



MASSHIRE
FRANKLIN HAMPSHIRE
CAREER CENTER



**FRANKLIN HAMPSHIRE
WORKFORCE BOARD**

WIOA Local 4-Year Plan Draft FY2022 – FY2025

(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;

The global pandemic of 2020 continues to impact the local economy, with increased demand for workers across all sectors and shifts within the priority industries. Current levels of demand for the workforce are at a historically high level across all areas of the economy. Demand for manufacturing workers remains high, as many employers were able to pivot the existing business to meet the changing need for new technologies (i.e., aerospace manufacturers have shifted production to medical devices). Health care demand for entry-level and higher-skilled workers continues. Education and technology sectors have remained strong despite major shifts to an increased virtual platform. Support for digital literacy has seen considerable growth to accommodate new online services. For example, the Work Readiness Labs 1 & 2 workshops discussed in more detail on [page 18](#) are new since the last WIOA plan. The hospitality and food service industries were the hardest-hit sectors and are just beginning to re-open.

The impact on low-wage workers has been particularly difficult for women, persons of color, and older workers. The Workforce Board and Career Center have adopted an updated priority population list that includes these groups. Reduced access to child care has also contributed to the significant workforce shift. Many family child care centers are unable to remain viable given lower enrollment levels due to COVID restrictions, and many families are concerned about child placement in larger settings due to safety concerns.

The Regional Workplan ([see link](#)) was updated to reflect 2021 information, and the Blueprint ([see link](#)) was also updated to reflect these recent changes to the workforce landscape.

(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.

Employers most often call for soft skills – communication, customer service, work ethic. In Health and Social Services, the highest demand is for Certified Nursing Assistants, Certified Medical Assistants, Certified Community Health Workers, Entry Level social service assistants/direct care workers (high

school diploma or CHW certification), and recovery coach/addiction specialists (Associates Degree).

IT demand is primarily for help desk assistants, customer service assistants with entry-level certificate/Associate Degree education.

Manufacturing demand is for Foundational Manufacturing Certificate followed by CNC training. A large segment of the trade industry is due to retire within the next ten years, creating an increased demand for training in electrical, plumbing, HVAC technicians, and other related trades. The growth of manufacturing has also increased the need for machine maintenance training.

(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.

May 2021 Unemployment rate for the Franklin Hampshire Workforce Area was 4.8%, slightly lower than Massachusetts and USA rates. Occupations most impacted by COVID layoffs include: Management, Office Administration/Support, Construction, Food Preparation/Serving, Building Maintenance, Sales, Transportation, and Construction

(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 Franklin Hampshire Workforce Region has led or collaborated on a wide variety of strategic workforce development initiatives in the past 15+ years, each one initially grant-funded but always developed with an eye toward long-term sustainability and continuing benefits to job seekers and businesses. Current regional activities include programs focused on healthcare and manufacturing. The WB offers a Foundational Manufacturing training and a CNC machinist training. In healthcare, the Board offers CNA training and in September, will begin a Certified Nursing Assistant training. Programs are offered in partnership with Greenfield Community College instructors. Successful initiatives in our priority industry areas include but are not limited to:

Educational Services

In the past, through partnership with the Labor Management Workplace Education Program (LMWEP) at the University of Massachusetts, the MassHire Franklin Workforce Board has helped to develop on-campus education and training programs that help frontline workers in

¹ Defined here: <https://community.lincolns.edu/document/workforce-innovation-and-opportunity-act-individual-barrier-employment-definition>

An equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. TDD/TTY 1-800-439-2370 - Voice 1-800-439-0183

grounds, facilities, dining services, housekeeping and clerical areas retain and advance in their jobs, and supported outreach to diverse populations to promote entry-level employment. Training areas have included math and reading foundations, computer skills, teamwork, communication and presentation skills, critical thinking/problem-solving, and pre-supervisory and supervisory training. High School Seniors were able to intern as Teaching Assistants within their own districts serving younger grades, and receive payment for hours worked and professional development training. The Five College Consortium has also developed strategic planning document to support advancement of paraprofessionals to teachers. (see link) (<https://www.fivecolleges.edu/system/files/FCI%20Strategic%20Roadmap%20Worksheets%2030%20Sept%202020.pdf>)

Healthcare/Social Assistance

Through partnership with Greenfield Community College, the Tripp Memorial Training Collaborative, the Center for New Americans and The Literacy Project, the FHWB and FHCC have contributed to the development of entry-level and accessible training in CNA, HHA, Medical Office Management (M.O.M.), and Medical Assisting for a wide array of diverse populations. Curriculum for CNA and HHA was significantly improved and enhanced through grants secured by FHWB in partnership with GCC, and the M.O.M. and Medical Assisting programs were launched in part as a result of subsequent pathway development collaborations.

More recently, – FHCC and FHWB established a Franklin Hampshire Health Employers Working Group, convening a planning meeting of fourteen health care employers with significant and ongoing demand for health care positions and strong competition between employers to work together towards collaborative solutions. From this initial meeting five employers formed a working group to do a deep dive with the Career Center and Greenfield Community College into the potential solutions identified by the larger group including but not limited to:

- Explore funding options: Employer sponsored local Allied Health Training Fund.
- Staff sharing/work schedule coordination to achieve full-time schedules for workers.
- Alternative transportation options
- Work readiness/job awareness: Job shadowing and work-based learning options, career orientation and job readiness sessions with targeted outreach.
- Improved coordination/communication between employers, career center, and trainers with pre-screened training slots and job matching of trainees.

Manufacturing

Working collectively, FHWB and the FHCC Business Service Team, along with community partners such as GCC and Franklin County and Smith-Vocational Technical schools, have helped many manufacturing companies develop Workforce Training Fund proposals, upgrade worker skills, hold recruitment fairs, provide employee testing, and expand the education/training pipeline of current and future workers. In recent years, with Greenfield

Community College and Franklin County Technical School as lead partners along with FHWB, a quarter million in funding from private industry, the support of the Franklin Hampshire Legislative delegation, and funds through the state's Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund and MA Economic Development, the FH region established for the first time in the immediate region an on-going venue for Advanced Manufacturing training for unemployed, underemployed and dislocated workers, located in an employer-supported, state-of-the-art lab at Franklin County Technical School. This work was recently expanded to the greater Ware region, where FHWB/FHCC partnered with Holyoke Community College and four greater Ware manufacturers to train incumbent workers and potential new hires in the fundamentals of manufacturing, with excellent results. A bi-monthly Advanced Manufacturing Roundtable of employers facilitated by FHWB ensures that we are kept up-to-date and responsive to manufacturing employer needs.

Community partners acknowledge the many openings with good wages, but also note that rotating shifts and long hours make them very limiting. In their view, lack of training opportunities may be less of a problem than employer willingness to make shifts, schedules and transportation more accessible to reduce turnover and attract a wider pool of applicants.

The Franklin Hampshire region has identified a need to increase sector specific multi-lingual workforce training, and is working with partners to implement programs that support the growing ESOL population locally.

The Franklin Hampshire Career Center also partners with individual employers to address pressing workforce needs. As just one of example of FHCC customizing their services, the FHCC Biz Team and Career Services staff recently collaborated with the City of Northampton to offer a specialized job fair with recruitment outreach to fill 21 machine equipment operator positions, resulting in fifteen interviews. Part of the recruitment focused on the favorable benefits package offered by the City – health insurance, vacation, personal time. In addition, the DPW committed to sponsoring qualified applicants to obtain the minimum licensing required or to advance in the position. Follow up meetings will review results and discuss next steps to meet employer goals.

The strengths of FH workforce development activities are apparent not only in that the aforementioned programs in large part met or exceeded performance goals, but also because projects frequently led to distinct and lasting changes in training availability, accessibility and effectiveness, and to improved overall outcomes for job seekers and employers.

Weaknesses of FH workforce development activities include continuing challenges in sustaining new training within our region without repeated grant funding, persistent accessibility issues (so far without many workable solutions) for low-income job seekers without private transportation, and dilemmas related to the above with regard to achieving a critical mass of eligible participants and economies of scale in a rural region.

Nevertheless, the FH region continues to develop unique and effective strategies for

increasing job seeker education and skills, overcoming barriers to employment, and meeting business needs. The region accomplishes this in large part through close coordination with local partners such as The Literacy Project, the Center for New Americans, International Language Institute, Community Action, the Greenfield DTA Office, Greenfield and Holyoke community colleges, and employers themselves, especially small-to-medium sized businesses in health care and manufacturing. We mutually support each other with grant funds in order to develop comprehensive and multi-pronged strategies, and we meet regularly and productively to troubleshoot problems regarding job readiness, placement, and retention. We work to maximize all existing resources among area partners, so we can use new resources to fill gaps or forge linkages that will serve mutual goals.

(5) Please describe the MassHire 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*

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

The strategic vision of the Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board, as expressed in its recent Strategic Plan is as follows:

- The Board will have comprehensive strategies in place for addressing the workforce needs of each of its prominent industry sectors, and will offer documented success of changes or enhancements in the public workforce system that support each of these sectors.*
- The Board will be able to articulate and account for effective programs and strategies in relation to key workforce populations, including the emerging, transitional, and incumbent workforce, and the Adult Learner/Limited English-speaking workforce.*
- The Board will communicate success in these strategies regularly through a community "report card" and expanded web presence.*
- The Board will use ROI measures to quantify its success to the community.*

- *The Board will increase its reliance on individual Board members to take leadership roles in setting the agenda and carrying out the business of the Board, including through sub-committees related to Performance Oversight, Youth Career Development, and Sector Projects.*
- *The Board will increase its capacity to develop and sustain innovative projects in partnership with business and community partners through the addition of at least one staff member specifically devoted to special projects and resource development.*
- *The Board will be recognized by the business community as the place to go for assistance in developing creative workforce development solutions, at least doubling the number of employer partners involved in competitively grant-funded collaborative training projects by 2018.*
- *The Board will establish itself, through its Youth Council, as a hub of resources, services, and collaborative grant programming for youth development. The Youth Council will play a leadership role across our region in implementation of College and Career Readiness goals, identifying benchmarks, supporting enhancements, and documenting improvements. More-over, the Board's Youth Council will solidify its unique position as the only regional entity specifically targeting out-of-school (in addition to in-school) youth with extensive and continuous youth development, training, and job placement services.*
- *The Board will communicate its vision of Workforce Development as "Human Development" broadly and effectively in the community. Strategies will demonstrate that it is equally interested in:*
 - *helping unemployed individuals and groups of workers through the process of discovering, inventing, doing, and being that turns "jobs" into "careers" and leads them to become productive, satisfied and contributing members of the community*
 - *helping businesses use workforce development as a tool for increasing their competitiveness, their productivity, and their long-term growth, and publicly recognizing and commending those who do.*

The Board's Strategic Vision relates directly to Performance Accountability in that the Board does not just regularly review and set goals for the Career Center Performance Measures and Outcomes in #5 a - d above, but rather, works continuously to respond to and address the larger issues of workforce pipelines and career pathways, private and public sector business growth and success, and economic development that are the context for successful work readiness, job training and placement. The Board and Career Center have identified priority industries, created focus and advisory groups to learn more about them, piloted strategies for addressing their needs, reported on successes and failures, cast the net wider to engage new businesses and community partners as needed, retooled and refined approaches, and in some cases established and institutionalized solutions to longstanding or endemic workforce problems. Examples include but are not limited to:

- in response to an urgent plea by a group of a dozen-plus area manufacturers, the piloting and eventual establishment of a solid and reliable venue for advanced manufacturing training for adults that didn't exist before in the Franklin Hampshire

region. (FH participants were travelling as far as Springfield, a 2-hr.round-trip drive, or even into Connecticut before then.)

- the piloting and establishment of the first MA community college degree program in Renewable Energy/Energy Efficiency, just as an influx of energy-related jobs or job description changes occurred in the region as a result of the ramping-up of energy conservation goals by the state.
- In response to an increase and role-expansion of extended care and home care agencies, the development and refinement of basic CNA-certification training to include early and not-then-required enhancements in areas such as Alzheimers/pre-Dementia, problem-solving, and pre-supervisory skills.
- In response to a shift to a more community-based healthcare model and the emergence of a variety of new agencies, clinics and offices, the piloting and eventual establishment of a Medical Office Management option within GCC's Office Administration program, and a similar evolution in the area of Medical Assisting training.
- In response to persistent complaints by business that young people didn't know about or weren't interested in their jobs, and that schools no longer had the time or staff to help them connect, the development of joint multi-partner programs to improve the effectiveness and outcomes of workforce development programs for in-school and out-of-school youth, such as P21 via the Northampton Education Consortium, the Pathways to MCAS Success initiative, and the award-winning USDOL Summer Jobs & Beyond project, which brings together WIOA Youth & School to Career programming and community leaders in three different high-need towns and has measurably increased the college and career readiness of over 200 youth.
- In response to a shrinking workforce (due to aging and out-migration) which prompted the necessity of looking for new or under-utilized entrants into the labor force, joint ABE/ESOL/WB/Career Center programs which have supported professional development, curriculum development, and academic/work readiness bridge programming leading to the placement of dozens of individuals with barriers to employment into priority industry jobs they might not otherwise have known about or succeeded in.

These and more Board/Career Center/Community Partner initiatives help to attract more and different job seekers to the Center, give them an edge in a competitive labor market, promote their retention and advancement, and increase their pay. Because initiatives are invariably sparked by economic development issues and needs, they help us to demonstrate our on-going value to business and economic development partners. All this clearly has a direct and positive impact on the region's Performance Outcomes.

(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 Franklin Hampshire Workforce Region has always been known for its partnerships, between agencies, organizations, and private sector businesses. In a sparsely-populated 1400-square mile rural region, everyone is trying to use low allocations to cover broad areas and many diverse needs, as well as often trying to pull together the critical mass of participants needed for a program to have any kind of economy of scale. In a region such as this, collaboration isn't a feel-good gesture--it's an imperative.

This means members of the Board are not just representatives of their sectors in the abstract: they are often the organizational leaders who use their knowledge of the system and their own entities' needs to instigate or join collaborative programs and projects to ensure their success. Since the early iteration of the workforce board as a "PIC," for example, both vocational-technical schools in our region have worked with the Career Centers to design and offer specialized training opportunities for adults; Older Worker programs have co-located to better reach and serve their participants; Labor organizations have spear-headed and supported dislocated worker initiatives with staffing, expertise and funds; and Adult Basic Education providers have reached out for help with career exploration and advising, customizing their curricula to recommended industry sectors in return. Just a few examples of such jointly-funded projects in the 2000's include the FHWB/Career Center/ABE BEST Older Youth Project (Hospitality and Culinary); BayStateWorks (joint machine training designed and delivered by GCC and the FHWB for a consortium of companies), the Older Workers in Education Project (UMASS Labor/Management program, the FHWB, Board members from Smith College & Mt. Holyoke); and ECCLI & Bridges to Healthcare, where nursing home businesses, the college, the workforce board, Career Center, and CAP resources combined to support the training, wraparound services, and trouble-shooting required to place, retain, and advance workers in entry-level healthcare jobs. As these partners recruited, assessed and enrolled participants, training and specialized services from agencies like MRC and DTA were also frequently folded in, paving the way for the even more ambitious service-integration activities prompted by WIOA.

With a multi-agency WIOA partner umbrella MOU now in place, a bi-monthly meeting schedule, and strong leadership by the Career Center, strategies to align and integrate resources and services have become even more focused and intensive, with individual MOUS between FHCC and DTA now in place for a second year, and new ones emerging with The Literacy Project and Mass Rehab. Repeated (vs. occasional) contact with and between required partners, and specific workplans prompted by MOUs are yielding a better understanding and mutual commitment by all to a shared and refreshed vision for an integrated system. As one partner stated recently, "These meetings help to remind us that it's not just about coordinating with each other, it's about the people we serve, it's about making sure they get the best we all have to offer."

(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:*
- (a) Programs that are included in your local workforce system (please list programs)*

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

(b) How your Board will support the 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;

Collaborate with two vocational schools in the region to develop trainings for in-demand jobs in the region. Support Skills Capital Grants to fully equip vocational schools with the training equipment need to support career pathway training.

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

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

FHCC uses WIOA, DTA, Ticket to Work, Youth, and specialized career pathway grants to train individuals with barriers to employment. FHCC incorporates supportive service dollars in all career pathway grant programs to support child care and transportation needs of enrolled participants.

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

Co-enrollment in multiple programs is encouraged. Approximately 36% of FHCC participants are co-enrolled in multiple programs.

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

FHCC customers in need of training to gain sustainable employment can participate in FHCC Work Readiness Lab and receive a local certificate of participation. Whenever feasible we enroll customers in career pathway or occupational training to gain the skills and credentials needed to successfully obtain and retain employment.

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

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

The Career Center engages businesses in two ways. First, as customers to connect businesses in our region to Career Center and MA BizWorks services, to determine business individual and industry sector needs in the region via interviews or focus groups, and to create a business services plan to

address the needs of individual businesses. Secondly, the Career Center engages businesses/employers in development of new training and workforce development programs to ensure responsiveness to industry sector needs. The majority of establishments in the Franklin Hampshire region are small businesses, and in-demand sectors receive high priority for program development or business engagement.

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

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

(c) To support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses;

See [section 3\(a\)](#) above.

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

FHWB and FHCC participate in regional economic development work groups including but not limited to W. MA Regional Biz Works, Economic Developers meetings, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy development as part of the Franklin Regional Economic Development Initiative and the Pioneer Valley Economic Development Coordinating Council. Workforce Board and Career Center staff regularly attend Chamber meetings in the region and conduct joint business outreach visits.

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

The Career Center has redesigned its customer flow to ensure integration of partner programs and to ensure job seekers using the Career Center have access to all programs that might be of assistance to their individualized needs. Standard services provided to Unemployment Insurance (UI) customers include:

- UI Online one-on-one assistance for those claimants wanting to file, reopen, or have questions regarding their online claim. Since mid-March 2020, assistance is provided remotely, over-the-phone.
- Informational handouts, brochures, and booklets are provided for first-time filers, offering the choice of filing online or via the telephone.
- A UI designated computer station is available in the Resource Room for claimants wanting to check the status of their claim and printouts of claimant benefits are made available for program eligibility.
- Claimants are introduced to Career Center services, programs, and resources at the front desk and on our website with more detailed information of Career Center and Partner services, as well as Training, Unemployment, Veterans, WIOA, Business Services, MSFW, Dislocated Worker, Disability, Senior Employment, and Youth Programs when they attend a Career Center Seminar. For claimants looking for additional assistance, they

may “Connect with a Career Coach”, see [page 18](#) for more details.

- Claimants enrolled in the Re-employment Assessment Eligibility (RESEA) Program receive one-on-one support with the development of a resume, utilization of labor market information, work search and online job search assistance. RESEA Program staff make appropriate referrals to Career Center and Partner programs and encourage return visits to the Career Center to take advantage of other services; e.g. workshops, trainings, career counseling and resume consults.

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

The Biz Team participates in the monthly Biz Works Western MA regional meeting convened by the Regional Rapid Response team at which partner agencies review current programs, initiatives, business outreach, and business needs. The Career Center Biz Team and the Rapid Response team sometimes conduct joint business visits. In addition, the Rapid Response team is invited to all Career Center and Workforce Board special events and is consulted for their expertise on employer initiatives.

The Team is in contact with Rapid Response staff whenever a business within the service delivery area experiences a large layoff or closure. The Career Center is informed, via email and the Rapid Response Referral Report, of those employees who have been affected, and referred to the Career Center for follow-up. This monthly Rapid Response Report includes the number of employers served, and the number of employees affected, is reviewed by Career Center managers and the Business Services Team.

Employers are provided access to skilled workers, and customized on-site services. Informational sessions are held to educate workers on various state and local programs such as the WorkShare Program, Workforce Training Fund, etc., and on Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) benefits to workers.

Affected employees are invited to attend on-site and remote workshops on job search, resume preparation, and interviewing. They are offered unemployment insurance assistance, labor market information, and information on health insurance, benefits, and pensions.

The Business Services Team collaborates with Rapid Response staff on the coordination and implementation of large scale job fairs and individual recruitment sessions: on-site and remote, many of which are held at the Greenfield Career Center.

FHCC refers employers who could benefit from the MA Workshare program to avoid permanent or temporary layoffs.

(g) Please describe procedures to offer MassHire Career Center Business Services and Mass BizWorks programs to local businesses.

The Workforce Board staff coordinate with Career Center staff on business outreach to create awareness of Career Center and Workforce Board Business Services. The Business Services Team (Biz Team) meets with employers, conducts a needs assessment, and creates a business service plan designed to target those needs. The Biz Team often collaborates with the Career Services team on

customized recruitment services, and opportunities for businesses to participate in job fairs throughout the year. Since June 2020, Job Fairs are offered remotely. Participating employers offer virtual tours and conduct chat sessions with job seekers

Priority industry sectors are identified in the MHWIB and MHFCC annual plan and the Pioneer Valley Regional Workforce Plan, and serve to prioritize business outreach and service provision. A Business Services Work Plan, created by the Career Center Executive Director, Operations Manager, Business Services Team and Workforce Board Director, includes events, activities, and outreach that target priority sectors as well as high demand or hard to fill hiring needs.

Workforce Board and the Career Center Business Services Team collaborate on special projects that target a priority sector, such as Greater Ware Manufacturing Initiative where a member of the Business Services Team collaborated with workforce board staff on business outreach, curriculum development, training participants, and training placements for a manufacturing/machine operators training.

The Workforce Board, Career Center, Workforce Partners and businesses collaborate on career pathway planning and design to address solutions to hiring challenges. Recent examples include the Health Care Employers Working Group and the Learn to Earn Medical Assistants initiatives. Three new initiatives in FY21-22 include Community Health Worker training in collaboration with Holyoke Community College, Healthcare Hub Medical Assistant training in collaboration with Hampden County, and ESOL/Food Service preparation training in collaboration with University of Massachusetts.

The Career Center Biz Team is in frequent contact with MA BizWorks staff and attend monthly regional meetings. The Team is notified by Rapid Response staff whenever a local company experiences a large layoff or closure. Conversely, the Team, thru daily review of newspapers/publications, workforce meetings, etc., informs Rapid Response of like activity. Recruitment assistance is offered for large scale layoffs.

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

Each month the Team distributes a report of business service activity which includes employer visits, summary of needs, business service agreement development, training program implementation; e.g. OJT, specialized recruitments, hiring initiatives, workforce board meetings, pre-screening and testing assistance; e.g. Apprenticeship testing proctoring.

The BizTeam remains informed of new businesses, hiring needs, and collaborative opportunities through communication with Workforce Board staff, Career Center Executive Director, Rapid Response and Career Center staff, BizWorks Meetings, Employer visits, newspapers/publications; e.g. Business West, Chamber newsletters/events, and neighboring Career Center staff.

The Business Services and the Career Services Teams at the Career Center promote OJT, apprenticeship opportunities and collaboratively work with employers to implement.

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

(a) Coordinate local workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities that are carried out in the local area

See previous [section 3](#) above and [section 16\(c\)](#) below.

(b) Promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services;

See previous [section 3](#) above and [section 16\(c\)](#) below.

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

(a) 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 Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board and FHCC follow state policy for approving eligible training providers in the region. Verifiable performance in the areas of Training Completions Rate, Entered Employment/Placement Rate, and Placement Wage are supplied by the provider and must meet minimum standards. Additionally, when determining subsequent eligibility, the FHWB and FHCC reviews the performance of these providers as it relates specifically to the participants funded through various sources. Failure to meet minimum standards may impact subsequent eligibility.

Feedback from training participants regarding program participation and quality of instruction received is also a determining factor in considering subsequent eligibility. FHCC periodically conducts outreach to training providers to encourage enrollment as a WIOA training provider for programs of interest to job seekers and employers alike. This can happen when a WIOA eligible customer, with an identified need for retraining that will lead to sustainable employment in our service area, has a strong interest in a training provider not currently WIOA approved. FHWB and FHCC regularly collaborate with community colleges to create and fund career pathway training programs.

(b) 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;

Due to the large service area, the Career Center provides three physical access points distributed throughout the region (Greenfield, Orange, Northampton) with a goal to provide additional part-time service in Ware when funding/staffing allows. Due to funding reductions the full-service Career Center in Northampton serving Hampshire County had to be closed in 2017. This was replaced with 15 hours of service in Northampton at Forbes Library. Hampshire County needs a full-service Career Center and we are striving to restore sufficient funds to do so. In the absence of this, our goal is to provide limited service access points as noted above as per our 2017 Customer Centered Design Facility Plan.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated adoption of remote/online services. The Career Center now provides virtual work readiness and job search workshops, UI Assistance, career counseling, business services, virtual job fairs, and virtual job placement assistance. As the career centers return to in-

person services, we envision a hybrid model of service delivery providing both in-person and virtual services to best meet the needs and technology capability of customers.

(c) How entities within the MassHire 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;

Career Center programs are both physically and programmatically accessible for customers with disabilities. Career Center facilities are all physically accessible with dedicated handicap parking, wheelchair ramps, elevators, braille signs, and automatic doors. In addition, the Career Center has invested in adaptive technology including: adjustable computer tables and chairs, video phone, TTY, adapted computer screens and mice, and on-site wheelchairs. FHETC makes every effort to provide reasonable accommodation to ensure programmatic accessibility on an as needed basis including: language interpretation, intake documents and information sheets in Spanish, information sheets in other languages as provided by the State, adapted written materials for visually impaired (such as large print, audio assist), sign interpretation, and space for service animals, and staff assistance in completing application forms.

To address programmatic accessibility FHETC created the Disabilities Resource Coordinator (DRC) to provide individualized counseling and employment services for Career Center customers with disabilities as an employment barrier. The DRC provides barrier assessment, career counseling, benefits counseling, job matching, job development, and follow up employment assistance.

The Career Center completes periodic physical accessibility self-assessments to continuously improve accessibility in the Career Centers and works closely with partner agencies servicing customers with accessibility needs including MRC, MCB, and ESOL programs to ensure coordinated service for shared customers and to ensure the highest level of service is available to meet the individual needs of each customer.

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

FHCC co-locates with several partner agencies at the Career Center including:

- The Literacy Project – Outstation Coordinator for adult basic education services is stationed in the Career Center one day per week and we have developed a detailed protocol for warm referrals and integrated case management for shared customers.
- The DTA Full Engagement Worker is stationed in the Career Center 2 times/month, coordinates via phone with the Career Center CIES/WPP Counselor to manage shared customers, and participates in a Cliff Effects workshop for our Work Readiness Lab.
- JobCorps is co-located for at least one day per week in the Career Center to receive appointments of young adults interested in residential training programs. The Career Center collaborates to promote JobCorps information sessions.
- MRC occasionally stations a staff person in the Career Center but more importantly a FHCC Career Counselor collaborates closely with MRC to enroll shared customers for occupational

training using MRC Training funds.

- SCSEP stations a Franklin County SCSEP coordinator in the Career Center.
- FHCC has developed a warm referral protocol for ESOL students to be introduced to Career Center services.
- The MOU Partner agencies meet quarterly to discuss service delivery integration and to keep up to date on partner programs.
- Rapid Response Team of Western MA stations a Rapid Response Business Services Representative at the Career Center several days/week.

(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 MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center offers a full array of services for adult and dislocated workers including: Wagner Peyser employment services, RESEA re-employment services, WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker basic and individualized services, specialized programs to support employment and training for priority populations including Comprehensive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) for DTA cash recipients, DTA Work Program participants, employment services for people with disabilities, and employment services for Veterans. In addition, the Workforce Board and Career Center collaborates with partner agencies to leverage non-WIOA training dollars to develop specialized career pathway programs to offer training, work readiness, and job placement for adult populations in manufacturing, health care, and educational careers which are high demand priority sectors in our region. Other funding sources leveraged include: MSMI NEG, EOHED MSI, TRADE, Commonwealth Corporation, and U.S. Department of Labor.

Due to the rural nature of our region and the data management requirements of Training Pro, there are a limited number of certified training vendors located in Franklin and Hampshire Counties, and there are no Eligible Training Providers in the North Quabbin Region. Our primary regional training providers are the community colleges and the vocational schools. Many of our adult and dislocated worker customers access trainings out of our region at community colleges, colleges and universities as well as private training vendors accessing IT, CDL Class A and B, software training.

Overall, the trainings our customers access are quality trainings that lead to employment in a related field. However, a large number of our customers are limited to the type of training they can access due to geographical availability, lack of reliable transportation and/or the time commitment with travel and child care. In addition, the Career Services Team at the Career Center collaborates with the Workforce Board to recruit new training providers and certified training programs within our region in Training Pro.

The Career Center uses WIOA supportive service funds to assist customers with barriers to attend training, and we continue to collaborate with partner agencies to advocate for and develop expanded public transportation options to serve our region. In addition, the Career Center is exploring options to provide online employment and training services, but limited internet access in the majority of rural areas in the region eliminates this option for many enrollees. Our plan includes working with partners to potentially provide computer and internet access for our rural customers to obtain remote services.

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

MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center provides oversight and program administration for WIOA Youth subrecipient youth services currently contracted to Community Action Youth Programs (CAYP).

CAYP WIOA Youth services young people ages 16-22 who meet WIOA eligibility requirements. The program focus is to assist youth, with a variety of barriers, to create goals and to achieve education and occupation credentials that will help them attain empowered employment as they transition into adulthood. The WIOA Youth Program consists of an array of services to meet the mandated WIOA elements including: Career Pathway Exploration Activities, Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling, Career Pathway Exploration, Job Readiness Training, Financial Education, Mentoring, Leadership Development, Peer Inclusion programs and Guided Transitions to Secondary and Post-Secondary education opportunities, Supportive Services. To promote wrap around services referrals are made to agencies such as local charities and food banks, the Literacy Project, Greenfield Community College (GCC), Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School (Smith Voc), Dial Self, ServiceNet, Clinical Support Options (CSO), The Center for New Americans, New England Farm Workers Association and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC).

Supportive Services are essential to the success of youth who face barriers in transportation, child care and other challenges presented due to living in rural poverty. When funding allows, the program helps youth to obtain a Driver's license, access to child care, winter coats, school supplies to support participation in the program and independence.

The Youth Program includes successful participation in subsidized work experiences in various industry sectors across Franklin and Hampshire counties. Work experiences range from agricultural experiences at Hadley Farms, work experience at local non-profit agencies, municipal summer jobs, and for-profit employers in various industry sectors.

Barriers specific to our rural region for which the program is continuously seeking solutions include:

- Post-secondary degrees or certificates take longer to achieve because youth are not able to attend college full time due to restraints in transportation, child care and the need to be employed at least part-time while attending college.
- Apprenticeships and Occupational Trainings due to limited training options in the region and lack of transportation to long distance training sites.

(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.

DTA and MRC collaborations include:

- Youth can be co-enrolled in both WIOA Youth and DTA services through participation in the Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) program and the Work Participation Program (WPP) through the MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center. In addition, Community Action recently became a DTA Young Parents Program (YPP) provider. 63% of WIOA youth enrollments are youth with disabilities.
- Youth with mental, physical and emotional disabilities have access to working with the

Disability Services Coordinator at the MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center and are regularly referred to MRC to ensure their special needs are being met when conducting Career Pathway and Job Search activities.

- MRC collaborations for in school youth includes co-enrollment in the Pre-Employment Trainings Services (Pre-ETS) that assist youth with IEP's, disabilities ages 14-22 by providing Job exploration counseling, work based learning experiences, work place readiness and instruction on self-advocacy. If youth are not eligible for the Pre-ETS program they may still receive general services through MRC to assist with employment readiness.

(8) 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.

The MHFHCC Biz Team will coordinate with the Connecting Activities Coordinator around business outreach to develop youth internships and summer employment opportunities. MHFHWB and MHFHCC contracts with Youth Providers to deliver WIOA Youth Services and YouthWorks. YouthWorks program has expanded the number of priority communities to include Montague and Ware. MHFHCC and MHFHWB will continue to push to expand YouthWorks priority communities. The current Youth Services Provider 's contracted work plans include coordination with Connecting Activities, support for high school completion for in-school youth, referrals to The Literacy Project for GED/HiSET completion for out-of-school youth, and educational planning with participants around post-secondary education or participation in workforce certificate level training. The MHFHCC Youth Programs Coordinator facilitates and ensures coordination of service delivery between programs where appropriate. The appropriate partners are brought around the table in planning youth related career pathway programs.

On the Adult Program side, MHFHCC meets regularly with Greenfield Community College, our lead training partner, to coordinate and plan workforce training programs responsive to local needs of both employers and job seekers. MHFH Workforce Area as a region collaborates regularly with regional Community College and other educational institutions on career pathway development. Examples include Learn to Earn Medical Assistant Training, TRAIN Foundational Work Readiness Training, and Pioneer Valley Diverse Teachers Pathway Project.

(9) How does 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.

As mentioned previously, due to the limits of rural public transportation, many of the Career Center adult and dislocated worker trainees have limited to no access to transportation services. FHCC incorporates supportive service funds in all grant applications for training programs to support child care and transportation to training. We coordinate with DTA for co-enrolled customers to use DTA transportation funds for TANF and WPP customers. We are also collaborating with Franklin Regional Council of Governments and Franklin Regional Transit Authority on pilot on-demand transportation to provide rides to training/education, career center services, and employment.

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

Front desk staff assess first-time callers or walk-in customers to assess needs and identify priority customers; e.g. Veterans, individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders, etc., for priority referral. Information on Career Center services and programs is provided as is instruction on completing the Career Center's Job Seeker Membership Form, available in a fillable format on the MHFHCC website. Customers are also referred to MassHire JobQuest for customer registration. Walk-in customers are encouraged to use the [Resource Room](#) for job search/application, resume writing, labor market data research, and profile completion; e.g. JobQuest, LinkedIn, etc. Fillable forms; e.g. resume and labor market worksheets, etc., are available via the MHFHCC website.

Customers are encouraged, by both front desk staff and counselors, to participate in, and register for, job readiness workshops, employer events, and program orientations, accessed remotely or in-person. RESEA staff review areas of need and recommend appropriate services at the Initial RESEA Review. During this meeting, customer needs and goals are recorded on the Career Action Plan (CAP) as are those Career Center activities and services of interest to the customer. Further discussion of, and registration for, Career Center services takes place during the final RESEA Review. Per program requirements, all enrollees are registered for a follow-up service, ensuring a repeat visit and further awareness of Wagner Peyser/labor exchange activities available.

Customers looking for additional information regarding Career Center services, and/or seek guidance on next steps, are invited to "Connect with a Career Coach". These one-on-one phone consult sessions are conducted daily, and serve to connect new customers with Career Center and Partner staff to develop a service delivery plan.

Work Readiness Lab workshops are available to all Career Center customers. They include workshops on customer service fundamentals, digital technical skills, career exploration, foundational soft skills, and managing cliff affects (guidance regarding public support benefits).

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

Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW), a priority population, are offered, and have access to, the full-range of Career Center employment and [training services](#) provided to non-MSFW's.

Callers are invited to come into the Career Center to learn about the services and programs offered, including training, and receive in-person assistance with Career Center and JobQuest registration.

Language assistance is offered to walk-ins who are not English proficient. The preferred language is identified initially by use of flashcards. If the individual is Spanish speaking, assistance will be provided by a staff member (if available). If not, or if another language is preferred, the Multilingual Services Unit will be utilized for translation and interpretation.

Those interested in training will be invited to be explore WIOA eligibility with the Career Services Team.

(12) Please describe how the Board coordinates WIOA title I workforce investment activities with adult education and literacy activities under WIOA title II? This description must include how the Board 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 submit an application 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.

FHCC coordinates with Title II Adult Education providers through co-enrollment of shared customers. We now have a written protocol for two-way referrals between the Career Center and adult basic education/ESOL providers and co-case manage shared customers. MOU partners meet quarterly to provide program updates and to discuss integration of service delivery.

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

Franklin Hampshire Employment and Training Consortium
One Arch Place, Suite 2, Greenfield, MA 01301
Lead Contact: Davis Hawkowl, Finance Director
413-774-4361 x 366
davishawkowl@masshirefhcareers.org

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

A subcommittee of the MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board (FHWB) is convened to establish the process and timeline of review of the Career Center Operator Procurement which is then submitted and approved or amended by the FHWB. The subcommittee then meets to discuss and review the parameters and components of the Request for Proposal (RFP). Once a draft of the RFP is established, the subcommittee meets with the Department of Career Services (DCS) for guidance and

review. A final version of the RFP is submitted and approved or amended by the FHWB and then published with public notices sent out. A Bidders Conference is held two weeks after the RFP is released with the questions and answers from the Bidders Conference published on the FHWB website one week later. The bid proposals must be submitted in sealed envelopes approximately 12 weeks from the release date. The subcommittee reviews and scores all proposals and submits their recommendation to the Board for approval. Once the Board approves the provider, there is an approximate 8-week appeals period, if needed. Contract negotiations begin after the appeals period ends and the contract is executed within 6 weeks of the end of the appeals period.

(15) Please provide the local levels of performance negotiated with the Governor and chief elected official with WIOA sec. 116(c), to be used to measure 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.

The local performance goals can be located here using the following URL:

<https://www.massshirefhw.org/wp-content/uploads/FY21PerformanceGoals-Approved.pdf>.

(16) 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?

Every two years, each of our Board members must complete the Conflict of Interest Training through the State website (<http://www.muniprogram.state.ma.us/>) and every year they must sign and return the Acknowledgment of Receipt of the Summary of the Conflict of Interest. In addition, all new Board members receive a thorough on-boarding and introductory meeting with the Executive Director, which covers how to apply for the Workforce Training Fund, how to connect with the Career Center's BizTeam, and any relevant grants, events, and subcommittees that might interest them. When appropriate, we also circulate newsletters and opportunities to participate in publicly accessible workforce trainings.

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

Several Board members are actively engaged in our Manufacturing Skills Initiative and our healthcare programs. Our Executive Committee is comprised of mostly private business owners, as is our Career Center Performance Oversight Committee. In addition, we seek out our business members to participate in our procurement process, monitoring process, and certification review process.

(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?

Our business Board members regularly use the Career Center's BizTeam to post jobs and help facilitate job fairs specifically for our Board members' organizations and/or recruit them into large job fairs. At our last Board meeting, the BizTeam received specific accolades for their outstanding work with the Cooley Dickinson Job Fair and assistance in job posting and recruitment from Worthington Assembly. Recent success in collaborative efforts is demonstrated by the success of the Manufacturing training. The program's most recent enrollees saw a 100% completion rate and a 100% employment rate at the

time of graduation. The program is a collaboration between the Workforce Board, Career Center, Greenfield Community College, and the Franklin County Technical School.

- (17) *How are the training services outlined in WIOA sec. 134 provided through the use of individual training accounts? If contracts for training services are or will be used, how is/will the use of such contracts coordinated with the use of individual training accounts?*
- (a) *How does the Board ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are provided?*

Training Services will be provided through Individual Training Accounts in accordance with the MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board ITA Training policy. Contracted Training will be utilized, only when one (or more) of the five exceptions identified in 680.320 applies. Enrolled adults and dislocated workers work with Career Services Counselors to determine skills gaps and training needs and identify an appropriate training that will lead to sustainable employment.

During the WIOA Orientation, customers are brought to the computer lab and taught how to navigate Mass JobQuest and the Eligible Training Provider list to ensure informed customer choice of training programs and vendors. Counselors provide Labor Market information especially on the priority industry sectors and in-demand occupations in our region to assist customers in making informed decisions about training that will lead to jobs within in-demand occupations and career pathways in the region.

Once a provider has been selected and funding approved, a training services contract that outlines the general provisions and requirements under the ITA system is forwarded to the training provider. The customer is notified of the training approval and must indicate agreement to the terms and conditions of the contract.

- (18) *Please describe the local area strategy and service plans for utilization of the following work-based training models:*
- (a) *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.*
- (b) *Apprenticeship.*
- (c) *Incumbent Worker Training.*
- (d) *Work Experiences (paid or unpaid).*
- (e) *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).*

Not currently utilizing.

- (f) *Online remediation tools for OJT/apprenticeship screening in support of cultivating and demonstrating workplace competencies.*

FHCC uses WorkKeys as an assessment tool to measure basic skills and abilities for the purpose of eligibility and appropriateness for training. Depending on the nature of an individual OJT/Apprenticeship, we may use any number of assessments or tools in consultation with the employer that will give us the most useful information when creating a Training Plan for OJT customers or selecting the best candidate for an Apprenticeship opportunity.

Additionally, as part of our Work Readiness Lab (curriculum), FHCC offers monthly workshops on Foundational Work Readiness Essential Skills, Customer Service Fundamentals and Digital Tech Skills.

The FHCC Work Readiness Lab is a continuous work in progress. Future plans are to incorporate more direct content from the NCRC, including a concentration on work ethic and discipline as well as basic skills.

The BizTeam promotes training programs whenever employer assessments are conducted during on-site or virtual employer meetings. Trainings are also included in handouts distributed at job fairs, business expos, and participation to date:

OJT: The Biz Team and Career Service Team collaborate to work with employers interested in OJT to place an appropriate job seeker in an OJT position, to develop an OJT plan, and to monitor the success of the placement providing follow-up assistance to both employer and job seeker to help promote retention of the job beyond the OJT period.

Apprenticeship: Ralph's Blacksmith is and has been a program participant since 2015. The Career Center serves as a testing site and Business Services staff proctor apprentices who participate in off-the-job training. Often career pathway training programs incorporate an internship or apprenticeship component.

Incumbent Worker: FHWB and FHCC incorporate incumbent worker training into career pathway grant applications when applicable. We also connect employers to Workforce Training Fund grants and will sometimes use WIOA funds for group trainings of incumbent workers within the confines allowed by WIOA funding.

Work Experiences/Transitional Jobs: MHFHCC has a number of partners who provide short term unpaid work experiences or transitional jobs including Pioneer Valley Community Action Fuel Assistance and Family Resource Center, the Recover Project, and the YMCA. Youth programs include paid work experiences.

(19) Please describe the process the Board uses, 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.

The MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board notifies via email and on their social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) when the 4-Year Plan is available for public comments. Including in this is the start and end dates of the public comments period and where to submit public comments. The 4-Year Plan is posted directly to the website and all notifications include the link (<https://www.masshirefhwb.org/current-past-plans/>). There is also a notice posted on the homepage

of the FHWB website.

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

Franklin Hampshire MOU Partners await the MA DCS integrated intake database program to implement on the local level. In addition, the Career Services Director is taking the lead on coordinating case management of shared co-enrolled WIOA and ABE/ESOL customers on a case by case basis. The MOU Partners quarterly update a Warm Referral contact sheet for all partner agencies. FHCC has adopted a specialized referral protocol to connect ABE and ESOL customers to Career Center services and to integrate case management communication.

(21) Please describe how the Board will implement the Virtual Career Pathway tool locally both for customers who can be wholly served by the Virtual Tool and those who will need to request personalized assistance.

(a) How will the Virtual Tool be used once total public access is restored?

(b) How will staff be assigned/deployed?

(c) How will MassHire Board and Career Center leadership ensure that all staff are cross trained to be part of process and ensure seamless customer service?

The Franklin Hampshire workforce area is fortunate in our region that we have several occupations that offer a career pathway for workers that are supported by a strong network of career development and educational institutions. Since the onset of the pandemic, all programs have successfully pivoted to virtual offerings. It is the goal to strengthen articulation agreements between regional partners to ensure students seeking to enter or advance in their careers will have access to education and training linked together to scaffold their success. As a regional strategy we are also supporting the development of a strong apprenticeship system to allow workers to advance their careers through paid hands-on work and formal education. The Regional Partnership have created regional career pathway charts developed to assist students, parents, guidance counselors, job seekers, and others about the variety of jobs in a given industry and the education/work experience necessary to advance from one level of employment to the next. (See link: Regional Career Pathway Charts)

The large geographic area served limits access to some in person services, so the virtual option is predicted to continue. The option of hybrid models seek to allow for increased access to services, and to build efficiencies in service provision. Staff at the Career Center are cross trained to provide exceptional customer service and seamless access to services.

(22) 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).

- 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.

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

State Plan: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2020-workforce-innovation-and-opportunity-act-wioa-massachusetts-combined-state-plan/download>

MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center provides employment and training services to military Veterans and eligible spouses, and provides priority of service over non-Veterans as determined by individual program eligibility criteria.

Priority of Service status is established at the time of eligibility determination and will be provided to Veterans and eligible spouses who are recipients of public assistance, low income, or basic skills deficient; Recipients of public assistance, and/or basic skills deficient; Other low-income individuals (in accordance with Federal Poverty Guidelines and Lower Living Level Standard Income Levels); and Individuals who are basic skills deficient.

Covered persons: Veterans and eligible spouses, are identified at point of entry, informed of their entitlement to priority of service, and given an opportunity to take full advantage of the full array of employment, training, and placement services under priority of service.

FHCC provides specialized employment, work readiness, and training for priority populations of Veterans, Department of Transitional Assistance clients (DTA cash and SNAP), employment services for people with disabilities (MRC and Social Security Ticket to Work), long term unemployed, re-entry (pre and post release); homeless individuals and families (WIOA, Secure Jobs, Hurricane Relocation), and co-refers with ABE/ELL programs.

As per FHWB policy, priority of service for Disadvantaged Adult individualized career services and training is given to:

- Recipients of public assistance
- Low income individuals
- Individuals who are basic skills deficient
- Other priority populations identified by the Governor or the Workforce Board (limited to 10% of individuals enrolled in WIOA individualized career services or training services in the current fiscal year). Including:
 - Older workers (55+)
 - Individual does not have access to a home computer or internet
 - People of color
 - Women

