



# MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE BOARD

## Planning/Career Center Committee

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

9:00 am

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Meeting ID: 867 1167 4470

Passcode: 082661

## Meeting Minutes

### MEMBERS IN PARTICIPATION:

Frank, Amato, Andrew Herlihy, Carol Riemer, Frank Surillo

### STAFF IN PARTICIPATION:

Frank Bonet, Lynda Buote, Varsha Gandhi, Tracy Myszkowski, Corina Ossers, Abby Seripais

### GUESTS IN PARTICIPATION:

Esther Alburquerque, Alicia Appugliese, Juan Belliard, Eric Nelson

#### **I. Call to Order and Roll Call**

A quorum being present Chairman Frank Surillo welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

#### **II. Approval of Minutes of February 17, 2026, Meeting (vote required)**

Chairman Frank Surillo asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 17, 2026, meeting.

**Motion by Frank Amato, seconded by Andrew Herlihy to approve the minutes of the February 17, 2026, meeting. Motion passed.**

#### **III. Performance Summary Update**

Frank Bonet provided the Performance Summary update as of 2.28.26.

**LABOR EXCHANGE PROGRAM and WIOA PERFORMANCE SUMMARY**  
**for the MASSHIRE MERRIMACK VALLEY CAREER CENTER**  
**LOWER MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA**  
**FISCAL YEAR 2026**

PROGRAM ACTIVITY	FY26 ANNUAL PLAN	ACTUAL TO DATE as of 2/28/2026	PERCENTAGE OF PLAN
<b>Job Seekers Served</b>			
1. Total Job Seekers Served	8,800	5,078	58%
a. Job Seekers Unemployed	8,200	4,694	57%
b. Persons with Disabilities	388	505	130%
c. UI Claimants Served	6,112	3,739	61%
d. Veterans Served	213	129	61%
2. Total Entered Employments	1,000	426	43%
<b>Employer Services</b>			
1. Total Employers Served	1,309	916	70%
a. New to Career Center	519	260	50%
b. Repeat	790	656	83%
2. Employers Receiving Job Seeker Referrals	69	62	90%
3. Employers Hiring from Referrals	19	11	58%
4. Employers Receiving Enhanced Services		179	
<b>WIOA Adults</b>			
1. Total Participants	81	67	83%
a. Carry-in Participants	25	23	92%
b. New Participants	56	44	79%
2. Total Participants in Training (single count)	69	62	90%
a. Carry-in Participants	25		
b. New Participants	44	37	84%
3. Program Exiters	38	15	39%
a. Enter Employment	29	5	17%
i. Average Hourly Wage at Placement	\$20.00	\$25.08	125%
b. Negative Exits	9	10	111%
<b>WIOA Dislocated Workers</b>			
1. Total Participants	52	40	77%
a. Carry-in Participants	29	24	83%
b. New Participants	23	16	70%
2. Total Participants in Training (single count)	64	45	70%
a. Carry-in Participants	29		
b. New Participants	35	16	46%
3. Program Exiters	34	14	41%
a. Enter Employment	27	6	22%
i. Average Hourly Wage at Placement	\$25.00	\$42.14	169%
b. Negative Exits	7	8	114%
<b>WIOA Youth (Younger &amp; Older)</b>			
1. Total Participants	109	73	67%
a. Carry-in Participants	23	19	83%
b. New Participants	86	54	63%
2. Enrollments by Program Element			
a. Occupational Skills Training (ITA's)	52	15	29%
b. Youth Group Program (In-School & Out-of-School)	34	31	91%
c. Work Experience (ITA & Group Program)	38	46	121%
3. Program Exiters	63	19	30%
a. Enter Employment	24	11	46%
b. Average Hourly Wage at Placement		\$20.02	
c. Entered Post Secondary/Advanced Trng (double count possible)	26	0	0%
d. Negative Exits	13	8	62%

References: FY26 MMVWB Annual Plan; MOSES & Crystal reports

**MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board**  
**FY 2026 Performance Dashboard Ending February 28, 2026**

FY'26 Annual Budget: \$10,481,591 (as of 2.28.26)

**LMVWDA**      4.9%  
**Unemployment:**      December  
                                          2025

<p align="center"><b>Job Seekers Served</b></p> <p align="center"><b>5,078</b></p> <p>% Of Plan:      58%</p>	<p align="center"><b>Employers Served</b></p> <p align="center"><b>916</b></p> <p>% Of Plan:      70%</p>	<p align="center"><b>Employers Who Hired a Job Seeker Referral</b></p> <p align="center"><b>11</b></p> <p>% Of Plan:      58%</p>																																		
<p align="center"><b>WIOA Youth</b></p> <p>New participants: 54</p> <p>Carry-in: 19</p> <p>Total Youth Served: 73</p> <p align="center"><u>% Of Plan:</u></p> <p align="center"><b>67%</b></p>	<p align="center"><u>Customer Demographics</u></p> <table border="0"> <tr><td>Male</td><td align="right">2566</td></tr> <tr><td>Female</td><td align="right">2473</td></tr> <tr><td>White</td><td align="right">2611</td></tr> <tr><td>Hispanic</td><td align="right">2090</td></tr> <tr><td>Other</td><td align="right">377</td></tr> <tr><td>18 and under</td><td align="right">70</td></tr> <tr><td>19-21</td><td align="right">166</td></tr> <tr><td>22-45</td><td align="right">2422</td></tr> <tr><td>46-54</td><td align="right">906</td></tr> <tr><td>55 and over</td><td align="right">1514</td></tr> <tr><td>Less than HS</td><td align="right">488</td></tr> <tr><td>HS Diploma/GED</td><td align="right">1649</td></tr> <tr><td>Some College</td><td align="right">574</td></tr> <tr><td>Associate Degree</td><td align="right">334</td></tr> <tr><td>Bachelor's Degree</td><td align="right">1168</td></tr> <tr><td>Advanced Degree</td><td align="right">742</td></tr> <tr><td>Unknown</td><td align="right">123</td></tr> </table>	Male	2566	Female	2473	White	2611	Hispanic	2090	Other	377	18 and under	70	19-21	166	22-45	2422	46-54	906	55 and over	1514	Less than HS	488	HS Diploma/GED	1649	Some College	574	Associate Degree	334	Bachelor's Degree	1168	Advanced Degree	742	Unknown	123	<p align="center"><b>WIOA Participants</b></p> <p>Dislocated Worker:      <b>40</b></p> <p><u>% Of Plan:</u>      77%</p> <p>Adult:      <b>67</b></p> <p><u>% Of Plan:</u>      83%</p>
Male	2566																																			
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<p>Total Entered Employment</p> <p align="center">426</p> <p align="center">% Of Plan:</p> <p align="center">43%</p> <p>Average Hourly Wage:</p> <p align="center">\$36.26</p>	<p>FY26 WIOA Funds Invested in Training (as of 2.28.26)</p> <p align="center"><b>\$557,370</b></p>	<p>FY26 Non-WIOA Funds Invested in Training (as of 2.28.26)</p> <p align="center"><b>\$146,415</b></p>																																		

**IV.      Budget Update**

Frank Bonet provided the Budget Summary as of 2.28.26.



**MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board Budget Report for FY 2026**

As of 2/28/2026

	Budget	Expenditure	Accrual	Balance	% Used
<b>MMVWB Total</b>	\$3,674,541	\$1,490,722	\$0	\$2,183,819	40.57%
<b>GLCAC Total</b>	\$2,393,039	\$961,442	\$14,969	\$1,416,628	40.80%
<b>DCS Total</b>	\$1,600,858	\$833,495	\$0	\$767,363	52.07%
<b>Customer Training Total</b>	<b>\$2,813,154</b>	<b>\$1,116,919</b>	<b>\$421,051</b>	<b>\$1,275,183</b>	<b>54.67%</b>
Youth Wages & Stipends		\$807,979	\$0		
Non-Youth Wages & Stipends		\$3,925	\$0		
WIOA Individual Training Account & Group Training		\$267,389	\$289,981		
Non-WIOA Group Training		\$15,345	\$131,070		
On the Job Training		\$0	\$0		
Needs Related Payments		\$0	\$0.00		
Support Services		\$22,282	\$0.00		
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$10,481,591</b>	<b>\$4,402,579</b>	<b>\$436,020</b>	<b>\$5,642,993</b>	<b>46.16%</b>
		\$4,402,579		\$5,642,993	53.84%

\$0.00

WIOA Training Total is	\$557,370
NON WIOA Training Total is	\$146,415

GLCAC Expenses are paid through January 2026.  
DCS Expenses are through January 2026.



**MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board Budget Report for FY 2026**  
**Balance of Funds by Fiscal Year**

As of **2/28/2026**

<b>Grants ending in Fiscal Year 2026</b>	<b>Start Date of Grant</b>	<b>End Date of Grant</b>	<b>Balance available to spend by June 30, 2026</b>
Youth Works - FY 25-26	5/15/2025	6/30/2026	\$353,875
Adult Community Learning Services	7/1/2025	6/30/2026	\$12,425
Senior Community Services	7/1/2025	6/30/2026	\$0
Mass Commission for Blind	7/1/2025	6/30/2026	\$3,050
MassAbility	7/1/2025	6/30/2026	\$840
Operation A.B.L.E.	7/1/2025	6/30/2026	\$2,007
Snap Expansion qtr 1 FY 26	7/1/2025	9/30/2025	\$1,269
DTA Work Program	7/1/2025	6/30/2026	\$44,874
DESE Career Pathways	7/1/2025	6/30/2026	\$9,083
Emergency Assistance Shelter Funding FY25-26	10/1/2024	6/30/2026	\$36,186
ARPA Upskilling Navigator FY 22-26	5/1/2022	6/30/2026	\$1,216
Workforce Investment Board	7/1/2025	6/30/2026	\$54,268
Connecting Activities	7/8/2025	6/30/2026	\$176,472
Helfrich Brothers - FY 25-26	1/14/2025	12/31/2025	\$0
COL Stand Alone Intensive English FY 20-26	7/1/2019	6/30/2026	\$170,371
Wagner Peyser 10% FY26	7/1/2025	6/30/2026	\$18,915
Career Center One Stop	7/1/2025	6/30/2026	\$262,970
DVOP JVSG	7/1/2025	6/30/2026	\$69,449
Rapid Response DCS Staff	7/1/2025	6/30/2026	\$30,031
WIOA Youth FY 25	7/1/2025	6/30/2026	\$297,715
WIOA Adult FY 25	7/1/2025	6/30/2026	\$145,524
WIOA Dislocated Worker FY 25	7/1/2025	6/30/2026	\$27,345
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$1,717,884</b> 30.44%

  

<b>Multiple Years Grants</b>	<b>Start Date of Grant</b>	<b>End Date of Grant</b>	<b>Balance available to spend after June 30, 2026</b>
WCTF Behavioral Health Program FY24-27	1/1/2024	12/31/2026	\$266,744
WCTF Healthcare Hub Program FY24-27	1/1/2024	12/31/2026	\$163,681
WCTF ESOL Program FY24-27	10/1/2023	9/30/2026	\$267,965
Wagner Peyser 90% FY 26-27	7/1/2025	6/30/2027	\$413,619
RESEA CY 25	1/1/2025	9/30/2026	\$446,486
RESEA CY 24	7/1/2024	9/30/2026	\$111,026
WIOA Youth FY 26	7/1/2025	6/30/2027	\$1,097,942
WIOA Adult FY 26	7/1/2025	6/30/2027	\$659,204
WIOA Dislocated Worker FY 26	7/1/2025	6/30/2027	\$498,442
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$3,925,109</b> 69.56%





**Fiscal Year 2026 Highlights  
As of February 28, 2026**

**No Changes to Report**

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Frank said over the last month, the positive trends are that employer engagement continues to increase, work experience placement for youth increased significantly, average wage is well above the plan target and services to persons with disabilities have exceeded our goals. Areas that need attention are employer placement rates, occupational skills training for youth and newer employer acquisitions.

Frank Surillo said what is the average age for youth we work with and what else can we do through the City of Lawrence to recruit more youth and Frank Bonet said we have the youth program at the Career Center who work with youth who have completed high school and we have the youth program at the Workforce Board who work with Commonwealth Corporation (Comm Corp) youth grants and other WIOA youth group training funding. Cristy Gomez and her team at the Workforce Board work with our area high schools in areas like career pathways, etc. We also create pipelines to the youth services at the Career Center.

Frank Bonet said I attended the City Council Budget and Finance Committee Meeting where we requested \$200k for an AI certificate training program for Lawrence high school students. This was prior to the announcement of the State's AI program through Google. With our program, participants will receive case management and employer placement services. The presentation was received well, and the committee wants to know more about the curriculum. The funds that the mayor asked us to request for this program are in discussion and Frank Surillo said technically it doesn't belong to any group and Frank Bonet said the impression from the Budget and Finance Committee is that it's still under discussion and it hasn't been finalized.

Frank Bonet said Andrew, if Haverhill has funding for AI training, we can do this in Haverhill as well and Andrew said we need to look at the State's free AI training, and is there a role for the Career Center in providing the training and Frank said the state programs are very broad, and the program presented for Lawrence high school students would provide ESOL integrated support, workforce coaching, guided AI learning and career pathway services.

Andrew said I am thinking about an AI workshop at the Career Center for adults that could be bilingual with supports added to it.

Frank said the City of Lawrence also has \$170k for ESOL training and career paths for Lawrence residents. I have a meeting with the mayor next week and we will probably discuss how to use that money.

Andrew said regarding the performance summary, I've been doing this for a long time, and it may be early to say this, but we changed operators to GLCAC, and I was concerned about how they might do but these early numbers are actually better. We have had no drop off. This is great news for GLCAC and shows how the new operator is doing. I'm really impressed. These early numbers look great and when we get things cranking in Haverhill, they'll be better.

Frank Bonet said what I've learned from the past years, is during the last months of the year, the numbers increase exponentially and I'm hoping the end of year will be outstanding and Andrew said I think it's attributed to the operator.

#### **V. Career Center Report**

Alicia Appugliese said thank you Andrew for the kind comments and there surely is more to come. We are looking at our programs and trying to improve them every day. Hopefully it will just get better from here.

Alicia provided the MassHire MV Career Center Report.

Career Center Report  
Planning Committee Meeting March 17, 2026

#### **Business Services:**

##### Past Events

- |                                                                  |                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| • 2/4/26 Mass PCA Recruitment                                    | 17 Job Seekers attended |
| • 2/10/26 Seven Hills Recruitment (Virtual)                      | 13 Job Seekers attended |
| • 2/11/26 Job Seeker Training – Navigating MassCareers (Virtual) | 46 Job Seekers attended |
| • 2/12/26 Magellan Aerospace Onsite Recruitment (Haverhill)      | 5 Job Seekers attended  |
| • 2/25/26 Work Opportunities Unlimited Recruitment (Virtual)     | 27 job Seekers attended |
| • 2/26/26 Waystone Onsite Recruitment (Lawrence)                 | 7 Job Seekers attended  |
| • 3/5/26 Emmaus Inc. Recruitment (Virtual)                       | 11 Job Seekers attended |

##### Upcoming Events:

- 3/17/26 Community Group Recruitment
- 3/18/26 Essex Tech Recruitment
- 3/19/26 Vicor Recruitment
- 3/24/26 MKS Instruments Recruitment
- 4/7/26 Merrimack Health Recruitment (Virtual)
- 4/9/26 Merrimack Health Recruitment (in Person)
- 4/29/26 Whole Foods Recruitment

##### Future Planning / not scheduled

- TBD (APR-MAY) Business Resources Seminar
- TBD (APR-MAY) Industry Information Sessions – Employer Panels for Job Seekers
- TBD (JUL) Premier Virtual Job Fair

#### **Staffing:**

- We have hired 2 new employment counselors. They will start March 23. We still have 1 Business Service Representative position to fill. Filling these roles is a priority to ensure continuity of services and operational capacity.

**Past Events:**

- Our youth counselors attended and had a table at the Methuen High Job Fair on February 27<sup>th</sup>
- Our youth counselors attended had a table the Haverhill High Job Fair on March 10<sup>th</sup>
- Juan and I visited UTEC on March 11<sup>th</sup> to discuss collaboration
- Juan and I went to Si Se Puede to discuss collaboration

**Upcoming Events:**

- Lawrence High School Learning Center College/Trade Fair on March 18<sup>th</sup>
- Newburyport College Fair on April 2<sup>nd</sup>
- In person meeting with Lawrence High Learning Center to meet with students April 8<sup>th</sup>

Alicia said as Frank mentioned, youth is a huge piece that we want to work on. Our youth counselors have participated in several events with more to come. We will provide a presentation to 67 youth at UTEC on April 10<sup>th</sup>.

At the last meeting we talked about Phoenix Academy and working on a pipeline with them. We are trying to get into high schools to form relationships so when students graduate from high school, they have a place to come, a counselor to connect with when they are ready.

**VI. Other Business**

Frank Bonet said our WIOA Youth Group Training RFP is available. If you can disseminate for us, that would be great.

The Career Center will hold an Open House on April 29<sup>th</sup>. We will invite our Board members, elected officials, partners and some employers to see the new location and meet staff.

The Workforce Partnership Meeting is tomorrow. If you would like to attend, ask Lynda to send you the meeting link.

Abby Seripais said our EMT training program graduation is coming soon and we're almost finished with recruitment for the second cohort that will start right away. Our ESOL grant will end soon. Those participants are doing well and will graduate in June.

Corina said Massachusetts Department of Career Services (MDCS) just conducted the annual monitoring of the Workforce Board and everything was in compliance and we were certified. Lynda will share the report with the committee. Abby just concluded the annual monitoring with the Career Center. There were a couple of concerns but no findings. We do understand that this is a new operator and we will be looking at other things in FY27.

Frank Surillo said Frank, can you send me the information on the EMT program and Frank said Abby will send that to you. Abby said we have 3 or 4 spots open for the April start date and we'll have another cohort in the fall with 10 spots available.

Andrew said the Career Center has opened a small satellite office at Haverhill City Hall, Room #308 on Tuesday and Thursdays. We all need to do a better job of promoting this and I'll talk with Frank about how we can do that. WHAV does a morning interview and maybe Frank or Alicia can talk about the satellite location on the air.

Frank Bonet said we can also connect with Cynthia Wright who provides weekly social media blasts.

Frank Surillo said the City of Lawrence has started the steering committee for the Economic Development Master Plan and next week, we'll be sitting down with the planning director to start the process.

Today we are holding our once-a-month one-on-one technical business assistance session for local businesses that are struggling. This is in partnership with the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission.

**VII. Adjourn (vote required)**

Having no further business, Chairman Frank Surillo called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**Motion by Andrew Herlihy, seconded by Carol Riemer to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Lynda Buote*

Recorder