

# CALLING ALL GATEWAY CITY LEADERS

AN ACTION GUIDE TO WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT TRANSFORMATION  
IN MASSACHUSETTS





# Calling All Gateway City Leaders

**An Action Guide to Workforce Development  
Transformation in Massachusetts**

Prepared by:



With assistance from:





**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT** has long been recognized as one of the smartest strategies we have to create household wealth and grow our regional economies. Unfortunately, it's often been overshadowed by other economic development approaches that look easier, faster, and more glamorous. Yet times are changing, because the return on investment (ROI) in workforce development has improved even as we encounter two new forces.

On one front, the global-knowledge economy creates and destroys industries at an accelerating pace. This means each year more adults need to retool their skills to keep Bay State employers competitive. But change and uncertainty have made companies hesitant to invest directly in employee training. Regions with public workforce development systems that can effectively partner with the private sector to quickly adjust to shifting skill needs will gain significant advantage.<sup>1</sup>

On a second front, we have an aging population, especially in Gateway City regions outside of Greater Boston that struggle to hold on to young workers. In these areas, a disproportionate share of the future workforce resides in high-poverty neighborhoods and attends high-poverty schools—environments in which children have an extraordinarily difficult time garnering the advanced skills required for jobs in Massachusetts' knowledge-intensive industries. Even entry-level employment now requires a relatively advanced set of

foundation skills (reading, math, English), work readiness skills (communications and teamwork), and technical skills.

Gateway Cities and their regions are also increasingly reliant on immigrants. While many immigrants arrive with advanced skills and need only limited assistance successfully transitioning into our labor force, a large majority of foreign-born residents in Gateway Cities have significant basic education and training needs. Workforce development leaders must overcome many obstacles to serve these residents, including ineligibility for federal programs, language and cultural barriers, and the especially long training pathway these workers must follow while they try to support their families through employment in some of our most arduous and unstable occupations.

Without workforce development systems that can help disadvantaged youth and new immigrants acquire skills to contribute at their full potential, these regional economies *will* contract as older residents exit the workforce.<sup>2</sup> All the institutions that form our loosely-defined workforce development system have been trying to respond to these challenges, but like having dozens of people hold hands and asking them to run in the same direction, friction created by disparate funding streams and layer-upon-layer of regulation have made it arduous to move forward with a cohesive strategy.

The 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) seeks to create more coherence among federal programs. These changes emanated from bipartisan recognition that our workforce development system must aim higher than the previous federal law, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, which focused heavily on moving families from welfare to work. Minimal support and a “work-first” approach left many stuck in low-wage jobs, hardly making ends meet and unable to find time to pursue additional training. By improving coordination between education, training, healthcare, family supports, transportation, and housing, WIOA aims to place more low-skilled workers having employment barriers on a career path leading to self-sufficiency and economic stability.

Successfully moving clients through training and into a career that offers family-sustaining wages requires more intensive services and support over a longer period of time. This calls for far more resources than the federal system currently has available. Massachusetts already devotes significant state funding to these services. Both Governor Baker and the legislature recognize that workforce development is a priority, and that more dollars should flow to programs that can demonstrate success.

This is why it is critical to enlist the support of Gateway City leaders. As centers in their regional economies, Gate-

## BEFORE YOU DIVE IN: A READING GUIDE AND A CALL-TO-ACTION FOR GATEWAY CITY LEADERS

Our hope is that this guide will help Gateway City leaders cut through the complexity of workforce development systems by distilling key objectives and strategies for workforce development transformation. And we also want to help leaders think about the role they play supporting change.

The National League of Cities *Municipal Action Guide for Workforce Development Competitiveness* outlines strategies for leaders looking to strengthen their role in the workforce development arena.<sup>3</sup> Here are NLC's suggestions to keep in mind as you read:

1. Know the stakeholders
2. Ask questions and listen
3. Understand the needs of your regional economy
4. Work with your WIB
5. Bring people together
6. Be a champion
7. Provide information to constituents

Keeping these seven practices in perspective, also read with an eye toward some of these big-picture considerations to get the most from this document:

### INNOVATION VS. SCALE.

As we describe new models, note that Massachusetts is often an innovator, although compared to other leading states, we seem to have relatively few innovations *that have been brought to scale*. How can Gateway City stakeholders coalesce around a few priorities and ensure that we adopt them widely to have more impact?

### SYSTEMS CHANGE.

This guide includes three case studies examining efforts that involve true systems change. In these examples, note how state and local leaders aligned resources, adopted new policies, and changed the system to get dramatically more output and better results.

### SERVING FEWER BETTER.

With limited resources and pressure to help those with multiple barriers build the skills to enter employment and progress toward jobs that offer family-sustaining pay, the core workforce system—at least initially—will need to serve fewer clients more successfully. As you read, consider how the system serves fewer better, while still demonstrating a full spectrum of models, positioning regions to serve all segments of the population at scale in the future.

### BREAKING DOWN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SILOS.

Too often workforce development policymakers place a heavy focus on the core federal programs. While this guide tries to be more expansive, to a degree it suffers from this same tendency. As you read, keep in mind that the federal system serves just a small fraction of workers. How can Gateway City leaders push both policymakers and stakeholders in their regions to think more comprehensively about transformation to benefit a wider swath of the labor force?

### EQUITY VS. EFFICIENCY.

When residents face many barriers to employment and employers have an urgent need for more skilled workers, workforce development leaders must balance taking an equitable approach (i.e., serving those who need the most help) with an efficient approach (i.e., getting employers the pipeline of skilled workers they need as fast as possible). This tension is built into program design because training is most effective when done with employers, but getting employer buy-in is difficult if the payoff is success is uncertain and long-term. Can Gateway City leaders convince business leaders to engage in this work as a double bottom-line corporate social-responsibility practice?

way Cities are home to the community college campuses, career and technical schools, human service providers, and a large share of major employers. Gateway City mayors are also responsible for appointing members to the regional Workforce Investment Boards, which further solidifies their leadership function.

Vested with this power, Gateway City leaders can play a prominent role spearheading the transformation of the Commonwealth's workforce development systems and drawing attention to effective new approaches to make the case for redirecting and/or increasing investment in these programs.

Gateway City leaders are also uniquely positioned to help Massachusetts navigate a major challenge inherent in WIOA as it seeks to prioritize limited resources for more robust services to individuals with multiple barriers to employment: Residents of Gateway Cities make up a very disproportionate share of these individuals, and improving service delivery could go a long way toward reducing poverty in their communities. But Gateway City regions are also hungry for growth in competitive new-industry clusters. These regions will not enjoy broader economic growth without workforce development strategies that also position them to gain competitive advantage in growing industries by producing workers with highly-specialized skills.

Meeting the needs of industry and the needs of disadvantaged residents simultaneously is phenomenally difficult with the limited funding and capacity that we have today. Gateway Cities must rise to this challenge by rallying civic leaders, coordinating their efforts, and helping the community make smart and balanced investments. Most important, they must advocate for a strategy extending beyond core state and federal

workforce development programs—which only reach a small fraction of the labor force, and into k-12 education, public higher education, and economic development systems that can have far more influence over the career trajectories of residents.

The pages that follow chart these waters, beginning with a more detailed review of the challenges, a description of the various actors and the role that each can play in the future, and the openings Gateway City leaders have to bring the groups together around coordinated action. Along the way, we will examine new models from other communities to provide guidance and inspiration for local leaders, who are determined to see that their region is capitalizing fully on the opportunities before them.

## I. Sizing up the Gateway City Challenge

Gateway City leaders preparing to take part in efforts to transform workforce development must begin with a clear picture of skills needed in their regions. In workforce development lingo, the challenge described above between meeting individual needs and industry needs is supply-side versus demand-side strategy. Census data can help us understand the supply-side. Identifying demand-side needs with publically accessible data is more difficult, but there are some basic concepts that can help Gateway City leaders frame their thinking in these terms and consider the available resources to respond to each of these challenges.

### The Supply-Side Challenge

The “supply-side” to workforce development is training residents with limited skills or other barriers to employment so that they can contribute more to the regional economy. This form of workforce development

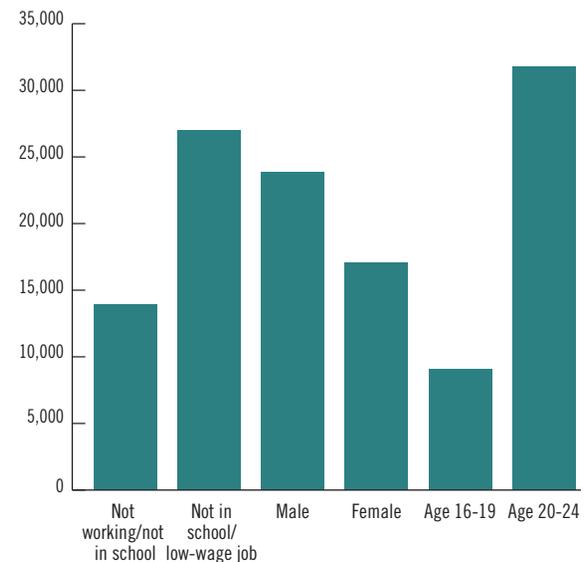
focuses on at-risk youth and adults with low-basic skills and disabilities.

### At-Risk Youth

Census data suggest approximately one in six Gateway City youth age 16 to 24 is struggling to find a career pathway. These at-risk youth are either not enrolled in school and not working, or they hold low-wage jobs with little hope for advancement and they are not continuing their education (Figure 1).

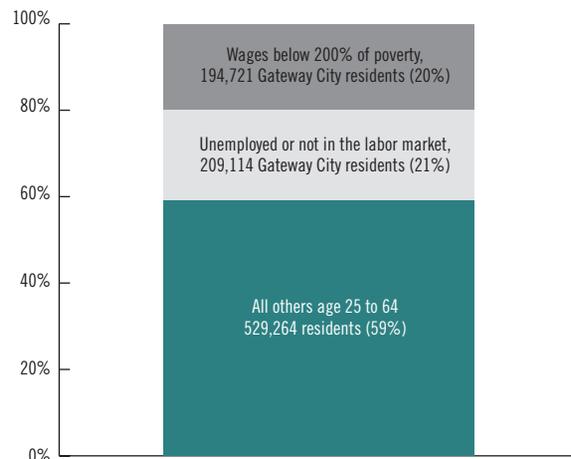
While the data available at the city level only provide a hazy portrait of these youth, statewide Census figures of this population show that they are mostly in their early twenties (high school dropout rates have fallen

Figure 1: “Opportunity Youth” Population in Gateway Cities

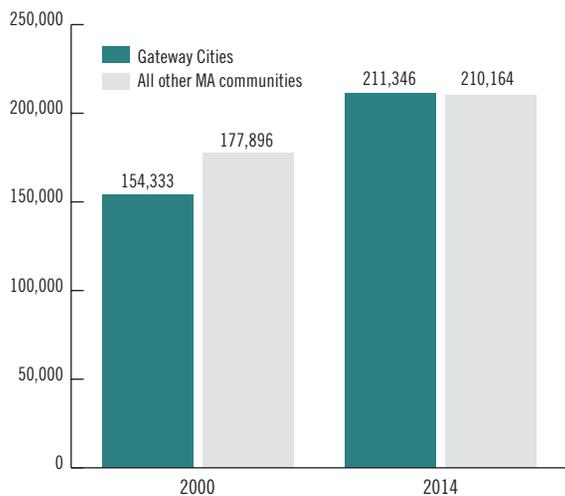


Source: MassINC's analysis of 2013-2014 ACS PLUMS

**Figure 2: Gateway City Adults by Wages and Employment Status**



**Figure 4: Adults (Age 18 to 64) Who Speak English Less than Very Well, 2000 and 2014**



**Figure 3: Gateway City Adults (Age 25 to 64) by Educational Attainment and Employment Status**

Educational Attainment	Number of residents	Labor force participation rate
Less than high school	152,375	58%
High school	290,995	76%
Some college or associate's degree	268,755	82%
Bachelor's degree or higher	244,816	89%

Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2014 5-year sample

**Figure 5: Educational Attainment for Foreign-Born Gateway City Residents, Age 25 and over**

Educational Attainment	Number of Foreign-Born Residents	Percent of Foreign-Born Residents
Less than high school graduate	102,861	32%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	91,990	29%
Some college or associate's degree	61,464	19%
Bachelor's degree	39,781	13%
Graduate or professional degree	20,560	6%

Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2014 5-year sample

considerably in recent years) and they are disproportionately male (about 60 percent). Half of these youth live in households with income below 200 percent of poverty, about 10 percent are parenting, about 10 percent are non-citizens, and only 4 percent receive public assistance benefits.

While one in six (17 percent) is a relatively high percentage of youth struggling to transition to a solid career pathway, across the 26 Gateway Cities, the absolute number of youth ages 16 to 24 in the at-risk category is just 40,000 (Figure 1). This equates to less than 5,000 youth in each year cohort. Relative to the needs of the adult population in Gateway Cities, this is a manageable challenge. In fact, experts prefer to refer to the at-risk demographic as “Opportunity Youth,” because with the interventions described below, it is very possible to help these teens and young adults contribute more fully in the workforce, bringing a large cache of valuable human capital into the regional economy for many productive years. (See Appendix A for more detail on the Opportunity Youth population of each Gateway City.)

### Adults

Roughly 40 percent of adults living in Gateway Cities lack skills (a post-secondary degree or credential) and struggle in the labor market, meaning they are either unemployed or not looking for employment or they hold very low-wage jobs (Figure 2). According to state-wide Census data for the population, approximately 10 percent of these workers are not proficient in English. Of those not working or looking for work, just over 10 percent have a physical or mental disability.

With limited resources, serving more than 400,000 low-skilled Gateway City residents is challenging. Nonetheless, growing these regional economies will prove

extremely difficult if we cannot help these residents increase their contribution to the labor market. (See Appendix B for more detail on the low-skilled adult population of each Gateway City.)

Figure 3 makes this point especially clear. In the 26 Gateway Cities combined, more than 150,000 prime working-age adults have not completed a high school degree or equivalency. The labor force participation rate for these residents is only 58 percent. Of the almost 300,000 Gateway City residents who have completed some college up to an associate's degree, currently 25 percent are not in the labor force.

Gateway Cities have seen a very significant increase in working-age residents with limited English skills in recent years. Since 2000, this population has increased by more than one-third, double the rate of increase of non-Gateway City communities in Massachusetts. As a result, Gateway Cities are now home to more than half of the roughly 420,000 residents in Massachusetts with limited English (Figure 4). Foreign-born adult residents of Gateway Cities also have significant basic education needs. One-third—more than 100,000 residents across the 26 communities—did not finish high school. For almost another one-third, high school is the highest credential completed (Figure 5).

### The Demand-Side Challenge

“Demand-side” driven approaches address specific labor market needs of employers. Public support provided in this manner should strengthen a sector that is vital or increasingly important to the regional economy, as opposed to subsidizing employment services for an individual firm. Demand-side approaches can

overlap with supply-side efforts, but finding opportunities to simultaneously meet the needs of low-skilled workers and employers is often difficult, because knowledge industries increasingly seek workers with advanced skills.

Demand-side workforce development is important to regional economic development and competitiveness, but fashioning these initiatives can be more difficult in Gateway Cities, because many of these regions have few growing clusters to serve. Workforce development leaders can attempt to form a cluster by providing exceptional training for an entirely new industry with high growth

## DEMAND SIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IS IMPORTANT TO REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMPETITIVENESS, BUT FASHIONING THESE INITIATIVES CAN BE MORE DIFFICULT IN GATEWAY CITIES.

potential, but this is risky. If businesses then fail to locate in the region, workers will have skills they *cannot* put to use and many will relocate. It also requires a much longer time horizon than current policy supports.

In these conditions, supply-side training can focus alternatively on skills or occupations that are vital across a range of industries. Typically it is not possible to identify these needs relying only on publically available data. Workforce development leaders must collaborate with private employers to pinpoint areas of agreement on hard-to-fill occupations or skills deficits in the incumbent workforce, and to understand the future trajectory of demand for particular types of skill.

### The Resource Challenge

All Gateway Cities struggle to identify state and federal resources to meet demand-side and supply-side workforce development needs.

In FY 2017, the 14 workforce investment areas serving Gateway Cities will receive \$11 million for federal youth programs. This equals \$272 in federal funding per Opportunity Youth (Figure 6). The Massachusetts state budget includes \$42 million in FY 2017 for exclusively youth-oriented programs. This amounts to \$1,017 per Gateway City Opportunity Youth. Gateway Cities, however, will not receive all of these state dollars. If the bud-

getted dollars went to Gateway Cities in proportion to their share of the state's Opportunity Youth population, it would leave less than \$500 per youth.

On the adult side, the core federal programs will provide nearly \$30 million to the 14 workforce investment areas serving Gateway Cities in FY 2017. This equals just \$74 per low-skilled adult with training needs in Gateway Cities. The state budget includes \$94 million in FY 2017 for adult programs or \$233 per resident with needs. Again, Gateway Cities will not receive all of these resources. Reducing the line items in the state budget to the Gateway City share of low-skilled adults with training needs leaves just \$84 per Gateway City adult.

**Figure 6: State and Federal Workforce Development Funding Per Resident with Need, FY 2017**



Source: MassINC analysis of data provided by MA Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the MA Budget & Policy Center

Note: Federal funding is for the 14 Workforce Investment Areas serving Gateway Cities. State funding is for the full statewide line item.

The resource challenge is particularly acute for residents requiring adult basic education (ABE). At any point in time, about as many residents are on waiting lists for these services as are enrolled. Those seeking to improve their English represent about three-quarters of the waiting lists for ABE. While the adult limited English population in Massachusetts has grown by more than one-quarter since 2000, adjusted for inflation, state funding for ABE has moved in the *opposite* direction, falling by nearly 30 percent.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BASICS: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SEGMENTS

In addition to the supply-side, demand-side frame, workforce development practitioners often describe their efforts as targeting three distinct segments:

**INCUMBENT WORKERS:** Those working in jobs and looking to upgrade their skills to earn more money; or from an employer perspective, helping current employees adapt to change and remain competitive.

**TRANSITIONAL WORKERS:** Unemployed or underemployed workers who need retraining and employment services to move into new jobs. This segment also includes those moving from safety-net systems and the criminal-justice system into the workforce.

**EMERGING WORKERS:** In-school and out-of-school, at-risk youth age 14 to 21, who are or will be the newest entrants into the workplace, and who will require additional support services, education, career guidance, and job readiness skills to succeed.

Gateway City leaders must work to see that their efforts are balanced to ensure that all three of these segments are appropriately served by their regional workforce development strategy and system.

These per-capita figures assume all workforce development funds flow to demand-side services for high-need individuals. Compelling supply-side programs will receive some portion of these state and federal workforce development dollars.

To put these resource limitations in perspective, Washington State’s I-BEST program—a national model for helping students with low-basic skills complete community college—costs \$2,000 more per student than the traditional community college program. Conservative

cost-benefit analysis shows this more expensive model pays off—because students are much more successful.<sup>4</sup>

As the focus shifts to achieving long-term outcomes, the resource challenge will force workforce development leaders to serve fewer better. This tradeoff will create difficult political and equity issues for Gateway Cities.

(See Appendix C for more detail on federal allocations to each workforce investment area, and Appendix D for state workforce development funding by line item.)

## II. Assuming New Roles and Responsibilities

Gateway City leaders who want workforce development to serve as a more powerful force for wealth creation and regional economic growth must consider how the roles and responsibilities of each major player in the system need to shift. At various levels, efforts are underway to drive this change. With a better feel for this landscape, Gateway City leaders can lend their support accordingly.

### Local Workforce Development Boards: Providing strategic coordination

Since they were created by the 1998 Workforce Investment Act, local WIBs have been envisioned as playing a major role centralizing workforce development efforts in their regions. Unfortunately, too many have lacked the staff capacity and clout to fulfill this function. Many have focused primarily on managing their one-stop career centers' contracts. WIOA calls upon WIBs to assume a stronger coordinating function by charging them with responsibility for conducting workforce research and regional labor-market analysis; leading efforts to develop career-pathway programs; and coordinating adult education and career and technical education with local providers.

To increase capacity to perform these functions and to ensure that the geography of boards aligns to current regional economies, the law encourages states to merge boards and/or reconfigure their geography. Massachusetts has responded by grouping boards together so that neighboring WIBs can share analytical resources. In addition, WIOA requires WIBs to develop an MOU between workforce development partners to integrate services. The hope is that by making complementary services more accessible to those seeking employment

services, the system will provide stronger support to individuals with multiple barriers to employment.<sup>5</sup>

### One-Stop Career Centers: Centralizing and targeting comprehensive services to high-need clients

WIA established one-stop career centers to create a location where individuals, particularly those receiving unemployment assistance, could access employment services. The centers were primarily designed to offer labor exchange services (i.e., job search assistance, job interview referrals, and recruitment services for employers seeking to fill vacancies) to help these workers quickly find new jobs. Internet job boards and other online tools have changed the landscape, so this function is no longer as valuable. At the same time, it is increasingly clear that those seeking workforce development assistance often need a more comprehensive set of supports.

As noted above, WIOA further centralizes services in this network of career centers in order to provide physical access to more comprehensive support for clients with multiple needs. Local boards now have the flexibility to include additional partners in one-stop centers, including local employers and community-based, faith-based, and/or non-profit organizations, as well as employment, education, and training programs. Working together, the partners will share costs for in-take and case management, reporting and fiscal management, professional development, and the physical operation of the centers.

### Comprehensive high schools, career and technical schools, alternative high schools: Placing students on a career pathway

Throughout the K-12 system, career readiness is receiving increasing attention. After decades of high schools emphasizing college prep over career, secondary school

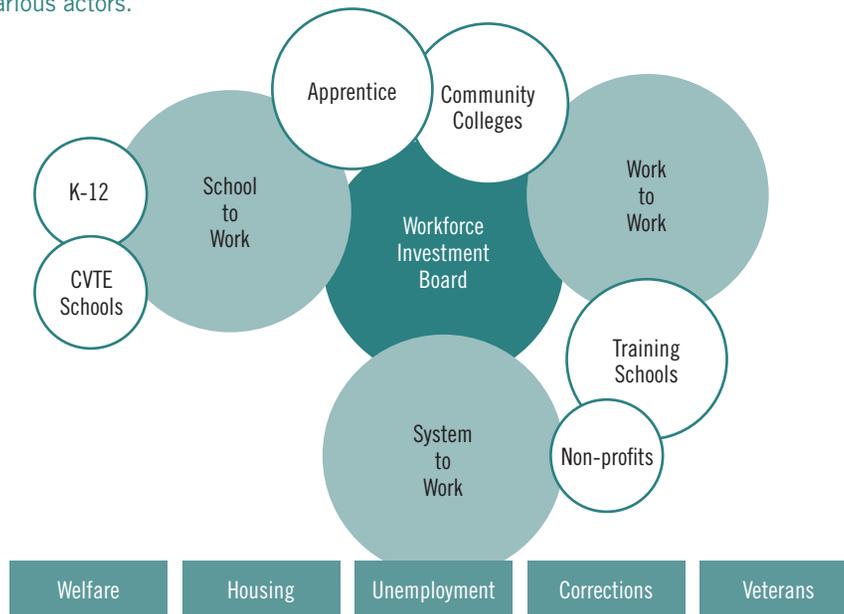
leaders are working to ensure that students build a more comprehensive set of skills and have experiences that allow them to make informed decisions about their future. These take various forms, depending on the institution:

- **Comprehensive high schools (traditional public high schools):** Efforts are underway to redesign high schools to ensure that students develop the full set of competencies needed to successfully pursue post-secondary training and a career pathway. This includes increasing the rigor of the curriculum, strengthening advising, and offering exposure to both the world of work and post-secondary education.
- **Career and technical schools (termed “vocational schools” in the past):** Recognizing that most professions now require at least some post-secondary training, career and technical schools are articulating their programming to help students gain these additional skills, either on their own campuses or through partnerships with local colleges and universities.
- **Alternative high schools:** For students who for various reasons are not well-served by traditional high schools, alternative schools are playing an increasingly important role. In Gateway Cities, alternative high schools are particularly critical to serving new immigrants. Those that arrive as teens often need additional time to complete their high-school degree in a supportive setting. Many alternative schools are designed to serve over-age, under-credited students effectively.

Secondary schools are critical to the “emerging workforce” segment. They have far more resources and touch many more individuals than traditional workforce development programs. Ensuring that these institutions are able to place students more firmly on a career path is critical.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BASICS: A MORE DETAILED MAP OF THE TERRAIN

The workforce development system spans much farther than the five central players described above. One way to envision the full landscape of our loosely coordinated workforce development system is through the various entry points. Those seeking employment services are either moving from school into the workforce (school-to-work), from a job into a better job requiring additional skill (work-to-work), or from government services to employment (system-to-work). At the center of this web, workforce investment boards must have the capacity to coordinate all of these various actors.



### Community colleges: Delivering training and support along the career pathway

From offering basic education to granting credentials in technical fields, community colleges have always supported residents as they develop a range of skills and progress in a career. But these institutions have often prioritized their role as stopping-off points for students

immediately transferring to a four-year school after completing an associate's degree. In recent years, community colleges have been working hard on how they can play a career-development role more effectively by partnering more intentionally with other agencies in the workforce development system and private employers. These efforts are critical to better serve more of their stu-

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BASICS: WHAT IS A WIB?

Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) were mandated by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. (It's worth noting that federal law drew from Massachusetts in establishing WIBs: the Commonwealth had developed a network of Regional Employment Boards and Private Industry Councils to serve as conveners and strategic leaders of local workforce development efforts.) As required by WIA and now WIOA, Massachusetts has 16 local workforce investment boards, although some still retain the words regional employment board or private industry council in their titles.

WIB members are appointed by the chief elected official from the largest community in a local area. The majority of seats must be held by businesses. Business representatives are nominated by local business groups. The members of the board elect one of the business representatives to serve as Chair. Local WIBs develop the local plan, including negotiating performance measures with the state Department of Labor and Workforce Development. They then oversee the execution of the local plan by contracting with a one-stop operator to provide services and partnering with other entities. Local boards can incorporate as a 501(c)(3) to raise additional funds to carry out these activities, yet very few Gateway City WIBs raise significant dollars beyond government grants.<sup>6</sup>

dents and help the workforce development system move from a focus on short-term job outcomes to long-term earnings gains.

### Community Organizations: Aiding individuals in transition

Nonprofit community-based organizations play many

# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BASICS:

## WHAT ARE THE CORE SERVICES AND WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE THEM?

WIOA funds five core federal programs delivered through one-stop career centers. (See Appendix C for funding by region.)

### 1. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING (WIOA TITLE I-B)

**Administering agency:** Department of Labor

**Eligibility:** Workers age 18 and over who lost jobs, unemployed self-employed workers, relocated spouses of active-duty service members, and homemakers returning to work. Low-income individuals, clients with basic skill deficiencies, and veterans receive priority.

**Services:** Career services including skills assessments, job search assistance, career counseling, internships, and assistance establishing eligibility for financial aid. These funds also cover training services, including skills training, on-the-job training, incumbent work training, and transitional employment; resource limitations, however, mean that few eligible individuals actually receive these services.

### 2. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING (WIOA TITLE I-B)

**Administering agency:** Department of Labor

**Eligibility:** Youth age 16 to 24 not enrolled or attending school, justice-involved, pregnant or parenting, homeless or in foster care, with a disability, or low-income and requiring additional assistance to secure employment.

**Services:** Training and youth development programs for out-of-school youth and after-school activities for in-school youth, including occupational skills training, tutoring, dropout recovery and alternative secondary schooling, paid work experiences, leadership development, mentoring and other supportive services.

### 3. ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (WIOA TITLE II)

**Administering agency:** Department of Education

**Eligibility:** Adults 16 and over, not currently enrolled in high school, who are basic-skills deficient, lack a high school diploma or equivalency, function below the level of a high school graduate, or unable to speak, read, or write English.

**Services:** Adult education and literacy services including work-place literacy, family literacy programs, and English language services. However, resource limitations mean many eligible individuals are unable to receive these services.

### 4. WAGNER-PEYSER ACT EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (WIOA TITLE III)

**Administering agency:** Department of Labor

**Eligibility:** All job seekers, with targeted assistance available to special populations.

**Services:** Career counseling, testing and assessment, job search assistance, labor market and training-provider information, and labor exchange services to help match jobseekers with employers.

### 5. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES (WIOA TITLE IV)

**Administering agency:** Department of Education

**Eligibility:** Adults who have a physical or mental impairment that creates a barrier to employment.

**Services:** Needs assessment and individualized employment plan, interpretation services, education and training.

roles in the workforce development system while they will continue to assume important functions, they will transition to a system providing individuals with support over a longer duration, CBO capacity is increasingly needed to offer specialized services to individuals transitioning into and out of training and employment. Those who enter employment on the lowest rung of a

career ladder often need assistance along the way in order to keep climbing. Youth who have received intensive services often need a steady hand as they assume more independence. Similarly, families need to trust that help will be available to them in order to have confidence to leave public housing. Community-based organizations play a particularly important role welcoming and sup-

porting immigrants. The state's new workforce investment plan envisions community organizations stepping in to fill gaps to ensure that we provide the seamless support required to improve long-term outcomes.

### III. Building a Foundation for Transformation: Effective and Emerging Models in Massachusetts and Beyond

With a clear supply-side and demand-side strategy and a better sense of roles and responsibilities, we now move on to tactics, exploring transformative models in Massachusetts and beyond. Some programs are well-established and perform fine, while others are emerging as promising practices. We include both in this summary so that Gateway City leaders can position themselves to delicately balance between pushing for new successes and ensuring that resources and attention are not overly diverted from programs that are working well. Models described in more detail in associated text boxes are highlighted in bold.

#### A. Supply-Side Models

##### *Proven-Risk Youth*

Proven-risk youth have committed violent acts or been the target of violence, often gang-related. These youth often have multiple barriers to employment, and yet stable employment is central to keeping them out of harm's way and curbing their involvement in illicit activities. Serving this small population of proven-risk youth more effectively has an outsized impact: the collateral consequences of their violent behavior take a tremendous toll on the community. Two new approaches show real promise:

**1. Intensive wraparound services with trauma-focused cognitive behavioral (CBT) therapy.** Efforts to serve these youth with employment services have become more sophisticated in recent years. While it has long been clear that these youth are not work-ready, we have learned that helping them gain the requisite soft skills is not a simple proposition. These youth often have

difficulty learning new skills as a result of their traumatic experiences. Programs are working to develop new CBT practices that are suited to the traumas these youth have experienced and can be delivered in settings and in a culturally sensitive manner so that these youth will fully engage in the therapeutic approach. Massachusetts has been at the forefront of this work. In the early 2000s, the Chelsea-based nonprofit Roca worked to pioneer an evidence-based model combining transitional employment and CBT-informed coaching and support. The state has scaled Roca with a first-of-its-kind social impact bond, and replicated a similar service model in other cities through the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative.

While these approaches are relatively expensive, fairly rigorous evidence suggests they produce a significant ROI. The therapeutic focus is what distinguishes these initiatives from previous models that generally produced lackluster outcomes. The challenge in replicating this approach is developing capacity to train therapists and youth-outreach workers to collaboratively deliver these therapeutic services with fidelity.<sup>7</sup>

**2. Developmentally-appropriate corrections and reentry services.** The Massachusetts Department of Youth Services has moved toward a positive youth development approach, providing education and clinical supports and reentry services to all juveniles committed to its care. All youth are assessed to better understand individual risks, needs, and strengths. Cognitive behavioral interventions focus on managing anger, assuming personal responsibility for behavior, cultivating empathy, solving problems, setting goals, and developing coping skills. Upon release, youth are connected to community-based organizations for support with career development, internships, and subsidized

employment through Commonwealth Corporation's Bridging the Opportunity Gap Initiative.

In stark contrast, the state's adult criminal justice system struggles to provide young adults with developmentally appropriate services. Offenders age 18 to 24 make up a disproportionately high percent of those committed, and this age cohort is the most likely to reoffend. Brain science shows that these young adults are developmentally similar to adolescents and could benefit from age-appropriate rehabilitation services, like those offered at DYS. The US Department of Justice has encouraged states to reexamine young-adult practices and criminal justice leaders in Massachusetts are currently exploring changes. Recent examples of new models in other states include a young adult court in Dallas, the Transitional Age Youth (TAY) Unit in San Francisco, and Maine's Young Adult Offender Program.<sup>8</sup>

##### *At-Risk Youth*

Numerous evidence-based models can help ensure that low-income youth find a steady pathway to rewarding employment. Below are three that play an increasingly prominent role in Gateway City youth employment efforts.

**1. Dropout prevention and recovery.** Much attention in recent years has focused on reducing high-school dropout rates. The strategies have included providing alternative pathways to meet a range of student needs, creating early warning indicators to identify students at risk of dropping out, providing graduation coaches to support students these indicators flag (and re-engagement coaches to re-establish pathways for those who have left), and putting in place alternative pathways, credit recovery, and credit acceleration options.

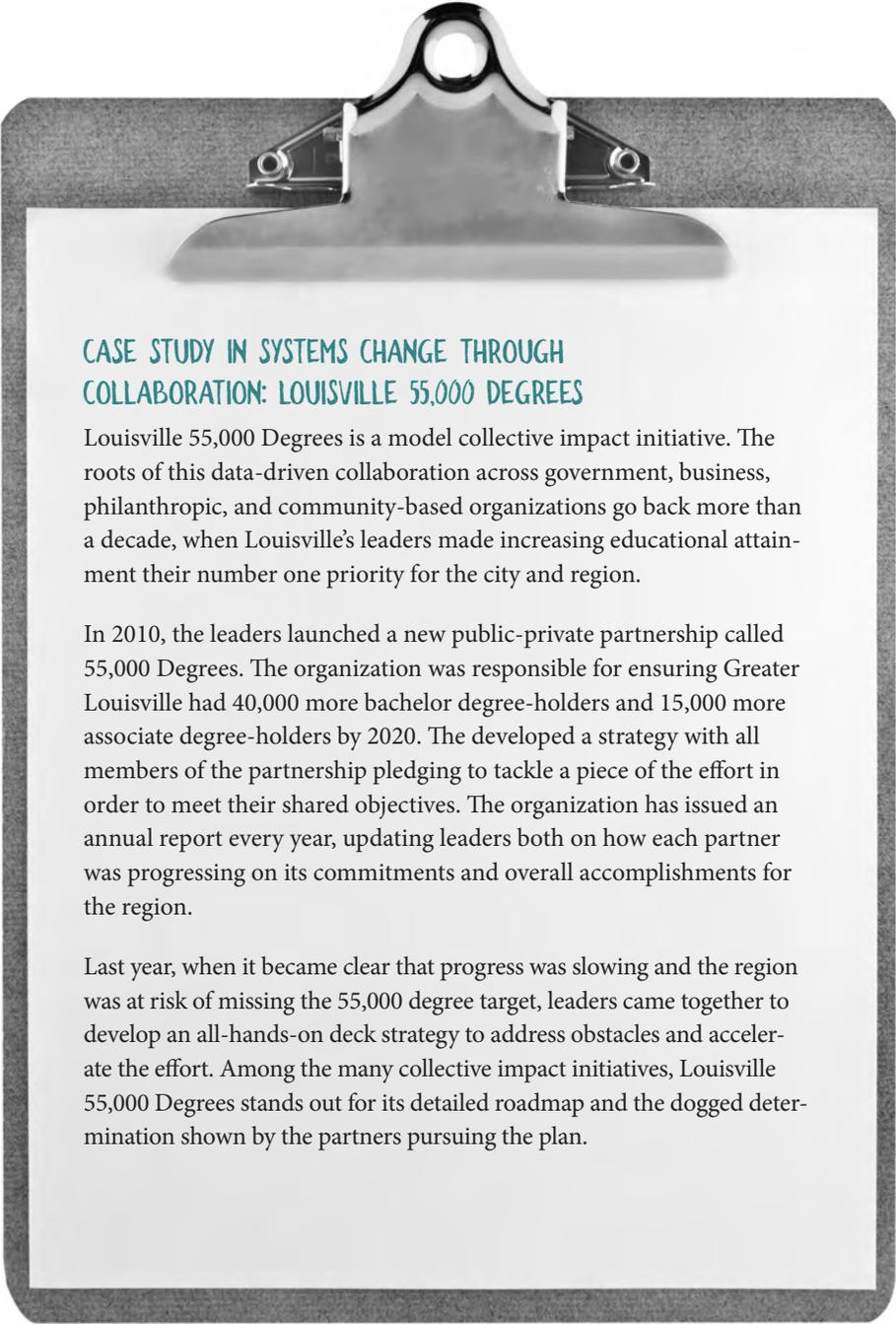
Efforts to create more alternative schools, such as Phoenix Academy, specifically designed to serve over-age students, including immigrants and those who have been out of school, have also been an important part of the solution. These schools often have flexible schedules and year-long classes to help over-age/under-credited students accelerate their studies. Many provide services to address barriers these youth face, including pregnancy, health problems, and family challenges.

While some of this innovative activity was supported through a large federal High School Graduation Initiative grant Massachusetts received in 2010, workforce development funds have also been critical, particularly in offering service-learning and work-based learning experiences targeting students most likely not to graduate.

**2. Subsidized employment with work-readiness training.** With low teen employment rates, particularly among disadvantaged youth, subsidized jobs programs for teens and young adults have become increasingly important. These programs can reduce violence and increase attachment to school in communities with low employment, high poverty, and underperforming schools.<sup>9</sup>

YouthWorks is one of the few statewide subsidized programs in the country. The program provides youth ages 14 to 24 with 25 hours of subsidized weekly employment over the summer months. All participants receive Commonwealth Corporation's Signal Success work-readiness curriculum designed to help youth develop skills to find and retain employment. And they must also complete a work-readiness portfolio to document their specific employability competencies.

Massachusetts is also trying to ensure that high school students gain career skills from work-based learning



### CASE STUDY IN SYSTEMS CHANGE THROUGH COLLABORATION: LOUISVILLE 55,000 DEGREES

Louisville 55,000 Degrees is a model collective impact initiative. The roots of this data-driven collaboration across government, business, philanthropic, and community-based organizations go back more than a decade, when Louisville's leaders made increasing educational attainment their number one priority for the city and region.

In 2010, the leaders launched a new public-private partnership called 55,000 Degrees. The organization was responsible for ensuring Greater Louisville had 40,000 more bachelor degree-holders and 15,000 more associate degree-holders by 2020. The developed a strategy with all members of the partnership pledging to tackle a piece of the effort in order to meet their shared objectives. The organization has issued an annual report every year, updating leaders both on how each partner was progressing on its commitments and overall accomplishments for the region.

Last year, when it became clear that progress was slowing and the region was at risk of missing the 55,000 degree target, leaders came together to develop an all-hands-on deck strategy to address obstacles and accelerate the effort. Among the many collective impact initiatives, Louisville 55,000 Degrees stands out for its detailed roadmap and the dogged determination shown by the partners pursuing the plan.

through the Connecting Activities program. Funded by a small line item in the state budget, Connecting Activities supports public-private partnerships between local workforce investment boards, schools, and businesses to offer students structured, work-based learning experiences. In addition to internships with at least a 2:1 private-sector wage match, the program funds job shadow days, career days, employer guest speaker programs, workshops, teacher externships, and curriculum development.

**3. Early College.** Communities are also increasingly supporting youth in the transition from high school to post-secondary through early college. Students in these programs earn both high school and college credit, and gain exposure to higher education. The schools are created through formal partnerships between high schools, post-secondary institutions, and often a community partner delivering support services. Rigorous research shows that participants in these programs are more likely to graduate high school and complete a post-secondary degree, and they do so at a lower cost and in less time. Outcomes are particularly strong for low-income and minority students.<sup>10</sup>

The Gateway to College Program, which re-engages students who have dropped out of (or who are currently unlikely to graduate from) high school by providing a college-based education that's on campus, is one example of an early college model. While Massachusetts lags behind leading states in offering students early college experiences, the Baker Administration has supported a joint-effort underway between the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Board of Higher Education, to develop policies to advance the growth of rigorous early college offerings in the Commonwealth.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Low-Skilled Working Adults***

Models for working adults must allow them to “learn and earn,” keeping them moving along a pathway to higher skills and wages as expediently as possible. From contextualizing basic education to allowing for competency-based progression, efforts to transform the workforce development systems for these individuals center largely on increasing the completion of post-secondary training and ensuring that the training they receive has real labor-market value.

**1. Contextualized adult basic education.** Basic skills deficits are one of the primary barriers adult Gateway City workers face in moving into higher-wage occupations and advancing in a career. Many adults recognize they need to gain additional skills and they enroll in community colleges, but community colleges struggle to help these students gain the fundamental academic skills required for post-secondary coursework. One solution is integrating adult basic education (ABE) into core courses. Contextualized adult basic education (connecting basic skills instruction in reading, writing, and math) is more useful to students by linking it to applications they encounter in their jobs or family life. In addition to making the material more relevant for students, this approach can accelerate learning so that developmental coursework does not exceedingly lengthen the time working adults will require to earn a post-secondary degree or credential. Evidence suggests contextualization is central to providing adults with additional education and a pathway to significantly higher wages.<sup>12</sup>

Contextualized instruction can be more expensive, particularly when it requires faculty with subject-area expertise to co-teach with ABE faculty. This creates

challenges because federal ABE funds are limited and primarily flow to community providers through K-12 state education departments. Adult students who lack high school degrees cannot access federal funding to enroll in community colleges. States have been working creatively to address this challenge. With a Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant from the US Department of Labor, all 15 community colleges in Massachusetts are working to implement the Jobs for the Future Breaking Through model, a comprehensive approach that includes contextualized learning, comprehensive support services, and stronger connections to employers.

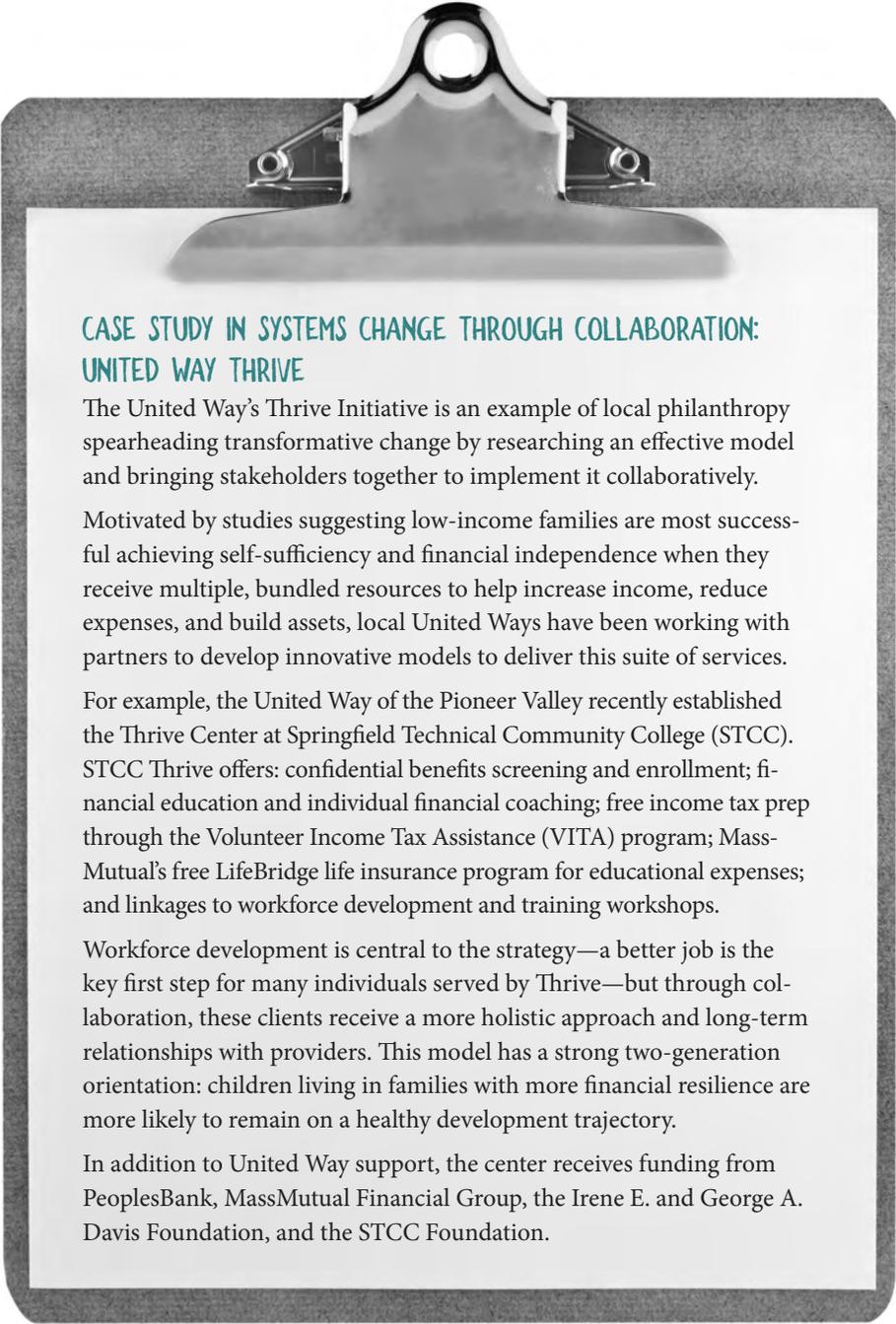
**2. Competency-based progression.** Working adults return to school with varying skill levels, and the demands of their daily lives with work and family mean it is often difficult to maintain a steady focus on courses. Competency-based progression allows students to move at their own pace, demonstrating that they have mastered the necessary skills to move to the next level. In moving away from our traditional model based on seat time and credit hours, post-secondary programs become more tightly focused on helping students gain skills with real labor-market value. Rather than passing on students with various levels of mastery, all students must meet a clearly-defined standard. This approach offers employers more certainty about an applicant's skills, and allows for “stackable credentials” that provide a career pathway students can follow in easier to accomplish chunks.

While competency-based education is not new, only recently has it gained traction in public higher education, where leaders are working to improve outcomes and contain costs. The University of Wisconsin's UW Flexible Option is an example of competency-based programs

that students pursue at their own pace to complete certificates and associate's degrees up to bachelor's degrees. The program also allows students to demonstrate, and earn credit for, knowledge that they gained on the job, in military service, or through prior coursework.

In 2015, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education awarded two grants to develop competency-based curriculums for health care workers. One grant was designed to help community colleges—working in partnership with employers, career and technical schools, workforce investment boards, and community-based organizations—share resources and best practices to adopt a competency-based curriculum codified by employer input and standards. The other grant went to Worcester State University to work in collaboration with UMass Memorial Health Care and the State Healthcare and Research Employees' Union to develop innovative educational programs, including stackable academic credentials, from certificates to bachelor degrees.

**3. Career pathways.** For many years, workforce leaders have been striving to connect education, training, and support services to help individuals secure industry relevant certification and employment and steadily advance to higher levels of education and employment in their profession. Since 2006, states have been required to provide at least one career pathway under the Perkins Act. A number of major national initiatives have formed to help states design these systems. Statewide models include California's Career Ladders Project, Minnesota's Fast-TRAC program, and Wisconsin RISE. While Massachusetts is deeply experienced in this area (Commonwealth Corporation having pioneered sectoral work in the early 1980s), we have fallen behind leading states that have gone on to develop more systemic pathway programs.



### CASE STUDY IN SYSTEMS CHANGE THROUGH COLLABORATION: UNITED WAY THRIVE

The United Way's Thrive Initiative is an example of local philanthropy spearheading transformative change by researching an effective model and bringing stakeholders together to implement it collaboratively.

Motivated by studies suggesting low-income families are most successful achieving self-sufficiency and financial independence when they receive multiple, bundled resources to help increase income, reduce expenses, and build assets, local United Ways have been working with partners to develop innovative models to deliver this suite of services.

For example, the United Way of the Pioneer Valley recently established the Thrive Center at Springfield Technical Community College (STCC). STCC Thrive offers: confidential benefits screening and enrollment; financial education and individual financial coaching; free income tax prep through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program; MassMutual's free LifeBridge life insurance program for educational expenses; and linkages to workforce development and training workshops.

Workforce development is central to the strategy—a better job is the key first step for many individuals served by Thrive—but through collaboration, these clients receive a more holistic approach and long-term relationships with providers. This model has a strong two-generation orientation: children living in families with more financial resilience are more likely to remain on a healthy development trajectory.

In addition to United Way support, the center receives funding from PeoplesBank, MassMutual Financial Group, the Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation, and the STCC Foundation.

While the career pathways models that have been well-established and rigorously evaluated produced promising long-term gains in employment and earnings, it is important to keep in mind that all of these efforts took place in an era that favored low-cost, “work-first” solutions.<sup>13</sup> They also lacked systems that could provide strong contextualized ABE and competency-based progression.

Massachusetts is working toward a new generation of career pathways programs in a variety of ways. The state is participating in the Pathways to Prosperity Network, led by Jobs for the Future, which focuses on linking high schools with work-based learning and community colleges. Massachusetts recently began using state ABE funds to provide grants to WIBs through a competitive process to support regional efforts to develop career pathways. The state has also developed a Transition to

tensive support. The three promising models for delivering these services described below have the potential to gain power, as the workforce development system adds capacity to deliver more intensive services over an extended period of time.

**1. Subsidized transitional employment.** Moving the large number of Gateway City adults not currently in the workforce toward employment will be extremely difficult without subsidized employment opportunities. A period of subsidized, transitional employment can help these workers develop soft skills and confidence. It can also provide employers with an indication that they are work-ready. In some models, subsidized employment is just a dry-run as individuals prepare to transition to the job market. Others, however, are offered in partnership with private employers, allowing

form to Employment (P2E) model, piloted in Connecticut and now expanding around the country. P2E provides a five-week preparatory program where recipients receive 100 hours of training to develop job readiness skills, and counseling to help overcome stress and build confidence.

Massachusetts has limited experience with subsidized employment for adult workers. The Commonwealth was one of only 12 states that did not offer subsidized employment during the Great Recession through the Recovery Act’s TANF Emergency Fund.<sup>15</sup>

**2. Supportive housing.** Housing policy can play an important, (but complex) role in increasing employment among Gateway City residents. Research demonstrates that providing families with subsidized housing can significantly lower their labor force participation and earnings. But conversely, housing assistance is central for helping people with multiple barriers to employment (especially those experiencing homelessness) gain access to steady employment. Moreover, contrary to claims that subsidized housing reinforces intergenerational poverty, strong evidence suggests low-income children in families that receive subsidized housing go on to earn higher wages as adults, all else being equal.<sup>16</sup>

Given these realities, it is important that limited housing resources support those with children and adults no longer parenting in their efforts to develop a career pathway. The Family Self-Sufficiency program is HUD’s long established model. Recent efforts like Opportunity NYC–Work Rewards show that offering enhanced incentives (i.e., the ability to earn wages without steep reductions in benefits) and supports can encourage those receiving housing assistance to enter full-time employment.<sup>17</sup> While more research is needed to better understand the efficacy of such policies in Gateway City economies, the

## “TWO-GENERATION” STRATEGIES COORDINATE EDUCATION AND HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF BOTH PARENTS AND CHILDREN TO IMPROVE THE FAMILY’S ECONOMIC SECURITY.

Community College program to fund support services at community colleges for ABE students working toward post-secondary education. The program will also help cover tuition costs for credit-bearing college courses for ABE students who are not eligible for federal financial aid because they have yet to complete a high-school degree.<sup>14</sup>

### **Low-Skilled, Out-of-Work Adults**

While the models are central to improving outcomes for low-skilled adults (with limited work experience or who have been out of the workforce for an extended period), many of these individuals will need more in-

the business to test the workers with the public sector covering wages, unemployment insurance, and workers’ compensation for a specified period of time.

Spurred in part by the Great Recession, there has been renewed focus on finding transitional employment models that produce sustained increases in unsubsidized employment for hard-to-employ workers. With funds made available through the TANF-EF program, many states developed placements for subsidized workers with private-sector companies. A number of efforts are underway to build on these experiences. One example is the Plat-

Worcester Housing Authority's A Better Life program represents another promising model.

**3. Two-generation strategies.** Research shows that improving employment outcomes for parents improves employment outcomes for their children. Focus on a two-generation approach has also emerged from welfare reform research, which indicates that the positive benefits of working (e.g., additional income, positive role modelling) can be overshadowed by the downside of low-wage work: long hours, second-shift schedules, and the stress working single-parents and their children often experience. Two-generation strategies coordinate education and health and human services to meet the needs of both parents and children to improve family economic security.<sup>18</sup>

For a number of years, the Aspen Institute has been convening policymakers to uncover opportunities to build two-generation models. A number of local efforts have emerged, such as CareerAdvance in Tulsa, OK and the MOMS Partnership in New Haven, CT. Boston recently became a pilot site for the Jeremiah Program, a place-based approach that provides single-parent families with high-quality child development centers, life coaches, life skills education, and job placement assistance. In a report issued earlier this year, Governor Baker's taskforce on chronic unemployment called on the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to work collaboratively to explore the feasibility of developing other two-generation approaches for Massachusetts.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Immigrants***

The innovations described above will also improve services for immigrants with low basic skills. Through a pay-for-success model, Jewish Vocational Services in Greater

Boston is currently working on an approach that integrates these practices with a model specifically designed to serve newcomers. The program is expected to produce measurable outcomes, including increased earnings, improved employment, and greater post-secondary enrollment.

However, given the importance of immigrant workers to Gateway City economies and the additional barriers they face acquiring skills and pursuing pathways to employment with family-sustaining pay, it is these communities must offer newcomers multiple avenues to opportunity. While we lack evidence-based models and far more effort is needed in this area, three different concepts described below demonstrate varying approaches to this work.

**1. Worker Centers.** Immigrant workers have long been served by community-based organizations focused on a trade, such as the New England Farm Workers Council in the Pioneer Valley. But recently, there's been a resurgence in worker centers that connect low-income immigrants to social services and help them organize to improve the quality of their jobs through advocacy. Like the Brazilian Worker Center in Somerville, these organizations are generally tightly focused on a national origin and often informal work, such as day-laborers and house-keepers. Increasingly there are examples of more formal sectoral models in healthcare, logistics, and hospitality.<sup>20</sup> In Massachusetts, The Immigrant Worker Center Collaborative was launched in 2005 to unite and strengthen these organizations.

**2. Work-based ESOL.** Employers that partner with the public workforce system to offer language training on the job has long been considered an ideal solution for immigrants with limited English. This contextualizes the learning and allows workers to earn while they study. For

many firms, helping employees acquire English increases productivity. Some companies even offer profit-sharing to workers who participate in work-based ESOL classes. Intermediaries can often help private employers build partnerships with the public sector by aggregating demand across companies and cutting through red tape. Unions have also traditionally played a major role advocating for work-based ESOL opportunities. Lack of public resources to broker these partnerships has been a major obstacle to expanding work-based ESOL.<sup>21</sup>

**3. High school redesign.** Efforts to redesign high schools would benefit all learners, but these models hold particular promise for immigrant youth, who need the most support developing awareness of college and career pathways and personalized instruction to accelerate their learning and address gaps. High school redesign advanced in Massachusetts by both the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and the Barr Foundation would help high schools build partnerships that allow students to benefit from anytime-anywhere learning and stronger linkages to vocational training, post-secondary institutions, and work-based learning opportunities. While these approaches are similar to the early college and alternative education models described above, advocates for high school redesign promote more radical transformation to create these learning opportunities at much greater scale. For Gateway Cities with large high schools serving thousands of immigrant students, advancing this kind of transformative change could offer real benefits.<sup>22</sup>

### **B. Demand-Side Models**

All of the above models described can be useful for demand-side strategies that prepare residents to fill jobs in growing sectors, and Gateway City leaders can also

use their clout to champion workforce development strategies that build regional competitive advantage and fuel long-term economic growth. In this regard, two models figure prominently: regional partnerships and university research centers.

**1. Regional partnerships.** Workforce development efforts that address the needs of specific sectors or industry clusters must be aligned with broader regional economic development strategy. This implies organizing along the boundaries of the larger regional economy as opposed to political boundaries. Examples include Wired65, and here in Massachusetts, the Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC)—a collaboration across industry, academia, and government created in 2012.

In Gateway City regions, capacity can also be limited to maintain such partnerships. The recently-enacted eco-

organizations such as the Lawrence Partnership. Given the employer hiring needs in these regions, these private, nonprofit partnerships are likely to take a more active role in supporting workforce development efforts in the future.<sup>23</sup>

**2. University research centers.** In a knowledge-economy, one strategy to seed new clusters is establishing a premier university research center in partnership with industry. With top talent and resources, the research center can then serve as the locus for regional workforce development partners working to meet the sector's growing demand for workers at all levels.

The State University of New York's College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering (CSNE) is a recent high-profile example of such an approach. The \$150 million joint investment New York State and IBM made in 2001 has translated into \$20 billion in private

Although not on the same scale, Massachusetts recently made a series of similar investments, including the Massachusetts Medical Device Development Center (M2D2) at UMass-Lowell, the Massachusetts Digital Games Institute (MassDiGI) at Becker College, and the Albert Sherman Center for biomedical research at UMass Medical School.

## IV. Fortifying Workforce Innovation in Massachusetts

With WIOA, a series of large federal grants, and support from private philanthropy, education and workforce leaders in Massachusetts have come together to transform systems and improve outcomes. To reinforce and further this concerted effort, there are several key steps we must take as a state. We conclude our enlistment guide for Gateway City leaders by outlining the five highest-order priorities:

**1. Integrating education and labor-market data systems.** To understand whether education and training is working, Massachusetts must move forward with integrating its longitudinal student-data system with employment and wage data. A number of states, including Florida, Kentucky, Hawaii, Idaho, Utah, and Texas, have already achieved this task. The data give policymakers invaluable information about industry workforce needs, labor migration patterns, and ROI in training. Equally important, they help students make more informed choices about career paths and educational providers.<sup>25</sup> In 2015, Massachusetts received a \$7 million federal grant to integrate these data systems. The state's WIOA plan includes data integration as a priority, although there are many unresolved issues

## AS THEIR WAGES RISE, THE SUPPORT THEY ARE PROVIDED DECLINES SHARPLY AND THEY MAY ACTUALLY END UP WITH FEWER NET RESOURCES.

economic development bill includes provisions offered by the Baker Administration that seek to bolster the role of regional economic development organizations (REDOs) by requiring them to develop strategic plans in return for state assistance. The legislation specifically identifies regional cluster development and efforts to foster regional workforce skills as tactics to incorporate in these strategies.

In addition, a number of Gateway Cities have built capacity in private, nonprofit economic development

and public investment, spawning over 7,000 nanotechnology jobs in the Capital Region. The model holds real relevance for regions outside Boston that have similar fundamentals to Albany in terms of offering communities with strong public-education systems and high quality of life. New York State prioritized this investment in an attempt to reverse the long-term decline in upstate high-tech manufacturing. These attributes have allowed the CSNE to attract top talent and retain one-third of graduates in the Capital Region.<sup>24</sup>

regarding how wage-record data will be made accessible to researchers and aggregated into reports for the public to digest. Moreover, maintaining these systems calls for staff capacity that the Department of Unemployment Assistance, which oversees these sensitive wage-data records, currently lacks.

**2. Establishing performance metrics and shared accountability.** Performance measures are critical to understanding how effectively programs are operating. Federal workforce programs have been criticized as narrowing the focus to short-term employment outcomes rather than the skill development needed for long-term economic well-being. WIOA addresses this challenge, but the federal measures are still relatively short-term captures of earning gains and the development of basic skills and credentials.<sup>26</sup> Massachusetts' WIOA plan commits the state to going one step further. As part of its effort with the Alliance for Quality Career Pathways—and working together with the Workforce Data Quality Campaign—Massachusetts will track an individual across programs over multiple years, reporting on the bundle of services the client receives, their completion of a Career Action Plan (CAP), and their long-term labor market outcomes.

WIOA also represents progress in moving the system toward more broadly-shared accountability for outcomes. For the first time, all partners must present outcomes using a common set of measures, and penalties can be deducted from WIOA discretionary targets for missed targets. For Gateway Cities where improving labor market outcomes for a large subset of residents is paramount, more effort will be needed to ensure that measures also capture the performance of the K-12 and higher education system working in tandem.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BASICS: HOW IS WIOA DIFFERENT?

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), a national, nonpartisan, anti-poverty organization advancing policy solutions for low-income people in Washington, DC, has summarized four potentially transformative changes ushered in by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

- 1. WIOA increases the focus on serving the most vulnerable workers**—low-income adults and youth who have limited skills, lack work experience, and face other barriers to economic success. At least 75 percent of youth funds must be spent on out-of-school youth, up from 30 percent under WIA. The youth age eligibility has increased from age 21 to 24.
- 2. WIOA expands education and training options to help participants access good jobs and advance in their careers.** The act eliminates sequence of job search services so individuals can move directly to training. WIOA training funds can now be used for individuals who are unable to get Pell grants or need additional funding beyond Pell, and ABE services are broadened to include post-secondary and career transitions.
- 3. WIOA helps disadvantaged and unemployed adults and youth earn while they learn through support services and effective employment-based activities.** The law supports on-the-job training by allowing public funds to reimburse private employees for rates up to 75 percent of wages, up from 50 percent under WIA. Up to 10 percent of dislocated worker funds can now be used for transitional employment.
- 4. WIOA aligns planning and accountability policies across core programs to support more unified approaches to serving low-income, low-skilled individuals.** The law requires a 4-year planning cycle vs. a 3-year horizon under WIA. States can now combine plans for WIOA and CTE, TANF, SNAP. WIOA also establishes common performance measures and financial sanctions for failing to meet them.

Source: Kisha Bird and others. “New Opportunities to Improve Economic and Career Success for Low-Income Youth and Adults” (Washington, DC: CLASP, 2014).

Discussions about moving in this direction are currently ongoing as Massachusetts adjusts its K-12 accountability policies to comply with revisions to the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Acts Congress passed in December 2015. Through the fall and into early 2017, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will be developing this new accountability framework.

**3. Providing seamless support over an extended continuum.** Lifting up people with multiple barriers into career pathways and higher wage employment requires greater support for longer periods of time than our workforce system has historically offered. Structures for maintaining assistance to youth out of intensive interventions like the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative are particularly lacking. Specifically calling attention to the need to provide longer funding periods to allow for deeper levels of engagement with individuals who confront multiple barriers to success, the Governor's taskforce on chronic unemployment recommends positioning community-organizations to fill this void. Resources would flow through an innovative state Economic Opportunity Fund to be created by legislation filed by the administration in 2017.

**4. Addressing “cliff effects.”** Recent analysis from UMass-Boston's Center for Social Policy shows that low-income parents often have little incentive to take on the stress and uncertainty of employment. As their wages rise, the support they are provided declines sharply, and they may actually end up with fewer net resources. For instance, a single parent with basic safety-net supports (excluding child care vouchers) and subsidized housing loses resources as their earnings rise above \$14 per hour and *they will not experience net*

*benefits to earnings gains until their wages climb above \$26 per hour.* These challenges can keep parents out of the labor market, which translates into lost output.<sup>27</sup> Governor Baker's taskforce on chronic unemployment called on the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to examine policy changes that could remove or mitigate the disincentives created by cliff effects.

**5. Designing new governance structures.** Regions need governance bodies with the capacity to convene community leaders, lead analytical efforts, and develop strategy. WIOA envisions local workforce investment boards moving from entities that primarily manage federal grants and contract with career centers to providing this more robust suite of services. But real questions remain about how they balance developing the capacity to address supply-side issues and all of the human services coordination required with capacity to act on demand-side issues, which means a much tighter alignment with economic development organizations and geography that corresponds to regional economies rather than the political boundaries of urban centers.

Over the course of the next year, each region will be completing their first workforce plan of the WIOA-era. These planning processes will be an early test of local capacity to analyze workforce needs and coalesce workforce partners around a shared strategy.

### CASE STUDY IN SYSTEMS CHANGE THROUGH COLLABORATION: WASHINGTON STATE'S BASIC FOOD EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING PROGRAM

Washington State's Basic Food Employment & Training Program is a case study of state officials from community colleges, community-based organizations, and government agencies coming together to transform a system and deliver more support to residents with multiple barriers to employment. In 2004, Washington State saw an opportunity to use federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) job-training funds to better meet the needs of low-income residents with multiple barriers to employment. Through combined effort, they developed Washington's Basic Food Employment and Training Program, which now delivers nearly \$30 million annually in training through 34 state colleges and more than 30 community-based organizations.

In 1996, federal welfare reform expanded SNAP Employment and Training Funds (SNAP-ET). Most states have offered only very limited services through SNAP-ET formula funds, which all states receive based on the number of able-bodied adults receiving SNAP benefits subject to work requirements. But states may also receive SNAP-ET 50-percent matching funds for state expenditures on training programs and participant expenses for daycare, transportation, and housing assistance. Under the Washington State model, this match is provided by expenditures that community colleges and community-based organizations were already making to support these services without federal funding.

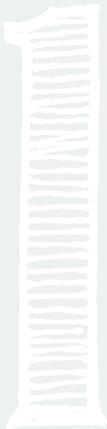
Figuring out how to make this arrangement work was a complex undertaking. The third-party partners had to determine eligibility and deliver services in advance of the federal reimbursement. They were able to pull this off because they had a long history of working collaboratively with the state. They also received valuable design assistance from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The foundation had also been engaged in other efforts with the state, and provided technical assistance through consultants to help convince federal officials that the SNAP-ET design was viable.

Over the past year, Massachusetts has been working with the Seattle Jobs Initiative and the USDA to replicate the Washington State model to leverage SNAP-ET dollars to serve more low-income individuals with multiple barriers to employment.<sup>28</sup>

# CHALK TALK

MODELS OF WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT TRANSFORMATION





## PHOENIX CHARTER ACADEMY NETWORK

The Phoenix Charter Academy Network is an academically rigorous alternative to district alternative schools and GED programs for young people who drop out or are at risk of dropping out of high school. The network offers a high challenge, high support environment committed to supporting young people's academic success and transition into post-secondary education or training.

The network began in 2006 in Chelsea with 75 students. In addition to Chelsea, Phoenix schools now serve students in Springfield (where they are a public charter school), and Lawrence (where they are a district school). Together, these three schools serve a total of 500 teens and young adults—who are typically older than traditional high-school students. The network is committed to supporting young people at risk of not completing high school: 60% of the student body is made up of teen parents, court-involved youth, English-language learners, former dropouts, highly truant youth, and students receiving special education services.

Phoenix schools combine an intensive academic focus with socio-emotional supports to ensure that students are successful. Academic elements include longer school days (9-5), AP courses, 70 minutes of individualized daily tutoring, and daily sustained silent reading. Support for post-secondary access include dual enrollment opportunities, SAT preparation, individualized secondary and post-secondary course planning, and college coaching. Students and their families have access to social workers for individual or group therapy and referrals to other social services. On-site day-care for students' children is available as another support to help parenting students succeed. The school has an athletic program and other extracurricular activities and clubs as well.

The Phoenix network has plans to expand to other Gateway cities. Their expansion model includes partnering with local schools and school districts to implement additional network schools, and considering ways to integrate key pieces of their model into local schools.



## GATEWAY TO COLLEGE

Five community colleges in Massachusetts are currently operating a Gateway to College model: Holyoke, Massasoit, Mount Wachusett, Bristol, and Quinsigamond. For example, the Brockton Public Schools launched the Gateway to College program in partnership with Massasoit Community College in 2007. The effort was to provide an alternative pathway for students ages 16 to 21 who had dropped out or were on the verge of leaving high school. The idea was to accelerate learning by marrying carefully-designed courses with student supports. Classes are held on the Massasoit campus, which helps students adjust to the expectations of the college environment. The program enrolls approximately 120 students in cohorts of 20 to 25. Students graduate from the program with only two semesters remaining to complete their associate's degree.

The Gateway to College network recently received a \$2.4 million grant from the Barr Foundation to support the addition of six new community college-based programs in New England over the next five years, as well as program improvement and college-readiness initiatives in all of the programs in the region.

## PLATFORM TO EMPLOYMENT

The Platform to Employment (P2E) begins with a five-week preparatory program. Over the course of 100 hours, participants receive customized job readiness and skill building focused on identifying their transferable skills; networking and communication; and developing goals and a career action plan. Particular attention is placed on restoring confidence and building a sense of self-worth. All participants undergo a behavioral health assessment and have access to counseling. The program then turns to their job search. Employers can hire participants for an 8-week trial period, during which all wages are covered by the program. P2E also assumes responsibility for unemployment insurance and workers' compensation.

P2E was first piloted in Connecticut in 2011. Over 80 percent of those completing the five-week program entered an eight-week work experience, and nearly 90 percent of those participants were eventually hired. P2E has since been replicated across the county, with funding provided by the AARP Foundation, Citi Community Development, the Walmart Foundation, and more recently, the US Department of Labor.<sup>30</sup>

## FASTTRAC

Minnesota's FastTrac program is a model for a statewide and state-led career pathway initiative for underprepared adults. Established in 2007 with support from the Joyce Foundation's Shifting Gears initiative, Minnesota built FastTRAC to increase cross-system collaboration among adult basic education centers, workforce development agencies, and career and technical education providers. A range of public agencies partnered together to make FastTRAC possible, including the state's human services, corrections, higher education, and labor departments. These departments made significant policy changes to further program goals. In addition to these changes and aligning resources to fund services, they also entered into data-sharing agreements to support evaluation and continuous improvement.

Between 2009 and 2012, the FastTRAC served more than 3,000 clients. Nearly 90 percent earned industry-recognized credentials or credits toward those credentials, and almost 70 percent obtained employment in their career pathway. Those exiting the program had wages one-third higher than their pre-enrollment wages. Participants are more likely to enroll in college courses than traditional ABE students, and more likely to avoid developmental education.<sup>31</sup>

## BREAKING THROUGH

In 2011, Massachusetts's 15 community colleges received a three-year, \$20 million grant to implement the Massachusetts Community Colleges and Workforce Development Transformation Agenda (MCCWDTA). Through MCCWDTA, community colleges are transforming their approach to serving low-skilled adults. The Breaking Through model (developed by Jobs for the Future) is the centerpiece of this effort. Together with Jobs for the Future, community colleges in Kentucky, Michigan, and North Carolina have pioneered this model.

The approach includes contextualized and accelerated learning, coaching and other academic and nonacademic supports, and alignment to support further progress in post-secondary education and success in the labor market.<sup>29</sup>

## JEREMIAH PROGRAM

The Jeremiah Program began in 1993 in Minneapolis. The model begins with empowerment training, a 16-week course provided during the pre-admission phase. Families then receive safe, affordable housing in a campus community that features on-site Child Development Centers. The centers provide convenient, high-quality early childhood education for children from infancy through age five. All women enroll in a post-secondary education program upon residency in the program. They also receive life skills education, coaching, and employment readiness training. The program has shown that this intensive suite of services provide ROI by improved outcomes for both the first generation (parents) and the second generation (their children).<sup>32</sup>

## A BETTER LIFE

The Worcester Housing Authority launched the A Better Life (ABL) program in 2012 to help residents of public housing transition from subsidized housing to private-sector housing. Participants must work or enroll in an education or training program. With funding from the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts, participants receive case management and a broad array of support services.

The housing authority asked current tenants to volunteer to join the program. They later made participation in ABL a stipulation of lease agreements in exchange for admission preferences. Approximately 80 percent of ABL participants are either employed or enrolled in school at least part-time after two years in the program. Relative to a comparison group, ABL families are 1.8 times more likely to be employed after two years. They earn significantly higher income, are more likely to participate in education or training, and are less likely to suffer physical or sexual partner violence victimization.<sup>33</sup>

## WIRED65

Serving the 26 counties in Kentucky and Indiana along the I-65 corridor, the program grew out of a US Department of Labor Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development Grant (WIRED) awarded in 2007. The partnership, which includes five local WIBs, has been successful cultivating employer-led workforce partnerships in manufacturing. Together, they developed a regionally recognized, entry-level certified production technician certification offered first to incumbent workers, and then to those seeking employment in manufacturing. The partnership has also worked with local community colleges to develop new manufacturing credentialing programs. Building on these, the partnership established the Kentucky Manufacturing Career Center, a sector-based One-Stop Career Center that is supplying a ready workforce to growing manufacturing companies (as well as building career pathways from manufacturing to engineering), based on the National Association of Manufacturers' stackable credential system.<sup>34</sup>

MODELS OF WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT TRANSFORMATION

## APPENDIX A

### Gateway City Opportunity Youth Populations by School and Employment Status, Gender, and Age

City	Estimated Number of Opportunity Youth						
	Population	Not working; not in school	Not in school; low- wage job (<\$10/hr.)	Male	Female	Age 16 to 19	Age 20 to 24
Attleboro	707	240	467	413	295	157	550
Barnstable	742	252	490	433	309	165	577
Brockton	2,164	736	1,428	1,262	901	481	1,682
Chelsea	875	298	578	510	365	195	680
Chicopee	1,226	417	809	715	511	273	954
Everett	948	322	626	553	395	211	737
Fall River	2,087	709	1,377	1,217	869	464	1,622
Fitchburg	1,231	419	812	718	513	274	957
Haverhill	1,127	383	744	658	470	251	877
Holyoke	1,159	394	765	676	483	258	901
Lawrence	2,636	896	1,740	1,538	1,098	586	2,049
Leominster	704	239	465	411	293	157	547
Lowell	3,071	1,044	2,027	1,792	1,279	683	2,388
Lynn	2,108	717	1,391	1,230	878	469	1,639
Malden	1,563	532	1,032	912	651	348	1,215
Methuen	726	247	479	424	303	162	565
New Bedford	2,410	820	1,591	1,406	1,004	536	1,874
Peabody	806	274	532	470	336	179	627
Pittsfield	788	268	520	460	328	175	613
Quincy	1,710	581	1,129	998	712	380	1,330
Revere	905	308	597	528	377	201	704
Salem	1,147	390	757	669	478	255	892
Springfield	4,490	1,527	2,963	2,619	1,871	999	3,491
Taunton	988	336	652	576	412	220	768
Westfield	1,181	402	779	689	492	263	918
Worcester	3,400	1,156	2,244	1,984	1,416	756	2,644
<b>Gateway Total</b>	<b>40,901</b>	<b>13,906</b>	<b>26,994</b>	<b>23,861</b>	<b>17,040</b>	<b>9,100</b>	<b>31,800</b>

Source: MassINC estimates from 2010-2014 ACS PUMS

Note: Gateway City estimates were derived by apportioning statewide Opportunity Youth counts to each Gateway City based on their respective shares of the Massachusetts population age 16 to 24 and their share of state population with income below poverty. While this method is not precise, in Gateway Cities for which ACS PUMS estimates are available, it produced relatively close approximations. These figures are intended to provide information on order of magnitude, not information for cross-city comparison.

## Appendix B

### Gateway City Adults by Wages and Employment Status

City	Number of residents ages 25 to 64			Share of residents ages 25 to 64		
	Wages below 200% of poverty	Unemployed or not in the labor market	Total	Wages below 200% of poverty	Unemployed or not in the labor market	Total
Attleboro	3,125	3,356	6,481	13%	13%	26%
Barnstable	3,252	3,492	6,744	13%	14%	28%
Brockton	8,344	8,961	17,306	17%	18%	35%
Chelsea	3,662	3,933	7,595	18%	19%	37%
Chicopee	4,862	5,222	10,084	17%	18%	34%
Everett	3,340	3,587	6,927	16%	17%	32%
Fall River	8,773	9,421	18,194	18%	19%	38%
Fitchburg	4,330	4,650	8,979	20%	22%	42%
Haverhill	4,546	4,882	9,428	13%	14%	27%
Holyoke	4,724	5,073	9,797	23%	24%	47%
Lawrence	9,470	10,170	19,639	27%	29%	55%
Leominster	2,986	3,207	6,192	13%	14%	28%
Lowell	11,447	12,293	23,741	21%	22%	43%
Lynn	10,476	11,250	21,726	22%	24%	47%
Malden	7,580	8,141	15,721	23%	25%	48%
Methuen	4,839	5,197	10,036	21%	22%	43%
New Bedford	10,518	11,296	21,814	22%	23%	45%
Peabody	5,414	5,814	11,228	20%	22%	42%
Pittsfield	4,655	4,999	9,653	20%	22%	42%
Quincy	10,292	11,053	21,345	19%	21%	40%
Revere	5,228	5,615	10,843	18%	19%	37%
Salem	5,807	6,236	12,044	25%	27%	51%
Springfield	21,101	22,661	43,762	28%	30%	58%
Taunton	6,314	6,781	13,095	21%	22%	43%
Westfield	3,148	3,381	6,529	15%	16%	31%
Worcester	26,488	28,445	54,933	29%	31%	59%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>194,721</b>	<b>209,114</b>	<b>403,836</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>41%</b>

Source: MassINC estimates from 2010-2014 ACS PUMS

Note: Gateway City estimates were derived by apportioning statewide adult counts to each Gateway City based on their respective shares of the Massachusetts population age 25 to 64 as well as their share of the state population with income below poverty. While this method is not precise, in Gateway Cities for which ACS PUMS estimates are available, it produced relatively close approximations. These figures are intended to provide information on order of magnitude, not information for cross-city comparison.

## Appendix C

### Federal Funding for Core WIOA Programs, FY 2017

Workforce Investment Area	TITLE I			Wagner Peysers Employment Services	Total
	Adult	Dislocated Worker	Youth		
Berkshire	\$284,977	\$363,588	\$286,329	\$207,576	\$1,142,470
Bristol	916,420	792,968	972,988	611,861	3,294,237
Brockton	530,932	554,039	611,100	408,632	2,104,703
Cape Cod & Islands	625,530	565,581	664,124	422,760	2,277,995
Central Mass	995,646	934,940	1,143,990	947,679	4,022,255
Greater Lowell	456,436	642,916	486,494	460,798	2,046,644
Greater New Bedford	710,669	633,682	759,567	389,070	2,492,988
Hampden County	1,533,673	909,547	1,635,787	754,230	4,833,237
Merrimack Valley	721,311	738,718	779,451	571,650	2,811,130
Metro North	911,690	937,249	906,708	1,267,193	4,022,840
Metro South/West	817,092	1,007,658	983,593	1,410,650	4,218,993
No. Central	494,275	541,342	532,890	412,978	1,981,485
North Shore	591,238	678,697	611,100	678,155	2,559,190
South Shore	710,669	864,531	731,729	866,169	3,173,098
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$10,300,558</b>	<b>\$10,165,456</b>	<b>\$11,105,850</b>	<b>\$9,409,401</b>	<b>\$40,981,265</b>

Source: MA Department of Labor & Workforce Development

## Appendix D

### Workforce Development Line Items in the Massachusetts State Budget, FY 2017

<b>Youth Programs</b>	Crossroads	\$25,000
	Gang Prevention Grant Program	6,000,000
	High Demand Scholarship Program	500,000
	Safe and Successful Youth Initiative	6,560,000
	School-to-Career Connecting Activities	3,398,750
	Statewide College and Career Readiness Program	700,000
	STEM Pipeline Fund	1,500,000
	STEM Starter Academy	4,750,000
	Transitional Employment Program (Roca)	2,000,000
	Youth Violence Prevention Grants	1,337,124
	Youth-At-Risk Matching Grants	2,639,000
	Youth-Build Grants	2,000,000
	YouthWorks	10,200,000
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$41,609,874</b>
<b>Adult Programs</b>	Digital Health Internship Incentive Fund	100,000
	Nursing and Allied Health Workforce Development Initiative	200,000
	Adult College Transition Services	250,000
	Train Vets to Treat Vets	250,000
	Demonstration Workforce Development Program	250,000
	Community College Workforce Grants	750,000
	Secure Jobs Pilot	800,000
	Pathways to Self Sufficiency	1,000,000
	Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund	1,000,000
	Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Development Grants	1,625,000
	Employment Assistance	2,188,102
	Community Based Employment	3,000,000
	Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind	3,340,735
	One Stop Career Centers	4,025,000
	Vocational Rehabilitation for the Disabled	10,260,724
	Employment Services Program	12,694,060
	Workforce Training Fund (Transfer)	23,100,000
	Adult Basic Education	29,468,517
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>94,302,138</b>
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$135,912,012</b>

Source: Massachusetts Budget & Policy Center

Note: This table is MBPP's analysis of the state budget excluding one disability line item, the \$192 million Community Day and Work Program for the Developmentally Disabled, which provides intensive services and supports in addition to workforce training.

## Endnotes

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The Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth (MassINC) is a rigorously non-partisan think tank and civic organization. We focus on putting the American Dream within the reach of everyone in Massachusetts using three distinct tools—research, journalism, and civic engagement. Our work is characterized by accurate data, careful analysis, and unbiased conclusions.

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