***PARTNERSHIPS FOR A SKILLED WORKFORCE***

***ADVANCING***

***THE METRO SOUTHWEST***

***KNOWLEDGE INNOVATION ECONOMY***

**Foreword**

The Metro Southwest Region of the Commonwealth has a competitive advantage, both in the Commonwealth and across the nation, in health care, information technology, manufacturing, and professional and business services. The information and professional and business service companies are strong players in international markets with access to venture capital and the research and development capability of colleges and universities in Greater Boston. The region has one of the most highly educated labor pools in the nation with substantial numbers of scientists, engineers, mathematicians and skilled technical workers. In both policy and practice, the region must sustain those advantages to retain the region’s competitive edge.

However, there are significant challenges facing policy makers, educators and workforce development organizations. Actions must be taken to:

• Ensure that there are an adequate number of people in the workforce by supporting the growth of jobs that are attractive and accessible to people who left the workforce during the recession and maximize the potential of the immigrant population

• Create a job-driven education and training system that re-skills those who are currently unemployed and prepares the workforce of the future by strengthening working relationships between business, industry and education at all levels

• Dramatically expand opportunities for all young people to work and learn through co-op programs, internships and paid work

The collective talent across the region was assembled in various forums to develop strategies to meet those challenges. Their advice is reflected in this document. We would like to thank the Board of Directors and recognize others who gave generously of their time.

Mary Feeney

Chair, Partner, Bowditch & Dewey

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Partnerships for a Skilled Workforce, Inc. (PSW) builds ***partnerships*** with business, education, community organizations and government agencies that will:

• Help companies develop a well-trained workforce so that they will survive and prosper

• Enable individuals and families to reach economic self-sufficiency through education and training for

21st Century jobs

PSW’s ***vision*** is:

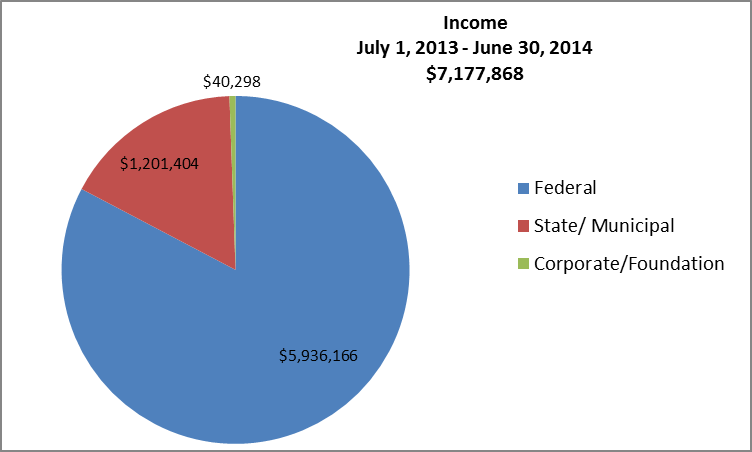
• The workforce, current and future, has the skills demanded by business and industry

• Individuals of all ages, genders and racial and ethnic groups improve their economic status through education, training and job search support

• Low-income individuals and at-risk young people succeed in the labor market

• Labor supply grows in occupations where there are persistent vacancies because more women and minorities choose STEM careers

In FY14, $7,177,868 was available to support achievement of the vision.



1 The strategies articulated in the document are based on the labor market analysis, *The Knowledge Innovation Economy* and on experience over the past decade.

***Goal One. . . Enhance the value of the Metro Southwest career centers, Employment and***

***Training Resources, to business, industry and individuals of all ages.***

Employment and Training Resources (ETR) is a partnership of the Metro South/West Employment and Training Administration and the Massachusetts Department of Career Services with centers in Framingham and Norwood, and satellites in Newton and Marlborough. The centers are the gateways through which job seekers access career counseling, job search assistance, and occupational training, and the talent organization through which companies find employees.

The FY14 funding for services to adults, dislocated workers and employers was $6,068,999 ($2,313,708 in

FY13 and FY14 Workforce Investment Act Adult and Dislocated Workers allocations; $174,007 in Wagner-Peyser Employment Service funds; $3,018,363 in National Emergency Grants from the US Department of Labor; and $562,921 in state funds)

***Objectives***

The objectives are:

• Increase the employability of unemployed and underemployed individuals, giving priority to residents who are 45 and older in the region, through training and coaching

• Increase the ratio of job seeker customers who find employment through staff job placement efforts to the total number of job seeker customers, including those that do not have individualized staff support

• Increase penetration in the employer market in targeted industries

• Keep career centers current and contemporary so employers see the value in using the centers

• Refine the customer service model through better understanding the unique needs of the long- term unemployed, using technology, employing customer engagement strategies, measuring outcomes and activities, and contracting with a third-party evaluator

***Need***

7,570 ETR customers have been unemployed for 27 weeks or more.

Although there is a debate about the size and persistence of a skills gap that would prevent or stall the growth of key sectors in the region—information technology, advanced manufacturing,

business and professional services, and health care—skills gaps do exist in niches in the labor market.

Structural issues impede collaboration and innovation within the career centers, among service providers, and between education and business and industry. There must be system integration with the job seeker and employer at the center.

***Program Design***

Two major studies of career centers over the past several years have shown that:

• Job seekers are more likely to find employment when the number of job orders and direct referrals to jobs increases (Sum, et. al)

• Career centers who have deep sustained relationships with employers have higher placement rates (Good, et. al)

The program design reflects the importance of employers. Three major industry sectors have been targeted for services: health care (hospitals, nursing homes); business and professional services (health information technology, architecture and engineering); and manufacturing (pharmaceuticals, medical devices). The intersection between services to employers and services to job seekers is shown in the diagram below.

chart 7_edit.tif

With the support of an ETR team of career advisors and business services representatives, job seekers move from assessment to a job.

***TEAM***

***Customer Assessment***

***And***

***Plan***

***Job Search Coaching (Boot Camp)***

***Referral: Job Order, Job Development***

***Occupational***

***Training***

No

***Interview***

***OJT***

***Internship*** No

***Accept***

***Job Offer***

50% of the job seekers receiving services from the teams will be long-term unemployed or underemployed as a result of a layoff or plant closing. The characteristics of the 7,570 long-term unemployed individuals who received one or more services at the career centers in the region from July 1, 2013 through January

2014 are shown in the table below.2 Ninety-three percent were not employed at the time of registration.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristic** | **Number** | **Percent** |
| **Gender** | | |
| Males | 3,905 | 52 |
| Females | 3,665 | 48 |

2 The occupations of 2,087 individuals or 28% of the total 7,570 were not coded. The percentages are calculated by dividing the number of individuals in each category by the total number that were coded—5,483. An individual may be counted in more than one occupational category.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristic** | **Number** | | **Percent** |
| **Age** | | | |
| 14 - 21 | 92 | 1 | |
| 22-45 | 2,548 | 34 | |
| 46-54 | 2,008 | 27 | |
| 55+ | 2,922 | 39 | |
| **Race/Ethnicity** | | | |
| White | 6,111 | 81 | |
| Black or African American | 428 | 6 | |
| Hispanic or Latino | 485 | 5 | |
| Asian | 471 | 6 | |
| Other or Unknown | 342 | 5 | |
| **Education** | | | |
| High School Student | 32 | 0 | |
| High School Dropout | 134 | 2 | |
| High School Graduate or Equivalent | 1,706 | 23 | |
| Some College or Technical School | 1,551 | 20 | |
| College Graduate (4 Years or More) | 3,982 | 53 | |
| Unknown | 121 | 2 | |
| **Other** | | | |
| Individual with Disabilities | 320 | 4 | |
| Basic Skills Deficient | 85 | 1 | |
| Low Income/Economically Disadvantaged | 1,562 | 21 | |
| Veterans | 450 | 6 | |
| **Top Nine Occupations\*** | | | |
| Management | 1,802 | 33 | |
| Office and Administrative Support | 1,340 | 24 | |
| Sales and Related | 836 | 15 | |
| Business and Financial Operations | 706 | 9 | |
| Computer and Mathematical | 576 | 11 | |
| Education, Training and Library | 426 | 9 | |
| Production | 355 | 7 | |
| Architecture and Engineering | 353 | 6 | |
| Art, Design, Entertainment, Sports and Media | 352 | 6 | |

***Impact***

The success of the teams will be measured by comparing the results of the teams with the overall placement rates for the centers. Metrics will be:

• The ratio of total job placements (development and referral) to the total number of people registered with ETR

• The total number of job placements from job development and referral from the team

• The ratio of job placements (development and referral) for team customers to the number of people receiving services from the teams

The scope and impact on employers will be measured by:

• The number of new employers who list job orders

• The number of repeat employers who list job orders

• The number of company contacts made each quarter by each business service representative

A third-party evaluation will be funded in FY15 to assess the effectiveness of the process used by the teams and to measure the outcomes in FY16. Examples of questions a

• Do job seekers have the competencies that employers demand as a result of services provided by the teams?

• Do employers value the services provided by the BSR’s?

• How do employers evaluate the quality of the candidates referred by the career centers?

• Do the jobs pay 300% of the federal poverty level?

**Goal Two . . . Through the HealthcareWorks Initiative, reduce the gap between the skills of current and future health care workers and the changing requirements of hospitals, nursing homes, community health centers and other health care facilities in a reform and cost- containment environment**.

*The program is just right for me. It is what I need to get ready to go to the next level. My goal is to become a nurse or radiology tech. Thanks for the program to help with the transition and preparation for college.*

*HCLN™ Scholar*

*[HCLN™] has been a great experience. Perfect for my busy schedule and because of the way the course runs and the teachers, I didn’t quit. They*

*kept me motivated from the first time I started.*

*HLCN™ Scholar*

***Need***

The need to prepare the health care workforce is an ongoing challenge as health care needs continue to expand, jobs continue to increase in skills required due to changing regulations, and the aging workforce nears retirement. Recent cost containment legislation demands efficiency, with all professional practicing at the top of their licenses. Front-line workers are a source of talent for professional jobs and support for nurses and other health care professionals, yet many aspiring workers lack the skills and knowledge to enter and succeed in college

***The Health Care Learning Network™***

HCLN™ is a web-based, instructor-facilitated remediation education system—preparing front-line health care workers and other people interested in a health care career to complete post-secondary education programs, and become licensed nurses and allied health professionals. Using the latest in instructional and learning outcomes management technology, HCLN™ delivers health care industry- specific college preparatory coursework to front-line health care workers.

The first students enrolled in October 2007 on the North Shore under the sponsorship of the North Shore Workforce Investment Board. Since that time, over 600 students on the North Shore and in Metro Southwest have been enrolled in HCLN™. Ninety-five percent are women. Students range in age from 22 to 63. Most are English language learners and have at least a high school diploma or GED. About half work in health care in entry-level jobs. The remainder work in retail, food service and similar entry-level positions. A small percentage is unemployed.

HCLN™ has three courses—Computers for College, Introduction to Allied Health and Nursing (academic reading, writing, career exploration, and health care terminology); Health Mathematics (math and pre- algebra), and Health Care Science (scientific thinking, biology, chemistry, anatomy and physiology). All courses include the core competencies required of health care workers for customer service and patient interaction: thinking skills (creative thinking, decision making, reasoning, problem solving, and learning- to-learn); self-management skills; and techniques for managing learning, work and family

responsibilities.

The coursework is contextualized to health care. Lessons and assignments are based on problems and circumstances that are encountered in the health care work place. The content and organization of learning is driven by both the current and future skills requirements of the health care industry, the career aspirations and educational needs of health care workers, and the knowledge needed to pass college entrance examinations.

Adult students need both personal and academic support if they are to surmount the challenges of combining work, family and academic study. Support in HCLN™ is provided in three ways: career coaching, communities of learning and academic tutoring.

***Effectiveness of Distance Learning***

Studies3 have shown that distance learning can be an effective educational method for selected populations when the instructional design:

• Supports the learner’s ability to work independently, take initiative and manage time

• Motivates students through achievement and making instruction fund—the courses are divided into manageable modules and incorporate games

• Creates a real life context, i.e., contextualized to work settings

• Provides hands on activities—students complete case studies and science experiments

• Encourages communication between students and teachers

• Makes technical support available—students complete Computers for College and have access to technical support personnel

The HLCN™ instructional designers built HLCN™ around these principles.

***Impact of HCLN™***

One hundred fifteen students were enrolled in fiscal years 2013 and 2014. 86 students (75% of total) have persisted and been retained in the program. 17 students (20% of those retained) have completed their course of study. Of the 17, two have been promoted, one has become a Certified Nursing Assistant and is working in health care and 14 are in college. The table summarizes HLCN™ activity from July

2011 when PSW received the first 1199SEIU Training and Upgrading Fund contract to the present.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Program** | **Start Date** | **Total**  **Enrollment** | **Retention** | **Completion** |
| 1199SEIU Training & Upgrading Fund | July 2011 | 33 | 22 | 5 |
| Framingham Adult ESLPlus | July 2012 | 22 | 14 | 9 |
| Operation Bootstrap | October 2012 | 11 | 10 | 1 |
| Middlesex Community College Adult Learning  Center, Bedford | February  2013 | 15 | 12 | 0 |
| Quinsigamond Community College, Assabet  Valley Regional Technical School | February  2013 | 22 | 16 | 2 |
| Blue Hills Regional Technical School | October 2013 | 9 | 9 | 0 |
| Totals |  | 112 | 83 | 17 |

3 US Department of Education. *Review of Distance Learning Research, 1996 – 2008*. Askov, Johnston, Petty and Young, 2003. Johnson and Aragon, 2003. Porter. *California Distance Learning Project*. 2005. Mary L. Gatta. *New Jersey On-Line Learning Project*. Rutgers University.

A recent evaluation conducted under a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s Career Pathways Program, showed significant support and enthusiasm for HCLN™ from adult education students, teachers and administrators. The model provides a method of learning for those desiring to enter or advance careers in health care that is not readily available, and fills a gap in adult educational services. Current partners listed in the table above overwhelmingly supported continued funding of HCLN™. Major findings include:

• Ninety-two percent of the students believed that HCLN™ would be helpful in reaching their health care education and employment goals

• Student engagement was strengthened when face-to-face learning labs were implemented

• Teachers valued HLCN™ as an additional resource for their students, but asked for more teacher’s meetings where they could evaluate and improve their experience

**Goal Three . . . Through the Young Adult Employment Initiative4 empower disengaged 16 to**

**21 year olds whose incomes do not exceed 300% of the poverty level by providing the tools they need to overcome barriers to employment and move into jobs in growing industries.**

*My name is Alejandro, and I’m a 19-year-old high school student. My parents split up when I was a kid, and my mother and I lived with my grandparents.*

*My mother helped my grandparents with the rent and other expenses until she remarried and moved out. I stayed with my grandparents, but I didn’t make*

*enough money at my job to cover any of the bills. The stress led me to drugs,*

*and I’ve been in and out of rehabilitation programs more than once.*

*I missed so many days of school, that in my senior year I was told I would not graduate due to absences. Now that I was clean, I began on online curriculum program, and I approached the high school career specialist. It told her I was, “in dire need of a job.” She helped me write a resume, cover letter, and reference sheet; and she spent time with me practicing answers to interview questions.*

*I interviewed and was offered a position at AXLE Brand Promotions, a marketing and events organization. With this job I can finally help my grandparents.*

*Last winter I purchased pellet fuel to heat the house, and I paid for groceries and other things.*

*For the first time in my life I am feeling successful.*

***Need***

Teen youth employment is at a low of twenty-six percent and is even lower for low-income and minority young adults. Unemployment as a teen increases the probability of unemployment as an adult and reduces life-long earnings.

Too many young people leave high school having never worked and too many young college graduates are having difficulty finding a college job.

Twenty-two to 28 year olds are not eligible for Workforce Investment Act youth programs, because they are over the age of 21. Few, however, have been served by the career centers.

***Objectives***

***The Young Adult Initiative Board established the following objectives:***

• Provide services and support to enable young people to complete secondary education and transition to post-secondary education

• Help youth not engaged in school to follow the educational pathway that meets their needs— reentering high school, obtaining a GED or alternative high school diploma, finding a post- secondary education program that enables them to complete high school and technical

certification simultaneously

4 For additional information see Young Adult Initiative Board Strategic Plan or contact Kelley French, Youth Director, PSW, [kfrench@pswinc.org.](mailto:kfrench@pswinc.org)

• Young people who succeed in the 21st Century must have the skills to navigate the labor market and flourish in the work place. The skills should be acquired and evaluated in both the classroom and the workplace

• Young people in targeted communities will learn to work by working in the summer, after school, and on weekends in paid employment and internships

• The members of the Young Adult Initiative Board will put transportation for youth employment on the agendas of government, community leaders and employers and encourage young people to exercise leadership, advocating for themselves

• The YAIB will support community partnerships that provide multiple pathways to education and employment

• To measure the impact of its strategies on youth employment, the YAIB will complete a self- evaluation on a bi-annual basis. Evaluation will include youth surveys and focus groups and use the data to improve the effectiveness of its investments in youth development and employment

***Programs that succeed in increasing young people’s success in education and in the labor market have the following features:5***

• Continuity of contact with caring adults, teachers, employers, community members and others who are committed to the participants’ labor market success and on-going, long-term support

• A focus on the strengths of young people, not on their weaknesses

• Connections to employers, using paid work and internships as a motivator and venue for learning

• Learning in both the classroom and the work place

• A clear definition of the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the labor market and a variety of options for acquiring them

• Hands-on experiential training in areas of labor market growth and community rebuilding

• Financial and non-financial incentives for achievement

• Opportunities for leadership development, self-governance and decision-making

5 Sar Levitan Center for Policy Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland; American Youth Policy Forum, Washington, D.C.; Grobe, Terry. Dollars and Sense, “How ‘Career First’ Programs like Year Up Benefit Youth and Employers. Jobs for the Future. May 2010. The White House Council for Community Solutions. Community Solutions for Opportunity Youth. June 2012.

***Services for 16 to 21 Year Olds***

3,348 young people participated in Fiscal Year 2013. Seventy-three percent were low-income with annual incomes at two hundred percent or less of the Federal poverty level. Fifty-four percent were males and forty-six percent were female. Fifty percent were white; 27%,

Hispanic; 12%, Black; and 11% were from other racial or ethnic groups. Young people gain access to services at high schools or in youth centers in Marlborough, Framingham, Waltham, and Bellingham. They participated in one or more of the following activities:

• Career planning—assessment and career inventories, career days, job shadowing, visits to colleges

• Job readiness—resume writing, interviewing techniques, employer expectations discussions, completing job applications, driver’s education

• Education and training—GED tutoring, certificate program, college coursework

• Job placement—internships, full and part-time paid employment

They may receive financial support to cover the costs of education and training, gas cards and bus passes, uniforms and tools.

In order to expand access to services, the Young Adult Employment Initiative will use online technologies, allowing young people to explore careers and become job ready on the web.

***Goal Four . . . Through the Young Adult Employment Initiative and the career centers, increase the number of unemployed or underemployed 22 to 28 year olds whose incomes are less than***

***300% of the federal poverty level who find jobs using career center services***

In FY15, the Career Center Initiative Board and the Young Adult Initiative Board will:

• Define the needs of 22-28 year olds, develop a program design that meets their needs and identify the resources, both at the career centers and in the community, necessary to attract and serve larger number of individuals in this age group at the career centers.

• Ensure that there is a continuum of services for youth ages 22 to 28.

• Identify five to ten employer champions willing to provide internships and hire young people.

***Goal Five . . . Continue to increase the visibility of the organization through partnerships and labor market research.***

To fulfill its mission PSW must be an effective workforce development broker in Metro Southwest. The labor market in the United States is fragmented—a market in which there is no formal structure for the exchange of information about the labor market itself or for developing effective strategies to address labor market problems. It is a maze of agencies and organizations difficult to negotiate for its customers—business, industry, organized labor, workers and the unemployed. PSW fills that void.

PSW is a neutral broker, assuming several roles *not* assumed by economic development agencies, educational institutions, government and other non-profit agencies. The roles of PSW are:

• Facilitator, providing a forum in which business, organized labor, education, government and service organizations have a voice in the investment of public workforce development monies

• Labor market analyst, continually scanning the market to identify issues, e.g., structural change in the industry and occupational mix in the region, skills shortages, sluggish labor force growth, the increasing importance of foreign-born residents as a source of workers, youth unemployment and the plight of individuals with limited skills and education

• Advocate, seeking change in policies and labor force strategies in the state and the nation, and increasing public and private revenues available for workforce development

• Intermediary, bringing together public institutions and businesses to find and implement solutions to labor market problems and financing for those strategies

• Catalyst for change, supporting regional experiments designed to ensure that there is a skilled workforce available to business and that individuals’ earnings increase

The Board’s actions must increase community leaders’, business’, educators’ and funders’ understanding of the dynamics of the labor market in Metro Southwest, the impact of workforce shortages now and in the future, and sustainable options for reducing the skills gap. In FY15, the Board will convene a skills summit to answer the questions:

• Is there a gap between the skills the unemployed have and industry need?

• If so, what occupations and skills are in short supply in what industries.