



REB

REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT BOARD
OF HAMPDEN COUNTY, INC.

Strategic Plan



July 1, 2017-June 30, 2020

Since 1980, the Regional Employment Board (REB) of Hampden County, Inc. has been the region's primary planner, intermediary and convener to address workforce development issues. Our only business is workforce development. In partnership with government, business, labor, and education and training providers, we coordinate, fund and oversee the publicly funded workforce development and job placement programs in Hampden County.

Your connection to workforce development

www.rebhc.org



REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT BOARD
OF HAMPDEN COUNTY, INC.

Dear Friends,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the Strategic Plan of the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc. covering the time period of July 1, 2017-June 30, 2020. Talent attraction, development, and retention is today's economic imperative, and will significantly impact the competitiveness of the Region and the Commonwealth in the future. Our FY 2018-2020 Strategic Plan embodies the basic principles of our enabling federal legislation, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and continues our aggressive and thoughtful agenda to ensure that all our residents are prepared to access career pathways that lead to economic self-sufficiency, and that our regional companies have the skilled workforce they need to grow their business, create wealth opportunities for their companies and employees, and strengthen the regional economy.

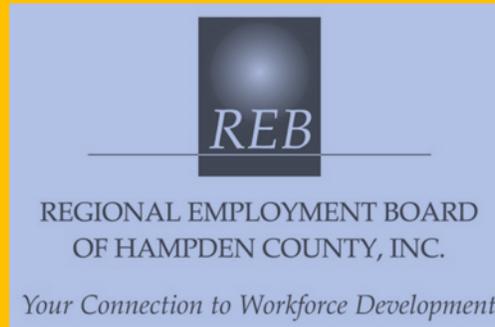
The Strategic Plan is grounded in the REB's commitment to use labor market data to inform decision making, strengthen regional cluster development, create innovative workforce development practices and programs, accelerate job creation by developing career pathways for all Hampden County residents, and enhance the quality of life and social fabric of our communities. The workforce development eco-system in Hampden County is arguably the strongest in the State, and is well positioned to implement workforce development programming that will drive economic expansion.

The Plan's Strategic Priorities and Goals reflect the REB's values, beliefs, and purpose, and are embedded in the principles of equity and access. Our business and industry partners, One Stop Career Center Operators, and training and educational providers share these principles and are committed to working with us in finding the best way forward. This work is not easy. It will require our continued commitment and engagement, leveraging of shared resources, and willingness to be innovative and take prudent risks.

We invite you to read the FY 2018-2020 Strategic Plan, join us in the exciting work ahead, and follow our progress on www.rebhc.org.

J. Jeffrey Sullivan, REB Chair
President, M&M Consulting, LLC

David M. Cruise, President & CEO
Regional Employment Board of Hampden
County, Inc.



The Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc. is a business-led, 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation that engages its members from business, education, labor and community-based agencies to set public policies that will build a better workforce. Our only business is workforce development.

In partnership with government, business, labor, and education and training providers, we coordinate, fund and oversee the publicly funded workforce development and job placement programs in Hampden County.

REB Board Officers

Chair: J. Jeffrey Sullivan, President, M&M Consulting, LLC

Vice Chair: Vacant

Treasurer: Eugene J. Cassidy, President & CEO,
Eastern States Exposition

Clerk: Judge William H. Abrashkin, Executive Director
Springfield Housing Authority

President and CEO: David M. Cruise

[WWW.REBHC.ORG](http://www.rebhc.org)

A complete list of REB Board Members can be found at:
http://www.rebhc.org/pages/membership_committees.html

For a listing of REB Staff, please go to:
http://www.rebhc.org/pages/about_reb_professional_staff.html

Strategic Plan

July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2020

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REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT BOARD
OF HAMPDEN COUNTY, INC.

FY2018-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the Commonwealth and in our Region, there is increased recognition of the importance of workforce development for overall economic development. Since 1980, the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc. (REB) has been convening employers, business and industry associations, economic development agencies, and education and workforce development entities to develop collaborative, coordinated, practical and measurable solutions to workforce development issues.

The FY **2018-2020 Strategic Plan** presents a framework and a menu of implementable and measurable approaches that will help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market, and match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy.



This framework will facilitate the development of sector-based career pathways, suggest strategies to scale up innovative education and training programs, accelerate community engagement and organizational capacity building, and establish a coordinated plan to secure alternative public and private sector investment in the workforce development system.

The Plan sharpens the REB's focus on using public and private investment to accelerate job creation and retention by strengthening the partnership between cluster-based industry sectors and our One-Stop Career Centers that will result in self-sustaining employment and career advancement opportunities for all individuals, in particular our County's growing minority populations. Up-skilling the region's incumbent workforce is a critical job retention strategy and will ensure that our companies retain their competitiveness in the global economy.

The Plan presents a renewed emphasis on developing connected career pathways programming that ensures that youth, especially minority youth and youth disconnected from both work and school are ready for college, careers and life in the 21st century.

Over the life of the Plan, the REB will expand approaches to cluster deployment strategies in new and emerging industry sectors-some of which are unknown to us now. The REB will convene new stakeholder partners and engage in new conversations in different spaces. All of the REB's activities and initiatives will be focused on building and sustaining a coordinated and effective workforce delivery eco-system that effectively responds to the workforce needs and requirements of business and industry, and creates self-sustaining employment and career advancement opportunities for all individuals.

The REB has developed a **Strategic Plan Scoreboard** and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure our progress toward meeting our Strategic Priorities and Goals. We believe that the KPIs will inform strategic thinking, drive tactical implementation of Plan Goals and Strategies, and keep us mission centered.

The Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc. welcomes you to join us in implementing our Strategic Plan and encourages you to visit www.rebhc.org to share in this exciting journey.

FY2018-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

I. Our Vision and Mission

Since 1980, the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc. (REB) has been the region's primary planner, intermediary and convener to address workforce development issues. Established by Federal and State legislation, the REB is a business-led, 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation that engages its members from business, education, labor and community-based agencies to set public policies that will build a better workforce.

Our only business is workforce development. In partnership with government, business, labor, and education and training providers, we coordinate, fund and oversee the publicly funded workforce development and job placement programs in Hampden County. The REB's public workforce development system annually serves over 20,000 job seekers with an approximate annual budget of \$11M-\$12M comprised of Federal (70%), State (26%), and Private (4%) funds.

We are constantly researching regional labor market data, analyzing business' workforce needs and priorities, and developing appropriate strategic partnerships with employers and training providers to meet those needs. Through the region's One-Stop Career Centers: FutureWorks (Springfield) and CareerPoint (Holyoke), we are the "voice" of the regional labor market. We have first-hand information on job seekers, job openings, labor supply and demand, and local hiring trends and projections.

The REB continues to embrace a commitment to its fundamental values. Collaborative leadership, innovation, being data driven, and an absolute commitment to diversity serve as the foundation of our Vision and Mission.

VISION

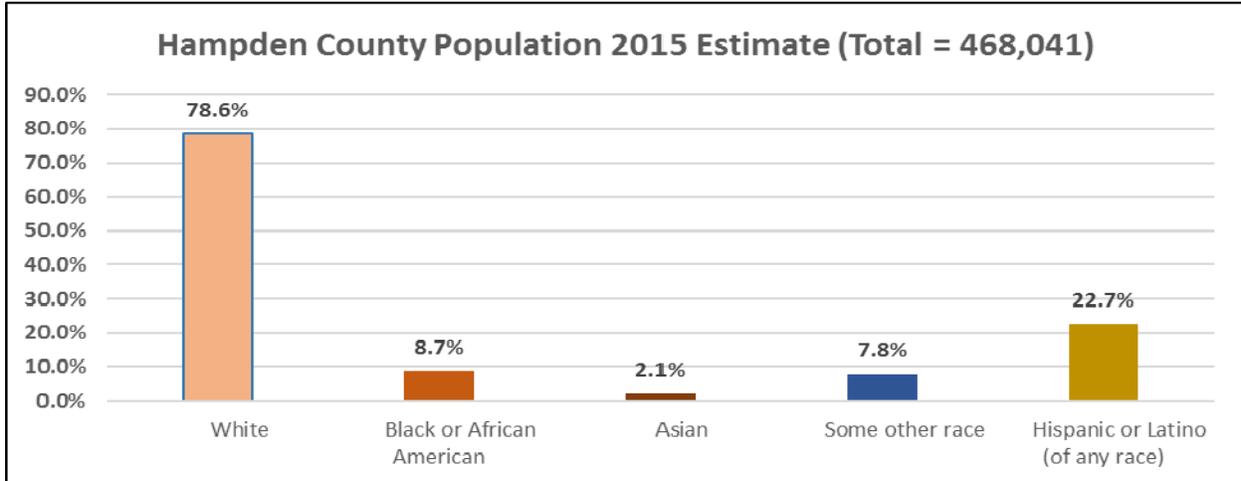
Hampden County residents have access to and are prepared for high quality career employment opportunities at family-sustaining wages that accelerate business growth, ensure continued economic development, and strengthen our communities.

MISSION

The Regional Employment Board leads a dynamic, efficient and integrated workforce development system that plans, coordinates and oversees the growth and effective use of public and private investment in workforce development initiatives for quality careers. The REB provides leadership in creating and sustaining strategic alliances that provide access to education, training and career opportunities for all workers while ensuring a skilled workforce for all employers.

II. State of the Region’s Economic Outlook and Employment Trends

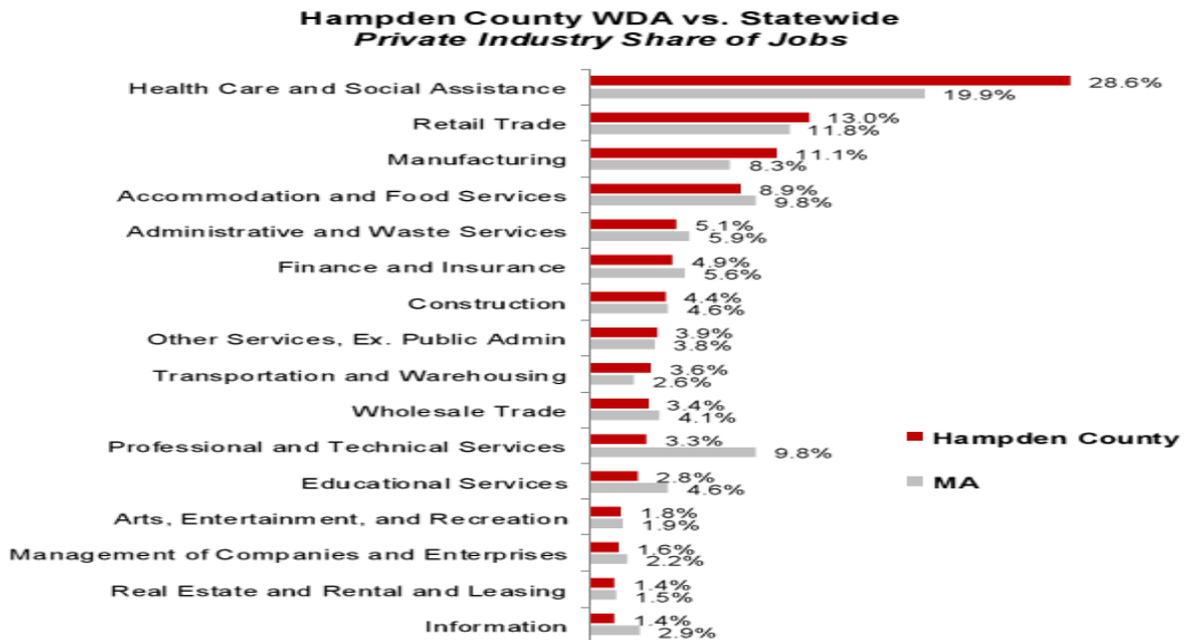
The population in Hampden County had a moderate increase from the estimate of 465,923 reported in our 2014 Strategic Plan. Whites increased from 66.6%, Black or African American estimates declined from 10.5%, Asians remained the same, Hispanic or Latinos increased from 22% and “other races” increased from 1%; suggesting possible increases in immigration from other countries.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey DP05 – Demographic and Housing Estimates, 2011-2015

Figure 1

The Healthcare and Social Assistance industry remains vital to the Hampden County economy. Almost 30% of all jobs in the area fall into this category. Not only is this the highest share of jobs in Healthcare statewide, but it is also the largest concentration of jobs in any one particular industry. The Social Assistance subsector, comprised of Child Day Care, Vocational Rehabilitation, Emergency and other Relief Services, and followed by Ambulatory Health Care Services; Hospitals and Nursing; and Residential Care Facilities is the largest contributor to this industry.



Source: DUA QCEW 2015 Annual Averages

Figure 2

Figure 3 indicates the **Top 5 Industries** in Hampden County and the **Top 10 In-Demand Occupations**, listed in order of number of job openings, within each industry sector. The industry sectors are consistent with the REB’s sector strategies and a significant number of the in-demand occupations are aligned with the career pathways work detailed in our new Strategic Plan’s Strategic Priorities.

This employment data clearly indicates the continued importance of the Health Care and Social Assistance industry to the area. The REB’s continued engagement with the **Healthcare Workforce Partnership of Western Massachusetts** is a critical component to the strategic planning and program development that will be required to respond to the changing needs of the regional healthcare industry moving forward.

Top 10 Jobs Across Top 5 Industries in Hampden County					
	Health Care and Social Assistance	Retail Trade	Educational Services	Manufacturing	Accommodation and Food Services
1	Registered Nurse	Customer Service Representative	Special Education Teacher	Machine Operator	Cook
2	Physical Therapist	Sales Associate	Teacher	Production Supervisor	Restaurant Manager
3	Speech Language Pathologist	Cashier	Math Teacher	Machinist	Server
4	Licensed Practical Nurse	Assistant Store Manager	Kindergarten Teacher	Assembler	Housekeeper
5	Occupational Therapist	Store Manager	Instructional Paraprofessional	Manufacturing (Misc)	Custodian
6	Certified Nursing Assistant	Outside Sales Representative	Science Teacher	Welder	Assistant Manager
7	Nurse Practitioner	Store Management Trainee	Substitute Teacher	Operations Supervisor	Food Service Worker
8	Medical Assistant	Account Executive	Paraprofessional Special Education	Production Manager	Line Cook
9	Pharmacy Technician	Account Manager	ESOL Teacher	Quality Inspector	Team Member
10	Physician Internal Medicine	Sales Consultant	Physical Education Teacher	CNC Machine Operator	Dishwasher

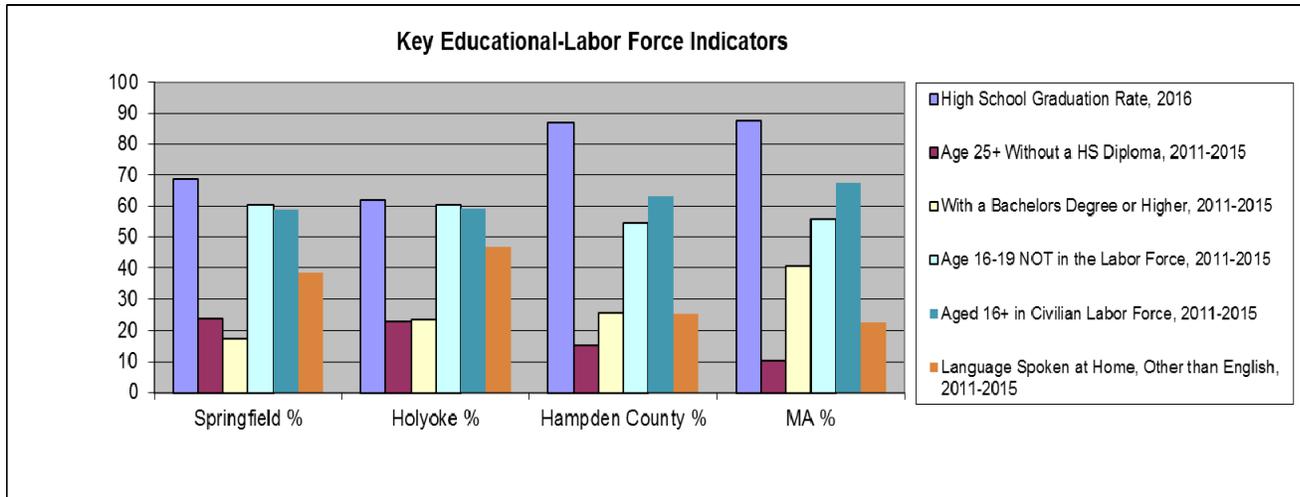
Source: CEB TalentNeuron Wanted Analytics; extracted 1-12-2017

Figure 3

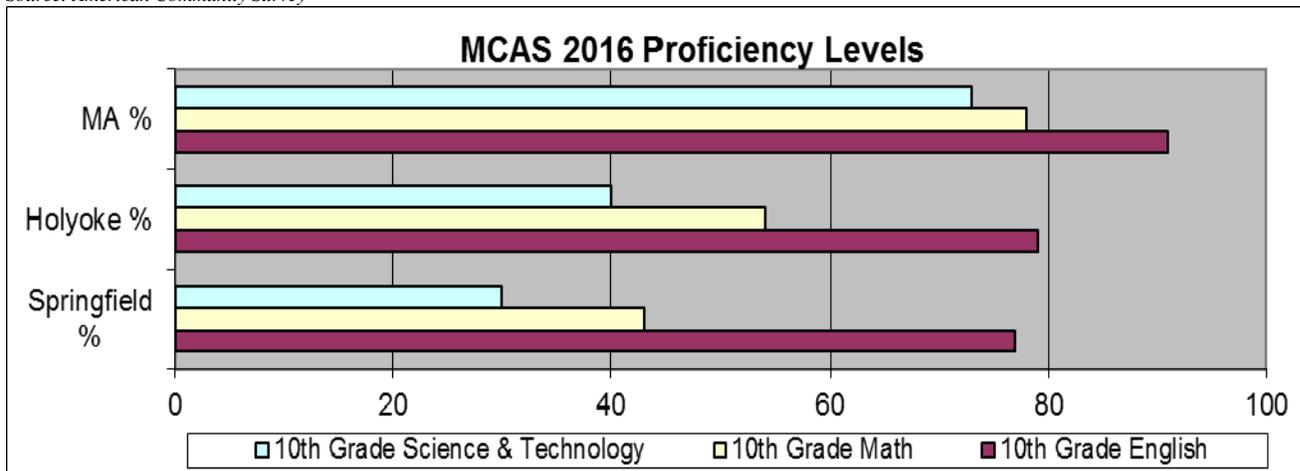
This data, along with anticipated new regional data for the Pioneer Valley that the REB will receive as part of the WIOA Regional Planning process will help us further understand and focus the goals and strategies in this Strategic Plan around priority industry sectors and high growth occupations. It will also inform our strategic thinking and planning on which sector strategies can offer quality career pathways to the populations we serve and guide us in our training investments and resource allocations. For additional labor market data, go to our website at: <http://www.rebhc.org/regionallabormarketinformation/>

III. Identifying the Major Challenges

The region continues to face interrelated challenges of inadequate educational attainment, low labor force participation rates and high poverty, particularly in our Gateway cities.



Source: American Community Survey



Source: US Census Bureau; Massachusetts Department of Early and Secondary Education,

Figures 4-5

The 2016 high school graduation rates in Springfield and Holyoke have shown improvement in the past three years; however they still lag behind other cities in Hampden County and in the Commonwealth. In addition, these two key anchor cities have significant challenges in advancing students towards a Bachelor's degree or higher. One particularly disconcerting trend is the increase in youth not participating in the labor force. Based on the 2011-2015 American Community Survey report, only 31% of the teens (16-19) in MA were employed during an average month¹. This is 23% points less than the amount of teens that were employed in 1999 (54% vs. 31%). While all teens have experienced steep drops in their employment rates over the past decade, young teens, males, African-Americans, Hispanics and low-income students have fared the worst.

Further, census data suggests approximately one in six Gateway City youth age 16-24 is struggling to find a career pathway (Hampden has 4 designated Gateway Cities: Chicopee, Holyoke, Springfield

¹ American Community Survey 2011-2015 S2301: Employment Status

and Westfield). These at-risk youth are either not enrolled in school or not working, or they hold low-wage jobs with little hope for advancement and they are not continuing their education.

The most recent MCAS proficiency levels show gaps in reading, mathematics, and science and technology—all critical to the skills competencies that will be required for 21st century careers. The region has a pronounced challenge ahead to eliminate achievement gaps. Because low-income residents tend to have higher dropout rates with lower levels of academic achievement, education and job training are critical for closing the skills gap and building a better workforce.

Based on an analysis of the most recent labor market studies and educational attainment data, significant challenges will influence the REB and its partner's ability to build a better workforce:

- Employment in the region is recovering at a modest pace but the region continues to have one of the highest unemployment rates statewide, particularly for minority and disconnected youth.
- An aging workforce, declines in younger workers, and stagnant population growth will force the region to confront demographic challenges sooner than other regions.
- Despite gains in the educational attainment of its labor force in the past decade, Pioneer Valley and Hampden County still have the highest share of individuals with only a high school diploma or less. Statewide projections show that more than half (60%) of all new growth jobs will require an Associate's Degree or higher.
- Addressing the barriers to employment facing the region's unemployed, particularly among the young and less educated, is key to the economic vitality of the region.
- There is an increased need for learning opportunities from birth to age 8 and during "out-of-school time" to improve reading proficiency rates by the end of the 3rd grade and beyond.
- High school drop-out rates, particularly in the region's Gateway city school districts have shown marked improvement in the past three years, however on-going interventions and supports will be required to sustain this positive pattern.
- Low literacy rates continue to be a barrier to labor market participation for a significant number of adult job seekers and will require additional resources and supports to increase capacity and programming. Also, of the 25% who speak a language other than English, 9.5% speak English "less than very well", per census data.
- Community college graduation rates are heavily impacted by the high number of 1st year students requiring developmental courses before taking college credit courses resulting in the inability of many students to persist in school.
- Continuing reductions in public funding for workforce development at the federal and state levels pose challenges in addressing the skills needs of our current and future workforce pipeline.

In order to address these challenges and systemic threats, our FY 2018-2020 Strategic Plan includes building our constituent and stakeholder base to increase support for workforce development as an essential tool to accelerate economic recovery and job growth.

IV. Emerging Trends, Assets and Opportunities

In the Commonwealth and in our region, there is increased recognition of the importance of workforce development for overall economic development. The REB is convening employers, business and industry associations, economic development agencies, and educational institutions and workforce development entities to develop collaborative, coordinated, practical and measurable solutions to workforce development issues.

WIOA as an Influencer and Unique Opportunity

On July 22, 2014 the U. S. Congress passed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Some of the provisions of this legislation have provided additional opportunities aligned with our

Strategic Plan. This includes an interest in seeing a number of existing best practices adopted or expanded, such as:

- developing career pathways (including integrated or contextualized ABE, ESL, and occupational training);
- building industry and sector partnerships (local Workforce Boards are required to “convene, use, or implement” sector partnerships);
- providing work-based learning opportunities and
- an increased focus on the attainment of industry-recognized certificates and credentials linked to in-demand occupations.

The State WIOA Plan and other multiple resources related to WIOA implementation can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/massworkforce/wioa/>.

WIOA has provided the REB with new opportunities for partnering with newly added agencies/programs as required “Core Partners” in the delivery of services through our One-Stop Career Center System: Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy and Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs. In MA, these are operated by MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and MA Rehabilitation Commission/MA Commission for the Blind. In addition, MA includes Department of Transitional Assistance funded employment and education related programs as a Core Partner. ***Embedded in our strategic priorities our goals and strategies for how we envision implementing these partnerships in Hampden County to serve shared customers: job seekers, youth and employers.***

Also, WIOA requires Workforce Boards to engage in regional planning and in MA the Governor’s Workforce Skills Cabinet (a partnership between three executive branches of the Commonwealth: the Executive Offices of Labor and Workforce Development; Education and Housing and Economic Development) is leading this effort. The REB is currently partnering with the Franklin/Hampshire workforce region and Board and local/regional representatives from the three executive offices, and will be in full planning mode in Year 1 of the Strategic Plan. The data-driven Regional Labor Market Blueprints to be developed from this planning process will likely drive state funding decision-making and therefore present unique opportunities moving forward

Additional emerging positive trends, assets and opportunities that are consistent with the REB’s Strategic Priorities, objectives and strategies moving forward, that will play a significant role in the workforce development phase of each of these areas are:

- The REB’s industry cluster deployment strategy in advanced manufacturing, health care, financial and business services and hospitality and tourism, is clearly aligned with regional economic development approaches to business expansion.
- The REB is currently analyzing labor market data and employment trends to determine the efficacy of adding a new sector strategy focused on STEM-IT skills that crosses industry sectors and includes new Health IT jobs.
- The REB, in collaboration with Springfield Technical Community College and Holyoke Community College, will be working with the One-Stop Career Centers, education institutions, community-based organizations, economic development and tourism partners to assist with applicant outreach, recruitment, assessment and skills development in preparation for the opening of MGM Springfield in September 2018, and to ensure the availability of a workforce ready to fill jobs at other businesses that may compete with MGM for talent possessing similar skill sets.

- Chinese rail car manufacturer CRRC MA will be opening its \$95M North America headquarters in Springfield in March 2018. CRRC is partnering with local labor unions, the REB, Roger L. Putnam Vocational Technical Academy, Springfield Technical Community College, UMass Amherst, and Western New England University to develop a coordinated workforce development plan.
- The REB is a partner in the Wellspring Collaborative which is using the purchasing power of area anchor institutions to create a network of worker-owned businesses that will provide job training and entry-level jobs to unemployed and underemployed residents in inner-city Springfield.
- The REB is a core partner with the City of Springfield and other entities in the Working Cities Challenge grant from the Boston Federal Reserve Bank. The mission of this grant to address the career development requirements and barriers of low-income residents of Springfield (supply) and the workforce needs of regional employers (demand).
- The REB continues to support the Training and Workforce Options (TWO), initiative established by Springfield Technical Community College and Holyoke Community College to deliver skills enhancement programs to companies and their employees.
- The REB continues to be a leader and “primary operator” in selected state-wide workforce development initiatives, including the Workforce Training Fund (WTFP) On-the-Job Training Program, Sector Partnership National Emergency Grant (SP NEG), Mass Talent Connect Program, Disability Employment Initiative, and two Registered Apprenticeship training delivery programs.
- The REB continues to use regional planning strategies to identify and document the demand driven need for entry level employees in the advanced manufacturing sector in Hampden County, and to align the existing publically financed educational/training infrastructure to develop and deliver high quality training that will respond to the manufacturing business needs.
- The REB will continue to be an active partner in cross-border collaborations with Capital Workforce Partners in Hartford, CT. to develop training programs in high growth, in-demand sectors that cut across state and regional boundaries.
- There is a continued state level focus and investment in High Quality Career Pathways (HQCP) with a strong focus on STEM skills and College and Career Readiness initiatives, A new \$1.95M grant to MA may provide a collaborative opportunity for the REB and its educational partners to strengthen and expand high-quality career-education pathways for students starting in high school and ending with postsecondary degrees and/or industry-recognized credentials aligned with high-skill jobs.
- The resulting recommendations from the Governor Baker’s “***Task Force to Improve Employment Outcomes among Populations Facing Chronically High Rates of Unemployment***” will likely drive state-funded training program investments and provide opportunities for the REB to work with community-based organizations, educational institutions, organized labor, and employers in new ways.
- New opportunities are emerging for the REB to provide collaborative leadership, in concert with municipal economic development agencies, business organizations, organized labor, city officials and our local legislative delegation to develop new city-based, targeted workforce development initiatives. One example is the Manufacturing Technology Skills training program that is

available for Springfield residents with classroom training held at the John J. Shea Technical Training Facility and the technical shop-floor training conducted at Roger L. Putnam Vocational Technical Academy.

- Emerging technology and the availability of the virtual global marketplace are creating new industries resulting in new entrepreneurial start-up companies that will impact the workforce landscape over the next three years. The REB intends to be an intermediary to provide significant guidance and support in this space.

V. *Updating the Strategic Plan*

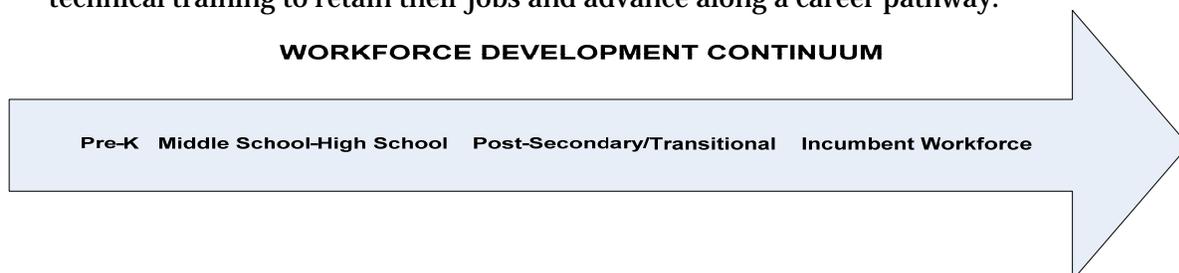
The FY 2018-2020 Strategic Plan builds off the REB’s first Strategic Plan of 2001, and subsequent updates including our current FY2015-FY2017 strategic Plan. This update process included the following actions:

- Continuing to research methods to create structured career pathways along the workforce development continuum of life-long learning and sector strategies aligned with those pathways.
- Updating current demographic and occupational labor market data, trends and projections.
- Updating the REB’s original “Stakeholder Analysis” to add new partners that have a stake in and/or influence our work and to re-assign priorities for many entities that under WIOA may be more important to and/or influence our work.
- Continuing to commit to the following areas identified for further improvement in our workforce development system:
 - Convening key stakeholder partners for presentations/briefings on issues and best practices.
 - Enhancing communication with external partners to facilitate alignment of workforce development initiatives.
 - Increasing involvement in policy development at the State level.
 - Accelerating business involvement and co-investment.
 - Expanding approaches to cluster deployment strategies in new and emerging sectors.
 - Enhancing our engagement in regional and municipal economic development.
 - Focusing on collaborative leadership as an essential strategy for community engagement and organizational capacity building.

A particular focus of the updated Strategic Plan is to ensure that our workforce delivery system supports success at vulnerable transition points: K through Grade 3 reading proficiency, middle-school to high school, high school to college and between 1st and 2nd years of college when many students, particularly those required to take developmental courses, are dropping out. Based on this, the FY 2018-2020 Strategic Plan continues the REB’s commitment to developing a continuum of strategies that address the following segments of the workforce:

- ***The Emerging Workforce*** of in-school and out-of-school youth particularly at-risk youth aged 14-24, who are or will be the newest entrants into the workplace, and who are in most need of education, career guidance, job readiness skills, and support services.
- ***The Transitional Workforce*** of unemployed/underemployed workers, including ex-offenders, and disconnected older youth, who need retraining and job search assistance to access new career opportunities.
- ***The Incumbent Workforce*** of employed workers who need additional education and targeted technical training to retain their jobs and advance along a career pathway.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CONTINUUM



VI. Strategic Plan: Strategic Priorities, Objectives and Strategies

Each of the four Strategic Priorities within the Strategic Plan is rooted in a Core Value embedded in the REB's Mission. Each of these four Core Values is described as a preface to each Strategic Priority. The REB has developed a **Strategic Plan Scoreboard** and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure our progress toward meeting our Strategic Priorities and Goals. We believe that the KPIs will inform strategic thinking, drive tactical implementation of Plan Goals and Strategies, and keep us mission centered.

Core Value 1: We Must Be Data Driven.

The REB must have real time, reliable information about employer needs with a particular focus on developing workforce data on small and medium sized enterprises (SME), and the available workforce. We must be proficient in analyzing and using data to inform and implement best practices and develop innovative programming that is research-based. We must measure outcomes, results and the return on investment in all workforce development interventions in order to secure on-going support for and investment in the workforce development delivery system.

Strategic Priority 1: Be the Leading Source of Regional Labor Market Information and Innovative Ideas for Advancing Workforce Development

Goal A) Provide accurate and timely information on current and future employer hiring and training needs and the readiness of the regional workforce to fill those needs based on state, regional and local data reports and use of data mining tools.

Strategy A1) Co-lead WIOA Regional Planning that includes the development of a labor market blueprint that is based on Pioneer Valley labor market supply and demand data and conditions.

Strategy A2) Obtain local area data through the convening of sector companies, business and industry associations, labor unions, planning and economic development agencies, institutions of higher education, and State and other research entities.

Strategy A3) Establish key workforce development indicators that the REB will use to disseminate appropriate information. Conduct timely analysis of the data, reports, and best practices, with a focus on targeted industry sectors and occupational skills common across industries, and disseminate key findings via multiple channels; including through the REB's website.

Goal B) Align resources with identified labor market demand and job seeker needs.

Strategy B1) Use timely data to prioritize and allocate resources for adult and youth programs and career center services.

Strategy B2) Periodically validate the deployment of resources to ensure they are meeting employer demands and needs.

Goal C) Design, implement, and disseminate innovative practices that will improve the workforce development system.

Strategy C1) Research, pilot and disseminate promising practices.

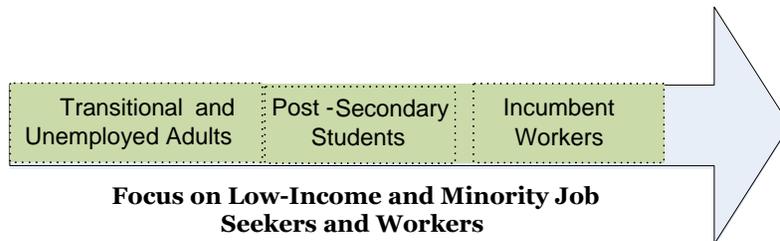
Strategy C2) Scale up, increase and/or improve excellent programs, practices and service delivery models.

Core Value 2: We Must Be Employer Demand-Driven To Upskill Our Workforce At All Levels

We must focus on job creation and retention efforts and on increased access for our growing minority populations and longer-term unemployed and other targeted populations. To achieve this, we must strengthen the partnership between cluster-based industry sectors, our One-Stop Career Centers and our WIOA Core Partners and their shared customers so that efforts will result in self-sustaining employment and career advancement opportunities for all individuals, and meet the demands of our regions employers.

The REB must focus on “up-skilling” the workforce at all levels. This includes basic literacy and “middle skills” for individuals possessing some post-secondary education who can improve their economic self-sufficiency by attaining a credentialed certificate, an Associate degree or competency-based on-the-job and/or apprenticeship work-based learning. We must also focus on the incumbent workforce who requires advanced training to access jobs along a career pathway continuum. We must provide the highest level of education and training and employment and career management services and supports to ensure that families obtain employment with self-sustaining wages.

Strategic Priority 2: Improve Education and Employability Skills of Adults for Quality Careers



Goal A) Coordinate education, workforce and business services across One-Stop Career Centers and partner agencies to improve outcomes for job seekers and businesses.

Strategy A1) Establish and maintain partnership between OSCCs and local partners serving job seekers and businesses that develops a shared vision for an integrated regional workforce development system through the OSCC WIOA Core Partner MOU.

Strategy A2) Increase capacity and support for OSCCs as the hubs of the workforce development system through increased alignment of partner agencies’ resources, services and supports accessible to shared job seeker and business customers.

Strategy A3) Develop customer flow models for target populations represented by partner organizations including services available to each population and methods for referring shared customers between partner agencies.

Strategy A4) Establish set of common performance metrics to track outcomes of job seekers and business customers, including shared customers across all partner agencies, and as specified in the One-Stop Career Center Charters.

Goal B) Increase capacity of One-Stop Career Center Operators and partner agency staff to deliver quality services to job seekers and businesses.

Strategy B1) Develop coordinated professional development plan across partner agencies to increase shared knowledge and strategies to serve job seekers and businesses.

Strategy B2) Disseminate key data, information, promising practices and innovative approaches that will inform and enhance staff capabilities.

Strategy B3) In partnership with the other OSCC Operators WIOA Required Partners, develop and implement the REB Employer Engagement Framework that provides a strategic direction to deliver Employer Services to all employers, covering wide ranges of size, industry, location and requirements; including all strategic planning, process development, and allocation of staff and staff resources that pertain to the provision of Employer Services.

Strategy B4) Coordinate with the One-Stop Career Centers in the development of the Regional Talent Bank to ensure that the Regional Talent Bank serves all job seekers, is consistent with the demand driven requirements of WIOA, complements the policies and protocols of the Massachusetts-based public workforce system, and is constructed in concert with the REB Employer Engagement Framework.

Goal C) Adopt a common set of required workplace readiness skills, and plan to develop these skills in job seekers, across industry sectors.

Strategy C1) Establish common indicators of workplace readiness across industry sectors.

Strategy C2) Expand utilization of existing and new assessment tools to better match worker skills sets to a viable career plan (e.g., WorkKeys, KeyTrain, CareerReady 101, etc.).

Strategy C3) Expand utilization of existing and new curricula to improve workplace readiness skills of job seekers.

Goal D) Develop sector-based career pathways to fill the identified gaps between employer needs in demand occupations and the supply of qualified workers.

Strategy D1) Establish a common career pathway framework applicable across all sectors that describes how to advance adults along the career continuum.

Strategy D2) Scale up innovative education and training programs, especially sector-based and cross-sector skill-based strategies for in-demand occupations along those pathways; including implementing and tracking the strategies outlined in the REB's Western MA Nursing Collaborative Strategic Plan (2016-2019).

Strategy D3) Establish a collaborative case management process that builds on the strength of CBOs, case managers, education and training providers, employers and OSCCs to increase access to support services that address barriers to success.

Strategy D4) Expand “transition to work” opportunities such as On-the-Job Training (OJT), internships, registered apprenticeships, to increase work-based learning opportunities.

Strategy D5) Align resources to support the development of quality career pathway opportunities.

Goal E) Increase adult literacy program capacities to ensure adult learners are prepared to successfully transition to college and careers.

Strategy E1) Accelerate adoption of promising practices among literacy, transition to college and workplace education providers.

Strategy E2) Develop business champions to advocate for and support increased program capacity and expanded business and industry commitment to adult literacy.

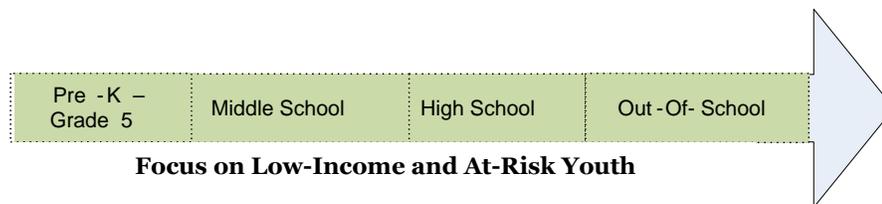
Strategy E3) Align resources to incentivize literacy and training providers, and their business partners, to integrate promising practices into their workforce delivery programming.

Strategy E4) Provide alternative supports to individuals waiting to access literacy programs and services.

Core Value 3: *Youth Employability Development is Essential To Our Future Workforce.*

The REB must attend to the development of youth employability skills early and often along the continuum. We must ensure that youth are ready for college, careers and life in the 21st century by promoting the development of STEM skills and the attainment of a common core of skills such as effective communications, critical thinking, problem solving, entrepreneurial thinking, and interpersonal relations. Special attention must be placed on at-risk youth, especially minority youth and youth disconnected from work and school. Finally, we must collaborate with education and community-based youth providers to build a coordinated, integrated and effective workforce delivery eco-system.

Strategic Priority 3: Develop 21st Century Youth Education and Employability Skills for Quality Careers



Goal A) Prepare youth for college and careers.

Strategy A1) Establish common indicators of workplace readiness across industries through the OSCC WIOA Core Partner MOU and/or the MOU between all youth-serving programs/agencies funded through the REB and at the One-Stop Career Centers.

Strategy A2) Establish a common career pathway framework applicable across all sectors that describes how to advance youth along the career continuum, included in MOUs above.

Strategy A3) Design, advocate for and support educational and K-16 curriculum development and programming that integrates 21st century skill development and contextualized learning along a career pathway continuum.

Strategy A4) Promote drop-out prevention and recovery interventions, including alternative educational career pathways, which provide and align available community support services to youth and out-of-school time programming to stem learning loss; particularly to youth identified as vulnerable based on early warning indicators.

Strategy A5) Represent the REB's strategic vision on advisory groups for K-16 curriculum development, and act as the intermediary to accelerate the design and implementation of sector-based career pathway programs, in key in-demand industry sectors, particularly in STEM skills disciplines.

Goal B) Increase the capacity and support of One-Stop Career Centers and all youth service delivery agencies to meet the employability needs of youth, particularly out-of-school and unemployed youth aged 16-24, and the educational development needs of younger youth.

Strategy B1) Increase and enhance programs focused on placing youth into employment positions aligned with the REB's industry sector strategies.

Strategy B2) Expand youth work readiness programs, including internships and work experiences in sector-based in-demand occupations with career advancement opportunities.

Strategy B3) Increase coordination and alignment among the youth-serving entities, e.g., schools, CBO/FBOs, REB youth vendors, and out-of-school time learning programs, to ensure youth successfully transition to the next level of their career pathway.

Strategy B4) Increase ability to serve youth with disabilities to improve the job placement rates through the use of career pathway strategies that prepare and support them for employment success.

Goal C) Implement the Strategic Plan for the Connected Learning in Afterschool and Summer Partnership (CLASP) initiative and track outcomes through its own set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Strategy C1) Serve as regional Out-of-School Time (OST) intermediary to improve program quality and capacity.

Strategy C2) Improve academic outcomes for younger youth.

Strategy C3) Improve social-emotional outcomes for younger youth.

Strategy C4) Advocate and identify funding for regional OST programs.

Goal D) Increase employer engagement to provide youth with work-based learning and career advancement opportunities.

Strategy D1) Develop business champions to advocate for and support increased program capacity and expanded industry commitment to providing work-based learning opportunities for youth, particularly; although not exclusively; in STEM career pathways.

Core Value 4: *Engagement In Collaborative Leadership At All Levels Is Essential To Success.*

The REB must find new and better ways to engage in collaborative leadership that generates investments and shared accountability for results. Scaling up workforce development programming will require new shared approaches and joint funding from both public and private sectors. We must promote the essential connection between workforce development and economic development that will strengthen the social fabric of the community and improve the quality of life throughout the region. Investment in the skills of the workforce is an economic necessity. Investments in Pre-K-12 and higher education are crucial, but workforce training investments are equally critical. The REB must identify new and creative investment strategies for workforce development to accelerate job creation and provide long-term sustainable economic growth.

Strategic Priority 4: Be the Leading Advocate, Planner and Convener to Promote and Fund Regional Workforce Development

Goal A) Communicate, market, and support the critical importance of workforce development to our regional economy.

Strategy A1) Develop and execute a communication plan and branding strategy to educate and inform key stakeholders about the regional workforce development eco-system and workforce development challenges and opportunities going forward.

Strategy A2) Accelerate cluster deployment in established industry sectors and identify new clusters that present opportunities for job creation.

Goal B) Align the REB's regional workforce development Strategic Priorities with the strategic plans of key economic development organizations and educational institutions.

Strategy B1) Lead strategic planning efforts to address critical workforce development issues by convening business, labor, education and workforce development stakeholders, including through the Regional Planning efforts as required under WIOA with the Franklin/Hampshire workforce region

Strategy B2) Ensure objectives and strategies in Strategic Priorities 2 and 3 are reflected in other regional partners' strategic plans.

Strategy B3) Work with key stakeholders in our regions, particularly in our Gateway Cities, to promote and implement city-based workforce development initiatives.

Goal C) Actively engage state and federal legislators in the need for increased funding and support for workforce development programs, including adult literacy programs and programs and services targeted to young adults (16-24).

Strategy C1) Conduct legislative briefings, events and forums on specific workforce development issues.

Strategy C2) Identify which state budget line items related to workforce development are our key priorities for funding, and promote support for them by engaging REB Board members in targeted legislative advocacy initiatives.

Goal D) Leverage increased partner co-investment and secure alternative public and private sector investment in the workforce development system.

Strategy D1) Increase leveraged resources from partners/stakeholders.

Strategy D2) Seek consistent annual funding from local Foundations.

Strategy D3) Identify and obtain new foundation and corporate funding aligned with the REB's Mission.

Strategy D4) Increase the investment in our regional One-Stop Career Centers.

Strategy D5) Develop a comprehensive and coordinated fundraising plan.

VII. Measuring Progress

The REB understands these Strategic Priorities are ambitious and broad in scope. We will prioritize which strategies we will move forward with in FY 2018 and build on that over the next three years. The REB has developed a **Strategic Plan Scoreboard** and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure our progress toward meeting our Strategic Priorities and Goals. We believe that the KPIs will inform strategic thinking, drive tactical implementation of Plan Goals and Strategies, and keep us mission centered. We will work closely with the Strategic Planning Committee of the REB to identify future trends, opportunities' and challenges that impact the fidelity of our Mission.

To view our progress, visit us on our website for periodic updates at:

http://www.rebhc.org/pages/about_reb_strategic_plan.html.

For more information on our FY 2018-2020 Strategic Plan, contact David M. Cruise, President and CEO, at 413-755-1362 or dcruise@rebhc.org.



REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT BOARD
OF HAMPDEN COUNTY, INC.

1441 Main Street, Springfield, MA • (P) 413-787-1547 • (F) 413-755-1364

www.rebhc.org