

Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Local 4-year Plan

2018-2021

Franklin Hampshire Workforce Region

2/1/19

Workforce region should provide comprehensive responses to the following questions. If information is contained in an attachment, please label and reference clearly.

(a) Strategic Planning elements, including:

(1) A regional (local) analysis of:

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

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

As reinforced during the Pioneer Valley-wide Regional Planning Process ([click here for the PDF](#)), the top three industries most important to the Franklin Hampshire region's economic success continue to be as follows:

- **Healthcare/Social Assistance:** chosen as a priority in part due to the presence of several acute care hospitals, a substantial number of long-term extended care and assisted living facilities, and a growing number of other community-based care and social assistance entities in the region.
- **Educational Services:** chosen due to the presence of a significant number of secondary and postsecondary institutions, including the UMASS flagship campus, the prestigious Five College network, and a wide array of private residential as well as public secondary schools.
- **Advanced Manufacturing:** chosen due to the region's long history of precision machining expertise, the established presence of an integrated manufacturing ecosystem and supply chain, and the fact that the sector remains one of the few where job seekers can find well-paid employment with substantial advancement potential, without necessarily possessing a four-year degree.

During the Great Recession (2008-2009) and in the beginning of the gradual recovery in 2011, employment in these three industries lagged somewhat in the Pioneer Valley, as did employment in secondary priority industries such as Accommodation/Food Services and the

Profession/Scientific/Technical sector. However, from 2011 to 2017, all three of the priority industries showed positive job growth: Healthcare/Social Assistance led with a 41% increase, producing 20,839 jobs. Educational Services grew at 9%, and Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing increased by 13%, adding 821 new jobs. In addition, Accommodation/Food Services grew by 7%, and Professional/Technical/Scientific Services grew 6%.

During the period starting with the economic recovery beginning in 2011 to 2017, significant job growth has occurred in occupations that require a bachelor's degree. Leading this growth are occupations in Healthcare and Social Assistance such as Community and Social Service Specialists (44%), Social Workers (42%), Therapists (18%) and Registered Nurses (12%). The demand for Educators also shows steady job growth averaging 5% to 10% for elementary, secondary and post-secondary educators in addition to teacher's assistants. High growth occupational trends at the sub-bachelor's level continue to be led by Healthcare and Social Assistance with Nursing, Psychiatric, and Home Health Aides (55%) and Healthcare Support jobs. Occupations such as Secretaries and Administrative Assistants (6%), Office Clerks, General (8%) and teachers' assistants (8%) show steady growth and create a significant number of entry-level job opportunities.

In the lower Pioneer Valley, based on anticipated industry growth in 2018 in Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, there will continue to be a substantial number of occupational opportunities emerging in Casino Floor and Hotel Operations. In addition, support and service job opportunities will become available in Food and Beverage, Administration, Security, Entertainment, information Technology and Culinary. New opportunities will also emerge in manufacturing in 2018 with the opening of the CRRC Railway Car manufacturing and assembly facility in Springfield. Approximately 110-140 positions will be created for production floor, supervisory, engineering, support services and administrative occupations.

Among the top three priority industry sectors, the region drew from the ranks of 3, 4, and 5-star occupations in the State's Regional Data Planning Tool to determine those with significant shortages, based upon the "supply" data for the region - input from business, organizations and others.

The top occupational groups with the largest supply gaps are as follows:

Healthcare/Social Assistance:

- ✓ Social/Human Service Assistants (-666 workers)
- ✓ Direct Care Workers (-1,802 jobs) including Registered Nurses, Nursing and Medical Assistants, Personal Care Aides)
- ✓ Technical/Clinical Workers (-1,373 workers) including Dental Hygienists, Pharmacy Techs, LPNs/LVNs, Medical Records/IT, Physician Assistants, Occupational/Physical Therapists.

Educational Services:

- ✓ Educators (especially in Voc-Tech, STEM, and Trades (-1,265 workers overall).
- ✓ Teachers' Aides/Assistants
- ✓ In residential facilities, esp. within the Five-College network, frontline staff such as food service, facilities, and trades workers.

Advanced Manufacturing (-105 overall):

- ✓ First-line Supervisors,
- ✓ Production Workers (inc. Computer Controlled Machine Operators and machinists
- ✓ Inspectors, Testers, Quality Control workers.

Cross-Industry Occupations:

- ✓ IT-related
- ✓ Professional Services
- ✓ Back-Office Administrative and Logistical Support

The region noted additional industries which--while not on the "Priority" industry employment list for varying reasons-- were deemed critical to the region's economy due to recent sharp job growth, or significant business vibrancy. They include:

- Accommodation and Food Services, in conjunction with Arts, Recreation, and Entertainment, and including occupations such as: Gaming-related emerging occupations; Food Preparation & Serving; Outdoor Recreation; Culture and Arts. In addition to longstanding outdoor recreation and eco-tourism opportunities in the FH region, a substantial number of occupational opportunities in Casino Floor and Hotel Operations associated with the opening of the MGM Casino Resort in Springfield is expected to have some impact on the FH job market. Support and service job opportunities there also include Food and Beverage, Administration, Security, Entertainment, information Technology and Culinary.
- Agriculture & Sustainable Food Systems, including occupations in: Growing; Value-Added Manufacturing; Processing; Distribution; Serving and Selling; and Managing Food Waste; as well as Animal Care; Farm/Nursery Management; and Entrepreneurship.

(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.

The knowledge and skills needed to fill many of the identified critical occupational areas are outlined in the PV Regional Plan in Attachment D "Completed Credential Asset Mapping Tool" ([click here for the PV Regional Plan](#)). One example follows:

Social & Human Service Assistance: many entry-level jobs require no more than an Associate degree, and community partners tell us advanced degrees are not always necessary for advancement outside of clinical settings. Experience in the field is important, which points to the need for paid internships and apprenticeships, ideally longer than one semester. A Bachelor's degree or Masters in Social Work or related fields is a good longer-term goal. A variety of certification and/or licenses are also required along the way. Off-site clinical experience/practicum is often necessary. Many credentials do have a degree of portability, but often individual State exams/licenses are required. The field is easily-accessible, with a wide variety of entry-level opportunities and substantive need, but retention/ advancement can be difficult due to low wages, for which employers are not wholly responsible, (i.e. outdated State Contract reimbursement levels are a factor).

Additional outside training, or a coordinated regional training effort might allow for more advancement to supervisory roles in this field.

Other occupations detailed in Attachment D of the PV Regional Plan include:

Direct care workers

Technical/Clinical Workers

Educators

Production Workers

Manufacturing Supervisors

(3) Please provide an analysis of your regional workforce, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.

Since 2012, the Pioneer Valley has seen a 0.4% increase in the overall population, gaining just over 3,000 residents. This trend is projected to continue over the next five years, with a projected population increase of 0.3% representing an additional 2,000 residents. The age cohorts projected to see the largest increase in percentage of the total population are residents 70-74, and 75-79, projected to increase by 30%, and 35%, respectively (15,000 residents). This factor will affect the workforce because: 1) it indicates how the region's workforce is aging; and 2) this cohort will require particular services including, but not limited to, those related to the occupational groupings within the Healthcare and Social Assistance priority industry.

Over the next five years, the Pioneer Valley is projected to add nearly 1,500 people between the ages of 25-29. This will increase the labor and talent pool for regional employers, however, this low rate of growth does create concern in terms of the available workforce levels needed to support new economic growth. The population age cohorts that are projected to decline by over 15,000 residents within the next five years include people ages 45-49 (12%), 50-54 (12%), and 55-59(8%); most likely due to out-migration *Source of data: EMSI 2017.4 class of worker*

The Pioneer Valley currently has an estimated 150,000 millennials, age 20-34, which is marginally higher than the national average for an area of this size, primarily due to the large number of area colleges and universities. However, the Pioneer Valley also has an above average portion of the population who are at or near retirement age. The number of people in the region who are considered to be retiring soon, defined as people ages 65 and older, total over 114,000, which is just above the national average for a region this size.

The population of the Pioneer Valley as a whole shows a lack of racial diversity, with over 71% of the population identifying as White, Non-Hispanic, followed by 14.8% of the population identifying as White, Hispanic, 5.9% identifying as Black, Non-Hispanic and the remaining comprised of other races. Over the next five years, the number of people identifying as White, Hispanic is projected to increase by 9%, adding nearly 10,000 residents. Additionally, the number of people identifying as Asian Non-Hispanic is projected to increase by 11%, adding nearly 2,500 residents in total. It's worth noting, however, that the larger urban areas of the region such as Springfield and Holyoke possess very large Hispanic populations.

As considered on its own, separate from Hampden County, the Franklin Hampshire Workforce region shows even less racial diversity, with a white population of 87.2% across the two counties.

Community partners note the following:

- *“There is more diversity within younger demographics than the 87.2% white statistic suggests. Planners should break this out for more precise assessment of needs.*
- *The demographics have been shifting toward more diversity which suggests there is a significant opportunity to employ more people here if we can be more welcoming and receptive. Workers who are people of color report a high degree of race based discrimination and bias and managers used to a nearly all-white workforce don’t have the cultural competency to embrace more diverse candidates.*
- *Employers are missing out on quality, qualified applicants as a result of the perception of candidates of color that local businesses are not equitable and inclusive. They may hesitate to apply for positions where the company has a bad reputation or history with diverse employees or may leave jobs where they feel that bias is persistent or not handled well by management.*
- *The Workforce Board could support employers with modeling how to address this in majority white organizations.*
 - *Resources for employers should include model policies and procedures to address bias in recruitment, hiring, and promotion.*
 - *Support in managing changing demographics (race and age/generational differences).*
 - *Cultural competency and anti-bias training for employers and employees.”*

UI claimant population data for the wider region indicates the following:

The largest supply of workers is within the following SOC Occupations *Source: EOLWD- UI Claimant Characteristics Report- Hampden and Franklin/Hampshire Counties Aggregated- Week Ending October 14, 2017:*

- **Office and Administrative Support (699),**
- **Production (533)**
- **Management (506)**
- **Personal and Care Service (487)**
- **Transportation and Material Moving (404)**

Official Unemployment Rates are relatively low, with a Franklin Hampshire average of 2.9% and a Pioneer Valley-wide average of 3.9% in September 2018 *(Source: BLS Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) compiled by MA DUA, Sept. 2018, not adjusted for seasonality.)*

But the region is keenly aware of the fact that a disproportionate number are working two or three low-wage jobs to support a family, and many others remain out of the labor force entirely, having become discouraged about their ability to advance in or even enter the job market due to limited education or work readiness skills, cognitive and/or physical disabilities, and life circumstances such as child/eldercare or transportation challenges.

Typical characteristics of the regions’ unemployed and under employed workers include limited educational attainment beyond a high school diploma, the need for post-secondary training to address skills gaps, wages that have not kept up with inflationary life cycle needs the lack of a

competitive benefits package, and lack of formal work experience. In addition to these work related characteristics, language barriers, transportation, the ability to work a non-traditional shift, and family responsibilities are often obstacles that are associated with the regions' unemployed and under employed individuals.

Our analysis of data, research, job seeker feedback, and business engagement leads us to understand our top 4 labor supply challenges as follows:

1. A regional workforce participation rate of 62.0% is being impacted by flat population growth, aging population, and too many adults who feel disconnected from job opportunities. Additionally, labor supply increases being driven by new immigrants may be negatively impacted by federal policies and limited public resources and supports for education and training.
2. Parts of the region have a relatively low share of the population with a bachelor's degree, contributing to a 10% difference region-wide as compared to the State (30.7% vs. 40.5%), impacting the long-term growth potential of knowledge economy sectors like healthcare, professional and scientific services, and finance.

However, It should be noted that, as considered on its own, the Franklin Hampshire region has a much higher share of the population with a Bachelor's Degree or more: **41.2% across the two counties, exceeding the state average.**

3. An increased workplace emphasis on employability readiness skills and flexibility to adapt to changing business conditions and work requirements necessitates the re-alignment and expansion of education and workforce preparation programs, and health and social services to support workforce development and retention.
4. Transportation barriers: Especially in the 1400-square mile rural region of Franklin Hampshire, where night-time or weekend public transportation is non-existent, and transportation corresponding to work shifts even on weekdays is not just sparse, but in some cases not even feasible due to lack of economies of scale. Most prospective workers need to be able to keep a roadworthy private vehicle in commission year-round. Yet many of the jobs most available do not pay enough to support such a vehicle and the mileage costs likely to be incurred. (For example, many unemployed FH workers were interested in the hundreds of entry-level Casino jobs that emerged in Springfield last year, but even residents of the southern part of our region, within 30 minutes of Springfield, have no access to bus routes corresponding to most work schedules.)

(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. 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 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. Currently the MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center is working with UMASS LMWEP on pathways to Apprenticeship and Trades-related training, in response to serious concerns of current and former FHWB Board members from the Five Colleges (including Amherst and Smith) regarding a high concentration of pending retirements among frontline, supervisory and management staff in these areas.

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.

Retail and Accommodation/Food Services

Past youth and adult training in such areas as Customer Service, Hospitality and Culinary have helped workers obtain, keep and advance in jobs in these sectors, and the FHWB has also supported ServeSafe* training in both English and Spanish.

Weatherization & Green Jobs

FHWB also helped to launch and support the first major Green Jobs initiative in the state at a community college, led by over 20 area employers and Greenfield Community College to develop entry-level and advanced training opportunities in weatherization, green building, and photovoltaics for prospective and current workers. The early partnership resulted in the establishment of a one-year Certificate and two year Associate Degree program in Renewable Energy/Energy Efficiency at GCC that continue to produce promising interns and entry-level workers for the industry.

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. As an example, a current collaboration with GCC and HCC yielded a highly-successful, well-supported, jointly-sponsored Medical Assisting program at HCC for disadvantaged DTA clients. However, despite best efforts, only 2 of 15 seats were filled with FH residents: even with grant support, a Hampden County training location is simply too far out of most FH participants' range.

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, Community Action, the Greenfield DTA Office, Greenfield and Holyoke community colleges, and employers themselves, especially small-to-medium sized businesses in extended 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 your Board's strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment), and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators described in § 677.155(a)(1). The primary indicators of performance include:

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

The strategic vision of the Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board, as expressed in its current (2013-2018) Strategic Plan (to be updated in CY19), 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. Moreover, 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:
 - (i) Programs that are included in your local workforce system (please list programs)

1. **The Adult Program (Title I), as part of the Department of Career Services (DCS), Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD): represented by Teri Anderson, Executive Director, Franklin Hampshire Employment and Training Consortium.**
2. **The Dislocated Worker Program (Title I), as part of DCS/EOLWD: represented by Teri Anderson, Executive Director, Franklin Hampshire Employment and Training Consortium.**
3. **The Youth Program (Title I), as part of DCS/EOLWD; represented by Teri Anderson, Executive Director, Franklin Hampshire Employment and Training Consortium.**
4. **The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (Title II), as part of Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS), Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Executive Office of Education (EOE): represented by Judith Roberts, Executive Director of the Literacy Project, Laurie Millman, Executive Director of the Center for New Americans; Caroline Gear, Executive Director of the International Language Institute; Andree Duval, Education Coordinator at the Franklin County House of Correction, and Yvonne Gittelson, Director of Education at the Hampshire County House of Correction.**
5. **The Wagner-Peyser Act Program (Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by Title III), as part of DCS, EOLWD: represented by Edie Smith, Operations Director, Franklin Hampshire Career Center.**
6. **The Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV), as part of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB), Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS): represented by Mark Dore, Director, Greenfield Area Office, MRC, and Nate Skrocki, Regional Director, MA Commission for the Blind – Springfield.**
7. **Federal-state unemployment compensation program, as part of the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA), EOLWD: represented by Marie-Lise Sobande, Chief of Staff, MA Department of Unemployment Assistance.**
8. **Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Programs (Activities authorized under chapter 2 of Title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.)), as part of DCS, EOLWD: represented by Teri Anderson, Executive Director, Franklin Hampshire Employment and Training Consortium.**
9. **Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (Programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.) as part of DCS, EOLWD: represented by Edie Smith, Operations Director, MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center.**
10. **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) as part of Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), EOHHS: represented by Joanne LaCour, Greenfield DTA Office.**
11. **Employment and Training Programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, (Programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C.2015(d)(4)), as part of DTA, EOHHS: represented by Joanne LaCour, Greenfield DTA Office.**
12. **Senior Community Service Employment Program (Programs authorized under Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.): Susan Maedler, Program Administrator, Catholic Charities – Worcester County, and Sandra Federico, Employment Director, Department of Elder affairs – City of Springfield.**

The MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board has also sought coordination with the Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers Program at the New England Farmworkers Council in Springfield. Additional (albeit non-required) Program Partners who have and will continue to be part of the WIOA planning process in the FH region include Community Action of Franklin,

Hampshire and the North Quabbin region, Greenfield Community College, and Holyoke Community College.

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

As described in (a)(6) above, strategies to align and integrate resources and services have become even more focused and intensive with the establishment of a multi-agency WIOA partner umbrella MOU, a bi-monthly meeting schedule with agenda topics focused on strategy, implementation, and compliance with State Goals, and individual agency MOUS and corresponding Workplans in place or emerging. Our Voc-Tech partners are represented on our WB and Youth Career Connections Council, respectively, (with the two voc-tech schools alternating three-year terms), where they too have the opportunity to share, coordinate, and engage with other WIOA Programs and partners. One example is the current Advanced Manufacturing training program for Adults, promoted by the FHWB, coordinated by GCC, and hosted and taught in part by Franklin Co. Technical School, a program which has counted multiple MRC, DTA, and ABE customers among its successes. In recent years, with flexible resources through EOHEd, the FHWB has also been able to fold Smith Vocational manufacturing-related courses into program offerings.

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

- (i) Expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment;
- (ii) Facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs; and
- (iii) Improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable);

Above and beyond formal WIOA partner meetings, the Board, staff, and Career Center work year-round with community partners—WIOA Partners and many others-- on expanding access to education, training, and support services, particularly for individuals with barriers to employment. Career Center and WB staff are regular participants in such groups as the Franklin County Resource Network, the Council of Social Agencies, the Opioid Task Force, the Western Mass Homeless Coalition, and the Communities that Care (Youth) initiative. Groups like these frequently provide new opportunities for collaboration, co-enrollment, and resource -sharing, yielding many fruitful connections with agencies including but not limited to the Franklin and Hampshire County Sheriffs' offices, Community Action of the Franklin, Hampshire and North Quabbin region, Dial/SELF (Older Youth Housing/Employment), the housing authorities, the Collaborative for Educational Services, secondary, charter and alternative schools, Disabilities program providers, and more. While the focus is often on maximizing and integrating existing resources, it is partners like these that the Board and Career Center also frequently turn to when a new funding opportunity emerges, be it an RFP for a

Commonwealth Corporation “Learn to Earn” project, an industry sector partnership, “bridge” programming, internship/apprenticeship pilots, or at risk youth initiatives. These collaborations have produced many projects over the past 20 years and into the future that facilitate career pathways and co-enrollment. In addition to those already mentioned, examples are the LEAP re-entry program with the Hampden Workforce Board and the FC House of Correction; Learn to Earn and now TRAIN projects in Medical Assisting and Pre-Employment, a Para-Professional to-Teacher program with the Five College Consortium, Refugee Assistance programs with the Homeless Network, a USDOL Summer Jobs & Beyond Project which engaged Town Administrators, School Superintendents, and CBO leaders in 3 high-risk communities on behalf of WIOA-profile youth; and Pathways to MCAS Success, where counselors from as many as 4 or 5 different organizations e.g. WB, FHCC, Turners Falls High, MassRehab, DTA) shared resources and positive outcomes for youth at risk of dropping out of school.

With regard to improving access to recognized postsecondary credentials, our strategy often takes the form of using grant resources to start small--piloting workshops and courses via community college partners in strategic areas such as Home Health Aide training, Foundations for Manufacturing, weatherization, and medical office management, then—once participant and employer interest is secured and good placement potential demonstrated-- expanding workshops into certificate programs (weatherization, manufacturing, CNC/HHA), and in some cases into full-fledged A.D. programs (Renewable Energy/Energy Efficiency; Engineering Technology, Medical Office Management/Medical Assisting). In each case, credential development addressed a partner-identified training gap and an employer need, and every effort is made to create credentials that are stackable and portable.

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

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

The 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 business 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.

The Workforce Board keeps an eye and ear out for special, unique, or particularly acute needs among business contacts and partners and periodically—frequently prompted by a Board or Youth Council member, or by a new funding opportunity—and convenes small or large groups of like businesses to explore common issues and consider joint strategic responses. WIOA partners and other relevant community organizations are often included in these initial discussions, and they have frequently led to one-time or sustained programs and projects. BEST Older Youth – Culinary, BayState Works/Manufacturing; The Older Workers in Education Project, ECCLI Extended Care, the ECCLI Homecare Partnership, Healthcare Bridge, Sustainable Practices in Construction(now RE/EE), and the Manufacturing Skills Initiative all

had their roots in an initial WB/Career Center convening prompted by an FH business and/or Board member.

The WB has also piloted the staff position of Industry Career Coach to better serve the business community. Sometimes called a “Market Manager,” the person in this position has specialized and extensive knowledge, experience, contacts, and/or training in a defined industry area, and can thus be a particularly valuable resource to both businesses and job seekers interested in that industry. The FHWB has developed positions for Healthcare, Green Jobs, and Manufacturing Career Coaches over the past decade. Current staffing includes a position with expertise in the Manufacturing and Green Jobs sectors.

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

With regard to Agriculture, WIOA law appears to be primarily concerned with the fair use of migrant labor, migrant worker rights and access to career services, and ensuring that the migrant farmworker program does not have the unintended consequence of depriving interested U.S. citizens of access to agricultural employment. The FH Career Center posts, distributes, and fields questions about all related job postings, regulations and protocols as required by federal and state law, referring those inquiring to the farms for interviews, and relaying any unanswered questions and concerns to the DCS department responsible for oversight.

However, in a rural and prominently agricultural region such as ours, interest in and support of agricultural business goes much further. A 2013 report by the MA Workforce Alliance (in part funded by the Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board and economic development partner Pioneer Valley Planning Commission), *Local Food, Local Jobs* <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/08/vl/mwa-food-report-03062013-screen.pdf> conceptualizes farm jobs as just one part of a larger “Agriculture and Food Systems” sector, with jobs not only in Growing, but also in Processing/Food Manufacturing, Distribution, Serving/Selling, and Managing Food Waste. These jobs cross industry sectors as they are identified in the NAICS system traditionally utilized by workforce development, and the concept presents some interesting challenges but also some excellent and unique opportunities for workforce development and economic development to collaborate in our region. Among other activities, our region has hosted Farm/Food career panels, tours of food processing and beverage manufacturing plants; and supervised youth farm internships, promoted jobs at co-ops, and supported the development of farm/food curriculum via Greenfield Community College’s SARE (Sustainable Agriculture and Renewable Energy) Program. The FHWB also developed, with the assistance of a USDA grant via the FC Community Development Corporation, a series of You Tube videos raising young people’s awareness of Food System jobs <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheFHREB> We are continuing to explore how we can further support the Workforce Development component of the 2015 Massachusetts Food Policy Council plan launched in 2015 <https://mafoodsystem.org/plan/> .

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

Key to meeting the needs of businesses in a workforce region is an expectation and commitment—by the Workforce Boards and the Career Center—to work together. Business should not be confused or inconvenienced by duplicative outreach activities, and should understand the role each entity can play in making their business more successful through a wide array of different workforce development strategies. The FH region has improved its approach in recent years, with the Career Center and WB working more on joint projects instead of pursuing parallel and not always complementary or mutually-beneficial tracks. As a result, businesses are starting to see the two entities as a team that can respond to their needs in a variety of creative and innovative ways. A recent case in point was the Intro. to Manufacturing session piloted in Ware. The Career Center identified and assessed the needs of employers, and worked on the placement or advancement of graduates. The WB procured and helped to develop the training, and recruited, oriented, and coached enrollees. Employers were extremely satisfied with the program and have now reconnected to discuss the possibility of a WTFP Consortium grant and/or a secondary school awareness program.

This breadth of interest and approaches points toward another key to successfully meeting business needs, which is for the Career Center and WB to take a comprehensive view of workforce problems and encourage employers to do the same, focusing not just on the immediate job to be filled, but on issues of awareness, readiness, retention, and advancement: to think in terms of “pathways” for workers and “pipelines” for business, better ensuring a prosperous future for both.

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

The Workforce Board has and will continue to engage on a regular basis with a wide variety of Economic Development partners in the immediate region and for the Valley as a whole. They include the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), where the WB Director serves both on the CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) Committee and FREDI (the Franklin Regional Ec.Devt. Initiative); The Franklin County Chamber of Commerce (FCCC), where the WB Director is on the Board of Directors; the Franklin County Community Development Corporation, the Director of which serves on the WB; the Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress, where the WB Director is a member of the Coordinating Council; the Western MA Economic Development Council’s Economic Development Partners (EDP) Committee; and the MA Office of Business Development (MOBD). The Director also remains in regular communication with Ec.Development staff of several different cities and towns, and with additional Chambers of Commerce, such as those in Northampton, Easthampton, and North Quabbin, and has served on committees or otherwise supported/conferred with these entities as well.

This level of visibility and participation continues to ensure that FH workforce priorities are recognized and incorporated in a variety of different plans and strategic activities. Just a few examples include the integration of the FH Manufacturing Skills Initiative into the CEDS Plan; the identification of Agriculture/Food Systems as critical sectors in the PV Regional Plan; the inclusion of FHWB Youth programming and Internships in the FCCDC's USDA Agriculture project; the FHWB's contributions through FREDI to listening sessions by EOHED Secretary Ash and others; and FHWB's inclusion in Chamber or Town Government outreach sessions to employers newly-relocated or considering re-location to the area. WB participation and visibility in these groups also ensures that ED partners are aware of and incorporating FH Career Center employment service resources into their plans and strategies.

(v) 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.**
- **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.**
- **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.**

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

The Board and Career Center work with a number and variety of business

intermediaries, including MOBD, Chambers of Commerce, Community Development Corporations, economic councils, staffing and temp agencies, and the workforce development representatives of our community partner agencies/organizations, such as the Deans/VPs of Workforce Development & Community Education at GCC and HCC, MRC employment counselors, and Careerworks, Inc. [youth council member]. Our methods are to identify mutual goals and seek ways to work collaboratively to achieve them. We are members of several Chambers, for example, who promote our services and achievements to their business members, while we can help them connect with workforce presenters, trainers, or job seekers. The Career Center provides space for staffing agencies to recruit as a benefit to our customers; the Center itself benefits by keeping up-to-date on what positions are most in-demand and hard to fill, and assists in specialized recruitment. MOBD, Chamber reps, and CDC staff sometimes accompany us to worksite visits or employer consultations, or invite us to attend one of their own such meetings. College workforce personnel keep us apprised of business training needs; we support their pursuit of workforce training resources to address them.

- b. Specifically, what procedures are in place to offer 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. As mentioned above, 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.

Priority industry sectors are identified in the MassHire FHWB and MassHire FHCC 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.

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, through daily review of newspapers/publications, workforce meetings, etc., informs Rapid Response of like activity. Recruitment assistance is offered for large scale layoffs.

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

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 and staff, BizWorks Meetings, Employer visits, newspapers/publications; e.g. Business West, Chamber newsletters/events, and neighboring Career Center staff.

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

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

Already answered extensively. See Part [\(3\)\(iv\)](#).

- Promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services;

The FC Community Development Corporation provides a presentation on entrepreneurship to Career Center customers on a regular basis, as part of the Career Center's menu of free workshop offerings. The WB/Career Center can also send interested people to the CDCs monthly "Intro to Small Business," the first Wednesday of every month, or their "Intro to Operating a Food Business," the third Tuesday of every month. One-on one technical assistance and consultation on financing for small businesses is also currently available on a no-cost basis. The Career Center also refers customers to no/low cost entrepreneurship workshops at the Western MA Small Business Development Center offered at their Springfield office and at Chambers of Commerce offices within the region. Residents are referred to the Franklin, Valley, Quaboag, and Hilltown Community Development Corporations for individualized small business counseling.

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

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

The FHCC Programs Director works with training providers to identify training needs and explore new training options (i.e. local computer training in Franklin County for basic computer skills), and works with existing training providers to get onto the Eligible Training Provider List. Soft Skills training for adults is also in development. The FHWB's Performance Oversight Committee (which comprises business as well as CBO representatives) also frequently reviews Training Provider performance, (through both statewide and locally-generated reports), and notes areas of particular success or concern. When there are gaps in training provider availability, or there are performance concerns, FHCC and the FHWB confer and develop a plan for addressing. That may include a visit to the site to review status, ask questions, and air concerns, or a meeting with a potential training provider to explore adding new options. Two examples include a close look at a proprietary vendor's job placement outcomes for WIOA clients in particular, (vs. the vendor's state-recorded whole-class performance); another was a meeting with GCC partners to emphasize how much employers were saying that the region could benefit from a Medical Assistant program. In the first case, we slowed down on referrals/ recommendations to the proprietary program in question until we saw outcomes improve; in the other, we helped initiate successful development of a Medical Assisting program by GCC.

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

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 2017 Career Center facility consolidation plan incorporates a plan to use technology to improve remote access to Career Center services including:

- **Use of Skype to engage with customers who are unable to come to the Career Center. Skype has been used for one-on-one consultation and for remote participation in workshops or WIOA orientation sessions on an as needed basis.**
- **Plans to use platforms like GoToMeeting to present online workshops which can then be made available in video or slide presentation.**
- **As part of the MassHire transition, the Career Center website was upgraded to improve content and navigation, with a longer term plan to increase tools and resources available online.**

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

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.

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

As already explained extensively in Part (a) (6) (b): (1) and (2), the Board and Career Center together reach out to, include, and develop joint strategies with our WIOA Partners and other relevant community partners not only through formal bi-monthly “WIOA Partner Plus” meetings, but also in in strategy sessions between meetings to float ideas, plan activities, identify successes and problem areas, and plan follow-up. The Board itself also serves as a sounding board and innovation generator, as various reports, presentations and discussions frequently prompt subsequent small-group meetings to explore and follow up on new ideas. (Examples include the Older Workers in Education program prompted by UMASS; the Sustainable Practices program prompted by GCC, Bridge programs prompted by ABE/ESOL

partners, and the USDOL Summer Jobs & Beyond program prompted by Community Action.) it is through regular and repeated contact, formal and informal, that we are able to keep the lines of communication open and productive. Resource contributions of our partners in FY18 were as follows:

ACLS \$4,658.92 – 100% cubicle costs

DTA \$36,516.50 – Cubicle/infrastructure costs, IT fair share costs, program services

MCB \$4,187.50 – Braille signs, adaptive equipment, portion of cubicle costs, program services

MRC \$8,791.32 – Portion of cubicle space, assistive technology, program services

SCSEP -0- If we had received an allocation for this fiscal year it would have been used for cubicle space, IT fair share costs, and front desk support.

Projected resources for FY19 are roughly similar, but it should be noted that they were late in coming from the state last year, and some have not been received at all yet from the state this year (e.g. those from MRC), making it very difficult for the Career Center or its partners to make the planned enhancements, and thus greatly decreasing the effectiveness of even these modest partner allocations.

Nevertheless, the WB, the Career Center and Local Partners continue to evaluate actual shared and infrastructure costs, current and projected, and to design agreed-upon plans for their use.

- (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 collaborate 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 lead in region training providers are the community colleges and the vocational schools. Many of our adult and dislocated worker customers find it necessary to access trainings well out of our region at other community colleges, colleges and

universities as well as private training vendors, in areas such as IT, CDL Class A and B, and software training. This can sometimes necessitate as much (or more) as a two-hour round trip to classes.

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. The Career Services Team and Board thus work assiduously to recruit new training providers and/or develop new certified training programs within our region that can qualify for Training Pro.

The Career Center uses WIOA supportive service funds to assist customers in attending training, and they 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) Describe how your Board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities.

FHCC's 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. Employers are provided access to skilled workers and customized on-site services. The WB also assists when business Informational sessions are held to educate employers on various state and local programs such as the WorkShare Program, Workforce Training Fund Program, etc., and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) benefits to workers.

Affected employees are invited to attend on-site 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, many of which are held at the Greenfield Career Center. Businesses similar to those conducting lay-offs are sometimes called in for career fairs so they can tap into dislocated workers with skills they need: the WB assists in expanding the pool of potential businesses to identify and invite.

Each month a Rapid Response Report, which includes the number of employers served, and the number of employees affected, is reviewed by Career Center managers, the WB, and the Business Services Team.

- (8) Please provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in your area including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities, which must include an identification of successful models of such activities.
- a. Please also provide a description of youth workforce investment activity coordination with the Department of Transitional Assistance, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, and Massachusetts Commission for the Blind.

Youth workforce investment activities in the FH region are and will continue to be provided largely through two workforce funding streams: School-to-Career/Connecting Activities, managed by the Board, and WIOA Youth, managed by the FH Career Center.

School to Career /Connecting Activities

The DESE-funded FH School-to-Career/Connecting Activities (STC/CA) bolsters the career development education of over 500 students across 16 schools and 50 communities in the region each year. A Coordinator in the FH Workforce Board office serves Franklin County and North Quabbin schools, and the Board contracts with Collaborative for Educational Services (CES) in Northampton to provide services to Hampshire County schools. Both staff collaborate widely and extensively with area employers to offer students an array of career exploration and work readiness activities, as well as opportunities to engage in work-based learning experiences.

STC/CA services are open to all students, without eligibility requirements: however, individuals and groups with special needs are frequently among those referred for extra assistance by guidance counselors. For example, STC/CA often provides direct services to transition / life skills program students at Partner Schools, facilitating workshops on critical industries, professional behavior/communication, and more. In particular, the Greenfield High School Life Skills program has stated that the end of year mock interview activity, organized by STC/CA and involving other professionals at the MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board and Career Center, is a meaningful capstone activity for their students – helping them recognize the fruit of their work readiness efforts and instilling a greater sense of self-efficacy.

STC/CA regularly provides school administration, counselors, and educators – including SPED educators – with information about career development education (CDE) and work-based learning (WBL): initiatives, professional development, events for students, programs, curriculum, and other resources. STC also maintains and promotes an impressively comprehensive youth employment website www.fhyouth.org, which includes resources for youth and those who are invested in their success – including resources specifically for special education students and educators. Additionally, STC/CA invites school SPED educators and

the MRC to provide feedback and share resources that can be promoted through this website, email distribution, and direct flyer distribution to school contacts.

In FY18, STC/CA provided guidance counselors with a packet of Career Center and community-based resources. Guidance counselors subsequently held individual meetings with at-risk seniors to review and distribute these resources prior to high school graduation. STC/CA also facilitates introductions between school-based SPED programs and the MassHire Career Center Disability Resource Coordinator.

STC/CA is planning to work more with the FH Youth Career Connections Council (YCCC) and the FHCC Youth Programs Coordinator on the aforementioned packet, making it a joint project, and one that will provide considerable assistance to graduating seniors and school staff working with them on how to access and utilize the Career Center in the future.

The WB's long-time Youth Pathways Coordinator, now acting as the USDOL Summer Jobs & Beyond Coordinator, notes a particularly strong connection with WIOA Partner MassRehab (MRC) over past years. MRC was a WIA-required partner on the Youth Council and has continued that commitment under WIOA, (although recent downsizing at the agency has left them temporarily unrepresented). MRC has a particularly strong relationship with YCCC member Amherst High School, as represented by their [SPED liaison?- need correct title] and has demonstrated great success in contributing to integrated MRC/STC/SPED services at that school. MRC has also regularly reached out to the YP Coordinator when they have youth who need help finding a placement or getting wrap-around services. When MRC was first provided PET (Pre Employment Training) funding, WB youth staff supplied them with connections to youth in special education programs in several schools.

The Youth Pathways Coordinator also notes effective connections with the Division of Transitional Assistance (DTA), another WIOA partner: helping to ease the transition of youth who are aging out of the STC and secondary system to Dial/SELF housing and FHCC's CIES program: the YP Coordinator provided "a familiar face" as youth moved from one level of services to the next.

WIOA Youth Services

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

Youth age 14-to 24 are eligible for WIOA youth services, but currently CAYP WIOA Youth targets young people ages 17-24 who meet WIOA eligibility requirements. The program focus is to assist older 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 Exploration/Counseling, 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, and school supplies, in order to support participation in the program and youth 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 to local non-profit agencies. The program has a good success rate in retaining employment in both the 2nd and 4th quarter after exit, along with helping youth gain credentials beyond secondary education.

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

- Post-secondary degrees 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.

WIOA Youth collaborations with 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.
- 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 ages 14-22 with disabilities and/or IEPs 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.

Providing oversight and guidance to all these activities is the FHWB's Youth Career Connections Council (YCCC), a regional group specifically charged with bringing together representatives of youth-serving agencies engaged in some way with youth development and pre-employment on a regular basis, to share information and best practices, and coordinate

and co-promote youth development opportunities. Members have included representatives of DTA, MRC, DCF, juvenile justice, youth housing, schools, literacy, and alternative education programs, as well as many others. The express mission of the group is to work together to help youth *“develop a career focus, gain technical and employability skills, obtain work experience, and achieve their career goals.”* YCCC partner strategies to achieve this mission include: identification of youths’ employment-related needs and resources; professional development and resource sharing; and cross-sector collaboration to reduce systemic barriers and increase access to work-related opportunities for youth.

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

The WB’s School to Career/Connecting Activities program provides information on a regular basis to Connecting Activities Partner School contacts about trainings, programs, and events that can help students become work ready via email, handouts, the ‘News & Events’ section of www.fhyouth.org, and direct contact. Additionally, STC highlights labor market information and respective access points to critical industries – i.e. through providing training and education workshops at community colleges for school partners.

STC collaborates with the GCC STEM Special Projects Coordinator to generate ideas for STEM Week, inspire schools to shine a light on STEM Week, and provide a STEM exploration and immersion experience for high school students at GCC. STC also played a key role in successfully encouraging Connecting Activities Partner Schools to attend the MassBioEd College and Career Exploration Event at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

The MassHire FHCC Biz Team will coordinate with the Connecting Activities Coordinator around business outreach to develop youth internships and summer employment opportunities. The FHWB and FHCC contract with Community Action to provide WIOA Youth Services, YouthWork, and Summer Jobs and Beyond services: the contract workplans for each 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 FHCC Youth Programs Coordinator facilitates and ensures coordination of service delivery between programs where appropriate. All appropriate partners are brought around the table in planning youth related career pathway programs.

On the Adult Program side, FHCC and FHWB meet 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. The FH Workforce Area as a region collaborates regularly with regional Community Colleges and other educational institutions on career pathway development. Examples include the Learn to Earn Medical Assistant Training, TRAIN Foundational Work Readiness Training, and Pioneer Valley Diverse Teachers Pathway Project.

- (10) How will your Board coordinate WIOA title I workforce investment activities with the provision of

transportation and other appropriate supportive services in the local area? Please also describe how other programs and services in your local area are leveraged to compliant workforce investment activities.

As mentioned previously, due to the limited number of accessible training vendors and the limits of rural public transportation, many of the Career Center adult and dislocated worker trainees have limited to no access to transportation services or travel a great distance to receive appropriate training services. In FY 18 FHCC/FHWB spent \$2950 to purchase gas cards for ITA customers to assist them with the high cost of travel to training. Additionally, we spent \$1300 to assist adult customers with driver's education and driver's license test and fees, as public transportation was not an option to achieve self-sufficiency. The Career Center coordinates with DTA for co-enrolled customers to avoid duplication of transportation services: however, as DTA transportation reimbursement is provided in the subsequent month, WIOA funds are often needed to assist the customer during the first month of travel until they receive the funds from DTA. It should be noted that reduced WIOA funding for the region over the last three years has necessitated a significant reduction in supportive service expenses for adult and dislocated workers.

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

Front desk staff assess (walk-in) customer needs on their first visit to the Career Center, identifying 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 Career Center membership and JobQuest registration. 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.

Customers are encouraged by both front desk staff and counselors to register for and participate in job readiness workshops, employer events, and program orientations.

For targeted UI recipients, RESEA (Re-Employment) 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.

Each week an Open Lab session titled "Career Services Lab" is offered to any enrolled or pre-enrolled program customer. Participants are offered assistance with job search/application, occupational research, and assessments.

Career Services Staff has developed a customer coordination process which is evolving towards a collaborative approach involving key program staff who meet as a team to review the needs, employment goals, and qualifications of a customer to jointly develop an action plan for service

delivery and to conduct job matching. Areas of need are identified and service provided accordingly; e.g. meetings with respective program staff, registration for workshop and/or program orientation, skills assessment, etc.

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

(13) How will the Board coordinate WIOA title I workforce investment activities with adult education and literacy activities under WIOA title II? This description must include how the Board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under title II consistent with WIOA secs.

107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA sec. 232:

Each eligible provider desiring a grant or contract from an eligible agency shall 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.

With the support of DESE’s Adult and Community Learning Services division, the FH Workforce Board works closely with FHCC and Local Providers in addressing WIOA coordination goals. The WB also participates annually in ACLS training opportunities, site visits, or proposal reviews to ensure that Local Providers set and meet required Performance Goals or have plans for improvement as needed. The FHWB has often sought out special supplementary funding to enhance or expand ABE/ESOL offerings, and Providers have done the same in reverse, contributing to support of staff hours required to provide outreach, career awareness, and work readiness at ABE/ESOL sites.

In addition, FHCC has been working with ABE/ESOL providers to coordinate shared customer service, periodically present a simplified Career Center Seminar for ABE/ESOL students, and organize group class introductory visits to the Career Center along with group career center membership registrations.

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

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

The FH Workforce Area updated and submitted its multi-partner “umbrella” MOU for WIOA Partner services over the summer ([click here for the Umbrella MOU](#)). A copy of a Shared Customer Agreement with The Literacy Project will also be included, as well as existing agreements with the Division of Transitional Assistance. FHCC and MRC are also re-establishing a communications process to improve collaborations between the Career Center and MRC around shared customer services and referrals, especially around service provided under the Ticket to Work Program, but also around youth services. Each FHCC program has presented its services to the MOU Partners group as a way of information sharing and educating staff about respective programs/services.

(15) 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**

(16) Please detail the competitive process that will be 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 One-Stop 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. A voluntary Letter of Intent to Bid can be submitted by all applicants prior to submission of their proposals. 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.

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

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

<https://www.masshirefhwb.org/wp-content/uploads/FY19PerformanceGoals.pdf>

(18) What are the actions and activities that support the local boards continued status as a high-performance workforce board?

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

New Board members are oriented to the Board by the FHWB Director, sometimes assisted by a veteran Board Member or Chair. The orientation includes an overview of WIOA, the structure and composition of Workforce Boards, system governance, the expectations of Boards and Career Centers, Funding, Performance Measures and Goals, Committee Structure, priority industries, new and on-going initiatives, and special issues critical to the region. After their first several months on the Board, new members are frequently re-contacted by the Director or a veteran Board member for a check-in, an appointment see how they are doing and if there are additional questions, or areas of interest to be explored. The bulk of Board training takes place in Board meetings themselves, where the agenda includes, in addition to regular reports on Strategic Plan Progress and Performance Outcomes, special presentations by WB program staff, FHCC program staff, or Community partner staff.

Board members are asked to join a committee by the end of the first year of their three-year-term, where they gain an even more in-depth knowledge of workforce issues related to planning, performance, funding and budgets, youth issues, or special projects. Board members themselves sometimes lead such special projects, as with Sisson Engineering's early support and leadership in the Manufacturing Skills Initiative, Northeast Solar's facilitation of the Regional Clean Energy Workforce Partnership, and UMASS Labor/Management's creation of the Older Workers in Education project. Board members also benefit by taking turns joining the Director at Workforce Board Quarterly Association meetings, the annual retreat, and the annual workforce summit.

All Board members, private sector and public, are asked (and almost without exception do), post their jobs through the Franklin Hampshire Career Center and to participate as feasible in recruitments, panels, workplace tours, and guest speaker events, as well as provide potential work-based learning sites for youth and adults. Projects such as the Manufacturing Skills Initiative would not exist without the participation of current and past Board members and their colleagues: the program model includes employer participation in every facet of the project, from applicant prep and screening, to mock interviews, classroom presentations, site visits, classroom instruction, as graduation speakers, and as hirers of successful graduates.

On occasion, Board members help to promote Career Center/WB services personally, as when a successful Workforce Training Fund recipient co-hosts a WTFP Information Session, or a Board member vouches for the quality of Career Center/Board services and effectiveness in a public meeting or event.

Such participation provides an unquestionably positive impact on both our job seeker and business service outcomes, ensuring our continuing status as a High Performing Board.

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

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. 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. In addition, contracted services are sometimes used to meet the hiring needs of employers.

(20) 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*).
- f. Online remediation tools (such as WorkKeys Curriculum) for OJT/apprenticeship screening in support of cultivating and demonstrating workplace competencies.
- g. Does the local area utilize the National Career Readiness Curriculum (NCRC) to measure job-seekers work ethic and discipline, basic skills abilities, and job-ready qualifications?

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

OJT: there is currently no separate On-the-job training program funding, however WIOA adult and dislocated worker training funds are available when an employer is interested in accessing OJT for an enrolled customer. FHCC has contracted with no less than 8 employers in the last 3 years including those from construction/building, renewable energy, manufacturing, plumbing/heating, and transportation sectors.

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. In our Learn to Earn Medical Assistant Partnership we have an Apprenticeship component where graduates can enter Apprenticeship with a partnering hospital to learn the advanced Medical Assistant skills needed for a hospital setting.

Incumbent Worker: the Career Center Executive Director, Career Services Director, and the BizTeam are in exploration stage with a public school system in Hampshire County regarding OJT and Apprenticeships to advance custodial/maintenance staff into maintenance trade positions.

Work Experiences/Transitional Jobs: FHCC 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.

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

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

The FH Workforce Region follows all above practices as required. Given approval of our request for an extension from the state, the Plan will be reviewed by the Board in its 12/6/18 meeting, their suggestions will be incorporated, and the Plan will go out for 30-day Public Comment by approximately 12/12/18, with comments due 30 business days later. The Plan will be posted on our website and made available hard copy in our lobby. A notice drawing attention to the Plan on our website will run in area newspapers, and broadcast emails will be sent to all workforce partners and the broader community, including all municipalities and education entities. The extension will allow sufficient time to amend the document as needed before allowing the Board to review it one more time via email, and then submitting it to the state by 1/31/19.

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

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 ABE/ESOL customers on a case by case basis. MassHire FHCC and The Literacy Project are also currently in conversation about refining the previously mentioned and attached TLP/FHCC Shared Customer Agreement to better define the role of the ABE Outstation Coordinator and to coordinate information sharing and referrals between the Career Center and TLP. In addition, the internal case management coordination process will identify partner agencies recommended for customer service delivery based on customer needs and a warm referral is made. WIOA Partners have created a contact list of referral staff to ensure efficient and effective referrals.

(23) What is the direction given by the Governor and your local Board to the career center operator

to ensure priority for adult career and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient consistent with WIOA sec. 134(c)(3)(E) and § 680.600 –

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

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

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

The above question appears to be repeated below. See Answers to both (23 & 24), below.

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

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

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

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.

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.

Depending on the type of service, this may mean that Veterans and eligible spouses receive services earlier in time, or instead of, non-covered persons; e.g. workshop/seminar participation, skill assessment/testing, job search/application assistance, training access, etc.

In addition, the Career Services Team is updating its enrollment process to ensure priority of service is considered at intake for WIOA enrollment and services.

Overall, Priority of Service will be applied as follows:

WIOA Dislocated Workers Program

- 1. Dislocated Workers who are Veterans or Eligible Spouses**
- 2. Dislocated Workers with barriers to employment**
- 3. Other Dislocated Workers**

WIOA Disadvantaged Adult Program

- 1. Individuals who receive Public Assistance, low income individuals, individuals who are basic skill deficient with barriers to employment**
- 2. Disadvantaged Adults who have barriers to employment**
- 3. Other Disadvantaged Adults**

When a Veteran or Eligible Spouse is determined to be eligible for WIOA Disadvantaged Adult program, priority for service will be given in the following order:

- 1. Veterans and eligible Spouses who are receiving public assistance, or meet WIOA low income guidelines, or are basic skills deficient**
- 2. Individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouse who receive public assistance, meet WIOA income guidelines or are basic skills deficient**
- 3. Veterans and eligible spouses who are not in WIOA priority group**
- 4. Individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses and are not in the priority group**

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

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

The Governor may issue regional planning guidance that allows Local Boards and chief elected officials in a planning region to address any local plan requirements through the regional plan where there is a shared regional responsibility.

Incorporate anything from your Regional Plan content as appropriate.

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