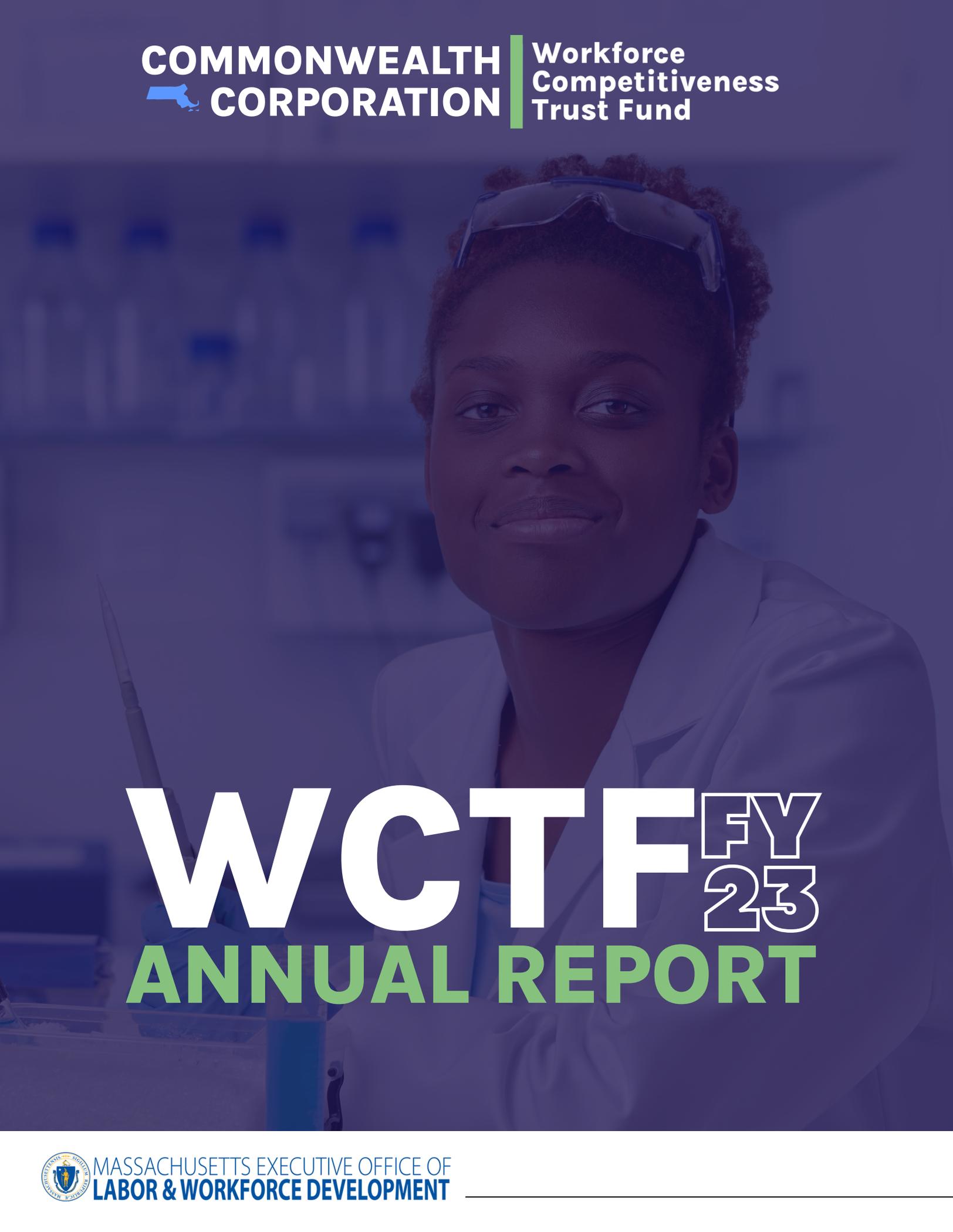


COMMONWEALTH
 **CORPORATION**

**Workforce
Competitiveness
Trust Fund**



WCTF **FY**
23
ANNUAL REPORT



MASSACHUSETTS EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF
LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

ANNUAL ADDRESS

The Healey-Driscoll Administration, with the support by the Legislature, dedicates significant effort and strategy to leverage the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund (WCTF) as a key tool in the toolbox to prepare, train, and hire untapped, diverse talent in Massachusetts. The WCTF was established through economic stimulus legislation passed by the Massachusetts Legislature in 2006. Led by the Commonwealth Corporation (CommCorp), a quasi-public agency under the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, the WCTF invests in demand-driven programs designed by industry-sector partnerships that train and place unemployed and underemployed workers. The purpose of the fund is to support the development and implementation of employer and worker-responsive programs to enhance worker skills, incomes, productivity, and retention and to increase the quality and competitiveness of Massachusetts firms.

WCTF grants expand training capacity to upskill new workers and address employers' hiring needs across a broad range of occupations within industries such as Healthcare, Information Technology, Transportation, Life Sciences, Early Childhood Education, and Clean Energy.

In 2018, the Massachusetts Legislature voted to rename grant awards from the WCTF in memory of the late Senator Kenneth J. Donnelly, who was a steadfast champion of promoting workforce opportunities in the Commonwealth, especially for people who might otherwise lack a pathway to economic stability. In this spirit, Senator Kenneth J. Donnelly Workforce Success Grants seek to foster sector partnerships that are powered by local organizations who possess deep expertise and aim to uplift people of all backgrounds. This model enables education and community organizations to build and sustain effective partnerships with employer partners and the public workforce system while striving to incorporate more equitable and innovative practices that lead to increased economic mobility for more people in the Commonwealth.

CommCorp administers the WCTF on behalf of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, as well as the Workforce Skills Cabinet (WSC), which aligns the Executive Offices of Education, Labor and Workforce Development, Economic Development, and Health and Human Services to support a comprehensive economic growth agenda to benefit all corners of the Commonwealth. WCTF grants represent projects and activities with an intentional lens and focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion for all citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, especially residents most underrepresented in the state's workforce system.

The enabling legislation for WCTF (Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 29 Section 2WWW) calls for a report to be filed annually with the Secretary of Administration and Finance; the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means; and the Joint Committees on Community Development and Small Business, Education, Economic Development and Emerging Technologies, Labor and Workforce Development, and Public Health.

The report must include the number of educational and eligible service providers receiving grants and participants receiving services and placed in employment, as well as the salary and benefits that participants receive after placement, the cost per participant, and job retention or promotion rates for the year after training ends.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS: **EXPANDING CAPACITY & OPPORTUNITY**



2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Expanding Capacity & Opportunity

WCTF programs serve residents across the Commonwealth whose life experiences and circumstances make it difficult for them to succeed in employment without targeted support. They include residents who are underemployed and rely on aid from public benefits to support their families, people who have been disconnected from the workforce for a long period, individuals who have not been able to obtain a credential or complete formal schooling, and individuals whose first language is not English. Many are newcomers to this country and strive to seek prosperity and a new beginning for their families. Other participants may face barriers to work due to past involvement with the criminal justice system, health conditions such as a disability, or a substance use history.

In 2023, funded applicants represent regions across the Commonwealth and a wide range of sectors. Successful applications demonstrate collaboration across many stakeholders within the state's workforce system, such as community colleges, community-based organizations, MassHire regional workforce boards, and many employers. They all shared a common factor of working collaboratively through industry partnerships.

Among the goals of WCTF, this grant program has focused efforts to assist in revitalizing the workforce in Gateway Cities across Massachusetts as a strategy to develop pipelines of new and career-changing workers. As part of this goal, WCTF made significant investments in serving Gateway Cities from Lawrence to Lynn to Worcester and Salem to New Bedford. While projects were funded in every region of the state, around two-thirds of participants include residents of Gateway Cities. According to MassINC:

Gateway Cities are midsize urban centers that anchor regional economies around the state. For generations these communities were home to industry that offered residents good jobs and a “gateway” to the American Dream. Over the past several decades, manufacturing jobs slowly disappeared. Lacking resources and capacity to rebuild and reposition, Gateway Cities have been slow to draw new economic investment.

All WCTF funded programs support a training strategy to:

- Deliver occupationally focused training and placement programs to unemployed and underemployed individuals working outside the target industry, with the goal of placing them in unsubsidized employment in the target occupation upon completion of the training.
- Deliver occupationally focused training and placement programs to individuals currently working in the target sector (incumbent workers) with the goal of preparing them for advancement within their employer into a target occupation that pays \$2 more per hour than they are earning in their current position.



2023 HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

Develop, Implement, Enhance & Empower

With the strong support of policymakers and advocates in economic and workforce development, the WCTF has been able to award over \$67 million since 2013. Grant awards have continued to grow at significant rates this year due in part to substantial federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) investments. WCTF has continued to support and provide quality technical assistance to help programs develop and implement superior employer and worker-responsive programs. These programs have enhanced worker skills, incomes, productivity, and retention. This ultimately leads to the empowerment of thousands of individuals to enter into quality jobs with family-sustaining wages as well as a strong economic state for the Commonwealth.

Post-pandemic, the state continues to recover economically at a steady pace. This has resulted in a supply-demand challenge for hiring employers, struggling to attract and hire qualified, skilled workers at the pace which employers require. While the state is experiencing record-low unemployment, the state is also experiencing record-high job openings in all sectors. Programs like WCTF help to fill those gaps with highly trained workers. The Legislature and the Healey-Driscoll Administration prioritize an investment in education and workforce training models to offer expanded career pathway programs.

As a result, CommCorp, the WSC, and stakeholders worked on strategies to dramatically increase the number and size of WCTF grantees over the next few years, scaling up workforce organizations to support more employer partnership engagement, including but not limited to increased and more intricate partnerships with community colleges, MassHire regional workforce boards, and community-based organizations.

In 2021, the Legislature allocated \$37.5 million in funding appropriated through ARPA to support scaling up WCTF grant awards. This funding, in addition to the state appropriations, allows partnerships to plan and deliver larger-scale training, placement, and advancement programs. WCTF was also funded by the state budget at \$15 million in FY 24, with previous funding at \$10 million for FY 21, \$17 million for FY22, and \$17 million for FY 23. CommCorp, EOLWD, and the WSC are investing these resources to fully support economic recovery and growth.

The RFP for the WCTF was revised and reissued in November 2022 to reflect expanded options for grants associated with new ARPA funding, including training and promotion leading to wage advancement for current workers in priority sectors and occupations, removing grant size limits to enable partnerships to design and deliver larger-scale programs, and supporting partnerships that plan to work on aspects of job quality.



2023 HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

The Big Picture: WCTF Since 2013

THE LAST DECADE IN NUMBERS

COMPLETED GRANT CYCLES



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has experienced multiple fluctuations in the last decade workforce development and the economy due to a variety of factors. The Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund has been a consistent force that has contributed to the economic innovations and progress of a plethora of businesses and organizations over the last ten years. Additionally, the fund has provided a valuable resource to help provide families sustaining wages and jobs that support career advancement to nearly 2,000 individuals. The overwhelming positive outcomes have assisted in this and previous administration's goals to make Massachusetts a desirable place to live, work and thrive. The data below outlines this tremendous progress and efforts of Commonwealth Corporation and its many partner grantees to make achieved these goals. Moreover, while this publication is being prepared, there is no shortage of quality proposals which will result in thousands of dollars more in grant awards to assist even more business and thousands more individuals.

GRANT PROGRAMS



WORKFORCE COMPETITIVENESS TRUST FUND PROGRAMS

The descriptions below highlight WCTF programs funding operating in 2023



WORKFORCE COMPETITIVENESS TRUST FUND OR DONNELLY GRANTS

The WCTF invests in demand-driven programs designed by industry sector partnerships that train and place unemployed and underemployed workers. The purpose of the Fund is to support the development and implementation of employer and worker-responsive programs to enhance worker skills, incomes, productivity, and retention and to increase the quality and competitiveness of Massachusetts businesses. WCTF programs serve people across the Commonwealth whose life experiences and circumstances make it difficult for them to succeed in employment without targeted support. They include individuals who are underemployed and rely on aid from public benefits to support their families, individuals who have been disconnected from the workforce for a long period, and people who have not been able to complete formal schooling.

In 2018, the Massachusetts Legislature voted to rename grant awards from the WCTF in memory of the late Senator Kenneth Donnelly, who was a steadfast champion of promoting workforce opportunities in the Commonwealth, especially for people who might lack a pathway to economic stability. In this spirit, we seek to foster sector partnerships that are powered by local organizations that possess deep expertise and aim to uplift people of all backgrounds. The WCTF model enables community organizations to build and sustain effective partnerships with employer partners and the public workforce system while striving to incorporate more equitable and innovative practices that lead to increased economic mobility for more people in the Commonwealth. In 2023, there were 34 Donnelly grants actively in operation.

HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE HUB INITIATIVE

The Healthcare Workforce Hub Initiative awarded \$2.5M to seven regional partnerships led by a lead MassHire Workforce Board in each region. Following a six-month planning phase, grantees were awarded two-year-long implementation grants that began in 2021 and concluded June 30, 2023. These award allocations supported regional capacity-building efforts that resulted in training and placement/advancement programs for healthcare pathways across the Commonwealth. Approximately 540 individuals were enrolled in these programs, training for roles as certified nurse assistants, acute care nurse assistants, medical assistants, EMTs, and home health aides. Funding for these partnerships will continue with six-month planning contracts with more continued funding opportunities to come in the future.

WORKFORCE COMPETITIVENESS TRUST FUND PROGRAMS CONTINUED



RENEW

An innovative funding model to create a sustainable pathway for individuals to access high-quality training and placement programs for in-demand jobs. The model's concept is to invest public resources in a way that encourages employers to contribute back, ensuring the model's longevity. It supports education and training programs that retrain the unemployed, with a focus on partnerships with employers who commit to repaying training costs upon successful placements. Employers benefit from a consistent talent pipeline and potential cost savings, while workers gain industry-relevant skills for sustainable employment. One grant was funded in 2021 and is scheduled to conclude in 2024. One grant was funded in 2023 and scheduled to conclude in 2025.



SCALE

Three-month planning grants aimed at operationalizing partnerships through direct engagement from the business community to solve training, education, and talent needs. Grantees use this planning time to scale up an existing training program by increasing seat capacity, achieving cost efficiencies per student, and enhancing employer engagement and student support to facilitate scalability. Applicants will aim to produce an implementation application for an ARPA funded workforce program. 14 grants were funded in 2023.



ESOL

Design/re-design of sector-based training and placement programs that incorporate contextualized ESOL services to better serve individuals for whom English is not their first language and/or have limited English proficiency. Awardees conducted a four-month planning phase followed by two years of program implementation. \$1.8M in allocations were made to the five organizations receiving awards. Grant activity began in 2021 and concluded on October 31, 2023. Three programs have received continuation funding totaling 2.2 million to continue implementation for an additional three years.

GRANTS OPERATING IN 2023 BY THE NUMBERS



GRANTS OPERATING IN 2023

*indicates closed grants

**indicates new grants awarded in 2023

	GRANTEE	GRANT AWARD	TARGET INDUSTRY/ OCCUPATIONS	REGION	GRANT
1	Operation Able	\$329,600	Healthcare	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
2	Apprenti/WTIA	\$500,000	Information Technology	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
3	Asian American Civic Center	\$344,200	Banking and Finance	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
4	Asian Women for Health	\$401,854	Healthcare	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
5 **	Berkshire Workforce Board	\$500,000	Healthcare	Berkshires	WCTF Donnelly
6	Building Pathways	\$500,000	Construction	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
7	Center Community Health Education and Research Services	\$462,730	Healthcare	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
8	DPV Transportation	\$180,000	Transportation	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
9	Gloucester Marine Genomics Institute	\$500,000	Biotechnology	North Shore	WCTF Donnelly
10	Holyoke Community College	\$1,000,000	Healthcare	Hampden	WCTF Donnelly
11	Jewish Vocational Service	\$639,469	Healthcare	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
12	Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts	\$250,000	Healthcare	Berkshires	WCTF Donnelly
13	Mass Bio Ed Foundation	\$1,000,000	Biotechnology	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
14 **	Benjamin F. Franklin Cummings Tech	\$500,000	HVAC Technician	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
15 **	Central Region Workforce Board	\$870,593	Transportation	Central	WCTF Donnelly
16 **	Greater Brockton Workforce Board	\$239,984	Transportation	South Shore	WCTF Donnelly
17 **	Metro North Workforce Board	\$500,000	Healthcare	Metro North	WCTF Donnelly
18	Action for Boston Community Development	\$500,000	Early Education and Care	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly

GRANTS OPERATING IN 2023 CONTINUED

*indicates closed grants

**indicates new grants awarded in 2023

	GRANTEE	GRANT AWARD	TARGET INDUSTRY/ OCCUPATIONS	REGION	GRANT
19	Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center	\$500,000	Healthcare	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
20	Boston Children's Hospital	\$499,996	Healthcare	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
21	Cape Cod Regional Technical High School	\$225,000	HVAC Technician	Cape and Islands	WCTF Donnelly
22	Community Servings Inc.	\$500,000	Culinary	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
23	Hebrew Senior Life	\$632,469	Healthcare	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
24	Minuteman Technical Institute	\$500,000	Facilities Management	Metro North	WCTF Donnelly
25	North Shore Workforce Investment Board	\$319,880	Manufacturing	North Shore	WCTF Donnelly
26 **	The Polus Center	\$500,000	Healthcare	North Central	WCTF Donnelly
27	Quinsigamond Community College	\$499,974	Biotechnology	Central	WCTF Donnelly
28	1199 SEIU Training and Upgrading Fund	\$717,220	Healthcare	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
29	Tech Foundry Inc.	\$515,143	Information Technology	Hampden	WCTF Donnelly
30 **	Imaginal Group	\$597,651	Early Education and Care	Merrimack Valley	WCTF Donnelly
31 **	Boston Children's Hospital	\$500,000	Healthcare	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
32 **	Massachusetts Restaurant Association	\$159,850	Culinary	Central	WCTF Donnelly
33 **	Greater Boston Tech Training: Per Scholas	\$1,000,000	Information Technology	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
34 *	Catholic Charities	\$1,000,000	Information Technology	Greater Boston	WCTF Donnelly
35 **	Berkshire County Regional Employment Board	\$2,280,150.00	Certified Nurse Assistant Practice Assistant Medical Assistant Registered Behavior Technician Behavioral Health Direct Care	Berkshires	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants

GRANTS OPERATING IN 2023 CONTINUED

*indicates closed grants

**indicates new grants awarded in 2023

	GRANTEE	GRANT AWARD	TARGET INDUSTRY/ OCCUPATIONS	REGION	GRANT
36 **	MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board, Inc.	\$1,271,342.64	Certified Medical Assistant Emergency Medical Technician Behavioral Health Associate (Direct Care Worker) Recovery Coach Behavioral Resource Technician Patient Care Technician	Hampden	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants
37 **	City of Worcester - MassHire Central Region Workforce Board	\$1,079,838.37	Pharmacy Technician Phlebotomist Cardiovascular Technologist & Technician Clinical Medical Admin Assistant Certified Nurse Assistant Home Health Aide	Central	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants
38 **	City of Salem/MassHire North Shore WB HUB	\$2,413,204.23	Certified Nursing Assistant Licensed Practice Nurse Emergency Medical Technician Radiology Technician Medical Assistant Pharmacy Technician Phlebotomists	North Shore	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants
39 **	City of Lowell/MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board	\$2,792,281.50	Recovery Coach Mental Health Peer Support Specialist	Greater Lowell	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants
40 **	Boston Private Industry Council	\$1,103,477.55	Surgical Technician	Greater Boston	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants
41 **	Metro South West Workforce Board	\$1,458,242.75	Community Health Worker	Metro South West	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants

GRANTS OPERATING IN 2023 CONTINUED

*indicates closed grants

**indicates new grants awarded in 2023

	GRANTEE	GRANT AWARD	TARGET INDUSTRY/ OCCUPATIONS	REGION	GRANT
42 **	MassHire Greater New Bedford Workforce Board	\$2,251,523.27	Medical Assistant Phlebotomist Emergency Medical Technician Certified Nurse Assistant Certified Addiction Recovery Coach	South Shore	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants
43 **	MassHire Cape & Islands Workforce Board	\$2,160,690.40	Certified Nurse Assistant Practical Nurse	Cape and Islands	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants
44	Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges	\$366,700.00	Retail	Statewide	RENEW
45 **	Mount Wachusett Community College	\$300,000	Life Sciences	North Central	RENEW
46	Franklin Hampshire Employment and Training Consortium	\$29,988.20	Culinary	Franklin Hampshire	SCALE
47	UMass Boston (Collins Ctr)	\$28,072.67	Municipal Assessors	Greater Boston	SCALE
48	Nano Dimension	\$30,000.00	Manufacturing	Metro North	SCALE
49	Polus Center	\$30,000.00	Human Services	North Central	SCALE
50	Berkshire Medical Center	\$24,838.00	License Practical Nurse	Berkshires	SCALE
51	Greenfield Community College	\$27,864.00	C.N.A./H.H.A.	Franklin Hampshire	SCALE
52	Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce	\$10,129.00	C.D.L.	Cape and Islands	SCALE
53	Boston Engineering	\$29,913.00	Manufacturing	Greater Boston	SCALE
54	Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI)	\$29,966.00	Biotechnology	Central	SCALE
55	MassMEP	\$29,990.00	Manufacturing	Central	SCALE

GRANTS OPERATING IN 2023 CONTINUED

*indicates closed grants

**indicates new grants awarded in 2023

	GRANTEE	GRANT AWARD	TARGET INDUSTRY/ OCCUPATIONS	REGION	GRANT
56	Cultivate Pathways (NOPI)	\$29,975.00	Information Technology	Greater Boston	SCALE
57	Imaginal Group	\$29,645.00	Early Education and Care	Merrimack Valley	SCALE
58	Entrepreneurial and Business Collaborative LLC	\$30,000.00	Culinary	Hampden	SCALE
59 *	University of Massachusetts Amherst	\$520,764.00	Various	Hampden	ESOL
60 *	MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board	\$376,000.00	Various	Merrimack Valley	ESOL
61 *	El Centro del Cardenal Adult Education Program	\$419,628.00	Various	Greater Boston	ESOL
62 *	English for New Bostonians, Inc.	\$336,200.00	Various	Greater Boston	ESOL
63*	Berkshire County Regional Employment Board	\$2,280,150.00	Certified Nurse Assistant Practice Assistant Medical Assistant Registered Behavior Technician Behavioral Health Direct Care	Berkshires	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants
64*	MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board, Inc.	\$1,271,342.64	Certified Medical Assistant Emergency Medical Technician Behavioral Health Associate (Direct Care Worker) Recovery Coach Behavioral Resource Technician Patient Care Technician	Hampden	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants

GRANTS OPERATING IN 2023 CONTINUED

*indicates closed grants

**indicates new grants awarded in 2023

	GRANTEE	GRANT AWARD	TARGET INDUSTRY/ OCCUPATIONS	REGION	GRANT
65*	City of Worcester- MassHire Central Region Workforce Board	\$1,079,838.37	Pharmacy Technician Phlebotomist Cardiovascular Technologist & Technician Clinical Medical Admin Assistant Certified Nurse Assistant Home Health Aide	Central	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants
66*	City of Salem/Masshire North Shore WB HUB	\$2,413,204.23	Certified Nursing Assistant Licensed Practice Nurse Emergency Medical Technician Radiology Technician Medical Assistant Pharmacy Technician Phlebotomists	North Shore	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants
67*	City of Lowell/MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board	\$2,792,281.50	Recovery Coach Mental Health Peer Support Specialist	Greater Lowell	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants
68*	Boston Private Industry Council	\$1,103,477.55	Surgical Technician	Greater Boston	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants
69*	Metro South West Workforce Board	\$1,458,242.75	Community Health Worker	Metro South West	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants
70*	MassHire Greater New Bedford Workforce Board	\$2,251,523.27	Medical Assistant Phlebotomist Emergency Medical Technician Certified Nurse Assistant Certified Addiction Recovery Coach	South Shore	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants
71*	MassHire Cape & Islands Workforce Board	\$2,160,690.40	Certified Nurse Assistant Practical Nurse	Cape and Islands	Healthcare/ Behavioral Health Grants

2023 PROGRESS UPDATE



ANNUAL UPDATE

FY 2023 PROGRESS TO DATE

1,173 participants enrolled in WCTF-funded education and training programs up to date in 2023. The following data has been compiled through a detailed analysis of information that funded participants and grantee partners have provided. The data is a cumulative calculation of all active grants in FY 23. Special emphasis has been placed on data reflecting increases in participation rates and attention to individuals who are most underrepresented in terms of economic prosperity in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This is particularly relevant with income levels, demographics, and education attainment levels.

Demographics		
	Number	Percentage
Hispanic or Latino	309	26%
American Indian/Alaska Native/ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3	0.30%
Asian	90	8%
Black/African American	344	29%
Multi-Racial/Other Race	99	8%
Not Disclosed/Missing	16	1.59%
White	331	28%

Gender		
	Number	Percentage
Female	706	60%
Male	467	40%
Non-Binary/Other	23	2%
Not Disclosed/ Missing	10	1%

Age		
	Number	Percentage
16 - 21 Years Old	206	18%
22 - 24 Years Old	152	13%
25 - 34 Years Old	399	34%
35 - 44 Years Old	268	23%
45 - 54 Years Old	95	8%
55 Years & Older	53	5%
Average Age	32	

31 Languages Represented	Language:	
	Number	Percentage
English	869	74%
Spanish	82	7%
Haitian	55	5%
Creole	19	2%
Portuguese	21	2%
Arabic	17	1%
French		

Disability		
	Number	Percentage
Yes	65	6%
No	847	84%
Not Disclosed/Missing	95	9.43%

Unemployment Status		
	Number	Percentage
Not Applicable	916	90.96%
UI Claimant	75	6%
UI Exhaustee	28	2%

Educational Attainment Level		
	Number	Percentage
Less than HS equivalency	33	3%
HS or state mandated equivalency	464	40%
Some College, No Degree	371	32%
Associate's Degree	84	7%
Bachelor's Degree	161	14%
Master's Degree and above	60	5%

Other Characteristics		
	Number	Percentage
Low Income	757	75.17%
Single Parent	296	25%
Born in the U.S.A.	391	33%
Veteran	26	2%



Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund

- **Develop & Implement**
employer and worker responsive programs
- **Enhance**
worker skills, incomes, productivity, and retention
- **Empower**
Massachusetts firms to increase quality and competitiveness

SUCCESS STORIES



Pictured here: Participants from Building Pathways Inc.



Photo: El-Centro's IT students begin the Cybersecurity Fundamentals Program at Benjamin Franklin Cummings Institute of Technology in Boston.-Submitted Photo

TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

EL-CENTRO'S JOURNEY TO EMPOWERING DREAMS IN I.T.

Founded in 1956, Catholic Charities El-Centro is the oldest ESOL program in the state and provides various levels of instruction to a growing number of students. Unlike other similar organizations, El-Centro puts a unique focus on training its students for college and workforce readiness. Marianna Geraskina, El-Centro's director of education, speaks to their mission: "We are trying to do what few programs do because we are trying to prepare them for the level that they can go to college and really create for them a pathway into the middle class." Marianna adds, "It's not good for the community when very talented people are not used according to their potential, and the mission of El-Centro is to help each, and every student reach their potential."

El-Centro has received a WCTF grant of \$340,706 to fund their IT program, an avenue Marianna was confident would be helpful for her students' career development. "We wanted to get our students into vocational training, and when the pandemic started, our students were even more disadvantaged," says Marianna. "People worked from home, but our students could not. Most worked in the service sector; I didn't know where the world was going. I was thinking: What is a cross-sectional field where people can work in different places but have skills that transcend one narrow field? And I thought that IT was exactly that. They can work in a school, bank, factory, small business, big business, everywhere."

Currently, El-Centro's IT Program is serving its third cohort of students and has shifted from remote to hybrid sessions. Marianna has learned much about the field since her first cohort and has since been able to provide her students with multiple certificates and internship options. Additionally, she connected with several great community employers, such as DoIT and Onward!, and ultimately helped her students find successful jobs in their field or get promoted in their current line of work.

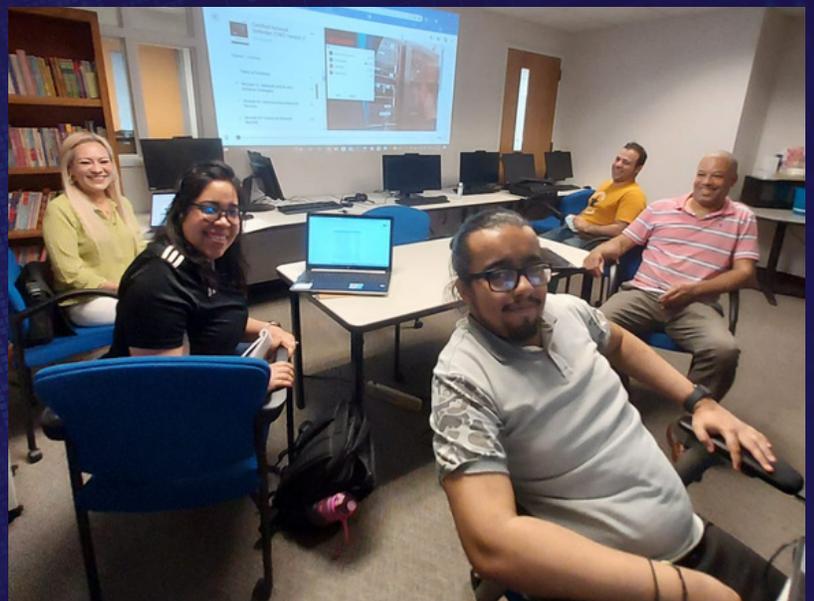
One of El-Centro's most successful stories is Ahmed's, who now works as a software analyst at Georgia Tech, where he used to be a student in biomedical engineering. "My goal was to have my own medical device company and software company, but you need a background in software development," he said. "I met with Marianna and told her about my dreams. She told me about this program that could really help me get on the right track. Now, I'm Security Plus certified and working as a software analyst. If it wasn't for El-Centro, I wouldn't be where I am now."

Ahmed was also grateful to connect with partners and lecturers. "Ambassadors from the cybersecurity industry would visit. They [would] tell students about things they can do to get into cybersecurity. Through it, I met so many different people in IT, and I got to connect with them on LinkedIn. Information from these experts was very valuable to my path."

Another student, Andrii, remarks on the support he received from other students, trainers, and El-Centro's Director. "Marianna was always with us, asking how we were and how our education was," says Andrii. "When we finished our cybersecurity [training], I didn't feel comfortable getting a certification, but we got together, and Ahmed helped us study. I started my fellowship in Boston in October." Andrii remarks that he is still in contact with his peers and teachers from the program today. "Marianna calls me every week, asking if I need help or information," he said. "I feel huge support from her."

At Catholic Charities El-Centro, not only do students learn practical and technical skills to increase career opportunities, but their confidence improves as well. "Confidence, I would say, is one of the major obstacles, and cultural fluency," says Marianna. "The Internship is very helpful in that regard. These opportunities are a huge personal success for students, both in terms of income and social fluency, so it's very important to them."

** Participant's last names have been omitted from this story at the individuals' request.*



El Centro IT Training Program prepares students for a successful career in Information and Technology. Pictured here, students gather during a session at El Centro's Adult Education Center facility in Jamaica Plain . - Submitted Photo



Participants from MassHire Berkshire accelerated medical assistant training program. - Submitted photo

EMPOWERING THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

In the heart of Berkshire County, a transformative journey unfolded through the MassHire Berkshire accelerated medical assistant training program. Driven by a pressing need for medical assistants, the initiative, led by Heather Boulger, Executive Director of MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board, and Bryana Malloy, Manager of Industry Relations, saw a collaboration with Berkshire Health Systems and Berkshire Community College. This unique partnership, supported by the Healthcare Workforce Hubs Grant, opened new doors for those seeking a brighter future in the healthcare sector.

Heather Boulger explained the program's inception: "We applied for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund as there was just a dire need for medical help, especially entry-level medical assistance."

"These entry-level positions are hard to attract and retain in the training," she continued.

At the core of this story is Kiana Nickles, a participant whose life took a turn toward hope and fulfillment. Motivated by a deep desire to help others, a desire sparked by personal loss, Kiana found her calling in the medical field. "What motivated me to join the program was my love for helping people," she shared, recalling how the passing of her mother steered her towards this path. Before joining the program, Kiana worked at an assisted living facility, an experience that further solidified her resolve to pursue a career in healthcare.

The program's innovative 'earn while you learn' model sets it apart. Participants like Kiana were employed as Practice Assistants by Berkshire Health Systems right from the start, earning wages while they learned.

This method not only provided financial support but also a sense of belonging. Bryana Malloy detailed this unique feature, saying, "They suggested providing a wage on day one of the training for medical assistants. So, it ended up being another job training from day one."

Kiana described her transformative training experience, particularly in a rheumatology office: "Working in the rheumatology office was eye-opening. I learned about treatments like injections and saw conditions like osteoarthritis up close." Kiana worked closely with doctors and is grateful for this experience, as this opportunity has motivated her to start higher studies.

The support provided to Kiana and her fellow trainees went beyond mere education. The program's support system was crucial in the transition from training to employment. Heather Boulger highlighted the holistic approach: "We support them by offering stipends for scrubs if they need help with transportation and anything else that they might need." The One Stop Career Center played a crucial role in offering continuous support, ensuring a seamless transition from training to employment.

The impact of the program was profound. Of the 35 individuals who embarked on this journey, 31 found their calling as Medical Assistants, a testament to the program's effectiveness and the dedication of its participants. This achievement was particularly remarkable, given the challenges posed by the post-pandemic environment.

Heather Boulger proudly stated, "We actually enrolled 35, but only so 31 actually entered the training, 31 completed, and 31 found employment. So that in itself is a huge success story."

Looking ahead, MassHire Berkshire is determined to build on this success. With a focus on strengthening partnerships and integrating technology in training, the program is poised to expand its reach and impact. Heather Boulger reflected on this, emphasizing the importance of adaptability and partnership: "The continuation of the forging of relationships and partnerships withstands any change in staffing."

This model of workforce development, as illustrated by Kiana's story, serves as a beacon of inspiration and a blueprint for similar initiatives.

MassHire Berkshire's accelerated medical assistant training program stands as a powerful narrative of empowerment, transformation, and community enhancement. It's a story that resonates with hope and possibility, illustrating how collaboration, innovation, and a deep commitment to community needs can create lasting change.



Participants from MassHire Berkshire accelerated medical assistant training program.
- Submitted photo



Pictured here: Participants from Building Pathways Inc. - Submitted Photo

BUILDING PATHWAYS: DIVERSIFYING THE CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE

A national model in developing the pipeline of workers for building construction, Building Pathways is helping diversify the industry in Massachusetts by recruiting and training diverse workers for entry into the construction and building trades.

Historically, women, particularly women of color, have faced significant challenges in entering and sustaining stable, well-paying careers in the construction industry. A report released in 2021 by the Institute for Women's Policy Research attests that women remain highly underrepresented in the trades, accounting for just 4 percent of all workers in construction occupations across the nation.

"That is why we prioritize women, people of color, and individuals from underserved communities," says Mary Vogel, Executive Director of Building Pathways. "The building trade has and to this day is largely populated by white males, and what we are doing is diversifying the construction building industry, particularly the building sector for women, people of color, and veterans, and then working not only to increase their participation but also retention," she added.

Building Pathways received a Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund grant to provide training and placement services to prepare participants for positions including carpenter, laborer, operating engineer, cement mason, electrician, plumber/pipefitter, sheet metal worker, sprinkler fitter, and ironworker. For this program, they have partnered with over a dozen union contractors, including McDonald Electrical Corp and Turner Construction.

"Participants can get a rich experience of what each of the trades do and what the trades can do for them," says Vogel. "We offer 200 hours of training, which is a combination of training in the classroom and on the job. We then advocate for them to get accepted into trade union and apprentice programs."

To ensure not only program participation but also employment retention, Building Pathways takes a tried-and-true holistic approach to meet the needs of its participants, providing career readiness and occupational skills training and even supporting with childcare. "Women and people of color tend to leave the industry at a greater rate. For this, it's truly a holistic approach to increase the pipeline and meet the demands of workers in our industry. They are provided with transportation vouchers when needed and even scholarships to reside the cost of their childcare for up to 6 months," says Vogel.

As they train new workers to join the industry, Building Pathways also works closely with its employer partners to help them welcome the workforce. Considering the trades and construction industry historically has been a male-dominated industry that primarily employs males, Vogel says providing anti-harassment and cultural sensitivity training to employers is crucial to effectively promote a healthy and welcoming work environment while ensuring retention. According to the U.S. Labor of Statistics, non-Hispanic white individuals make up 60.9% of the construction labor force, followed by 30% of workers of Hispanic origin.

Thomas A Cooney, Vice President at McDonald Electrical Corp, has been involved with the program since 2017. "I have hired over 30 of their graduates. For me, it's a chance to give opportunities to someone that may not traditionally get the opportunity. Whether it is a woman, a person of color, or a Boston resident from a marginalized community, this program has been creating a pipeline of good workers to support the industry."

Cooney and fellow employer partners like Amanda DiLando, Workforce Development Manager at Turner Construction, work closely with Building Pathways from screening program applicants to the end of the program. This is their first stop when they are looking for individuals to fill construction roles. "We know that if we are getting some that graduated the program, they are top quality, and they are ready to get into the trade and get the ground running," says Cooney. "This program is really making an impact on people's lives, and as an employer, I am really grateful for how they instill in them a strong work ethic," he added.

Funding this type of program is crucial and secures the workforce to get the job done, says DiLando. "It's extremely important because not only are we facing an aging workforce, and we need to make sure roles are being filled, but it's important because people who may naturally see this as an option are now seeing it. This makes people aware of the trades that they were not aware that this was an option."

Building Pathways is transforming lives and reshaping the landscape of the construction industry, breaking down barriers and fostering inclusivity. "They are so dedicated to ensuring that their students are ready to transition into the trade," says DiLando. Big kudos to the staff at Building Pathways, who are very committed to the students," said DiLando.



*Pictured here: Participants from Building Pathways Inc.
- Submitted Photo*



**We thank you for your
continued support.**

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