.

When the WB or CC is notified of a layoff or a closing, the Rapid Response Team is alerted to initiate services. Businesses may also submit a formal WARN notice to the Rapid Response Statewide Team.

The RR Team coordinates activities with the WB and CC through the Director of Business Partnerships. The RR Team will schedule a meeting with the employer to obtain information about the dates of layoffs, types of jobs being impacted, and the number of employees affected. Employee informational meetings are generally scheduled on site, with RR and CC staff providing information about reemployment services including trainings, as well as unemployment insurance. These trainings may be funded through the Dislocated Worker or Trade programs, and some laid off workers may be eligible for Section 30 extensions of their unemployment claims while in training.

Some counseling, workshops, or career center seminars may be provided on site while others are held at the CC. Layoff intervention is provided by linking businesses in growth stages with those businesses who are laying off similarly skilled workers. The Business Services Representative (BSR) will work with the other staff in the CC to access funding and training opportunities for eligible dislocated workers to upgrade their current skills or provide new skills needed to obtain a new job.

The Career Centers actively work with Rapid Response to assist both employers and customers.

Customers:

As the Rapid Response staff becomes aware of a layoff and subsequently meets with the impacted job seekers from that employer, the rapid response representative will indicate in MOSES all job seekers interested in receiving more information/services from a career center. From there, the Career Center has two check points with the customer encouraging them to participate in Career Center Activities:

- 1) Twice a month, the Director of Business Partnerships runs reports that highlights any “currently employed, expecting to be laid off and are interested in CC services” customers. While they are not officially laid off at this point in time, we introduce them to the Career Center’s Business Services Team, our Newsletter, the job openings we are currently working on and instructions on how to participate in Career Center Activities. Customers receive a minimum of two email outreach attempts.
- 2) When a customer officially becomes laid off, a notification is sent to the Career Center front desk staff indicating the layoff. Career Center staff front desk staff then emails and calls the customer for additional outreach encouraging participation in the Career Center.

Businesses:

The MSW Business Services Team actively participates in all Mass BizWorks Committees and reoccurring meetings scheduled by the Rapid Response team. Specifically, the Career Center is active in three regional meetings that occur monthly or quarterly. The Career Center participates and is notified of all upcoming/recent layoffs and WARN notices. Career Center Staff is notified of upcoming layoffs, potential NDWG’s, and initiatives occurring in the region.

MassWorkforce Issuances detailing Rapid Response Policies and Procedures:

100 DCS 11.101	1. Massachusetts Rapid Response Process Under WIOA
100 DCS 11.101A	2. Company Questionnaire / Demographic Report
100 DCS 11.102	3. Mass BizWorks Program Continuation and Tracking in MOSES
100 DCS 11.102A	4. Mass BizWorks Flowchart
100 DCS 11.102B	5. Mass BizWorks Program Plan
100 DCS 11.102C	6. Mass BizWorks Committee/Regional Teams Description
100 DCS 11.102D	7. Mass BizWorks Icon in MOSES
100 DCS 11.102E	8. Mass BizWorks Business Cycle
100 DCS 11.103	9. Rapid Response Set-Aside Funding
100 DCS 11.103A	10. Grant Application Process
100 DCS 11.103B	11. Grant Application

100 DCS 11.103C	12. Fiscal Application
100 DCS 11.103D	13. Vouchering Payment Guidance
100 DCS 11.103E	14. Vouchering Master Agreement Template
100 DCS 11.103F	15. Statement of Application Completeness Checklist

(8) Please provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in your area including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities, which must include an identification of successful models of such activities.

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

The US Department of Labor, through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, provides funding to support intensive workforce development activities for 100 – 150 teens living below the poverty level and facing additional barriers to employment. WIOA Title I Youth services falls under the Board’s *Youth Connections* program and provides comprehensive young adult development program designed to provide intensive education, employment and training services to meet the needs of disconnected young adults. Participants are between the ages of 17 and 24, reside in the Metro South/West region and meet the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Youth eligibility requirements.

Approximately sixty percent of the young adults currently enrolled in WIOA Youth have a documented disability. Coordination of services with Special Education departments, Disability Advocates and MassAbility is common practice. Case Managers (CMs) participate in transition planning and incorporate WIOA services into a participant’s Individual Plan for Employment.

Young adults with disabilities are provided with accommodation typically outlined in an Individual Education Plan or a formal medical evaluation (e.g., additional time for taking tests) throughout the assessment and planning process. Complementary services with disability partners are frequently leveraged to enhance the young adults’ ability to meet their employment and educational goals.

Disability professionals are consulted to ensure participants have appropriate education/workplace support (e.g., assistive technology) and are provided with accurate information needed for benefits planning.

Successful collaboration among partners at the Framingham DTA site, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission have been formally established and have proven to be of a cooperative nature. WIOA Youth CMs are trained and knowledgeable in the services provided by the partner organizations and work with agency staff to access available resources. An informal tracking and referral process currently exists, and all services are documented in MOSES.

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

Youth Connections utilizes a Pathway approach to bridge education and training to our young adults preparing for the workforce. Pathways are customized to meet each individual's needs and align remediation, employment, training, post-secondary education and supportive services. CMs ensure that the program participant understands entrance requirements, the application process, industry licensing/credentials, remediation (if necessary), prerequisite requirements, apprenticeship criteria, labor market demands, opportunity for advancement and salary potential of the career cluster. Youth continue to develop critical thinking skills as they interpret the demands of the industry, reflect upon their goals and skills, and take the necessary steps to enter a specific career pathway. These action steps require problem-solving skills to successfully navigate a career pathway.

Extensive research and planning are invested into the development of education and training goals for pathways necessitating classroom training. CMs assist young adults to enter available post-secondary opportunities that align with the demands relevant to the labor market. Participants are helped accessing grant funding, federal financial aid, Massachusetts State Scholarship, institutional grants, and local scholarships.

In-school CMs coordinate with high school administrators to ensure students remain on track to meet graduation requirements. Access to academic supports, including dropout prevention and credit recovery strategies leading to the completion of a secondary school diploma, are facilitated by CMs. Continuous follow-up and benchmark incentives have proven to be effective motivators to keep students on track.

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

The Board, in conjunction with the Career Centers, intends to continue its efforts to increase accessibility for WIOA Title I participants through the expansion of service delivery sites and increased remote access service capacity. The CC has made considerable efforts to expand services through remote access services such as workshops, orientations, partner focused presentations, and out-stationing staff at DTA to support job search efforts.

Career Advisors can facilitate workshops at any given location around the region and can be out stationed with partner organizations to enhance career readiness. Workshops and seminars are available in a virtual capacity. Case Managers can offer intensive case management services off-site at partner locations or virtually, therefore eliminating the need for the participant to come to the Career Center.

(11) 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 WB procures and oversees the MassHire Framingham and Norwood Career Centers along with the Waltham affiliate site. Procured in June 2025, the current operator for the Career Centers is Blue Hills Regional Technical School. These three entities have distinct roles regarding service delivery. The Board sets the strategy and policy, the Career Center is the service delivery vehicle while the Operator works to ensure that services are provided in alignment with local, state and WIOA policy. The main goal of the model is to maximize coordination, reduce duplication, facilitate referrals between Partners and improve service delivery throughout the region.

The current operational structure is an Integrated Management Team (IMT) which consists of Board and Career Center Leadership as well as DCS Operations Managers. The IMT communicates meets regularly to address regional service needs. All career center staff are responsible for the delivery of services to job and training seekers as well as regional employers and are a blended team of local and DCS staff. Staff are cross trained in career center functions where appropriate to increase capacity.

To address employer needs, staff who are part of the Business Service Unit (BSU) are assigned specific geographic sections of Metro South/West but and come together to provide collective services and facilitate area-wide events. The BSU works with job-ready customers who have completed training, to facilitate referrals to open positions. As previously noted, the BSU works closely with the Rapid Response team when there is a closing or layoff. The BSU also plans multiple large scale job fairs per year as well as other business-related events and activities.

Services are currently provided at two brick and mortar sites in the region: one in Framingham and one in Norwood. In addition, limited services are provided at our affiliate location in the Waltham Public Library, with affiliate sites in Acton and Newton to follow. The IMT team strives to see that services are equally available between the sites, moving staff as necessary to coordinate and support each location, while pursuing opportunities to expand our in-person services locations.

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

Signage, written in English and Spanish, is posted in the reception areas of the MassHire Framingham and Norwood Career Centers informing customers of their rights as MSFW employees. Customers are asked if they are a seasonal farmworker as part of the general intake process.

A dedicated MSFW employment specialist will be designated in each center and will connect with that customer. Any MSFW customer has access to all the universal services available to other customers. During the Career Center Seminar (CCS) access to training opportunities is explained, and any MSFWs who may be interested in training are cycled to the case managers for assessment, counseling and intake as deemed appropriate.

Career Center staff will make job referrals to agricultural orders whether obtained locally, through the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS), or the H2-A foreign labor certification program. They will determine the eligibility of a qualified applicant and disclose the terms and conditions of employment prior to the referral by obtaining the employer's application (ETA-790) from the Foreign Labor Certification Unit.

Business services will be made available to agricultural employers who can benefit by pursuing WOTC tax credits, bonding programs, and recruitment services to fill their hiring needs. The Business Service Representative will provide assistance and information to the agricultural employers about labor laws and pertinent regulations.

The Career Center will arrange for initial and refresher training, at least one per year, or more frequently if needed.

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

Each eligible provider desiring a grant or contract from an eligible agency shall apply to the eligible agency containing such information and assurances as the eligible agency may require, including a description of –

- i. of how funds awarded under this title will be spent consistent with the requirements of this title;
- ii. any cooperative arrangements the eligible provider has with other agencies, institutions, or organizations for the delivery of adult education and literacy activities;
- iii. how the eligible provider will provide services in alignment with the local plan under section 108, including how such provider will promote concurrent enrollment in programs and activities under title I, as appropriate;
- iv. how the eligible provider will meet the State adjusted levels of performance described in section 116(b)(3), including how such provider will collect data to report on such performance indicators;
- v. how the eligible provider will fulfill Career Center partner responsibilities as described in section 121(b)(1)(A), as appropriate;
- vi. how the eligible provider will provide services in a manner that meets the needs of eligible individuals; and
- vii. information that addresses the considerations described under section 231(e), as applicable.

The four adult basic education providers in our region are part of our local WIOA Partners MOU. As such, we will continue to work with them at a Board level. The CC coordinates closely with the Adult Education partners in the region as well. A Career Navigator has visited each Adult Education partner offering CC workshops and information to students to promote the benefits of becoming a shared

customer. The CC also offers space to Adult Education partners onsite at each comprehensive location. Career Navigators coordinate referrals to and from these entities to support students and recruit for special programs.

- (14) Provide copies of executed cooperative agreements, MOUs, ISAs, or other agreements between required partners which define how all local service providers, including additional providers, will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in your local Career Center delivery system. This includes cooperative agreements (as defined in WIOA sec. 107(d)(11)) between the Board or other local entities described in WIOA sec. 101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)(B)) and the local office of a designated State agency or designated State unit administering programs carried out under title I of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 720 et seq.) (other than sec. 112 or part C of that title (29 U.S.C. 732, 741) and subject to sec. 121(f)) in accordance with sec. 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)) with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with businesses, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination.**

Describe how the Local Board/Career Center intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and in establishing new partnerships with local service providers (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements). *(Note: There is a statewide collaborative agreement in place between DCS and the New England Farm Workers' Council (NEFWC), the WIOA Sec. 167 Grantee. A copy of the agreement will be included as part of the consolidated State Plan).*

The WB will continue to develop collaborative efforts with its WIOA Partners through execution of the MOU. (Appendix a.) A primary component of this strategy will be to create staff development training modules that span the partnering agencies. The following modules make up the staff development core curriculum:

- Partner agency missions
- Services offered by each agency
- Target populations served and their characteristics
- Requirements for participant entry
- Accessibility of services (accommodations)
- The referral process to and from the career center and the criteria used to determine when a referral would be made
- Staff sensitivity. What it means to be multi-lingual, multi-cultural, disabled and other special populations and what their needs are

The WB has included Job Corps, Assabet Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School and the Massachusetts Department of Correction in its roster of workforce partners.

In addition, the WB has expanded its ability to provide labor market information to stakeholders by collaborating with the MetroWest Economic Research Center (MERC) at Framingham State University. MERC produces economics reports topic areas that the WB historically has not addressed, such as cost of living and housing. By working with MERC, the WB can provide its access to job posting data and qualitative data from employers to help develop a clearer picture of this region's economic landscape.

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

Carol Wolf, Chief Financial Officer, Metro South/West Workforce Board, Inc., 201 Boston Post Road, Suite 301, Marlborough MA 01752, 508-665-1216

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

The Metro South/West Workforce Board Inc. is the non-profit 501(c) 3 which has been designated by the region's Chief Elected Official and certified by MassHire DCS as the WIOA Fiscal Agent for the regional workforce funds. The WB adheres to a local Procurement and Contracting policy, which is consistent and compliant with Mass Workforce Issuance 100 DCS 01.102, in all matters of procurement and contracting related to funds provided through the Department of Career Services including, but not limited to, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funding. The Procurement and Contracting Policy as well as the other fiscal policies has been submitted as part of the Workforce Board Certification process for the region.

The Metro South/West Workforce Board Inc. is the fiscal agent and financial contract signatory authority for WIOA funds in the Metro South/West workforce development region.

The Executive Director and the Fiscal Officer are responsible for the conduct of all formal solicitations and procurements.

The Executive Director and the Fiscal Officer are the only individuals within the organization who have the authority to allocate funds to procure goods and services; approve procurement plans, issuance of a solicitation package, selection of contractors, contract modifications and procurements deemed non-competitive and/or sole source; sign contracts as authorized in contractual agreement with regional CEO; and issue notices of contract termination.

The WB conducts competitive procurement for the operators of the WIOA Career Center, while the Fiscal Agent is the contract signatory authority, following local procurement rules and 100 DCS 03.105.1. The WB designates the Career Center Committee to design the RFP, pending final approval by vote of the WB.

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

local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers under WIOA title I subtitle B, and the Career Center system in the local area.

Local Boards may insert or provide a link to requested performance goals.

The following was submitted to DCS as part of the FY21 Local Plan:

PERFORMANCE MEASURE	FY2024 PROPOSED LOCAL GOAL	FY 2025 PROPOSED LOCAL GOAL
WIOA ADULT MEASURES		
Employment Q2	79.0	69.2%
Employment Q4	78.0%	80.7%
Median Earnings Q2	\$6,400	\$10,955
Credential Rate	73.5%	68.0%
WIOA DISLOCATED WORKER MEASURES		
Employment Q2	83.0%	74.8%
Employment Q4	83.0%	77.8%
Median Earnings Q2	\$10,500	\$17,498
Credential Rate	71.5%	59.7%
WIOA YOUTH MEASURES		
Employment/Education Q2	75.0%	75.8%
Employment/Education Q4	72.0%	74.7%
Credential Rate	65.0%	58.5%

The following table represents customer performance goals that the CC and WIOA Youth programs have committed to in the FY25 Local Plan. The WB and relevant oversight committees will review CC and WIOA Youth performance on a regular basis as part of our accountability process.

FY21 Performance Goals (Metro South/West)	Adult	DW	Youth
1. Participants	102	266	150
2. Program Exiters (= 2.a + 2.b)	50	200	70
a. Enter Employment	35	150	42
b. Other Exit Reasons	15	50	0
3. Carry-Out to FY2020 (= 1 - 2)	52	60	80
4. Entered Employment Rate at Exit (= 2.a / 2)	70%	75%	100%
5. Total Participants in Training Activities (single count*)	65	220	88
a. Occupational Skills Training (all including ITA)	61	205	61
b. On-the-Job Training (OJT)	0	0	36
6. Training Participants Obtaining Certificate/Credential	42	117	59
7. Support Services	0	0	0

- (18) What are the actions and activities that support the local boards continued status as a high-performance workforce board? a). What trainings are applicable to Board members?**
b). How do business Board members contribute to workforce development in your region?
c). How does your Board support the business services in the career centers?
d). To what extent does inter-/intra-Board collaboration result in positive outcomes for job-seekers and businesses?

The WB utilizes five standing committees to carry out its responsibilities under WIOA and maintain its status as a high performing workforce board. The committees are listed below:

Committee Name	Committee Charge and Responsibilities
Executive Committee	<p>The Executive Committee is charged with organizing the work of the WB and providing guidelines for board actions. The Committee will make provisional decisions on behalf of the WB and when expedient action is required or warranted, exercise certain powers and duties of the WB. Duties include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve annual budgets and forwarding the four (4) year local plan to the full board for review • Develop legislative/advocacy platforms and position statements • Develop governance, operational and policy objectives • Identify potential nominees on an on-going basis for board vacancies. • Design and oversee a process of board orientation, including gathering information prior to election as board member and information needed during the early stage of board service • Regularly reviews and updates the organization's policies procedures and makes recommendations to the board. By-law changes are initiated as required • Evaluate the performance of the Executive Director of the MassHire Metro S/W Workforce Board

Youth Connections Committee	<p>The responsibility of the Youth Connections Committee is to increase the ability of both in-school and out-of-school youth to succeed in the workforce. Duties include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and oversee employment related program implementation for youth ages 14-24 • Establish goals and performance standards for youth programs • Advocate for resources and initiatives promoting youth employment • Develop and participate in fundraising initiatives to support youth programs • Select WIOA youth vendors • Approve WIOA youth plan
Career Center Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Career Center Committee is responsible for oversight, program policy and service delivery of the one-stop career center in the Metro South/West region. <p>Duties include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the role of career centers in workforce development and economic development in the region • Review monthly funding stream and WIOA training expenditures related to the career center operations and approve the annual budget • Establish guidelines for the career center business plan and review and approve the plan • Charter career center operators • Set standards for career center performance and continuous improvement • Establish procedures for measuring career center performance and review monthly • Review and recommend for approval, the selection and designation of a One-Stop Operator, Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth program providers following a competitive procurement process, and if warranted and necessary, decertification of the One-Stop Operator
Finance Committee	<p>The Finance Committee is responsible for oversight of MassHire Metro South/West funds, but it is not involved in the daily operations of grants and programs. Duties include but are not limited to:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and recommend the MassHire Metro South/West Workforce Board operating budget • Recommend allocation of WIOA funds to One Stop Operator(s) after review of each proposed budget • Review all financial reports/documents/audits as needed • Establish, enforce, and review all financial policies and procedures. • Request additional information and reports from One Stop Operator(s) on an as needed basis. • Work with the Executive Director to secure additional grants and funds for the workforce development area and WB
Workforce Strategies Committee	<p>The Workforce Strategies Committee is responsible for leading strategic planning efforts for the full board and advising on the delivery of workforce services to vulnerable populations as well as prioritize which industry sector-based initiatives to pursue. The committee will also keep the WB apprised of labor market trends, the status of regional economy, and the hiring and workforce needs of employers. Duties include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and present for review the strategic plan for the full board and periodically amend when necessary • Collect and provide information on programs and services to be made available for individuals with the highest barriers to employment, including but not limited to, those with disabilities, veterans and justice involved individuals. • Review labor market data and make recommendations based on the information provided. • Promote participation of employers in the workforce system. • Identify career pathways within priority industry sectors in the Metro South/West Region

a). What trainings are applicable to Board members?

The WB implemented a comprehensive on-boarding process for new members. A key component of the process is a training module that provides an overview of WIOA, the Massachusetts workforce system and the thirteen primary responsibilities of a workforce board as required by CFR §679.310 and §679.370. Members who serve on a standing committee will receive training specific to its work. For instance, members of the Youth Programs committee will learn the core objectives and goals for Connecting Activities, YouthWorks and WIOA Title I Youth.

All Board Members participate in the updated, online Conflict of Interest Training that is offered by the MA State Ethic Commission. Members complete this training every two years in compliance with state statute.

Labor Market Training is also available to the board members that explains the distinction between industries and occupations, how the North American Industry Classification System and the Standard Occupation Classification System function as well as primer on the Greater Boston Regional Blueprint.

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

All board members are asked to attend four quarterly meetings each year. During these meetings of the WB, members deliberate, provide input and vote upon proposals submitted by the standing committee. Board members are also encouraged to serve one of the five standing committees and/or ad-hoc committees to address a specific purpose for a limited duration.

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

While the full board can provide direction and guidance in terms the delivery of business services, the bulk of the work is taken up by the Career Center Committee. Board members on the Career Center Committee bring their knowledge and expertise to help define the Business Services component of the center as well establishing quality assurance mechanisms to ensure the services have a high “value add” to stakeholders.

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

Inter-board collaboration will continue through the communication and coordination of executive directors, presidents or chief executive offices representing the sixteen workforce boards. This information will allow us to develop more opportunities for businesses to tap into talent pipelines across workforce delivery areas. Likewise, by keeping our fellow workforce boards informed of companies who have staffing needs, jobseekers willing to travel or relocate have a greater chance of finding meaningful employment.

The WB collaborates with the Metro North and Boston workforce boards in regional planning effort to align workforce development, education and economic development strategies to support the larger Greater Boston region. Three of our Board members serve on the steering committee attached to Regional Planning. The WB will continue to develop updated labor market data and establish sector partnerships in critical industries across the region

As noted previously, intra-board collaboration is exemplified by the WB through its dynamic of the standing committees carrying out specific work tasks and the bringing back elements and recommendation of this work back to the WB for deliberation and approval.

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

The MassHire Career Center staff and management team are responsible for most facets of client training, eligibility determination, ITA or OJT development, case management, contract implementation and client follow-up processes. The WB and the Fiscal Agent also play key roles in the design, authorization and compliance of client training activities and expenditures. For process clarity, the roles of the Workforce Board and the Fiscal Agent are further detailed below.

In the client training process, the role of the WB is largely to set the regional training cost cap, approve training vendors in the MOSES system, monitor system processes and mandatory training rates, and review requests for waivers from the standard procedure:

- The training cap is determined during the annual planning process and is a collaborative determination between the career center operator and the WB. The WB sets the cap; any exceptions to the cap should be reviewed and approved by the WB.
- The WB approves eligible training providers on an ongoing basis throughout the course of the fiscal year. All requests for inclusion on this list should be directed to the WB office.
- Any exceptions to established protocol, such as providing training to out-of-region or non-WIOA eligible clients, tuition exceeding board-approved cap, etc. is directed to MSW WB office and may require a vote of the WB.

As the Grant Recipient, the Fiscal Agent's role in the delivery of client training is to authorize all ITA and OJT contracts and ensure that related expenditures are adequately documented and compliant with requirements of each funding source. The Career Center ensures compliance and quality assurance of the Individual Training Board process. The Career Center works with the individual customer to conduct assessment, provide advice and counseling. The Career Center provides follow up services both while in training and after completion and works closely with the customer in job development and referrals to employer's openings.

Individual Training Approval Process:

- Customer eligibility is determined and enrollment into the appropriate program is verified and completed, including but not limited to the confirmation of residence in our region, separation from an employer in our region or other designated special circumstances.
- The assigned Career Advisor works with the customer to complete all aspects of the ITA proposal packet. Upon completion and quality assurance review of the ITA packet, an ITA board is scheduled.
- The board consisting of a Career Center Manager, proposing Career Advisor and a third career center staff will review the training proposal justification and take a vote. A unanimous vote will result in moving forward with the contract approval process.

- Upon approval from the ITA board an ITA contract is initiated and submitted to the assigned Career Center Manager for review and processing.
- The Career Center Manager reviews the ITA contract for accuracy and submits the ITA for processing, that is submitted to the vendor with a copy of the contract, EEO, general terms and information related to the billing process.
- Once the signed contract is returned from vendor, it is reviewed and approved by signature by the Career Center Director or designee.
- The partially executed ITA is then submitted to the Fiscal Officer for final review, compliance approval and final fiscal authorizing signature.
- A copy of the now fully executed ITA is retained by the Fiscal office and a copy is provided to the Career Center Manager and Career Advisor for the customer file;
- The original ITA contract is retained in the Fiscal Office.
- The Fiscal Agent will track all expenditures against these contracts; report on mandatory training requirements to management, DCS and the board; notify all parties when training funds are close to depletion or significantly underspent; and represent the region in federal and state monitoring, as well as independent auditing, of all training-related regional expenditures.

At all stages of the client training process, every effort will be made to review and approve contracts and process payments in a timely manner, communicate frequently and manage the expectations of all involved to ensure that both the client and the training vendor have a positive and successful training experience, and the region's training dollars are spent advantageously and efficiently.

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

- On-the-Job Training, including use of the Commonwealth's waiver to provide up to 90% employee wage reimbursement to businesses with fewer than 50 employees**
- Apprenticeship**
- Incumbent Worker Training**
- Work Experiences (paid or unpaid)**
- Transitional jobs (§ 680.190 – *one that provides a time-limited work experience, that is wage-paid and subsidized, and is in the public, private, or non-profit sectors for those individuals with barriers to employment who are chronically unemployed or have inconsistent work history, as determined by the Local Board. These jobs are designed to enable an individual to establish a work history, demonstrate work success in an employee-employer relationship, and develop the skills that lead to unsubsidized employment*).**
- Online remediation tools (such as WorkKeys Curriculum) for OJT/apprenticeship screening in support of cultivating and demonstrating workplace competencies.**
 - Does the local area utilize the National Career Readiness Curriculum (NCRC) to measure job-seekers work ethic and discipline, basic skills abilities, and job-ready qualifications?**

On the Job Training: The CC devotes a limited percentage of its available WIOA formula training resources for the provision of On-the-Job Training (OJT) as a training vehicle. Where OJT is utilized, the CC staff provide consideration to utilize all resources available in the successful training placement including but not limited to additional funding from NDWG Grants or the utilization of the small company waiver providing expanded reimbursement options.

Apprenticeship: The CC staff actively engage in working with both business and job seeker customers to maximize the use of apprenticeships as an effective training, placement, and employee retention tool. The Career Center partners with other Agencies, Consortiums, and Grant recipients to assist in the execution and management of registered apprenticeships in the Metro South/West Region.

Incumbent Worker Training: The Career Center continues to explore new opportunities to work with local businesses in the development of targeted incumbent worker programming and are currently active utilizing the Apprenticeship Program to assist with the employer Rolls-Royce Naval Marine located in Walpole.

Online / Virtual Reality remediation tools: The Career Center will extensively utilize the Transfr VR's Virtual Training Facility content, Tooling U and Remote Access Workshops offered through the Career Centers.

The CC will offer job seekers and area businesses the opportunity to earn a National Career Readiness Certificate through participation in pre-test assessments, work on remediation modules in three foundational skills concentrations, and the opportunity to sit for the NCRC assessment. We work with area WIOA Partners to offer these services to shared customers to earn this credential.

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

- a). make available copies of a proposed local plan to the public through electronic and other means, such as public hearings and local news media;**
- b). allow members of the public to submit comments, not later than the end of the 30-day period beginning on the date on which the proposed local plan is made available;**
- c). include with the local plan submitted to the Governor any such comments that represent disagreement with the plan.**

The WB posted the Plans for public comment on our website masshiremsw.com. Notices of the posting were sent via email to our WB, WB committees, WIOA Partners. Comments can be sent directly to the WB to info@mswwb.com.

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

The Career Center has been working with the local WIOA Partners to identify methods to coordinate

referral and intake information for their shared customers. The region supports the work being done at the state level to establish an integrated technology- based intake and case management information database and is eagerly awaiting its implementation. The Career Center conducts weekly Partner Referral Orientations and the assigned partner services liaison records customer referrals in MOSES and maintains a spreadsheet of cross referrals to use when meeting with partners to keep track of their activity.

Amazon Workspace (AWS) accounts allow Career Advisors to record information when off-site and will be fully utilized as more access points and affiliate sites like the Waltham Public Library are established.

The MassHire MSW region has access to ZOOM, Webex, and Microsoft Teams, which allows for remote meetings to be conducted throughout the region to share information consistently while reducing travel expenses and time spent out of the office.

The CC Business Services team produces a weekly Newsletter that incorporates relevant resources, events, job openings available through the Career Center for customers. WIOA Partners and community organizations are encouraged to promote the newsletter to their customers.

As noted previously, the Board has taken advanced steps surrounding improving cybersecurity as many of the technology enabled solutions we are identifying will require secure networks.

(23) What is the direction given by the Governor and your local Board to the career center operator to ensure priority for adult career and training services will be 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) and § 680.600 –

POS for Veterans: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/priority-of-servicefor-veterans>

State Plan: <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/02/09/ma-wioastate-plan-final-4-7-16.pdf>

Please describe the local board’s policy and process related to Priority of Service for adult career and training services for recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient (100 DCS 08-116).

The WB and CC follow the guidance set forth by the MassHire DCS policy issuances, more specifically, 100 DCS 08.116. The Adult Title I program funds which support individualized training and career services are prioritized for:

- Recipients of public assistance
- Other low-income individuals in accordance with Federal Poverty Guidelines and Lower Living Level Standard Income Levels
- Individuals who are basic skills deficient

Additionally, the WB and CC assure that Veterans receive priority of service in all DOL funded training and employment programs if the Veteran meets the individual program’s eligibility criteria.

Individuals in these groups are given priority of service over other individuals for the individualized training and career services in the Title I Adult program. Veterans within these groups receive priority over non-veterans.

Local staff determine eligibility for the respective programs and services by complying with state issued procedures and the career center's internal processes for enrollment into training. This process includes the Career Center Training Board, consisting of a Career Center Manager, Career Advisor and the Career Center. This Training Board reviews the customer's individual training proposal justification and votes its approval.

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

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

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

(c) Your local plan must include any additional information required by the Governor.

(d) Your local plan must identify the portions that the Governor has designated as appropriate for common response in the regional plan where there is a shared regional responsibility, as permitted by § 679.540(b):

The Governor may issue regional planning guidance that allows Local Boards and chief elected officials in a planning region to address any local plan requirements through the regional plan where there is a shared regional responsibility. Incorporate anything from your Regional Plan content as appropriate.

(e) Comments submitted during the public comment period that represent disagreement with the plan are required to be included with your local plan.

There is currently no local policy which would give priority of service to other populations for intensive training and career services. Dislocated Workers have their own eligibility processes and are enrolled for service on their own DW terms. The WB and CC will convene to explore the merits of a local priority of service policy.

Attachments:

- Appendix a. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) July 1, 2024-June 30, 2027,
MassHire Metro South/West Workforce Board and The WIOA Partners
- Appendix b. Agreement Between Partnerships for a Skilled Workforce (the Local Workforce
Development Board) and The General Manager of the Town of Norwood, for the
Oversight and Administration of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act,
January 2025 – January 2027.

WIOA Local Four-Year Plan Signatories

Metro South/West Workforce Board

This Local Four-Year Plan shall be fully executed as of the date of signatures below, and effective through June 30, 2029. The Plan may be amended or modified if agreed to by all parties.

Signature indicates acceptance of the Local Four-Year Plan.



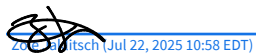
Tony Mazzucco, General Manager, Town of Norwood 07/22/25
Chief Elected Official (or Designee) Date



Lisa Kubiak 07/22/25
MassHire Workforce Board Chair (or Designee) Date



Greg Bunn 07/22/25
MassHire Workforce Board Director (or Designee) Date



Zoie Jaklitsch 07/22/25
MassHire Career Center Director Date



Jack McKenna 07/23/25
MDCS Operations Manager Date



Stephen Souffrant 07/23/25
MDCS Operations Manager Date



Carol Wolf 07/22/25
Title I Fiscal Agent Date