*MassHire Metro South/West Workforce Board*

*and*

*The WIOA Partners*

*Memorandum of Understanding*

*July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2024*

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**Purpose and Duration of the MOU**

The MassHire Metro South/West Workforce Board (MSW WB) has continued to foster discussion and refinement of the career center model, the service delivery system, and the roles and responsibilities of each of the WIOA Partners going forward in a post-pandemic environment. This MOU has been developed and implemented with the agreement of the General Manager of the Town of Norwood and defines the roles and responsibilities of the One Stop Career Center (OSCC) Required Partners to operationalize the delivery of services necessary to produce the best possible outcomes for shared customers – job seekers, businesses and young adults. The MOU may include other provisions agreed to by all parties that are consistent with all Partner programs, services and activities authorizing statutes and regulations.

This agreement shall begin July 1, 2021 and, unless it is substantially changed or terminated by agreement of all parties, end on June 30, 2024. The MOU will be updated not less than every three years to reflect changes in (1) the signatory officials of MSW WB, the Partners, and Chief Elected Official; (2) substantial improvements in the delivery of services; and/or (3) changes to infrastructure cost contributions.

**Partners**

The WIOA Partners in the Metro South/West workforce area of Massachusetts include:

* Massachusetts Department of Career Services, including Title I Adult and Dislocated Workers, Wagner-Peyser, Trade Adjustment Assistance, and Jobs for Veterans State Grants
* The WIOA Youth Program
* The Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance
* Adult Learning and Literacy Programs:
  + Framingham Adult ESL Plus
  + Hudson-Maynard Adult Learning Center
  + Middlesex Adult Basic Education
  + Blue Hills Regional Adult Basic Education Center
* Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Framingham Area Office
* Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, Metro West Regional Office
* Department of Transitional Assistance, Transitional Assistance Office, Framingham, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Regional Office and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
* Senior Community Service Employment Program, Operation ABLE and Executive Office of Elder Affairs
* The Massachusetts Department of Corrections
* Job Corps
* Career and technical education postsecondary programs level authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)

WIOA Section 121(c) (g) requires that the MOU shall be reviewed not less than once every 3-year period to ensure appropriate funding and delivery of services, also including effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility. WIOA Regulations Subpart C 20 CFR Part 678.500 further requires MOU renewal following the 3-year review if substantial changes have occurred.

This agreement shall commence on July 1st, 2021 and shall terminate on June 30th, 2024 unless otherwise terminated by agreement of all parties or superseded.

**Process to Develop the MOU, Define the Shared Customer and Map Service Pathways**

This agreement builds on the work that the Partners began in the fall of 2016 which focused on four areas: defining a shared customer, the range of available services, development of career pathways and business services. Since that time there have been several iterations of the initial agreement and additional partners have been brought on board.

The Massachusetts Department of Corrections (MA DOC) joined the Partnership in January of 2019 This has enabled the Partners to better understand the needs of formerly incarcerated individuals and the elements that are critical to successfully reintegrate them back into society. Work readiness, financial stability and access to mental health treatment are all factors that play a role in effectively serving this population and the Partners are in better position now with the participation of MA DOC.

Job Corps is another partner that joined us formally on July of 2020. A federally mandated WIOA partner, Job Corps provides residential vocational training to young adults. Job Corps involvement will benefit us with insight and best practices regarding workforce development for youth, they will benefit from the resources and information available through the One-Stop Career Centers.

MSW WB has continued to convene the Partners during the Covid-19 pandemic remotely through Zoom video conferencing to exchange information about each organization in adapting their customer service models and delivery systems while in-person locations are unavailable. While there were initial challenges experienced by all the Partners in shifting to a virtual service model, it was recognized that there was also an opportunity to leverage remote access technology to communicate amongst each other, deliver services and co-case manage shared customers all more effectively.

A working group was convened consisting of representatives from The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), Framingham Adult ESL Plus, MA DOC and MSW WB to develop a new MOU that maintained the “good DNA” of previous MOU’s including our definition of a shared-customer, target populations we serve and the documentation of a continuum of services. At the same time, the working group also identified opportunities for change and adaptation to a service delivery model that incorporates a much greater degree of virtual services than before. Several key themes emerged from the working group:

* Developing a flexible system that does not hardwire into one particular tool or delivery method
* Reducing the footprint of physical locations
* Creating the most beneficial ratio of in-person services vs. virtual services
* Re-examining out-stationing and co-location strategies
* Establishing commonly used technology services and products, reducing the number of disparate technology resources.
* Implementing a virtual case conferencing process

This MOU will be reviewed in the fall of 2021 as we continue to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic. It will be revised as necessary based upon what we learn about the ongoing rules and regulations regarding in-person services, the effectiveness of particular technology resources and what our base of shared customers feel is the best service delivery model going forward. We commit to incorporating the cornerstones of the original work developed by the partners into a new framework that aligns with this new paradigm we are experiencing.

**Role of the One-Stop Career Center Operator**

In 2021 the MSW WB conducted a procurement process for a One-Stop Career Center Operator in accordance with WIOA guidelines (CITE?). The MSW WB opted to procure only for a Career Center Operator and to continue to have Metro South/West Training Administration (MSWETA) operate as the service provider. Representatives from three of our WIOA Partner agencies, DTA, MDCS and ABE/ESOL were part of the five-person team to review proposal from bidders.

Volunteers of America, Massachusetts (VOA MA) was selected as the Career Center Operator to begin on July 1st, 2021. The scope of work as the One-Stop Career Center Operator will include three components:

* Convene up to four meetings per year of mandated partners to support the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) implementation. The Operator will develop meeting agendas, (in conjunction with MassHire MSW WB staff), meeting activities, facilitate meetings, and provide meeting notes.
* The Operator, in conjunction with staff from the MSW WB will develop an appropriate mechanism to semi-annually report on the progress and performance of the WIOA Partners across the system to the Board.
* Support the MSW WB in developing benchmarks to measure a baseline of “system performance”, e.g., customer service, system flow, etc. In future years, the expectation is that the Operator will make recommendations for continuous improvement based on this data.

**Career Center Objectives**

The MassHire Metro South/West Workforce Board and the WIOA Partners listed in the previous section agree to:

* Create a one-stop system that supports the development of a workforce with the skills employers require by implementing a service delivery model that encompasses both virtual and in-person service section.
* Improve the economic standing of Metro South/West shared customers, both youth and adults as well as businesses.

Employment of individuals is the primary measure of success for career centers. However, that success depends on the engagement of the Partners to help individuals overcome any barriers they may have that prevent them from finding a meaningful career.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:**

For the Partners, diversity, equity, and inclusion are integral parts of not only carrying out our shared mission but are components of our culture and identity as well. These values guide the way we treat and perceive all differences. We strive to create an inclusive culture where all forms of diversity are seen as authentic value for our workforce system.

The Partners are committed to fostering a high-performing workforce drawn from all segments of American society. By developing a culture that encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness to enable individuals to contribute to their full potential, feel valued and supported, we can better deliver on the promise of economic opportunity and self-sufficiency.

This promise of a diverse and inclusive workforce enables the Partners to be more responsive to the public we serve and better equipped in fulfilling the full scope of our responsibilities under WIOA. Achieving diversity and inclusion is also a collaborative effort. Together, we support a workplace that offers every individual the opportunity to attain professional goals and contribute to accomplishing our collective mission.

**Successful Career Centers**

The partners agree to build a system in which:

* Operates on a customer-centered model. In Metro South/West, employer and jobseekers’ needs are addressed and there are strong and beneficial relationships between the career centers and employers.
* WIOA partners share resources, expertise and best practices through a collaborative process in an effort to mitigate barriers to reemployment or training that a shared customer may experience.
* 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.
* Virtual services and relevant technology are employed to augment existing in person services and in expand the access to cities and towns that may be distant from a brick-and-mortar location. In Metro South/West, well-designed virtual service platforms support individual learning, placement, management and continuous improvement.

**Work Plan**

In the first year of this new agreement, MSW WB and its Partners will begin the development of post pandemic, flexible, service delivery model that uses virtual tools to increase ease of access for shared customers, while at the same time providing in-person assistance for those who may experience challenges with technology:

* Elicit customer feedback regarding the effectiveness of virtual services during the pandemic and the preferred level of virtual services used post-pandemic.
* Ensure that facilities, services, and equipment are accessible to the customers or consumers of the Partners in accordance with State Covid-19 Reopening guidelines.
* Develop a system of referral to services between the career center and the Partners that can be tracked and reported on
* Establish a series of metrics to define quality customer service to our shared customers as service amongst Partners
* Establish a “case conference” process where staff from different agencies can meet at the same with a shared customer through a virtual services platform

**Target Job Seeker: Priority Populations**

The workforce system in Metro South/West will address the needs of the following groups:

* The long-term unemployed;
* Unemployment insurance claimants;
* Low-income adults including TANF and SNAP recipients;
* The homeless;
* Adult education participants;
* Individuals with disabilities;
* Veterans;
* Older workers;
* Offenders who are released from prisons and jails;
* Young adults with barriers to employment.

In Metro South/West the career centers will give priority to referrals from WIOA partners.

**Shared Customers**

***Definition, WIOA Joint Partner Communication 01.2018, March 20, 2018***

Shared customers are:

“Youth and job seekers that are eligible for and receive services from more than one WIOA Partner program. They benefit from services and resources delivered across multiple WIOA Partner programs and other stakeholders that are aligned to meet an individual’s needs. Shared customers also meet the definition in the Title II regulations of WIOA, CFR 34 Part 63.3 of concurrent enrollment or co-enrollment referring to enrollment by an eligible individual in two or more of the six core programs administered under the Act.

A business that receives services from more than one WIOA Partner program is also considered a shared customer. (However, the policy pertains only to youth and job seeker shared customers.)

Each state WIOA Partner has criteria that must be met before an individual is eligible for the respective Partner services. Communication among Partners is essential to ensure accurate identification of shared customers.”

***Continuum of Services***

Partners will work to provide their customers the foundational knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the career center environment and refer them to the career center for services. The customers most likely to benefit from career center career advising, training and placement services are those individuals who:

* Want to take the first step toward employment and/or education, are able and willing to work, and want a job
* Are able to complete digital and/or paper assessments with help if needed
* Have a desire for services and are committed to training or retooling skills as necessary
* Possess the literacy skills necessary to do the job they are applying for
* Are documented and able to work in the United States
* Are willing/able to sign a release of information form which will allow agencies to share applicable client information

***Career Center Services to Individuals***

One of the primary objectives the Partners is committed to is re-engineering a service delivery models that leverages the gains virtual services offers but ensuring shared customers who lack the means to take advantage of technology resource are equally well served. An in-person, and possibly a virtual, “Welcome Point” will be the triage mechanism a staff person with thorough knowledge of the career center and partners’ specialized services will connect customers to appropriate resources. This will entail determining the reason why the individual is at the career center, facilitating the completion of a profile for employment, an educational history, and guiding them to the first step in the service pathway.

The range of services may vary in intensity and duration based upon customer need and eligibility. The menu of services available at the career center includes:

* Skills, interest and aptitude assessment, including literacy, numeracy, language fluency, and English language proficiency, marketable knowledge and skills, and supportive services. Methods include interviewing and diagnostic testing.
* A service plan based on a conversation(s) with the individual that includes a discussion of his or her skills, skills valued in the labor market and the match or gap between what is required, and the individual’s knowledge, skills and abilities
* Comprehensive and extensive career counselling based on actual labor market needs so individuals can make informed career decisions
* Eligibility determination for adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs
* Staff assistance in writing a plan leading to employment
* Training programs provided through career and technical education school adult learning divisions, private and public colleges and universities, and other approved vendors that match their skills, interests, personality, and employment goals. Help navigating the financial aid system and applying for WIOA vouchers. A plan for financing education will be developed.
* Referral to Partner organizations and other community resources when individuals need services that are beyond the scope of the career navigation division and they agree to the referral
* Job search preparation and placement

The following services will be available to all individuals both through virtual platforms and in-person and the profile matching system, regardless of eligibility for services through WIOA and other special programs:

* Labor market data including information about industries and occupations where there are current and future opportunities for employment and advancement, the knowledge and skills requirements in those jobs, and relevant education and training programs
* Job search tutorials, including resume building and interviewing skills placement assistance
* On-line occupational training programs
* Notice of a job opening when their profile matches the requirements in the job order, assistance in completing the application, and preparation for selling themselves to the employer
* Information about filing for unemployment and/or addressing problems with their claims

***Pathways to Services***

There are multiple points of entry into the workforce development system in Metro South/West, that, collectively, will lead to self-sustaining wages. The pathways for each target group, developed by the Partners for their target groups, are in Attachment A.

***Supports and Services for Target Markets***

The table in Attachment B. (MSW WIOA Partner Services**)** lists the services provided by the Partners to prepare people for the career center or to respond to the needs of individuals referred by the career center.

**Business Services:**

During the Pandemic, the Partners discovered and adapted to new ways to utilize technology platforms to provide services to its business customers as well. We commit to working with businesses who struggle with worker skills shortages, support career pathways for adult learners, host internships for students and externships for educators and are committed to hiring people with disabilities. We will work together to gauge and address employer needs in the evolving labor market.

The WIOA Partners will:

* Maintain a catalogue of business services among the Partners
* Collaborate on the development of common practices, processes and services for the Business Services Team to cultivate new and existing business partnerships
* Document and manage job orders into the matching system through MOSES/JobQuest
* Identify industries/businesses and occupations in our joint work that align with our regional planning process.
* Maintain a talent pool of job seeker profiles and to be documented in MOSES/JobQuest to match with job orders
* Stay apprised of the regional labor market with MSW WB disseminated analysis and reports as well as other data sources
* Participate in the development, outreach and evaluation of a shared employer customer base
* Commit to using virtual service platforms, like the Premier Job Fair tool to enhance services to Businesses

**Performance**

MSW WB will focus on activities that evidence shows improves performance: data driven approaches, sector projects, education and occupational training and social support.

In Metro South/West performance will be measured using WIOA common performance measures for both the job seeker and employers, including:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Adults** | **Measures** |
| Employment | Employed in the 2nd quarter after exit |
| Employment Retention | Employed in the 4th quarter after exit |
| Median Earnings | Median earnings in the 2nd quarter after exit |
| Credential Attainment Rate | Obtain recognized postsecondary credential by 4th quarter after exit |
| Measurable Skill Gains | During program year achieve documented skill gain from education/training |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Youth** | **Measures** |
| Employment | Employed or in education or training in the 2nd quarter after exit |
| Employment Retention | Employed or in education or training in the 4th quarter after exit |
| Median Earnings | Median earnings in the 2nd quarter after exit |
| Credential Attainment Rate | Obtain recognized postsecondary credential by 4th quarter after exit |
| Measurable Skill Gains | During program year achieve documented skill gain from education/training |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Employers** | **Measures** |
| Effectiveness in Serving Employers | Retention with the same employer in the 2nd & 4th Quarter after exit |
| Effectiveness in Serving Employers | Employer penetration rate |
| Effectiveness in Serving Employers | Repeat business customer rate |

Building on WIOA performance measures, the Partners are committed to the development of additional performance measures to gauge how well services are delivered to shared customers and business, and how effective these services are. The Partners agree to work with the One-Stop Career Center Operator to examine and quantify the outputs each organization produces, as well as identify shared employment related outcomes that may not be captured through other measures.

**Technology**

Technology, specifically virtual communication platforms, will be available throughout the career center to support the Metro South/West service delivery model. Technology will facilitate the exchange of information and a continuum of services to individuals, employers and Partners. New resources, including a revamped JobQuest interface and an online resume builder, will be integrated into our service delivery model as they become available.

To stay current with these new technology offerings and refinements to current resources, the Partners commit to the establishment of a Technology Working Group. This working group will serve point for learning about new technology and providing recommendations to the Partners regarding the methods to most effectively utilize them. This group will also coordinate training on new technologies as needed.

Over time, new technologies for delivering and managing services that have the following characteristics will be added to ensure the following:

* Systems (in-person, virtual) available on evenings and weekends
* Platforms for counseling, training, cases management and linking Partner services
* Support integrated “real-time” access between all areas of the career center, customers, and Partners, including tracking customers, accountability system, and quality access for individuals of various education levels, career pathways, and physical or job search needs
* Compliance with applicable statutes, regulations and data security requirements
* Sharing of information to the greatest extent appropriate among Partners
* Compliance with common reporting principles and requirements
* Meets confidentiality requirements.
* Innovative, flexible, expandable and cost effective

**Labor Market Information (LMI)**

Within the past year, the labor market has changed drastically in terms of which industries were experiencing growth or declination. Occupations that were being shed by employers were suddenly in heavy demand six months later. To address the potential volatility in the Metro South/West area, the Partners are committed to developing and sharing LMI data in a more timely and actionable manner.

The MSW WB will be the focal point of this improved LMI effort. To this end, the MSW WB has redesigned its Labor Market information section on its website. Data here will now be updated at a minimum of once a quarter. Some data sources, including the region’s unemployment and labor force data, will be updated every month.

The Partners also commit to expanding its data sources used to develop more accurate LMI. Dunn and Bradstreet’s DataVision is one such source we will look to secure that fills in gaps that job posting data does not capture regarding employer information. MDCS will be making Burning Glass Technologies Resume Builder to workforce areas, and we will be using this tool in conjunction with existing UI claimant data and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) information to develop reports that provide better insight in terms of the available labor supply of the labor market

Leveraging partnerships with entities that possess LMI expertise will be another initiative the Partners commit to in order to improve access to local LMI. The MSW WB will build on its relationship with Framingham State University’s MetroWest Economic Research Center (MERC) to access additional data sources that include building permits, average housing costs and tax rates which will provide indicators of the region’s overall economic health to the Partners. UMass Donahue Institute will be another valuable LMI partner who specialize in population growth data and are proficient in the use of Public Use Micro Series (PUMS) data from the American Community Survey.

**Staff Development and Training**

With the ability to conduct remote training and webinars established, staff training can be conducted more frequently since logistics are less complicated. The following modules make up the current Partner staff development curriculum and will remain in place and be delivered remotely:

* 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
* Diversity/Cultural Sensitivity. What it means to be multi-lingual, multi-cultural, disabled and other special populations and what their needs are

The Partners commit to develop additional training on areas that include:

* Best practices for virtual meetings and webinar
* Training on new technologies
* Grants and funding resources

**Shared and Infrastructure Costs**

Shared costs include both cash payments and in-kind services, facilities and equipment. Agreements for sharing costs have been negotiated with each of the partners, including staffing, out-stationing, equipment, shared space and referral policies and procedures.

Funding: Each Partner’s contribution is negotiated at the state level. The Partner and the career center director negotiate the use of the funds and that agreement is entered into the integrated budget.

Referrals. A common referral form is used by all Partners and career center staff. Partner referrals are sent to a single point of contact in the center. Young people ages 16 to 24 are referred to the WIOA youth program. Individuals over the age of 18, who do not meet the WIOA youth eligibility requirements or who do not choose to participate in the WIOA youth program, are referred back to the career center for adult services. To be referred from a Partner to the career center, the individual must register in JobQuest, complete the referral form, and send it to the point of contact in each career center.

**DUA Data**

A. “Confidential DUA Data” are any data not determined by DUA not to be confidential under 20 C.F.R. Pt. 603, or not secured by DUA pursuant to the provisions of G.I c. 151A. By way of example, but not by way of limitation, Confidential DUA Data include unemployment insurance claimant information, employer information, and Wage Data. (“Wage Data” are individually identifiable information, reported to DUA by employers as required by G.L. 151A § 14P, including, but not limited to, an employee’s name, Social Security account number and wages.) If Confidential DUA Data are commingled with other data, from any source whatsoever, that commingled data are deemed Confidential DUA Data.

B. In the discretion of the DUA Director, Confidential DUA data may be shared under this Agreement only when permitted by applicable state and federal law, including federal regulations and subject to the applicable confidentiality, security and cost reimbursement requirements. For the avoidance of doubt, no confidential DUA Data may be shared unless either (i) this Agreement is amended to contain language complying with DUA’s understanding of its confidentiality obligations or (ii) pursuant to some other, separate written agreement complying with that understanding.

***Staffing and Out-Stationing***

As the physical space needs versus virtual service capabilities are yet undetermined by our agencies, the Partners commit in year one to develop a new Staffing and Out-Stationing strategy, site locations and requisite schedule.

***Shared Space and Equipment***

Partner staff when utilizing in person space at the Career Centers will be assigned cubicles equipped with a phone and a partner extension, a computer with Internet, MOSES, Microsoft Office 365 and printer access, desk and chairs, general office supplies.

Partners are encouraged to display promotional materials and event flyers within the space and in the front desk area of the Center and to develop digital copies of these materials to be used as content in Career Center Seminars conducted as webinars as well as for electronic marketing purposes.

**Evaluation**

The Partners will continue to meet on a schedule to be determined in early FY22. Steps will be taken to assess the effectiveness of shared practices and impact on customers will include:

* Strategies to elicit feedback from shared customers on what they feel will be optimal service delivery options post pandemic.
* Deterring the most effective ratio of in-person services to virtual services for our shared customers
* Measure performance using the metrics listed in the performance section in this MOU and discuss the results at Partner meetings. When the benchmarks/goals are not achieved, the Partners will develop a continuous improvement plan.
* Reserve a section of the Partners meeting for each organization to report on referrals, services and other actions taken to build and improve the public workforce system in the region.
* In conjunction with the Career Center Operator, develop additional evaluation to measure customer service and the impact on shared customers and explore the possibility of a comparison or control group.
* Prepare Partners for the roll out of additional technologies and data sources.

**Signatories**

By signing this agreement, all parties agree to the provisions contained herein, subject to all applicable, Federal, State, and local laws, regulations and/or guidelines relating to nondiscrimination, equal opportunity, displacement, privacy rights of participants, and maintenance of data and other confidential information relating to One-Stop Career Center customers. By signatures affixed below, the parties specify their agreement:

Tony Mazzucco, Chief Elected Official

General Manager, Town of Norwood

Lisa Kubiak

MassHire Metro South/West Workforce Board Chair

Greg Bunn

MassHire Metro South/West Workforce Board Chair

Zoie Jaklitsch, Executive Director

MassHire Framingham and Norwood Career Centers

Angela Grant, Operations Manager

MassHire Framingham Career Center

Antoine Jones, Operations Manager

MassHire Norwood Career Center

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MassHire Career Connections / WIOA Youth Program

Meghan Burke, Director

MassHire Metro South/West Workforce Board Youth Careers

Marie-Lise Sobande

Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance, DUA Representative

Adult and Community Learning Services, DESE

Lincoln Lynch, Chief Financial Officer,

Framingham Public Schools

Susan Haberstroh, Program Director

Blue Hills Regional Adult Basic Education Center

Marco C. Rodrigues

Hudson-Maynard Adult Learning Center

Katherine Innis, Director

Adult Basic Education

Middlesex Community College

Susan Medeiros, Director

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Framingham Area Office

Alan White

Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, Metro West Regional Office

Lina Stolnik-Yoffe, Director

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, Transitional Assistance Office, Framingham

Mark Gyurina, Chief Program Officer

Senior Community Service Employment Program, Operation ABLE and Executive Office of Elder Affairs

Kun Chang, Director

National Asian Pacific Center on Aging – SCSEP /Greater Boston Chinese Golden Age Center

Vicki Williams, Manager

Job Corps Shriver Center, Mattapan

Katherine Sullivan, Program Coordinator III

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Ernest Houle, Superintendent-Director

Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School