

HAMPDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE BOARD
Executive Summary of the FY-19 Workforce Development Operational Plan

I. Introduction

The Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc. (REB), in partnership with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Area’s Chief Elected Official, Mayor Domenic J. Sarno of Springfield, is required to prepare a Fiscal Year 2019 “Annual Workforce Development Operational Plan” for Hampden County for submission to the MA Department of Career Services (DCS). In FY-2019, which begins July 1, 2018, the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and MA state funds are expected to be allocated to the Hampden County region by the state Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development to provide workforce development, labor exchange, education and training services to the region's adults, dislocated workers, youth and employers.

Planning for WIOA 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,
- developing career pathway models and industry sector strategies,
- continuous improvement of the One-Stop Career Center system as the primary vehicle for delivering services to both job seekers and employers,
- integration of WIOA and non-WIOA 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’19, what the major priorities and service strategies of the system will be and to summarize the key performance goals for adults, dislocated workers and the youth who will be served through WIOA. New common measure goals for WIOA have been introduced.

All comments must be submitted in writing, no later than July 18, 2018 to:

Christine Abramowitz
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Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc.
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The complete required FY’19 Workforce Development Plan Charts and Integrated Budget will be available on the REB’s website <http://www.rebhc.org> on July 23, 2018. Responses to narrative questions are not yet being required of local workforce areas.

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.

HAMPDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE BOARD
Executive Summary of the FY-19 Workforce Development Operational Plan

II. WIOA and One-Stop Allocations

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and in turn Hampden County, experienced an overall decrease in its federal WIOA funding for FY'19. The table below provides a comparison of FY'18 and FY'19 allocations.

WIOA-State FY2019 Formula Funds:

Grant Source	% Change for All Workforce Areas FY'18 vs FY'19**	HAMPDEN COUNTY			
		FY18	FY19	\$ Change Decrease	% Change
WIOA Wagner Peyser (Job Search/Placement at Career Centers)	-1.0%	\$731,106	\$715,324	\$(15,782)	-2.2%
State Line Item Funding (Job Search/Placement at Career Centers)*	0.0%	\$395,970	\$395,970	\$ -	0.0%
WIOA Adult (Ed/Training Through Vendors)	-6.8%	\$1,323,898	\$1,434,879	\$110,981	8.4%
WIOA Dislocated Workers (Ed/Training Through Vendors)	-8.3%	\$820,667	\$723,992	\$(96,675)	-11.8%
WIOA Youth (Summer Jobs, Ed/Training Through Vendors)	-7.0%	\$1,438,908	\$1,600,359	\$161,451	11.2%
Total		\$4,710,549	\$4,870,524	\$159,975	3.4%

* Assuming level funding

** Less State 15% Set-asides for Adult/DLW/Youth

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

Training will continue to be a priority of the REB and the workforce development system, with 35% of WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Program funds to be used for training/education. This will be augmented by targeted WIOA National Emergency Grant funding to the region for recent mass company lay-offs, thereby freeing up training resources for others.

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. WIOA provides for various career services and additional training services that are available to persons predicated on meeting certain eligibility criteria.

HAMPDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE BOARD
Executive Summary of the FY-19 Workforce Development Operational Plan

Examples of career services include:

- 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 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 WIOA funded training services.

Under WIOA, *training* opportunities for adults will continue to 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 as the primary funding vehicle. ITAs may be used to pay for approved Occupational Skills Training and/or Adult Basic Education (ABE) such as education to pass the HiSET 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, 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. In addition, the REB will consider new contracting mechanisms offered under WIOA such as cohort based group training via a direct contract to an institution of higher education or other eligible provider to facilitate the training of multiple individuals in in-demand industry sectors/occupations so long as customer choice is not limited or the contract is performance-based, as required by the new law.

Also, Hampden County will provide "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 WIOA 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. WIOA will reimburse the employer 50% of the wage rate for the extraordinary costs of providing the training and for the related additional supervision that is required. New partnerships with Registered Apprenticeships are also being implemented in Hampden County under WIOA and through a federal grant.

- Approximately 300 adults will be served in FY' 19.
- **WIOA Performance Goals for Adults (estimated):**
 - Entered Employment Rate, Q2 after Exit 84%
 - Entered Employment Rate, Q4 after Exit 70%
 - Median Earnings, Q2 after Exit \$4,500
 - Credential Rate 69%

HAMPDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE BOARD
Executive Summary of the FY-19 Workforce Development Operational Plan

- Key services to *in-school youth* are dropout prevention; academic support; career and leadership development; financial literacy education; work experience (including summer jobs and other work-based training); labor market and employment information; adult mentoring 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 towards a high school equivalency certificate (HiSET); occupational skills development; career and leadership development; financial literacy education; work experience (including summer jobs and other work-based training); labor market and employment information; adult mentoring and case management services that link youth to other 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, monies will be made available for the costs of approved Occupational Skills Training and/or Adult Basic Education (ABE) with Youth funding or from Adult funding for youth aged 18-24.
- Youth that meet benchmarks for progress in meeting work readiness and educational goals may receive bonuses. Also, WIOA youth may be assisted with support services needs such as transportation, HiSET testing fees and the purchase of work tools and clothing.
- Approximately 395 youth will be served in WIOA in FY19.
- **WIOA Performance Goals for Youth (estimated):**
 - Entered Employment/Education Rate, Q2 after Exit 80.5%
 - Entered Employment/Education Rate, Q4 after Exit 73%
 - Credential Rate 65%
- The WIOA Title I youth system also coordinates with other WIOA funding sources providing services to youth who are “core partners” including WIOA Title II for Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) funded adult education (for youth aged 16-24); WIOA Title IV vocational rehabilitation services through MA Rehabilitation Commission and Commission for the Blind, Department of Transitional Assistance funded education and training services to public assistance and food stamp recipients and the WIOA funded Westover Job Corps and YouthBuild programs. The REB will closely coordinate WIOA activities with other youth programs and projects to leverage additional non-WIOA funds to better align services as well. 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.

HAMPDEN COUNTY WORKFORCE BOARD
Executive Summary of the FY-19 Workforce Development Operational Plan

- Key partners in workforce development include the DESE School-to-Career "Connecting Activities" partnerships to provide internships to high-school students. Another important youth initiative in Hampden County will be the state funded YouthWorks project which will place approximately 500 low-income, at-risk youth from Chicopee, Holyoke, Springfield and Westfield into summer jobs.

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.
- 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 statewide federal “common measures” metrics.
- Approximately 1,500 employers will be served, with 1,100 of those receiving enhanced services and about 70% of those posting job orders to the One-Stop system.
- Further, several non-WIOA/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 or federal funding opportunities the REB pursues.