



MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE BOARD

Annual Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 28, 2025

7:30 a.m.

Michael's Function Hall
12 Alpha Street, Haverhill MA

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Frank Amato, Dawn Beati, Michael Bevilacqua, Kemelin Domenech, Andrew Herlihy, Billy Lang, Vilma Martinez-Dominguez, Eric Nyandat, Frank Surillo, Nardy Vega, Ellen Weinhold, Juan Yopez

MEMBERS ABSENT:

John Bruno, Wilson DeLos Santos, Kemelin Domenech, Lane Glenn, Conor Helfrich, John Lavoie, Maureen Lynch, Carol Riemer, Nardy Vega, Ellen Weinhold, Cal Williams

STAFF PRESENT:

Frank Bonet, Lynda Buote, Varsha Gandhi, Yvette Garcia, Cristy Gomez, Ana Gonzalez, Yeang Leng, Cecelia Lunde, Valerie Luque, Tracy Myszkowski, Corina Ossers, Matt Robert, Abby Seripais

GUESTS PRESENT:

Alicia Appugliese, Mayor Melinda Barrett, Juan Belliard, Joe Bevilacqua, Tracy Fuller, Eric Nelson

I. Call to Order

A quorum being present, Chairman Juan Yopez called the meeting to order at 7:58 a.m.

II. Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Yopez said welcome and thank you for attending today's annual meeting. I'd like to welcome Mayor Melinda Barrett. Thank you for hosting us here.

III. Approval of the June 24, 2025, Quarterly Meeting minutes and the August 26, 2025, Special Meeting minutes (vote required)

Chairman Yopez called for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 24, 2025, Quarterly Meeting and the August 26, 2025, Special Meeting.

Motion made by Frank Surillo, seconded by Frank Amato to approve the minutes of the June 24, 2025, Quarterly Meeting and August 26, 2025, Special Meeting as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. Ratification of Prior Electronic Vote – Approval of MassHire MV Career Center Operation (vote required)

Frank Bonet said we received notification from the Department of Career Services (DCS) legal team informing us that we are required to ratify any electronic votes that the board has taken to have on record and in meeting minutes. This vote will be to ratify electronic votes, and I will let Chairman Yepez continue.

Chairman Yepez called for a motion for the Ratification of Prior Electronic Vote – Approval of MassHire Merrimack Valley Career Center Operator.

Motion made by Frank Surillo, seconded by Eric Nyandat to the Ratification of Prior Electronic Vote - Approval of MassHire MV Career Center Operator. Motion passed unanimously.

V. **Ratification of Prior Electronic Vote – Approval to Award to Fund WIOA Youth RFP to Fund Haverhill Public Schools and Not to Fund Haverhill YMCA-YMCA of the North Shore (vote required)**

Frank Bonet said the electronic vote was taken by board members to approve the funding for an RFP for this program. This funding has been awarded. This is a ratification of the electronic vote so we can have it on record and in meeting minutes.

Andrew Herlihy said we discussed how there is some money in Out of School Youth that still hasn't been awarded and Frank said Tracy how much do we have available for Out of School Youth and Tracy Myszkowski said we have to spend at least 75% for Out of School Youth and no more than 25% for In School Youth and Frank said this RFP is 25% for In School Youth and Andrew said can we anticipate there will be a release of funds for Out of School Youth and the Haverhill YMCA-YMCA of the North Shore can apply for those funds and Frank said yes, anyone who provides services to out-of-school youth can apply and Andrew said can I assume it will be forthcoming and Frank said we can bring it to the MMVWB Planning/Career Center Committee.

Mayor Barrett said will there be any more money for In School Youth since we had another good proposal from the Haverhill YMCA and Frank said with the uncertainties of FY26 funding, we don't know. We do know that the House wants to defund all youth programs, but the Senate doesn't want that. Once we know the allocations, we'll know how much we'll have for that.

Chairman Yepez called for a motion for the Ratification of Prior Electronic Vote – Approval to Award to Fund WIOA Youth RFP to Fund Haverhill Public Schools and Not to Fund Haverhill YMCA-YMCA of the North Shore.

Motion made by Frank Surillo, seconded by Eric Nyandat to the Ratification of Prior Electronic Vote - Approval to Award to Fund WIOA Youth RFP to Fund Haverhill Public Schools and Not to Fund Haverhill YMCA-YMCA of the North Shore. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. **Report of Chair**

Chairman Yepez said good morning, everyone. Thank you for being here at the annual meeting of the MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board. As Chair, I'm pleased to present this year's report and to reflect on where we stand, what we've accomplished, and what challenges lie ahead. It is also my duty to inform you that this meeting is being recorded in audio format solely for the purpose of transcribing the minutes.

Before I proceed, I want to notify the board that Joe Bevilaqua has transferred his responsibilities as the employer, MV Chamber of Commerce, to Michael Bevilacqua. This is now official. Michael Bevilacqua is the President/CEO of the Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce. Before this, he served as Vice President at the Chamber. He has an educational background that includes an MBA from Suffolk University, and undergraduate studies at Merrimack College. Congratulations, Michael, and welcome aboard. We eagerly anticipate collaborating with you.

As you are aware, during our last meeting in June 2025 we informed the board and the Merrimack Valley on the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council's (GLCAC) role as the operator of the Merrimack Valley Career Center. Over the past five months of operation, the collaboration has been exemplary. Today, I am pleased to introduce the new Director of the Career Center, Ms. Alicia Applugliese. Before taking on this role, Alicia served as the Unemployment Program Specialist with the U.S. Department of Labor and was formerly the Contact Center Director at the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development. Please join me in welcoming Alicia to our team. Alicia, would you like to make a comment or give a quick impromptu speech, and Alicia said I am honored to be part of this program with GLCAC and the MassHire MV Career Center as I work with the Department of Care Services (DCS), and Eric Nelson. I'm excited to see how far we can go and Juan said thank you, we look forward to working with you as well.

Federal Funding Uncertainty & FY26 Budget Delays - One of the most pressing issues we face right now is the federal budget situation. As of today, Congress has not finalized the Fiscal Year 2026 budget, and we are operating under short-term continuing resolutions. This limits our ability to plan, launch, and sustain programs that depend on stable WIOA funding. As the federal government shutdown occurs—or even if budget delays continue, there could be serious implications for our Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. Grant cycles may be interrupted. Service delivery could slow. And our ability to meet the needs of employers and jobseekers in the region will be strained.

Our team is actively monitoring these developments, and we're working closely with our state and regional partners to prepare for any disruptions.

WIOA Reauthorization: Possible policy shifts ahead - At the federal level, conversations around WIOA reauthorization have resumed. While we welcome modernization efforts, any changes to funding formulas, performance metrics, or program design will impact how we operate locally. We need to be ready. Workforce policy is shifting, and the local board's voice—and flexibility—will be crucial to ensuring these programs continue to serve our region effectively. Despite funding uncertainty and shifting conditions, I'm proud to say that our board continues to meet or exceed key WIOA performance metrics. This is a credit to the dedication of our staff, our career center partners, and our service providers. But we can't rest on our past performance. The need for better data integration, outcome tracking, and return-on-investment reporting is growing. Funders and policymakers want to see impact—and we are working to deliver it.

Unless there are any questions, this concludes my report.

VII. Guest Speaker: Dr. Naydeen Gonzalez-DeJesus, Vice President, Lawrence Campus and Community Relations, Northern Essex Community College

Juan Yopez said we have a change to our meeting agenda. Dr. Naydeen Gonzalez-DeJesus, Vice President at Northern Essex Community College had a scheduling conflict is not able to attend today's meeting. She apologizes and is looking forward to speaking at a future date.

VIII. Reports of Committee Chairs

i. Planning and Career Center Committee

Frank Surillo said good morning. The executive director of the board submitted a memorandum to the planning committee to formally request the transfer of \$90,000 from FY25 WIOA Adults Funds to WIOA Dislocated Worker. The vote of the planning committee was unanimous. This request for transfer is in addition to the last meeting when we reported \$60,000 from the FY25 WIOA Adult Training Funds to the WIOA Dislocated Worker (DW) Training Funds. The approved reallocation was essential to meet the continued growing demand for career services among dislocated workers in our region.

The following is a summary of program activity and performance outcomes for the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2026 (as of September 30, 2025). The data reflects progress toward the goals established in the FY26 Annual Plan and is based on MOSES and Crystal reporting systems.

- Total Job Seekers Served: 1,963 (22% of annual goal of 8,800)
 - Unemployed Individuals: 1,755 (21%)
 - Persons with Disabilities: 185 (48%)
 - UI Claimants: 1,227 (20%)
 - Veterans: 47 (22%)
- Engagement with people with disabilities is notably strong, reflecting improved outreach and accessibility efforts.
- Total Employers Served: 613 (47% of 1,309 goal)
 - New Employers: 100 (19%)
 - Repeat Employers: 513 (65%)
- Employers Receiving Job Seeker Referrals: 34 (49%)
- Employers Hiring from Referrals: 5 (26%)
- Employers Receiving Enhanced Services: 111
- Employer engagement continues to be a program strength, with nearly half of the annual goal already achieved in the first quarter.
- WIOA Program Performance:
 - Adult Program
 - Participants: 26 (38% of goal)
 - In Training: 28 (41%)
 - Program Exiters: 0
 - Dislocated Worker Program
 - Participants: 31 (48% of goal)
 - In Training: 35 (55%)
 - Program Exiters: 0
 - Youth Program
 - Participants: 24 (22% of goal)
 - Training Activities: 2 of 52 planned (4%)
 - Program Exiters: 0

Participant enrollment and training progress are consistent with early-year trends. Employment outcomes and wage measures will be realized in subsequent quarters as individuals complete their training.

Key Takeaways

- Overall performance is on track, particularly in employer engagement and service delivery for persons with disabilities.
- Employment placements and wage outcomes will increase in later quarters as training programs are completed.
- Focus areas for Q2–Q3: expanding new employer outreach, increasing youth engagement, and supporting participants toward completion and placement.

This concludes my report. Thank you.

ii. Youth Committee

In the absence of Cal Williams, Ana Gonzalez said I am pleased to share this Youth Committee report highlighting the outcomes and impact of our youth programs and initiatives last quarter.

The 2025 Summer YouthWorks Experience Program successfully provided meaningful project based learning and subsidized work experiences, professional and employability skills development, and exposure to career pathways to 327 area youth while also supporting local businesses and community-based organizations.

July 7th was the official start date of the program and youth engaged in activities until August 25, 2025. The team enrolled 127 youth in Tier 1 Service and Project-Based Learning, 126 youth in Tier 2 Early and Career-Trajectory Experience and 74 youth in Tier 3 Career Pathways and Support programming.

We partnered with hosts and worksites, including nonprofits, businesses, and public agencies. We are proud to share that our youth participants collectively engaged in over 29,000 hours of meaningful programming this cycle. We provided over \$560,000 in stipends, wages, and incentives to youth participants and almost \$11,000 to employer partners for youth related expenses.

Here are few highlights. Thirty-four Tier 1 youth successfully attained their First Aid Certification, which will remain valid for 2 years. The majority of the youth reported increased confidence in communication, teamwork, and time management skills. Many expressed greater clarity around future career and education goals.

Our employers noted strong engagement from youth participants and appreciated the support from program staff. Many expressed interest in participating again next cycle and are sharing their positive experiences with other employers, further supporting our efforts to expand our outreach and recruitment. These highlights are a powerful reflection of the impact of our shared efforts.

Additionally, the youth team guided the youth participants through the new Learning Management System – Signal Success. Signal Success is a requirement of the program and teaches that early work readiness preparation proved valuable in setting expectations and boosting career and employment success.

The youth application link for our 2025-26 YouthWorks Year-Round Program was open from September 29th to October 3rd. Our enrollment goal for this cycle is 210 youth. The program start date is November 3rd for the returning youth and November 12th for new participants.

Due to our area high schools being closed during the summer, we co-enrolled most of our YouthWorks participants into Connecting Activities. The team has already started their school-to-career and workforce work with our local high schools to expose students to careers and world of work.

The Youth teams from MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board and MassHire Merrimack Valley Career Center met to strategize about ways to align our programs and services to better assist our area youth. It was made clear that by combining our strengths and aligning our efforts, we can better inform youth about opportunities available through our programs and initiatives.

Our WIOA Youth Program in FY26 will continue to focus on equipping eligible youth with the education, training, and work experience necessary to achieve long-term success in the labor market. This year's goals are aligned with our local priorities. Our enrollment goal, including carry-ins, is 109. As of September 30th, there are 24 youth enrolled.

As reported in our last meeting, Haverhill Public Schools was selected as our WIOA Youth Group Program service provider. Eighteen out of the 34 Haverhill High School students are currently in the process of completing their WIOA eligibility and assessments for enrollment.

We have submitted a Request for Information (RFI) to participate in the Youth Employment Gateway Cities Learning Community Pilot through EOLWD. This pilot funding is intended to support the planning and collaboration between our communities and other communities in strengthening youth employment. We received a letter of support from the City of Lawrence and a letter of commitment from the Youth Development Organization, Inc., to support us in this 12-month pilot to connect youth with local economies, develop a pathway forward for youth looking for employment, and engage local employers in the goal of strengthening youth employment. We will keep you posted on the status of this request.

In conclusion, we are grateful to our employers, school partners, training vendors, and community-based organizations for their continued support and partnership in making our youth programs a success. I am pleased to report that we generated over \$200,000 in wage match during the summer months. This came from our partner employers that hired youth directly.

Hats off to our youth teams for their dedication and impactful guidance to ensure our youth develop career and work skills.

Please continue to support our programs by referring a youth or an employer partner. Together, we can continue advancing workforce development and creating meaningful opportunities for the next generation.

This concludes the youth committee report.

iii. Nominating Committee

In Billy Lang's absence, Frank Amato provided the Nominating Committee report. Frank said welcome. I trust that all Halloween enthusiasts are not intending to show up at your workplace in their typical work attire. Therefore, I urge you, as a young person myself, to embrace your inner child. Dress up and enjoy yourselves, and the activities.

But honestly, we still need a few more members to achieve a 51% representation of private small businesses on this workforce board. During our last meeting, I requested your help in identifying small businesses from the Merrimack Valley for nomination to this board. I suspect the spooky season has made you hesitant to reach out, as I haven't received any nominations yet and I am not spooky. I understand that everyone is quite busy at work. Nevertheless, I want to encourage you once more to have conversations with small companies you know or work with and invite them to join us. Lacking a 51% representation could negatively impact the board's certification with DCS and the federal government.

We are still in search of nominations for the Board Vice Chair and the Board Treasurer. So, once again, Frank will fill in today and read the financial report for FY26.

This concludes my report. Thank you.

iv. Finance Report

Frank Bonet said as of our first quarter ending September 30, 2025, the MMVWB expenditures were \$533,380, GLCAC \$152,357 plus \$91,736 in accruals, and DCS \$311,134.

Youth Wages, Stipends, and Supportive Services total \$579,165 through the first quarter, and we have accrued \$329,750 in other areas, such as WIOA and Non-WIOA, Individual and Group, Trainings. As of September 30th, we have expended and accrued close to 20% of the annual budget.

Available Grant Funding balances ending FY26 is currently at \$3,412,338 (41% of grant budget), and multiple year grants are at \$4,962,775 (representing 59% of grant budget)

This concludes with the budget summary. If there are no further questions, this will wrap up my report.

Juan Yepez said before we move on to the next agenda item, Mayor Barrett would you like to say a few words, and Mayor Barrett said welcome to Haverhill everyone. As you know the City of Haverhill has partnered in this effort for many years and we would like to see a lot more Haverhill-centric efforts. We have Tracy Fuller from the Haverhill YMCA here today who was one of the applicants for the recent youth RFP. They weren't awarded the RFP, and they do great work and reach a lot of youth in our area. We have Career Resources and Makelt Haverhill that do great job fairs, place people in jobs and train people in English and computer skills. We have Whitter Vocational Technical High School that trains both school and after school students in career development and trades. These people are doing it every day and they're making a difference in people's lives in Haverhill and if they had a smidge more money to get these things done, everyone in the Merrimack Valley would benefit. If you're looking for return on investment, those folks can deliver, and they do it with nothing budgets. From my point of view, being fairly new the job, this report is frustrating because we have people on the ground in Haverhill that can deliver more.

Juan said thank you, Mayor, and thank you for everything you do for the city of Haverhill. We look forward to working with you and the city more closely and look forward to when another RFP comes out and see how more funding can come to the City of Haverhill.

IX. Election of Officers

Frank Bonet said each year at our annual meeting, we vote to elect new or re-elect current officers for the coming year.

Chairman Yepez said we are open to nominations. Would anyone like to be considered for any post and there was no response.

Chairman Yepez called for a motion to keep the current slate of officers; they are:

- Chair: Juan Yepez
- Vice Chair: Vacant
- Treasurer: Vacant
- Clerk and Nominating Committee Chair: Billy Lang

Motion by Michael Bevilacqua to re-elect the current officers and Frank Amato seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

X. Report of the Executive Director

Frank Bonet said as the chair mentioned earlier in his report, the ongoing risk of a federal government shutdown and the current lack of a finalized FY26 federal budget present significant uncertainties for our workforce development system. As of now:

- Congress has not passed a full-year budget for FY26, operating instead on short-term Continuing Resolutions (CRs). These temporary measures limit long-term planning and constrain the launch of new workforce programs.
- Potential shutdown impacts include delayed funding for WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) Title I programs, adult education, youth workforce services, and dislocated worker programs—core pillars of our Board’s service delivery.
- Grants and contracts may be delayed or limited in scope, which could impact on our service providers, training partners, and employers who rely on timely funding and stable programming.
- Ultimately, if the deadlock persists over an extended period, the salaries of our workforce staff and payments to our CC operator may face delays. We might have to request funding from the city while we wait for Congress to finalize the FY26 budget.

Additionally, it remains to be seen any changes to the WIOA Reauthorization & Workforce Policy Changes.

- While WIOA has not been reauthorized since its inception in 2014, there has been movement in Congress toward reform, including proposed legislation that could change performance metrics, funding formulas, or program structures.
- These changes could impact on how local boards operate, particularly in areas of youth services, apprenticeship expansion, and employer engagement.

As for Massachusetts State Budget & Policy Landscape

- Governor Healey’s workforce agenda continues to focus on clean energy, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and digital literacy—all of which align with the region’s growth sectors.
- However, the state budget may also be constrained if federal funds are delayed or reduced.
- Recent state initiatives like MassReconnect (free community college for adults 25+) and expanded apprenticeship funding are strong opportunities for our region.

Regarding the ongoing program, MMVWB and its Healthcare Hub Program finalized a grant funding agreement with LifeCare Ambulance and its training provider earlier this year. The curriculum and program have received approval from DCS, and we have commenced recruitment for three training cohorts, each consisting of 10 participants. We are thrilled, as our advertisement for the EMT training and certification has gained significant traction. We have been receiving calls, texts, and emails expressing interest, and as previously mentioned, LHS aims to incorporate this training into its healthcare program for students over the age of 18 and/or graduating seniors.

Unless there are any questions about this quick FY26 quarterly report, and because this is an annual meeting, I do want to report on the FY25 annual presentation slide.

Frank said I'd like to say thank you and recognize the MMVWB team, the Career Center team, the Department of Career Services and our partners for all the work everyone does continuously.

Frank provided the annual meeting PowerPoint presentation (see presentation).

Juan said thank you Frank and congratulations to the MMVWB team for all you do for the communities and the citizens of those communities.

XI. Other Business

Juan said Andrew Herlihy would like to show an advanced manufacturing promotional video and Andrew said we have some wonderful, advanced manufacturing companies right here in Haverhill. They have had some recruiting challenges, and we felt we had to dispel some of the old myths about manufacturing. This video is geared towards young people and was created with companies from all over our region.

Frank said I will send the video link to board members and Juan said thank you Andrew and to the city for putting this together. I think it's very important to share this video with our youth to show how important manufacturing is not only in our community but in our country, especially with the administration's push to build in the U.S. We see a lot of companies invest billions of dollars and there is a need for our youth to go into manufacturing.

Juan said is there any other business and Michael Bevilacqua said I spoke with Cal Williams who is unable to attend today, and he wanted to congratulate the MMVWB youth team on a great job with their annual reporting and Juan said thank you to everyone who had a hand in putting this annual meeting together. You did an outstanding job.

XII. Adjournment (vote required)

Having no further business, Chairman Yopez called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion made by Frank Surillo to adjourn, seconded by Frank Amato. Motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynda Buote

Recorder



2025 Annual Report



Prepared By :
Frank Bonet



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Team

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Team



- Youth Team
- Fiscal Team
- Operation Team
- Program Team
- Career Center Team (GLCAC)
- DCS



Teamwork is the catalyst that transforms individual potential into collective excellence, harnessing diverse strengths and perspectives to forge solutions far greater than any one person could achieve alone. It is the invisible framework upon which innovation is built, where the free exchange of ideas fuels creativity and shared responsibility lightens every load while deepening commitment to a common goal. Through collaboration, challenges are met with a resilience no solitary effort can muster, mistakes become shared lessons rather than individual failures, and success, when arrived at together, carries a sense of accomplishment that is both profoundly meaningful and enduringly powerful.



Annual Performance Measures



FY25 Final Labor Exchange Program & WIOA Performance Summary

- Total job seekers served - 8,125 (7,462 were unemployed, 5,549 UI Claimants, 182 veterans served. In total - 937 entered employment).
- Over 1,200 employers served (403 were new to the career center).
 - Close to 70 Adult WIOA participants were served.
 - Ninety-One (91) WIOA Dislocated workers served.
 - Fifty (50) WIOA Youth participants were served.

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YouthWorks Performance

- The YouthWorks Year-Round program has successfully ended and met enrollment goal by 100% - with a total of 131 participants across all tiers.
- Workforce Connections event hosted in March was a great success, over 45 employer partners provided positive feedback. Six WIOA partners expressed interest in further collaboration.
- Driver's Education Program, facilitated through Berkeley Auto School to 11 students who completed the classroom portion of the program.
- We have implemented CommCorp's pilot Learning Management System (LMS) to better guide our participants through Signal Success, ensuring they gain.
- Organized a company tour to Magellan Aerospace where students had the opportunity to explore careers in advanced manufacturing and aerospace technology.

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Financials



Youth Wages & Stipends \$783,060
 Non-Youth Wages & Stipends \$10,700
 WIOA Individual Training \$719,295
 Non-WIOA Group Training \$119,620
 Support Services \$22,341

WIOA Training Total \$721,232
 NON WIOA Training Total \$200,965



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Financials

	Budget	Expenditure	Accrual	Balance	% Used
MMVWB Total	\$4,225,647	\$2,218,046	\$0	\$2,007,602	52.49%
NECC Total	\$4,006,547	\$3,115,604	\$0	\$890,943	77.76%
DCS Total	\$1,822,168	\$1,444,207	\$0	\$377,961	79.26%



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Financials

Grants	Balance	%
Ending in Fiscal Year 2025	\$295,810	5.45%
Multiple Year Grants	\$5,135,046	94.55%



Capital Needs



MEVA Transit has generously agreed to donate a 15-passenger van to the MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board.

The van will be utilized to support workforce and career service activities throughout the Merrimack Valley, enhancing our ability to engage with job seekers, employers, and community partners across the region.

Several steps will be required to bring the van into full operational use, including registering and insuring the vehicle, conducting a mechanical inspection through Greater Lawrence Technical School (GLTS), and wrapping the van with the MassHire logo alongside those of partnering organizations assisting in its preparation. The MEVA Transit logo will also be prominently displayed to acknowledge their contribution. In addition, we will ensure the van is equipped with the necessary IT capabilities to support on-site service delivery and digital connectivity for workforce activities.





Career Center Location Update



Both Lawrence location and Haverhill Location are currently in Bid Review Stage.

Won't be able to provide any additional details until selection and final approvals are reached.



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One Year Review



Highlights

Healthcare Hub

Reached an agreement with LifeCare to utilize CommCorp Health Care Hub funds to train for Emergency Medical Technician. LifeCare- we have over 35 applicants for 30 spots they are currently being interviewed and vetted for cohort 1 in January

Team Training

Microsoft Excel Training - currently ongoing with NECC.

ESOL Advanced Manufacturing

Completed two cohorts of ESOL AM. Placement samples - 2 grads working at Magellan Aerospace - working for about 1 year. Recruitment began for the next cohort.

ESOL Advanced Manufacturing

Helfrich was awarded planning funding to develop Welding Academy with us as lead partners. Helfrich will be applying for implementation funding in the coming months as we develop our application for 2-year welding academy



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One Year Review

Creative Achievements

- Delivered over 50 creative social media platform information and educational content.
- Launched 2 major recommendations for MassHire exceptional groups, recognition through DCS.
- Introduced innovative design techniques that enhanced project outcomes. (CANVA, GoPro, Mics)

Team Growth

- Reduced Youth Team by 1 FTE, added additional that load and the duties of WIOA Group and social media creative (Digital Storytellers, ContentAlchemist). Focuses on crafting engaging narratives across platforms. Transforms ideas into high-impact, shareable content.
- Preparing individuals for Job Progression as some of us are in that age and plan for retirement.



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Membership

The Board is currently short on its required membership. The Mayor has expressed a preference that the Board review and recommend prospective members for appointment rather than receiving direct nominations from his office.

This process will allow the Board to compose its membership strategically —ensuring balanced representation, alignment with organizational priorities, and inclusion of members whose expertise strengthens our governance and mission impact.



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Challenges

Funding Volatility and Sustainability

- Reduced or uncertain federal/state allocations (e.g., WIOA, ARPACloseout, or shifts in Commonwealth of MA workforce priorities).
- Increased competition for discretionary grants and reliance on short-term project funding.



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Challenges

Workforce Participation and Demographic Shifts

- Declining labor force participation among working-age adults, especially in Lawrence and Haverhill.
- Continued aging of the regional workforce and shortages in skilled trades, healthcare, and manufacturing.
- Barriers to entry for immigrant and limited-English populations — a key part of the Merrimack Valley labor supply.



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Challenges

Coordination Across Partners

- Fragmentation among partners (career centers, educational institutions, community-based organizations).
- Balancing multiple operator relationships — ensuring alignment with the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council as the new operator.
- Maintaining consistent service delivery and data tracking across sub-regions.



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Challenges

Data, Evaluation, and Compliance

- Increasing demand from the Department of Career Services (DCS) and U.S. DOL for data-driven performance measures and outcome reporting.
- Transitioning to new reporting systems or federal benchmarks may challenge staff capacity.
- Audit readiness and documentation for prior-year contracts and electronic votes or board actions.



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Challenges

Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

- Sustaining equity-focused programming (reentry, ESL, youth, veterans) amid limited funding.
- Language access and digital divide issues in outreach and service delivery.
- Ensuring inclusive participation in board membership and leadership roles.



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Challenges

Future Workforce Trends

- Rapid shifts from traditional employment to gig/contract work.
- AI and automation displacing or transforming mid-skill jobs.
- Pressure to adapt training programs to future industries like clean tech, biotech, and AI-enabled manufacturing.



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Strategic Focus FY26

Overall Strategic Focus for FY26

- Advance equity-driven, employer-informed workforce solutions across the Merrimack Valley.
- Build sustainable partnerships with education, training, and community partners.
- Position the region for emerging industry opportunities in clean energy, life sciences, and technology.

