

NORTH CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

Strategic Plan 2016 - 2019



Dear Secretary Walker,

It is my pleasure to serve as the Chair of the North Central Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board, and in this role, to present this new WIOA Strategic Plan as a summary of our shared commitment to building a strong, economically viable region.

The Workforce Investment Board is composed of a diverse and influential group of leaders from North Central communities. Together, we will coordinate the resources and develop new approaches to ensure that employers have a skilled workforce to meet their needs. The Board will also assure that job seekers in this region have the opportunities to learn new skills that employers and businesses require to keep pace with the changing economic conditions and the related demands on their industry sector.

This document reflects our review of local workforce issues and challenges, industry demand and current labor market analysis with shared ideas about how to ensure that residents of the North Central communities we serve are prepared to work in emerging and expanding industries, including advanced manufacturing, healthcare and other priority sectors. By working together to train and educate our workforce, our goal is to support the broader regional growth strategy developed by our partners at the North Central Economic Development Council.

I hope that as you read this plan you will see a role for yourself and your organization in supporting our regional economic development and the investments we will make in training and workforce development to ensure that the residents of our cities and towns have the skills they need to participate in this changing workforce.

Sincerely,

Barbara A Mahoney
Chair

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
About the North Central MA Workforce Investment Board	5
Key initiatives and accomplishments	7
External Assessment: Environmental Scan	8
Labor Market Analysis	11
Internal Assessment - SWOT Analysis	17
Critical Issue Survey	18
Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA)	19
Mission and Strategic Goals Summary	21
<u>Goal 1</u> - Priority industry sectors of Healthcare and Advanced Manufacturing.....	22-23
<u>Goal 2</u> –Opportunities for people with barriers to employment.....	24
<u>Goal 3</u> Youth opportunities	25
<u>Goal 4</u> - WIOA regulations and high performing workforce system.....	26
Appendices	
A – Strategic planning committee, Executive Committee, Board Membership.....	27
B – Fastest Growing Occupations in North Central MA.....	28
C - Top 100 companies in North Central MA.....	30
D – Critical issues survey.....	31

Introduction

In December, 2015, the North Central MA Workforce Investment Board (NCMWIB) began the robust process of mapping out a three-year strategic plan with an eye towards the future of the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). A Strategic Planning Committee (a sub-committee of the Board) worked with NCMWIB's Executive Director to engage the Board, staff and business representatives, industry leaders, non-profit and educational stakeholders in a process that included:

- Updating the strategic plan based on current economic and demographic data
- Identifying current priority industry sectors based on new data
- Developing goals and objectives for the next 3 years
- Revising our “dashboard” report to reflect new goals and measurements
- Documenting strategies and timelines for WIOA implementation
- Discussing career center certification & procurement and the move to a “job driven” service delivery model
- Identifying any additional local career center performance requirements not in state regulations
- Documenting all of this in a “new” strategic plan

The NCMWIB's Executive Committee provided leadership, guidance and on-going feedback throughout the strategic planning process. In addition, the Chief Elected Official for the region participated through review and comment at critical points of the process.

The full membership of the NCMWIB, was engaged in conducting the environmental analysis, reviewing drafts, participating in the survey, and recommending and approving major goals and objectives, activities and measures for each goal. See Appendix A for a list of Board and committee members.

The process included five phases:

Phase I: Identify and engage stakeholders.

Phase II: Market analysis and environmental scan; confirm priority industry sectors; identify additional data to be collected; identify job needs, growth potential, future employment prospects and skill needs; review existing career pathways to meet skill requirements; and prepare market analysis data summary.

Phase III: Review new WIOA requirements; conduct a SWOT analysis; consider the assets and challenges of the region, the Workforce Board, the One-Stop Career Center, and each of the major programs.

Phase IV: Document key areas of strategic focus to address the findings in the other phases, including by industry sector, to address WIOA changes, and to address weaknesses identified through the internal assessment. Review existing dashboard template and make recommended changes.

Phase V: Send draft out for review to stakeholders for feedback and input. Through interviews with key stakeholders, surveys, meetings, forums and external research, identify current labor, economic and demographic trends facing our region. From that analysis outline the areas where we believe the NCMWIB is best positioned for growth and where the memberships' energy and interests will support effective action in the coming one to three years.

The overall goals of our ongoing strategic planning process were to (1) identify strategic areas of activity that would have the greatest impact on our region's economy and (2) to identify the structure and capacity of our local

workforce system to support the accomplishment of our strategic objectives.

This Strategic Plan continues strategic activities that the North Central MA Workforce Investment Board has been engaged in for many years, including the successful completion in 2010 of the High Performing Board Certification process. NCMWIB's Strategic Planning committee and Youth Council meets regularly to review and revise goals, objectives and outcomes and shares our progress with the full Board using our dashboard reports. This document reflects the work of those committees and the insights, ideas and hopes that individuals and groups of NCMWIB members bring forward during our ongoing strategic planning discussions.

Strategic planning is a continuous process that cumulates in the establishment of objectives and quantifiable measureable outcomes. As these objectives are implemented and evaluated, the cycle continues so that this plan is active and usable, not something that simply gets done and filed away. Once approved, the staff and Board review regularly and update to meet new opportunities to meet the strategic direction outlined in this document. The emphasis of this process was to look out 3-5 years and to set an overall strategic framework. An evaluation of progress will happen at least annually and new specific objectives will be set each year.

About the North Central MA Workforce Investment Board

The North Central Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board, Inc., established in 1979, is a private 501(c)3 non-profit corporation designated by the Governor to serve as the Local Workforce Board for the North Central Massachusetts Workforce Region under the new Federal Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act. Board members are appointed for three year terms by the local chief elected official. The NCMWIB is responsible for the policy development and oversight of all state and federally funded workforce development initiatives in the region. For a complete list of the Boards functions see section 679.370 of WIOA regulations pg.977-983.

The purpose and functions of this 51% private sector Board under the Workforce Investment & Opportunity Act section 107(d) and final regulations section 679.300 are:

§ 679.300 The purpose of the Local Workforce Development Board

- Provide strategic and operational oversight in collaboration with the required and additional partners and workforce stakeholders to help develop a comprehensive and high quality workforce development system in the local area and larger planning region;
- Assist in the achievement of the State's strategic and operational vision and goals as outlined in the Unified State Plan or Combined State Plan; and
- Maximize and continue to improve the quality of services, customer satisfaction, effectiveness of the services provided.

§ 679.370 The functions of the Local Workforce Development Board

As provided in WIOA sec. 107(d), the Local WDB must:

- Develop and submit a 4-year local plan for the local area, in partnership with the chief elected official and consistent with WIOA sec. 108;
- If the local area is part of a planning region that includes other local areas, develop and submit a

regional plan in collaboration with other local areas. If the local area is part of a planning region, the local plan must be submitted as a part of the regional plan;

- Conduct workforce research and regional labor market analysis
- Convene local workforce development system stakeholders to assist in the development of the local plan under § 679.550 and in identifying non-Federal expertise and resources to leverage support for workforce development activities. Such stakeholders may assist the Local WDB and standing committees in carrying out convening, brokering, and leveraging functions at the direction of the Local WDB;
- Lead efforts to engage with a diverse range of employers and other entities in the region
- With representatives of secondary and postsecondary education programs, lead efforts to develop and implement career pathways within the local area by aligning the employment, training, education, and supportive services that are needed by adults and youth, particularly individuals with barriers to employment.
- Lead efforts in the local area to identify and promote proven and promising strategies and initiatives for meeting the needs of employers, workers and job seekers, and identify and disseminate information on proven and promising practices carried out in other local areas for meeting such needs.
- Develop strategies for using technology to maximize the accessibility and effectiveness of the local workforce development system for employers, and workers and job seekers
- Conduct oversight of youth workforce investment activities authorized under WIOA sec. 129(c), adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities under WIOA secs. 134(c) and (d); and entire one-stop delivery system in the local area; and Ensure the appropriate use and management of the funds provided under WIOA subtitle B for the youth, adult, and dislocated worker activities and one-stop delivery system in the local area; and Ensure the appropriate use management, and investment of funds to maximize performance outcomes under WIOA sec. 116.
- Negotiate and reach agreement on local performance indicators with the chief elected official and the Governor.
- Negotiate with CEO and required partners on the methods for funding the infrastructure costs of one-stop centers in the local area in accordance with § 678.715
- Select One-stop operators in accordance with §§ 678.600 through 678.635 of this chapter.
- In accordance with WIOA sec. 107(d)(10)(E) work with the State to ensure there are sufficient numbers and types of providers of career services and training services serving the local area and providing the services in a manner that maximizes consumer choice, as well as providing opportunities that lead to competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities.
- Develop a budget for the activities of the Local WDB, with approval of the chief elected official and consistent with the local plan and the duties of the Local WDB.
- Assess, on an annual basis, the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one stop centers in the local area, in accordance with WIOA sec. 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 *et seq.*).
- Certify one-stop centers in accordance with § 678.800 of this chapter.

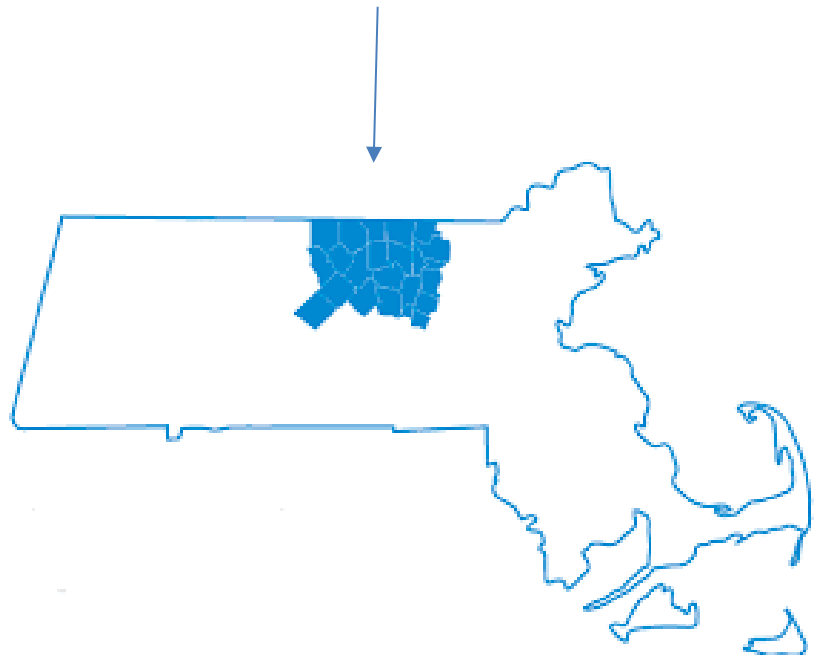
For a more detailed and complete description of the Local Workforce Board responsibilities: See section 679.300 in WIOA final regulations pages 977-983.

Aligning with the key principles of WIOA, the North Central MA WIB:

-
- Is committed to employer centric solutions through strategic partnerships and collaborative services;
 - Engages and convenes all core and mandatory one-stop partners and other stakeholders to advance common goals;
-
- Builds the capacity of all partners in the system to deliver excellent workforce services that meet the needs of our communities;
 - Contracts for One-Stop, youth and other workforce related services, and supports the development and implementation of one-stop policies and processes, service delivery, infrastructure and certification criteria;
-
- Review and approves budgets, in alignment with strategic goals, that leverage funds and assets of other community partners;
 - Is fully supported by our local Chief Elected Officials and local agencies responsible for implementation of WIOA;
-
- Continuously builds our capacity to fulfill this role and that of our partner agencies and stakeholders;
 - Serves as a keeper of a guiding vision for workforce development and engages funders, partners, employers and community members around that vision.
-

The NCMWIB serves 23 cities and towns primarily in Northern Worcester County designated by the governor as the Local Workforce Development area under the new Federal Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act. Those cities and towns are:

Ashburnham	Templeton
Ashby	Barre
Clinton	Gardner
Lancaster	Westminster
Sterling	Berlin
Fitchburg	Harvard
Leominster	Bolton
Lunenburg	Princeton
Winchendon	Berlin
Groton	Townsend
Pepperell	Ayer
	Shirley



Key initiatives and accomplishments

Since our last strategic plan was completed in 2012, the North Central MA Workforce Investment Board has:

- Assisted 13 local companies in acquiring over one million dollars to train their incumbent workers in new industry skills through the State's Workforce Training Fund Program.
- Partnered in a four year 4 million dollar H1-B grant with MassMEP and the Central Mass Workforce Board to train advanced CNC operators and middle skilled workers to obtain industry recognized credentials. This project has been extended through December 2016. We have two full time staff working on this project, one in each region.
- Partnered with Mount Wachusett Community College and three other Community Colleges across the country in a 14 million dollar Federal TAACCCT III grant to develop and implement a nationally recognized Industrial Readiness Training and Quality Systems Training program to meet the needs of our local advanced manufacturing sector. This project was also supported by a \$350,000 Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund grant and recognized as a best practice in 2015. We have presented this project at two National Conferences.
- Received a two year \$534,000 National Emergency Sector Grant in partnership with the Central Mass Workforce Board to provide the Industrial Readiness and Quality Systems training offered by Mount Wachusett Community College and the advanced CNC operator training offered by MassMEP.
- Received a three year \$640,000 Disability Employment Initiative grant to provide existing career pathways training to job seekers in our region who are eligible.
- Partnered with Mount Wachusett Community College on an application for a new Tech Hire grant, another round of federal funding under the H1-B program. We just received notification that this \$4 million multi-regional project has been selected for funding.
- The School to Career Connecting Activities program which is now in its' 16th year funded through a small grant from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides internship opportunities to local students in local businesses. This year over 700 hundred students will participate with work-based learning plans and documented skill gain.

In addition to the above, the NCMWIB Director and staff are now working to complete implementation of the "new" Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, negotiating MOU's with local partners, developing the RFP and selecting the lead operator for our Career Center.

External Assessment: Environmental Scan

The first step in the strategic planning process was to identify and understand the existing conditions surrounding the region's workforce, including trends and realities in terms of demographics, skill gaps, education and training, and other considerations. With this as a foundation the Board was able to assess the issues, challenges and opportunities to focus on in its strategic plan. This assessment was done with the input of stakeholders represented by the Board of Directors and Strategic Planning Committee.

Demographics

Baby Boomers/Older Workers

- Experienced workers/baby boomers are starting to retire, leaving a skills gap. Trained workers will be needed to replace experienced retirees.
- Many retirees want to continue to work, and may be looking for part-time opportunities. Some older workers take early retirement and accept part time jobs that don't fully use their skill set and pay much less than they earned before their retirement. Sometimes this is desired to avoid loss of retirement benefits.
- With the aging population, there is a great and increasing need for healthcare and home care workers. They are being sent home early from hospitals and they desire to stay at home, causing a great need for home health aide workers and direct care professionals.

Millennials

- Businesses and employers need to also adapt to millennials. Need to learn how to work best with millennials and help them understand career ladders, but also that there is a need for training and experience in order to earn higher wages. Some millennials expect higher starting salaries and are not used to failing, but there are skill gaps and the need to begin with entry level jobs.
- Millennials have expertise in social media and technology, but they often need training in social skills and how to be successful members of work teams. Employers complain about the lack of basic work ethic, interpersonal skills, business etiquette and the ability to take direction from supervisors and mentors.

Older youth without skills

- With the importance placed on secondary and post-secondary education as basic requirements for most entry level positions, and the increasing focus on standardized testing, there is a need to help older youth who didn't pass MCAS and therefore did not graduate. The increase in older youth enrolled in HSET could be tied to the MCAS exam.

At the same time, HISET is becoming more difficult, so there are more unemployed youth who lack a high school degree and cannot pass the HISET exam without assistance.

Over-qualified candidates for available jobs

- There are many college degreed people without steady employment. Many graduates with 4-year degrees are overqualified for the entry level positions available. Given the investment made in their higher education, they expect higher wages and more responsible positions than are currently available.
- There is a need for better integration between high schools and employment systems to make sure that educators understand employer needs and what jobs will be available, before encouraging students to pursue a 4-year degree.
- On the other end of the employment spectrum, there are experienced workers who have been laid off from companies where they have worked for many years looking to replicate their former salary, but there is a mismatch with available jobs that offer lower starting salaries.
- There are several issues with an aging population. Some employers perceive that the salaries requested from older workers are too high, which older workers expect due to their years of experience. Others fear that older new hires will not stay long term, but that they will only work a few years and then retire. There are misperceptions they only want part-time, or that they will only stay on the job if they can earn as much money as they were making at previous employment.

People with disabilities

- Federal contract hiring laws, new WIOA requirements, the Department of Labor Disabilities Employment Initiative, and a strengthened partnership with MRC have all offered an increased emphasis on this potential talent pool.
- Skilled older workers who do not choose to retire may need accommodations.
- Many transition age youth with disabilities ages 16-24 need support in employment.
- Massachusetts is closing day programs and shifting to employment, increasing the number of people with disabilities of all ages and abilities looking for competitive work. Many of them will need skill training and possibly additional support. This may also be an additional reason that there is a need for basic employment and social skills training.

Transportation

- People without vehicles or public transportation access, especially outside the main routes, have a serious barrier to employment.
- There is often a mismatch between employer shift hours and transportation services (e.g., to Devens for early and late shift Manufacturing positons).

- There are transportation options but we need to better educate people about them, and develop stronger partnerships with transportation providers (MART, private services) and employers to identify solutions.

Global Economy

- We need to adapt to a global economy, companies may need to consider alternative sources of labor to meet their demands. Importing of labor may be part of the solution.

Skill Gaps

- There is a need to continue focus on job driven training initiatives.

- Many college degreed job seekers are not finding employment without practical skill credentials.

- It's not always true that you need the degree to make more money, sometimes on the job experience or short term training is worth more.

- Need more certificate programs and to continue to pursue a job training model, with an emphasis on stackable credentials and career pathways, practical education, tuition assistance, money for professional seminars once people are employed. This will require a continued collaboration between educators and employers, which the local workforce board can facilitate.

- Need to be careful not to flood the market with skills that quickly become outdated, e.g., medical coders that were predicted years ago and now have unusable credentials. When people enter into a 4-year program there is a 4-year lag, sometimes by the time they graduate there is no longer the need for skills identified when they entered higher education.

- We need to focus on career outcomes and career ladders, and take a strategic long-term view of employment needs.

- There is an increased use of online training.

- Social skills beyond the technical increasingly are important. Soft skills are still lacking and they are not necessarily being taught in school or in the family. There is a need for soft skills and financial literacy training.

- Customer service skills are needed for all jobs.

- Unemployment in the region is often a money issue, not a skills gap. Overqualified candidates feel entitled because of their experience and education, but then the jobs available pay less, as companies are competing with the global economy. Companies outside the region pay more. People are not able to support a family on \$10/hour jobs.

- If companies want the skilled labor they need, then they need to find a way to pay for it. It is possible to find workers interested in increasing their skills, but employers need to think about how to fund training, such as offering tuition support or taking advantage of the Workforce Training Fund.

- We need to do more work with employers on how to implement Workforce Training Fund Program grant opportunities. We can help them apply but then they feel buried by the paperwork required to implement the grant. We need to continue our facilitation role, but take it a next step.
- We could encourage more coalitions of companies to apply for funds and the-local board could be the lead applicant and take on the administrative role.
- Reading skills are not aligned with increasing needs, especially among bilingual employees.
- We need a bigger pool of Certified Nursing Assistants and Home Health Assistants. The need for Home Care Workers is on the rise.
- Nurse mentoring programs are needed; graduates can't just do the job after 4 weeks of training. They need experience, or patients won't get the care they need.
- CNC training along with robotics will be in greater demand.
- Programmers will continue to be needed.
- Need to educate employers on the availability of workers from different talent pools (such as older workers, people with disabilities, youth).

Education and Training

- Most industries require a minimum level of education, beyond High School.
- Stackable credentials will become more necessary, particularly in Advanced Manufacturing.
- Need stronger partnerships between employers/schools/internships/ co-ops/training.
- People need help with the transition from first job after college to actual career.
- HISET continues to change through a 3-stage process, becoming more math focused.
- Need more screening for college readiness.
- More services are needed for adults over the age of 25, 25-35 range.
- More OJT with less federal restrictions.
- Customer service skills are needed for all jobs.
- Partnerships are key!
- Businesses don't know how to deal with skill mismatch, don't have good succession plans.

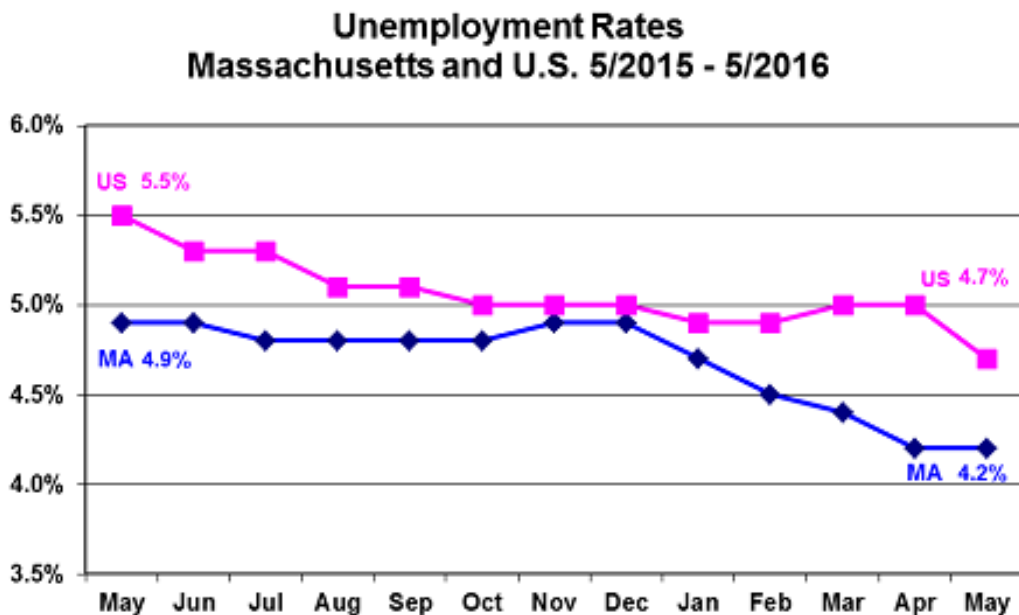
North Central MA Labor Market Analysis

The North Central MA Workforce Investment Board continually examines the needs and opportunities for businesses and individual job seekers, including unemployment statistics, long-term unemployed surveys, and employment projections. The committee reviewed many sources of labor market data, including Career Center statistics, MA Labor and Workforce Development data, the latest MA Labor and Market Review, and the results of a survey of long-term unemployed. Key findings that informed the strategic plan included:

Unemployment

At 4.2 percent, the unemployment rate is down 0.7 percent over the year, with the state's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate dropping from 4.9 percent in May 2015. There were 26,600 fewer unemployed persons and 49,000 more employed persons over the year compared to May 2015. The Commonwealth's May unemployment rate remains lower than the national rate of 4.7 percent reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. "The labor force continues to grow, with 7,000 more employed residents and 2,000 fewer unemployed residents in May," Labor and Workforce Development Secretary Ronald L. Walker, II said. "The Education and Health Care Professional, Scientific and Business Services sectors continue to generate the most jobs in the Commonwealth."

The not-seasonally adjusted rate for the state of Massachusetts in May 2016 was 3.8%.



North Central Massachusetts – May 2016

Area	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Area Rate
North Central WDA	132,130	126,838	5,292	4.0

City or Town	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
Ashburnham	3,546	3,419	127	3.6
Ashby	1,856	1,801	55	3.0
Ayer	4,075	3,898	177	4.3
Barre	2,883	2,763	120	4.2
Berlin	1,756	1,707	49	2.8
Bolton	2,853	2,777	76	2.7
Clinton	8,107	7,775	332	4.1
Fitchburg	19,265	18,273	992	5.1
Gardner	9,549	9,058	491	5.1
Groton	5,917	5,737	180	3.0
Harvard	2,645	2,570	75	2.8
Hubbardston	2,469	2,391	78	3.2
Lancaster	3,923	3,811	112	2.9
Leominster	21,739	20,794	945	4.3
Lunenburg	6,225	6,020	205	3.3
Pepperell	6,892	6,665	227	3.3
Princeton	1,912	1,854	58	3.0
Shirley	2,820	2,700	120	4.3
Sterling	4,239	4,102	137	3.2
Templeton	4,297	4,111	186	4.3
Townsend	5,315	5,141	174	3.3
Westminster	4,344	4,201	143	3.3
Winchendon	5,503	5,270	233	4.2

At 4.0%, the mean unemployment rate for the North Central MA region is slightly higher than the state average, though significantly lower than the 2014 rate of 6.3%, as noted in *the 2014 Massachusetts Labor Market Review*. Two of the largest cities, Fitchburg and Gardner, show the highest unemployment rate at 5.1% unemployment rate, followed by Leominster, Ayer, and Templeton all at 4.3%. Nine of the 23 towns/cities in North Central MA have higher unemployment than the statewide average, though six (Ashby, Berlin, Bolton, Harvard, Lancaster and Princeton) are 3.0% or lower. The average wage increased by 6.9%, from \$45,239 in 2014 to \$48,459 in 2016.

**North Central Unemployment and Wage Comparison
2014 -- 2016**

	2014	2016
Unemployment rate	6.3	4.0
Mean average wage	\$45,239	\$48,459

Economic Outlook: Looking for Skilled Labor

According to the *2016 North Central Massachusetts Economic Outlook Survey*, though 40% of the 200 local CEOs surveyed thought the economy in the next 12 months would be in much better or somewhat better shape, 11% cited lack of skilled labor as the single greatest threat to the economy of the region, and 20% see it as the most challenging issue they expect to face in the next two years?¹ This re-inforces the need to identify and address skill and labor gaps in the region. A small focus group of North Central MA Manufacturing executives projected about 15% increases over the next few years in both production and hiring, with the need for entry level and skilled labor to support those hiring goals.

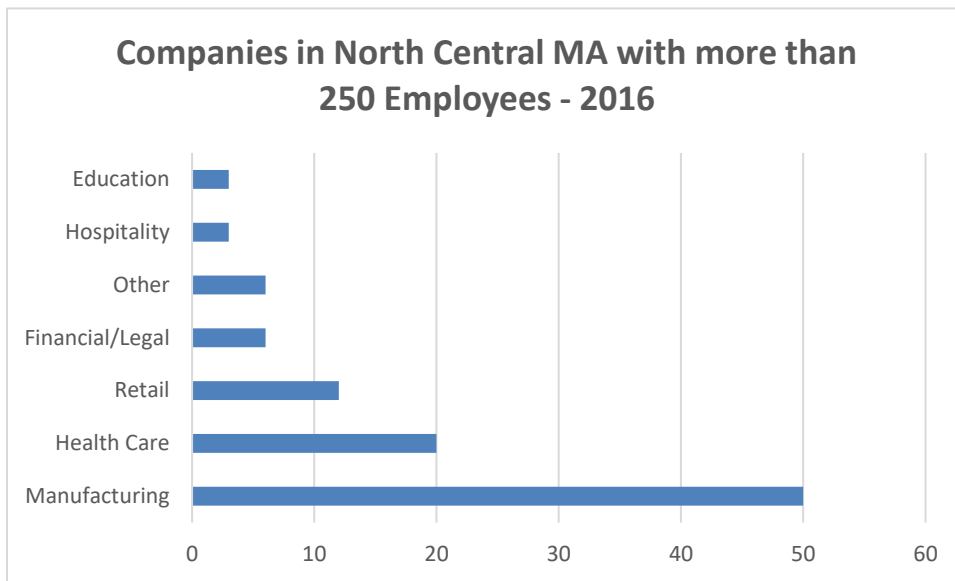
Long Term Unemployed Survey

The strategic planning committee reviewed a *2015 Massachusetts Long Term Unemployed Survey*, which polled 4547 (213 from the North Central region) individuals who were still looking for work beyond their unemployment claim period. The most striking observation was the fact that close to 60% of the long term unemployed had at least a 2-year degree, 48% of them with 4+ years of higher education. The majority of respondents were looking for work in higher skilled managerial, administration, business operations, or sales occupations. Close to 70% of those surveyed were over age 46. These survey results, coupled with observations and data from the Career Center Director, suggests that there are many people with college educations and years of experience, who, when laid off from long-term employment situations, find either that their skills are outdated for new position requirements, or because of their long tenure and experience they have come to expect and need a level of salary that is not available in the current job market. The committee highlighted this group of older job seekers, though educated and experienced, as one to include in the category of people with employment barriers for which retraining opportunities could be identified.

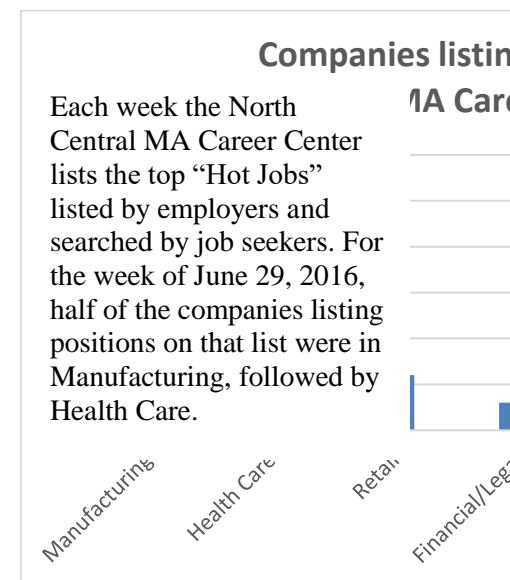
¹ Presented at the 2016 North Central Massachusetts Economic Outlook Survey Forecast Breakfast sponsored by the North Central MA Chamber of Commerce, Fidelity Bank, the Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce, and the Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce.

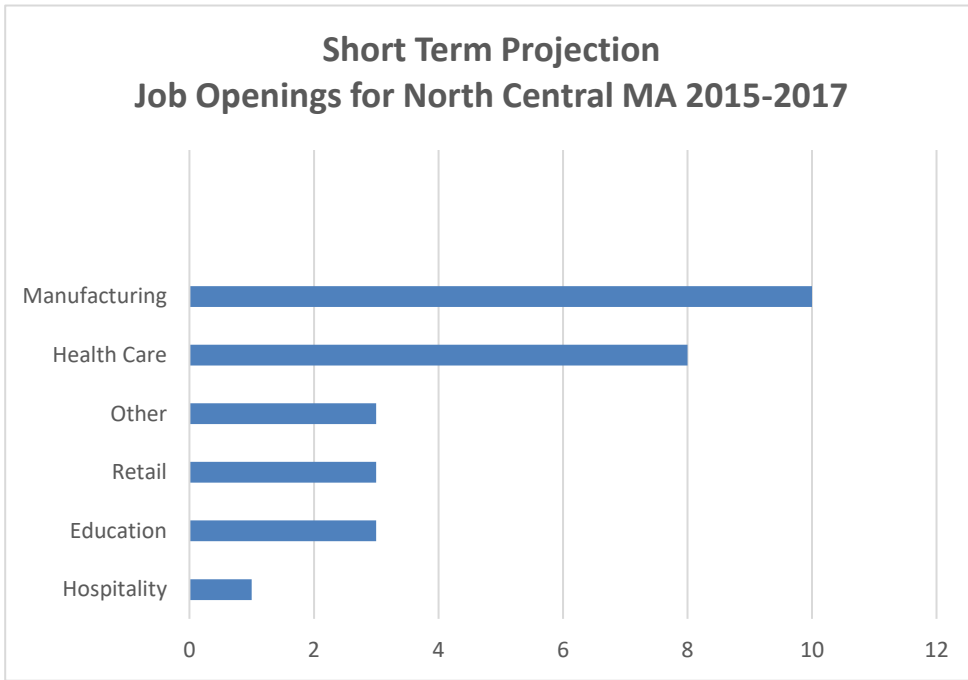
Priority industry sector determination

One of the key tasks of the strategic planning committee and process was to confirm which industries would be the priorities on which the North Central MA Workforce Investment Board should focus for the next several years. The committee reviewed short and long term occupational projections, the companies that had the most “hot jobs” listed at the Career Center; companies that employed more than 250 employees; and data obtained through interviews with NCMWIB members, employers, educators and the Career Center Business Representative during the 2015-16 labor needs assessment for the Disability Employment Initiative. While opportunities outside these few industries would still be encouraged and pursued, it was important to highlight those industries with the most need for skilled labor and the most opportunities for those seeking employment. This would inform the types of career pathways to develop and fund, as well as help define agenda topics and guest speakers for board discussions. The following data was among those statistics analyzed.



According to MA Labor and Workforce Development (June 2016), the majority of companies with the highest number of employees in North Central MA are in Manufacturing or Health Care.





The short-term projection for job openings in the North Central MA region through 2017 shows a majority of job openings are in Manufacturing and Health Care.



According to MA Labor and Workforce Development (June 2016), of the top 32 fastest growing occupations in North Central MA,

- 38% Health Care
- 21% Hospitality
- 16% Manufacturing/Construction
- 6% Education
- 6% Other

This data, along with Career Center dashboard information regarding job placements, confirmed that the priority industry sectors for the North Central MA Workforce Region are **Advanced Manufacturing and Health Care**. While additional concentrations are in Retail and Hospitality, many of those jobs are low skill/low wage that do not require additional training and support, or in higher skill/higher wage jobs such as those in Education that require college degrees beyond the scope of the NCMWIB’s typical mission.

Internal Assessment: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Strengths

- A lot of talented staff, great leadership from board members and staff, work ethic, knowledge (10)
- Network of support, Great collaboration with partners, Ability to address issues cross collaboratively among several agencies, local partnerships have already been established and the formalization process will strengthen those partnerships (8)
- Strong board membership; right people around the table (NCMWIB meetings), engaged, diversity or board representation, different perspectives, NCMWIB meetings well attended, diverse, participation (5)
- Grant writing to supplement funding (2)
- Multiple layers of resources (2)
- Dropping unemployment rate (3)
- Business services, company connection is reflected in job fairs, workshops (3)

Other comments on strengths included: New employers moving in; available in-person customer service; Work ethic of older workers; Solid reputation/recognition; Wholehearted engagement by the board on a deeper level; Partnerships with Fitchburg State and MWCC; Good data; Funding seems to be well distributed; Great Youth Council; Good vision.

Weaknesses

- More support to smaller towns and communities (4)
- Need better coordination and collaboration, sharing knowledge (4)
- Marketing (2)
- Complexity of work, hard to summarize and understand, causes people (including board members) to disengage. Simplify board orientation? (2)
- Need more representation of private businesses (2)
- Career center ability to match job seeker skills with job openings and track their success at filling those job vacancies (3)

Other comments on weaknesses included: Long term unemployed needs; Common complaint of need for soft skills; hard to fill jobs with low wages; Data entry (MOSES); Good basic website but needs to be updated and easy to post news/keep current; need to address transportation issues; Territoriality; Mindset (academia); need for more dual enrollment (client sharing); Funding struggles; Permanent employment vs temp workers; Restrictions on training with previous college and career change; need to ensure commitment of NCMWIB members beyond meeting attendance; more brainstorming/discussion during meetings (topic driven); Staff capacity grows and shrinks with competitive funding.

Opportunities

- Room for expansion for more companies and new construction; Local/state TIF program
- More presentations at board by board members to describe what they do, how they related to NCMWIB priorities; Bring back guest speakers in general, more often; When board members have roles to play offline, more engaged at board meeting.
- Small size allows flexibility to adapt to changes
- Programs to help long-term unemployed and under-employed
- Help local businesses become more entrepreneurial to take advantage of available skills
- Employers are asking for more involved and trained soft skilled candidates

- Working with schools for youth to be educated on vocations, educate in all facets of job opportunities; Work based learning, OJTs, internships
- Strengthen partnerships with VR, employers, agencies supporting people with disabilities
- Streamlined access to meaningful job opportunities through career pathways model
- Job seekers have good opportunity to find the right match of job for their skill set
- Advanced manufacturing program by MWCC
- New law, board has more local control
- Contracted relationship with WIOA providers is a great opportunity
- More local control over the use of limited resources
- State and federal opportunities for competitive funds

Threats

- Stability of funding (5)
- Eventual retirement of ED, institutional knowledge and board success largely rests with him, need succession plan for when he retires, start nurturing successor now (2)

Other threats comments included: Restrictive regulations; Rising cost of education and training; Private opportunities; Must be willing to change; Candidates getting frustrated in job search, move on to other areas; Employers equally frustrated when they can't find candidates to fill jobs; Loss of consumer focused service model/individual choice; Younger job seekers lack math and reading skills to obtain entry level positions; Language – lack of ability to read/write in English is a roadblock for many job seekers.

Critical Issues Survey

The strategic planning committee surveyed a small sample of 23 regional leaders, all of whom had either hiring authority or a vested interest in workforce development, including business owners, non-profit leaders, elected officials, state agency personnel, local community-based partners, skills training providers, state or local education providers, labor union representatives and local government. Questions included:

- What do you think are the primary challenges facing North Central MA companies in relation to their labor force?
- What do you think are the primary issues facing North Central residents in relation to finding, getting, and keeping quality employment?
- What do you think are the primary issues facing North Central educational providers as they attempt to address these challenges and issues?
- In your opinion, what other critical issues will the North Central area face in the next 3 years that is relevant to NCMWIB's work?

This survey was conducted about half way through the strategic planning process, when the group had narrowed the list of potential goals down to seven (7), and the final question of the survey asked respondents to comment on those goals. See Appendix D for survey results.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Much of the work of the strategic planning committee and the NCMWIB has been to understand the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and its implications for the North Central MA workforce region.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)'s goal is to help job seekers and workers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and match employers with skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. Congress passed WIOA, the first legislative reform of the public workforce system in more than 15 years, by a wide bipartisan majority. In doing so, Congress reaffirmed the role of the American Job Center (AJC) system, a cornerstone of the public workforce investment system, and brought together and enhanced several key employment, education, and training programs. In recent years over 20 million people annually turn to these programs to obtain good jobs and a pathway to the middle class. WIOA continues to advance services to these job seekers and employers.

HIGHLIGHTS OF WIOA

Aligns Federal Investments to Support Job Seekers and Employers

At the State level, WIOA establishes unified strategic planning across “core” programs, which include Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs; Adult Education and Literacy programs; the Wagner-Peyser Employment Service; and Title I of the Rehabilitation Act programs.

Strengthens Governing Bodies that Establish State, Regional and Local Workforce Investment Priorities

WIOA streamlines membership of business-led, state and local workforce development boards. The Act emphasizes the role of boards in coordinating and aligning workforce programs and adds functions to develop strategies to meet worker and employer needs.

Helps Employers Find Workers with the Necessary Skills:

WIOA emphasizes engaging employers across the workforce system to align training with needed skills and match employers with qualified workers. The Act adds flexibility at the local level to provide incumbent worker training and transitional jobs as allowable activities and promotes work-based training, for example by increasing On the Job Training reimbursement rates to 75%. The law emphasizes training that leads to industry-recognized post-secondary credentials.

Aligns Goals and Increases Accountability and Information for Job Seekers and the Public

WIOA aligns the performance indicators for core programs, and adds new ones related to services to employers and postsecondary credential attainment. Performance goals must reflect economic conditions and participant characteristics. It makes available data on training providers' performance outcomes and requires third party evaluations of programs.

Fosters Regional Collaboration to Meet the Needs of Regional Economies

WIOA requires states to identify economic regions within their state, and local areas are to coordinate planning and service delivery on a regional basis.

Targets Workforce Services to Better Serve Job Seekers

WIOA promotes the use of career pathways and sector partnerships to increase employment in in-demand industries and occupations. To help local economies target the needs of job seekers, WIOA allows 100 percent funds transfer between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. WIOA adds basic skills deficient as a priority category for Adult services. WIOA also focuses youth program services to out-of-school youth. The Act strengthens services for unemployment insurance claimants. It merges WIA core and intensive services into a new category of career services, clarifying there is no required sequence of services. The Act allows Governors to reserve up to 15% of formula funds for activities such as innovative programs.

Improves Services to Individuals with Disabilities

WIOA increases individuals with disabilities' access to high-quality workforce services to prepare them for competitive integrated employment. It requires better employer engagement and promotes physical and programmatic accessibility to employment and training services for individuals with disabilities. Youth with disabilities receive extensive pre-employment transition services to obtain and retain competitive integrated employment. It creates an Advisory Committee on strategies to increase competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities.

Supports Access to Services

To make services easier to access, the WIOA requires co-location of the Wagner-Peyser Employment Service in AJCs and adds the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program as a mandatory partner. WIOA establishes dedicated funding from AJC partner programs to support the costs of infrastructure and other shared costs that support access to services. It asks the Secretary of Labor to establish a common identifier for the workforce system to help workers and employers find available services. In addition, WIOA allows local areas to award pay for performance contracts so providers of services get paid for results. It also allows direct contracts to higher education institutions to provide training.

Conclusions

After many meetings of the strategic planning committee, to review and analyze the above information, and reviews with the Board, staff, and other stakeholders, the following mission, goals, activities, and outcomes were developed. The NCMWIB is committed to ongoing review, evaluation, and updating of these goals over the next 3 years. Outcomes listed are primarily for year 1. A “Dashboard” will be created to regularly review progress against goals at Board and Executive Committee meetings. This strategic plan will be input to the Regional Plan needed for WIOA implementation. The North Central and Central Mass Workforce regions will be working together to develop a regional plan that will be submitted to the Division of Career Services in compliance with WIOA regulations.

**North Central MA Workforce Investment Board
Strategic Plan 2016-2019**

Mission

The mission of the NCMWIB is to provide job driven employment and educational services that expand opportunities for young people and adults in North Central Massachusetts and provide employers with the competitive workforce they need to succeed.

North Central MA WIB Strategic Goals: 2016 – 2019

Based on a comprehensive analysis of regional labor market needs, challenges and priorities, the North Central MA Workforce Investment Board sets forth the following strategic goals:

1. Promote, develop and expand relevant career pathways, stackable credentials, work-based learning and skill development opportunities to address the hiring needs of the region's priority industry sectors of Health Care and Advanced Manufacturing.
2. Increase access and opportunities for people with barriers to employment, such as people with disabilities, older workers, veterans, low income adults, experienced or displaced workers with outdated skills, and college graduates with academic credentials not matched to skill demand.
3. Provide the region's youth with opportunities, skills and credentials to participate in career pathways and secure employment.
4. Restructure NCMWIB and our Career Center to address WIOA regulations and to continue to be a high performing workforce system.

GOAL 1A: Promote, develop and expand relevant career pathways, stackable credentials, work-based learning and skill development opportunities to address the hiring needs of the region’s priority industry sectors of Healthcare and Advanced Manufacturing.

A. *Healthcare*

Strategies	Activities/Outcomes
<p>1. Maintain strong partnerships to ensure training partners understand the needs of Healthcare employers.</p>	<p>At least two members from the Healthcare sector on the board.</p> <p>Convene at least semi-annual meetings between Healthcare employers and training partners to discuss skill development needs and opportunities.</p>
<p>2. Increase the pipeline of available skilled workers and upskill incumbent employees.</p>	<p>Participate in opportunities to secure healthcare planning and implementation grants to provide funding for relevant training programs & career pathways.</p> <p>Track CC placement data to assure we continue to address some of the hiring needs of this sector</p> <p>Recommend to funders and training vendors that they include internships or clinical practicums for participants.</p> <p>CC develops job driven strategies to post and fill critical healthcare positions.</p>
<p>3. Educate adults and youth about career pathways and training opportunities in Healthcare through our Career Center.</p>	<p>Make Healthcare a priority sector in all STEM projects.</p> <p>Promote training programs and opportunities in healthcare for youth and adults.</p>
<p>4. Support local community college and vocational schools to develop curriculum for critical and emerging healthcare needs.</p>	<p>Support TAACCCT and Perkins applications for new curriculum and equipment for training students in healthcare.</p>

GOAL 1B: Promote, develop and expand relevant career pathways, stackable credentials, work-based learning and skill development opportunities to address the hiring needs of the region’s priority industry sectors of Healthcare and Advanced Manufacturing.

B. *Manufacturing*

Strategies	Activities/Outcomes
1. Provide support and identify resources for manufacturing.	<p>At least two members from the Manufacturing sector on the board</p> <p>Market the Workforce Training Fund Program</p>
2. Increase the pipeline of available skilled workers and upskill incumbent employees.	<p>Participate in opportunities to secure grants & funding to provide relevant training programs & career pathways</p> <p>Continue to work with Mass MEP on the \$3.9 million H1-B grant for manufacturing</p> <p>Meet or exceed the goals of the NEG manufacturing grant and the “new” Tech Hire grant</p> <p>Continue to work on training for advanced manufacturing positions, CNC operators and entry level</p> <p>CC develops job driven strategies to post and fill critical manufacturing positions</p>
3. Educate adults and youth about career pathways in Manufacturing and increase awareness of STEM careers.	<p>Support the North Central Chamber of Commerce “Amp it Up” program</p> <p>Promote STEMPOWER.org that contains contacts, postings and discussions used in the H1-B manufacturing project</p>
4. Support local community college and vocational schools to develop curriculum for critical and emerging manufacturing needs.	Support applications for new curriculum and equipment for training students in manufacturing (Perkins, TAACCCT, etc.)
5. Maintain strong manufacturing partnerships between key business and training providers to ensure training meets the needs of businesses.	Engage local employers in grant projects and on project advisory committees

GOAL 2: Increase access and opportunities for people with barriers to employment, such as people with disabilities, older workers, veterans, low income adults, experienced or displaced workers with outdated skills, and college graduates with academic credentials not matched to skill demand.

Strategies	Activities/Outcomes
<p>1. Continue to implement the USDOL Disability Employment Initiative.</p>	<p>Build cross agency partnerships focused on services to individuals with disabilities and ensuring accessibility of Career Pathways and Career Center resources</p> <p>Conduct skill assessments with companies from each sector to determine job availability, skill needs, and potential for internships/employment</p> <p>Design and implement education and training programs for employers</p> <p>Identify Career Pathways opportunities to address skill development needs</p> <p>Recruit, screen and enroll 44 participants in training</p> <p>Support 34 participants through career pathways programs, internships, and employment opportunities</p>
<p>2. Enhance outreach to veterans and create opportunities for employers and veterans to engage</p>	<p>NCMWIB and Career Center directors meet with local veterans’ agents to explain programs</p> <p>Inform Career Center Vet reps of any newly funded projects and opportunities</p>
<p>3. Use WIOA Youth and Adult funding to provide education and training opportunities in priority industry sectors and beyond for eligible participants with employment barriers</p>	<p>Use formula funds to address skill gaps and train participants for available jobs in our region, tracked through MOSES & CC performance</p>
<p>4. Use WIOA Dislocated Worker funds to provide training opportunities for eligible candidates for in demand jobs in our region</p>	<p>Use these formula funds to up-skill dislocated workers for current openings that meet the needs of local employers, tracked through MOSES & CC performance</p>
<p>5. Provide opportunities for older workers, especially those who need new and additional skills to remain competitively employed.</p>	<p>Partner with the Office of Elder Affairs to provide training & employment opportunities for people over age 55</p> <p>Member of Operation Able on Board</p>

GOAL 3: Provide the region’s youth with career exploration opportunities, internships, foundation skills, summer employment opportunities, career pathways and credentials to prepare them for competitive employment.

Strategies	Activities/Outcomes
1. 15 -20 young women participate annually in our Women in Technology project at TYCO/Simplex	Project celebrated it’s fourteenth year in 2016
2. 700 youth participate in internships annually through the Connecting Activities program with at least 20 in our priority sectors	FY14 836 participants 57 in priority sectors FY15 814 participants 87 in priority sectors FY16 744 participants 51 in priority sectors
3. 250 youth attend the regions Youth Leadership Summit	FY15 278 FY16 300
4. 100 youth participate annually in the Summer Youth Works program and complete CommCorps Empower Your Future Career Readiness curriculum	FY15 109 FY16 110
5. Use WIOA Youth funds to prepare out of school youth for employment	Track “Youth” outcomes through CC performance and sub-contract monitoring

GOAL 4: Restructure NCMWIB and our Career Center to address WIOA requirements and to continue to be a high performing workforce investment system.

Strategies	Activities/Outcomes
1. Complete Fiscal Agent designation for the Board	July 1, 2016
2. Prepare and issue the Request for Proposals for the Career Center Operator, schedule a bidders conference and potential sub-contractor list	July/August 2016
3. Develop new WIOA Strategic Plan	Complete by September 2016
4. Complete Career Center procurement, establish a review committee and scoring criteria.	Procure by December 2016 for implementation & operation by July 1, 2017
5. Develop agreements and signed MOU's with required local WIOA partners including infrastructure cost sharing	Interim MOU due June 2016 Final MOU with shared costs due June 2017

APPENDIX A

North Central MA Workforce Investment Board Strategic Planning Committee

Michael Noble, Committee Chair

Barbara Mahoney, NCMWIB Chair

Paulette Carroll, Career Center Director

Christine Cordio, Director ABE Clinton

Dale DelleChiaie, Gardner VNA

Jacqueline Belrose, MWCC

Lisa Marrone, City of Leominster

Martha Chiarchiaro, Clinton Hospital past NCMWIB Chair

Michael Gerry, NCMWIB Staff

Jeffrey Roberge, Director local MRC office

Scott Percifull, Career Center Business Rep.

Theresa Kane, The Polus Center for Social & Economic Development, Inc.

Tim Sappington, NCMWIB, Executive Director

North Central MA Workforce Investment Board Members -2016

Trevor	Beauregard	Dept. of Community Development & Planning
Jackie	Belrose	Mount Wachusett Community College
Kristi	Bruwer	Training Resources of America
Paulette	Carroll	Café Edesia, LLC
Martha	Chiarchiaro	Clinton Hospital
Maryalyce	Cleveland	Department of Transitional Assistance

Christine	Cordio	Clinton Adult Learning Center
Jeff	Crowley	Wachusett Mountain Ski Area
Dale	DelleChiaie	GVNA Health Care
Melissa	Fetterhoff	Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce
Yolonda	Francois	Shriver Job Corps
Roy	Gilbert	GB Chapel Furnishings
Beth	Goguen	Department of Career Services
Pierre	Groleau	Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 4
Mario	Guay	SMC Ltd.
Theresa	Kane Ph.D.	Polus Center
Mohammed	Khan	MART
Linda	Lagoy	Workers' Credit Union
Barbara	Mahoney	Leominster Credit Union
Lisa	Marrone	Leominster Office of Planning & Development
Donata	Martin	Boys & Girls Club of Fitchburg & Leominster
Christopher	Mattioli Sr.	New England Regional Council of Carpenters
Maegen	McCaffrey	RCAP Solutions
Roy	Nascimento	No. Central MA Chamber of Commerce
Michael	Noble	North Middlesex Savings Bank
Tee	Provost	Operation A.B.L.E.
Kevin	Reed	Montachusett Opportunity Council
Jeff	Roberge	Mass Rehabilitation Commission

Appendix B

Fastest Growing Occupations in North Central MA

Title	Employment		Annual Percent	Sector		2015 Mean Wage
	2012	2022				
Electrical and Electronic Equipment Assemblers	287	455	4.72 %	M	High school diploma or equivalent	\$28,836
Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors	230	316	3.23 %	HC	High school diploma or equivalent	\$43,526
Construction Laborers	445	587	2.81 %	C	Less than high school	\$59,354
Medical Secretaries	663	869	2.74 %	HC	High school diploma or equivalent	\$38,301
Home Health Aides	317	414	2.71 %	HC	Less than high school	\$27,616
Cooks, Restaurant	608	789	2.64 %	HOSP	Less than high school	\$26,584
Physical Therapists	202	262	2.63 %	HC	Doctoral or professional degree	\$87,685
Personal Care Aides	344	445	2.61 %	HC	Less than high school	\$26,425
Carpenters	852	1,094	2.53 %	C	High school diploma or equivalent	\$47,487
Bartenders	699	894	2.49 %	HOSP	Less than high school	\$22,714
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	277	353	2.45 %	C	High school diploma or equivalent	\$69,089
Self-Enrichment Education Teachers	310	392	2.37 %	E	High school diploma or equivalent	\$48,516
Healthcare Social Workers	400	503	2.32 %	HC	Master's degree	\$53,621
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	916	1,146	2.27 %	HOSP	Less than high school	\$22,617
First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	309	383	2.17 %	HOSP	High school diploma or equivalent	\$30,947
Registered Nurses	1,632	2,008	2.10 %	HC	Information Not Available	\$84,005
Medical and Health Services Managers	268	329	2.07 %	HC	Bachelor's degree	\$121,286
Nursing Assistants	908	1,114	2.07 %	HC	Information Not Available	\$29,119
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	416	510	2.06 %	HC	Postsecondary non-degree award	\$51,933

Industrial Machinery Mechanics	214	262	2.04 %	M	High school diploma or equivalent	\$54,924
Bus Drivers, School or Special Client	617	755	2.04 %		High school diploma or equivalent	\$27,697
Childcare Workers	377	458	1.97 %	E	High school diploma or equivalent	\$25,869
Medical Assistants	401	487	1.96 %	HC	High school diploma or equivalent	\$34,637
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	301	364	1.92 %	HOSP	Less than high school	\$23,886
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	799	955	1.80 %		Less than high school	\$30,711
Rehabilitation Counselors	351	419	1.79 %	HC	Master's degree	\$33,113
Dining Room and Cafeteria Attendants and Bartender Helpers	252	300	1.76 %	HOSP	Less than high school	\$21,866
Waiters and Waitresses	1,888	2,239	1.72 %	HOSP	Less than high school	\$22,859

N=32

Health Care – 12

Hospitality – 7

Manufacturing /Construction/Laborer– 5

Education - 2

Other - 2

APPENDIX C
Top Companies in North Central MA
with More than 250 Employees

		employees
<u>Future Electronics Corp</u>	Bolton	1,000-4,999
<u>Health Alliance Hospital</u>	Fitchburg	1,000-4,999
<u>Tyco Simplex Grinnell LP</u>	Westminster	1,000-4,999
<u>Wachusett Mountain Ski Area</u>	Princeton	1,000-4,999
<u>Deluxe Corp</u>	Groton	500-999
<u>Fitchburg State College</u>	Fitchburg	500-999
<u>Henry Heywood Memorial Hosp</u>	Gardner	500-999
<u>Mci Shirley Complex</u>	Shirley	500-999
<u>Nashoba Valley Medical Ctr</u>	Ayer	500-999
<u>Nypro Inc</u>	Clinton	500-999
<u>Sterilite Corp</u>	Townsend	500-999
<u>Clinton Hospital</u>	Clinton	250-499
<u>Demoulas Super Markets Inc</u>	Fitchburg	250-499
<u>Doctor Franklin Perkins School</u>	Lancaster	250-499
<u>Franklin Perkins Dr School</u>	Lancaster	250-499
<u>Georgia-Pacific Corp</u>	Leominster	250-499
<u>Hannaford Supermarket</u>	Leominster	250-499
<u>Highlands Long Term Care Ctr</u>	Fitchburg	250-499
<u>Hollingsworth & Vose Co</u>	Groton	250-499
<u>Market Basket</u>	Fitchburg	250-499
<u>Mt Wachusett Community College</u>	Gardner	250-499
<u>North Central Corrections Inst</u>	Gardner	250-499
<u>Paragon</u>	Bolton	250-499
<u>S M C Ltd</u>	Sterling	250-499
<u>SMC Limited</u>	Leominster	250-499
<u>Sterling Village</u>	Sterling	250-499
<u>Stetson School Inc</u>	Barre	250-499
<u>Templeton Developmental Ctr</u>	Baldwinville	250-499
<u>TRW Automotive</u>	Westminster	250-499

APPENDIX D
North Central MA Workforce Investment Board
Critical Issues Questionnaire Results

1. Organization/Partner type (check all that apply)		
Company	2	
Non-profit	7	
Elected official	1	
State agency	1	
Local community-based partner	4	
Skills training provider	3	
State or local education provider	3	
Other, please specify	2	Labor union, local govt

2. What do you think are the primary challenges facing North Central MA <u>companies</u> in relation to their labor force?		
There are no issues.		
Unable to find workers with specific occupational skills	13	
Unable to find workers with basic core competencies and/or generic skills, e.g., reading, speaking, doing basic math, etc.	10	
Cost of hiring/employing individuals, i.e., health care, other benefits, state assessments like Unemployment	6	
Unable to keep skilled workers who leave to work for competitors	8	
Unable to keep skilled workers who move out of the area	2	
Don't know		
Other, please specify	1	

- Unable to find work opportunities for union dues paying members.
- We do not have many issues in regards to recruitment; can find individuals who have skills needed fairly easily at non-exempt level. More difficult for specialized jobs.
- Cost of recruitment.
- High turnover
- Skill gap less of a problem than unwillingness to shoulder costs. Companies need to add value, most people stay put
- Unable to find workers with basic job skills (e.g., professionalism, punctuality, customer service)

3. What do you think are the primary issues facing North Central residents in relation to finding, getting, and keeping quality employment?

There are no issues		
Continually being laid off by companies	3	
Lack of knowledge on how to find a job	5 (youth)	
Lack of specific skills required by companies in their field	11	
Lack of knowledge on how to gain these skills	6	
Lack of time to return to school to gain these skills	8	
Mismatch of skills and available jobs (e.g., over-qualified, wages)	13	
Don't know	1	

Other, please specify

- There is a constant downward pressure in the economy. There is less of an effort by businesses to be part of the community and look at benefitting the community in the longer term.
- Transportation has been an issue recently. (2)
- Language (ESL).
- Many career center customers are not ready for training.
- Temp employment without benefits and insurance.

4. What do you think are the primary issues facing North Central educational providers as they attempt to address these challenges and issues?

Lack of information on local labor force needs	8	
Lack of funding to expand education/training programs	5	
Need stronger partnerships between employers/schools	13	
Don't know	1	

5. In your opinion, what other critical issues will the North Central area face in the next 3 years that is relevant to the WIB's work?

No comments

6. Please review the following list of potential areas of focus for the NCM Workforce investment board. Check all of which you think should be included in the strategic plan:

- o Develop, with training providers, stackable credentials and career pathways, continue to enhance partnerships between educators and employers⁸
- o Provide focused funding and activities to address barriers of alternative sources of talent, such as people with disabilities and older workers.⁷
- o Address skill gaps such as youth with low skills, experienced older workers with outdated skills, college graduates with educations not matched to skill demand. Connect long term unemployed with hard to fill positions. Improve soft skills and customer service in addition to technical skill development.⁷
- o Focus on priority industries (Advanced Manufacturing, Health Care/Social Assistance)⁶
- o Continue shift to a job driven vs. job seeker model, better matching of customers to job openings⁶
- o Restructure WIB/Career Center to address WIOA requirements⁴

Other:

- The priority industries will be determined by the major employers driving the local industry.
- Important! Need to combat the perception that people are just sending resumes from career center to simply check off but without any thought of matching job to business. Probably a by-product of insisting people apply for x-number of jobs a week.