



# MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE BOARD

## Youth Committee

Wednesday, January 14, 2026  
11:00 am

Remote Meeting via ZOOM  
Meeting ID: 837 0617 9904  
Passcode: 082661

### Meeting Minutes

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Alicia Appugliese, Roberto Duran, Audra Durkin, Linda Soucy

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Michael Bevilacqua, Brad Howell, Tia Gerber, Fermin Peralta, Tom Raiche, Jeury Santiago, David Tagliaferri, Ellen Weinhold, Cal Williams

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Lynda Buote, Cristy Gomez, Abby Seripais

**I. Call to Order**

In the absence of Chairman Williams, Linda Soucy called the meeting to order at 11:06 a.m. and thanked everyone for attending today.

**II. Approval of Minutes from the October 8, 2025, Meeting (vote required)**

The October 8, 2025, meeting minutes were not approved today as we did not have a quorum present.

**III. WIOA Program Update**

Cristy said as of December 31, 2025, our current WIOA Youth program enrollment is 60 participants out of the 109 goal. This represents 55% of goal. New enrollments total 41 participants out of the 86 goal. The MassHire MV Career Center team has referred nine participants to Individual Training Accounts, 17% of the 52 ITA goal.

We have enrolled 27 out of 34 students into the WIOA In School Youth Group Haverhill Public Schools Program. These students are participating in 18 hours of career readiness workshops prior to starting their 100 hours internships. In addition, they will attain OSHA 10 certification. Today we are enrolling an additional five students.

Linda asked if there were any questions and there were none.

## **VI. YouthWorks and Connecting Activities Update**

Cristy said the team has referred a total of 177 youth to our YouthWorks Cycle 2 Year-Round Experience program. Our outstanding employer partners are providing youth with mentoring, guidance, and supervision while placed at their hosts and worksites. Today, we are referring six additional youth and will review eligibility for 21 additional youth.

We will be offering Driver's Ed to 11 eligible YouthWorks participants through Berkeley Auto School. Youth must be 17 years old, have their driver's permit, and commit to completing the 30 hours classroom training during February's school vacation week. Youth will get daily snacks, lunches, and a stipend payment for attending this class.

Today, we will be submitting our application to Commonwealth Corporation for the Program Year 2026-27 YouthWorks program. The Commonwealth Corporation proposed allocation for this region is \$1,022,400.00. As a result, we will only be able to enroll 175 eligible youth this summer and 125 in the 2026-27 year-round cycle - 237 less youth than this program year. This is going to impact our region dramatically and we are going to have to implement the group policy for enrollment to be fair with our partners and with youth that don't have a partner in the community. I will keep you posted.

Audra Durkin said Greater Lawrence Technical School (GLTS) used to be a part of this. Do you know why we no longer stayed in communication about these opportunities and Cristy said I have copied GLTS in all my communications. I informed GLTS when we released the application for the year-round program. I don't know why some of the youth didn't come through. We have a few GLTS students in the program. In past cycles, we had a strong partnership with Lawrence General Hospital (LGH). That didn't happen. The youth need to follow through with us and LGH. In 2024, between Haverhill, Lawrence, GLTS and Methuen public schools, we enrolled 50 students and in this program year's program, we only have enrolled 20 for the summer and two for the year-round.

Audra said where are your sites now in lieu of Lawrence General Hospital and Cristy said it's based on youth preference and interest. We have youth in Haverhill and Lawrence public schools, Boys and Girls clubs of Lower Merrimack Valley and Lawrence, YMCA of Lawrence, Methuen Housing Authority, Methuen Arlington Neighborhood, Youth Development Organization (YDO), Elevated Thought, Food for the World, Groundwork Lawrence, etc.

Audra said what are the students doing at the schools and Cristy said for example, in Haverhill, youth are working in their after-school programs providing various services to elementary school students while others are working for the school district refurbishing chrome books.

Audra said is this like a homework club and Cristy said no. They do a variety of work, create workshops for the youth including career pathways, STEM, IT, health etc. We also have Tier 1 programming – project-based learning with Lawrence High School Transition students. They are exposed to different career pathways and they complete hours and learn about work readiness, etc.

If youth submit their application by the deadline, but don't follow-through with eligibility after many attempts to contact, it's first come, first served. With LGH, they must complete their entrance criteria to be part of the hospital including vaccination and other screenings. If they don't follow through, we can't place them.

Audra said we haven't had the best success with Kristin at LGH and Cristy said they limited their enrollment this cycle.

Cristy said this next program year is going to be challenging due to lack of funding. Hours will be reduced and enrollments will be reduced compared to the current year. We're looking for other ways in partnership to complement the program. We're waiting to see the impact to our region.

Linda said you're going from 327 to 175 participants. Is that based on funding that you are already aware of or is there any chance the funding will be increased, and Cristy said the funding won't be increased. Commonwealth Corporation provided us with what their proposed allocation will be for this next year's programming. Abby will submit the application today. They tell us not to expect any additional funding. They are trying to be fair across the board, and we are one of the regions getting the most funding.

In Connecting Activities, the team continues to provide career development education services to students from our area high schools. In partnership with the GEAR UP program - Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs—we support students in building high expectations, staying engaged in school, and preparing for college, trade school, trainings, and career pathways. The Youth Services Specialists attended the GEAR UP Fair at Lawrence High School, with over approximately 150 students present.

Students from Amesbury Innovation High School and Triton Regional High School participated in enriching college to North Shore Community College. Students learned about transfer pathways to Salem State University, campus living options, and toured state-of-the-art healthcare labs. These visits provided first-hand insight into hands-on, career-focused programming, and the many post-secondary options.

In collaboration with the Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC), the Advanced Manufacturing Career Exploration cohort students from Lawrence High School attended an open house at Shea Concrete in Amesbury, MA and gained exposure to real-world manufacturing environments. Prior to the open house the team facilitated a preparatory workshop at our office. This workshop focused on supporting students preparing for employment via the RIASEC model and how personality traits connect to career paths.

We also supported NAMC's Mock Interview event at Lawrence High School, where students practiced professional interview skills with representatives from 10 employer partners, including Raytheon, Shea Concrete, American Training, and MassHire North Shore.

## **VII. Partner's Information**

Robert Duran said we are working with Cristy and Yvette Garcia onboarding 20+ students for YouthWorks. Thank you for supporting that. We are continuing to work with the internships and the sites in the community to get the students the career preparation they need. Cristy said Yvette will be on vacation next week, but she and the youth team will be assisting with the project to ensure the youth are ready to start.

Audra said it's been a pleasure working with Cristy and Yvette. We collaborated a few years back when we piloted students working at LGH and were able to get both daytime and after-school opportunities which also led to summer employment. The cycle has been carrying on and due to the decrease in funding and our student population, it's been a struggle finding locations and hopefully with the merger of Holy Family Hospital and Lawrence General Hospital into Merrimack Health, we will see things start to turn around.

Alicia Appugliese said at the Career Center, we have a staff member who has started outreaching to youth in the community. We are also working to develop a Path to Training specifically for WIOA Youth.

We provide Path to Training for WIOA adults currently. We hope to get this running in the coming months. We are also hoping to connect with the workforce board on a monthly or regular basis to create a pipeline and streamline youth customers from the workforce board to the Career Center for services.

Linda said the Methuen Arlington Neighborhood has seven youth working on the Signal Success program. I'm happy to hear the driver's education program will continue. Our youth are excited about that. I'm sorry to hear that youth work hours will be reduced in the upcoming YouthWorks program.

Linda said when will the summer application be available and Cristy said we will release the summer application in April. The process is the same. There will be an application link with a deadline, and a documentation drop off deadline. The summer program start date is July 6<sup>th</sup>. Cristy said the turnaround for the application will be very quick. I will be in contact with partners next week and provide an update regarding the application, etc.

**VIII. Other Business**

Linda asked if there was any other business and there was none.

**IX. Adjourn (Vote Required)**

Linda Soucy asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**Motion by Audra Durkin, seconded by Robert Duran. Motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,

*Lynda Buote*

Recorder