

HAMPDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE AREA
Executive Summary of the FY-12 Workforce Development Operational Plan

I. Introduction

The Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc., (REB) in partnership with the Workforce Investment Areas Chief Elected Official (CEO), Mayor Domenic J. Sarno of Springfield, is required to prepare a Fiscal Year 2012 “Workforce Development Operational Plan” for Hampden County for submission to the MA Department of Career Services. In planning for how the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) system will be coordinated with other systems providing employment and training services to improve services for both job seekers and employers, our region’s priorities and strategies in workforce development will continue to include an emphasis on:

- alignment with the REB’s current strategic goals and initiatives,
- alignment of program design with labor market trends and the characteristics of the labor force to create a demand-driven delivery system,
- continuous improvement of the One-Stop Career Center system as the primary vehicle for delivering services to both job seekers and employers,
- integration of WIA and non-WIA systems and programs to enhance services for job seekers and employers,
- minimizing duplication of effort and improving performance and accountability, and
- increasing the labor force participation rate of underemployed and vulnerable target populations.

The REB and CEO have prepared this document to highlight how the Hampden County Workforce Development system proposes to allocate local resources for FY’ 12, what the major priorities and service strategies of the system are and to summarize the new key performance goals for adults, dislocated workers and the youth who will be served through the WIA funded system.

Interested parties may submit written comments on this document to the REB by July 6, 2011. The complete required FY’ 12 Plan will be available on the REB’s website by close of business no later than **August 5, 2011** at <http://www.rebhc.org>. After that date, copies of the plan may also be obtained at the offices of the Regional Employment Board, 1441 Main Street, Springfield, MA 01103.

Questions may be directed to the REB’s Director of Planning and Systems Administration, Christine Abramowitz, at (413) 755-1358 or by e-mail at christine@rebhc.org.

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II. WIA and One-Stop Allocations

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and in turn Hampden County, experienced an overall decrease in its federal WIA funding for FY'12, particularly in Adult and Youth funding. Due to a change in the allocation formula, Hampden County was more negatively impacted by these reductions than in past years. The table below provides a comparison of FY'11 and FY'12 allocations which in total shows a decrease of 11% in funding from FY'11 (and which is close to a 18% reduction from FY'10 funding).

Grant Source	% Change for All Workforce Areas FY'11 vs. FY'12	HAMPDEN COUNTY			
		FY'11	FY'12	\$ Change	% Change
WIA Wagner Peyser (Job Search/Placement at Career Centers)	-0.2%	\$ 786,523	\$ 792,558	\$ 6,035	0.8%
State One-Stop Funds (Job Search/Placement at Career Centers)*	-10.0%	\$ 755,086	\$ 700,862	\$ (31,249)	-4.3%
WIA Adult (Ed/Training Through Vendors)	-10%	\$ 1,418,469	\$ 1,278,090	\$ (140,379)	-9.9%
WIA Dislocated Workers (Ed/Training Through Vendors)	11.8%	\$ 935,655	\$ 988,650	\$ 52,995	5.7%
WIA Youth (Summer Jobs, Ed/ Training Through Vendors)	-10%	\$ 1,534,137	\$ 1,538,671	\$ 4,534	0.3%
State Supplemental (Adult-Youth Operations)	N/A	\$ 587,434	\$ -	\$ (587,434)	-100.0%
Total		\$ 6,017,304	\$ 5,298,831	\$ (695,498)	-11.6%

* The State Line Item monies are just an estimate at this time as the state budget is being finalized and final allocations to this region are not yet known.

III. WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth and Wagner-Peyser Programs

Training will continue to be a priority of the REB and the workforce development system will continue to spend at least 50% of WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker Program funds on training/education.

Adults

- Through the One-Stop Career Center (OSCC) system, adult job seekers will have access to a broad array of services from a comprehensive assortment of employment programs. WIA provides for basic core services, which are available to all job seekers, and additional intensive and training services are available to persons predicated on meeting certain eligibility criteria. *Examples of core services include:*

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- Orientation to the information and services available through the OSCC system.
- Career counseling as required, based on customer need.
- Initial assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, and supportive service needs.
- Job search and placement assistance, including interview preparation, resume preparation, job listings, resume listings, job clubs, and various job search workshops.
- Provision of information on employment and labor market statistics.
- Information and referral to job openings (including those posted on on-line job banks) and the hiring requirements of local firms.
- Program performance and cost information on eligible providers of training services.
- Assistance in establishing eligibility for obtaining financial assistance for training and other services.

Additional intensive and training services may be available, based on eligibility for various federally funded programs targeted to certain groups. For example, recipients of transitional assistance and certain economically disadvantaged adults may be eligible for occupational training and other specialized employment assistance programs. Low-income adults receive priority for WIA funded intensive and training services.

Training opportunities for adults include a customer-choice driven form of training vouchers, called "Individual Training Accounts" or "ITAs" that will help pay for the costs of approved training programs. ITAs may be used to pay for approved Occupational Skills Training and/or Adult Basic Education (ABE) such as GED or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Based on funding availability, eligible individuals may receive up to \$5,000 in funding assistance for Occupational Skills Training, \$3,000 for ABE/GED/ESOL, or up to \$7,000 for a combination of Occupational Skills Training and ABE/GED/ESOL. Staff at the Career Centers assist in determining a job seeker's eligibility for training and guide them in the process of selecting a program from an approved list of providers.

Also, Hampden County will allow "On-the-Job Training (OJT)" opportunities for adults. OJT is occupation specific training provided by an employer for a limited duration. The employer will pay the WIA trainee a wage while engaged in productive work in a job that provides knowledge or skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job. WIA will reimburse the employer up to 50% of the wage rate for the extraordinary costs of providing the training and for the related additional supervision that is required.

- Approximately 300 adults will be served in FY' 12.
- **WIA Performance Goals for Adults – DRAFT:**
 - Entered Employment Rate 69%
 - Employment Retention Rate 76%
 - Average Earnings \$9,150
- The WIA system also coordinates with several non-WIA funding sources providing services to adults. Just a few of the examples include Department of Element and Secondary Education funded adult education, post-secondary vocational education and vocational education activities; Mass Rehabilitation Commission and Commission for the Blind funded vocational rehabilitation for persons with disabilities; Department of Transitional Assistance funded education and training services to public assistance and food stamp recipients; and

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Title V services to older workers. The REB will also improve its capacity to serve homeless job seekers through expanded partnerships with agencies such as the Department of Mental Health and through coordination with city-led campaigns to serve the homeless such as those initiated by Springfield and Holyoke. The REB also has a Re-entry grant working with ex-offenders which will be coordinated-matched with WIA resources.

Dislocated Workers

- Dislocated workers are those individuals who have been permanently laid off, or have received a notice of termination or layoff from employment. Dislocated Workers may receive the same WIA core, intensive and training services as those available through the WIA adult grant. However, a separate funding stream is provided to pay for those services, as noted in the table on the second page of this plan summary.

- Approximately 620 Dislocated Workers will be served in FY'12.

- **WIA Performance Goals for Dislocated Workers - DRAFT:**
 - Entered Employment Rate 74%
 - Employment Retention Rate 85%
 - Average Earnings \$15,400

- There are also several other WIA and non-WIA funding sources assisting dislocated workers in addition to the “formula” funding found in the table on page two of this Executive Summary. Examples specific to dislocated workers include the State's Department of Career Services "Rapid Response" services, designed to respond to significant layoffs and plant closings; National Emergency Grants (NEG) for targeted company lay-offs; and NEG OJT grant we are currently still operating and the provision of benefits, services and/or training through the Trade Adjustment Assistance and/or North American Free Trade Acts. WIA Trade Act funds will supplement WIA to provide additional funds for case management services of Trade affected dislocated workers.

WIA Youth Programs

- Service providers for FY' 12 WIA Youth program vendors were selected through a 2-year competitive Request for Proposals process in FY' 11. Providers will target either low income, at-risk youth that are entering their junior or senior year of high school in the fall of 2011, or low income, out-of-school youth 16-21 years of age that are dropouts. Consistent with the national and state emphasis on serving the growing population of out-of-school youth that are neither in school or working, *approximately 65%* of the youth funds will be targeted to serve out-of-school youth.

- Key services to *in-school youth* are dropout prevention; academic support; career and leadership development; work experience; and case management services that link youth to other community resources and youth partnering agencies. Primary outcomes for in-school youth are successful completion of high school with a transition to employment and/or post secondary education and attainment of a degree or certificate/credential.

- Key services to *out-of-school youth* include programs that raise educational attainment levels and provide academic support; occupational skills development; career and leadership development; work experience; and case management services that link youth to other

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community resources and youth partnering agencies. The primary outcomes for out-of-school youth are transition to employment and/or post-secondary education, attainment of a degree or certificate/credential and literacy/numeracy gains.

- Through training vouchers similar to the ITAs used for adults and dislocated workers, at least \$40,000 will be allocated to help pay for the costs of approved Occupational Skills Training and/or Adult Basic Education (ABE) such as GED or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).
- Youth that meet benchmarks for progress in meeting work readiness and educational goals may receive bonuses. Also, WIA youth may be assisted with support services needs such as transportation, GED testing fees and the purchase of work tools and clothing. Approximately \$50,000 will be allocated for Bonuses/Support Services.
- Approximately 375 youth will be served in WIA.
- **WIA Performance Goals for Youth - DRAFT:**
 - Placement in Employment or Education 83%
 - Attainment of a Degree or Certificate 65%
 - Literacy and Numeracy Gains 50%
- The REB will closely coordinate WIA activities with other youth programs and projects to leverage additional non-WIA funds and better align services. The REB will play a lead role in organizing community partners, including schools and the Massachusetts Department of Social Services and Department of Youth Services, to better coordinate services for youth at-risk of dropping out of high school and those older youth that have left school without a diploma. Additionally, the REB will work with its partners to initiate expanded outreach activities to homeless youth.
- Key partners in workforce development include the 3 School-to-Career "Connecting Activities" partnerships, encompassing 15 school systems and providing internships to high-school students. Holyoke Community College and Springfield Technical Community College will again provide academic support services for youth that have not passed MCAS and will lead the region's Tech Prep projects which are closely aligned with School-to-Career activities. In addition, the REB's privately funded "Center for Youth Internships and Employment" (CYIE) provides paid internships and jobs to youth through the County's One-Stop Career Centers. Another important youth initiative in Hampden County will be the state funded YouthWorks project which will place approximately 275 low-income, at-risk youth from Chicopee, Holyoke and Springfield into summer jobs (more if additional state funding is secured). Other partners include Westover Job Corps and YouthBuild programs.

Wagner-Peyser – State Line Item

- Wagner-Peyser funded Employment Services and state line item funds provide universal access to core services as delivered through our One-Stop Career Centers as outlined above, plus an integrated array of labor exchange service activities between the job seeker and the employer community.

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- Approximately 20,000 individuals will receive labor exchange services. Of those individuals specifically seeking jobs, an entered employment rate ranging from 45% to 52% will be sought as part of the federal “common measures” metrics.
- Approximately 875 employers will be served with 75-80% of those posting jobs to the One-Stop system.
- Further, several non-WIA/Wagner-Peyser funding sources provide services to employers. Hampden County is very much involved with helping employers obtain grant funds to upgrade employed ("incumbent") worker skills via local and statewide grants. Examples include the Workforce Training Fund, Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund and other state funding opportunities.