



FY2027 DRAFT WIOA Plan Executive Summary

The MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board (BWB), in partnership with our Chief Elected Official, Mayor Peter Marchetti of Pittsfield, is required to prepare a Fiscal Year 2027 Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Plan for Berkshire County for submission to the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. This planning document articulates the region's priorities and workforce development strategies and revisits the broad scope of how the Workforce Investment Act system will be coordinated with other systems providing employment and training services to improve services for both job seekers and employers.

For FY27, the MassHire Department of Career Services issued Policy 100DCS 04.117 local annual plan guidance, which includes allocations, program summaries, budgeting, and alignment with MassHire Innovation Project (MIP). Our plan includes the following:

1. Expanding Accessibility & Inclusive Service Delivery
2. Strengthening Operational Efficiency & Addressing Funding Gaps
3. Advancing Youth Service Strategies
4. Preparing for Implementation of the Workforce Pell Grant Program
5. Enhancing Business Services Capacity
6. Improving Customer Experience

Planning for WIOA will be coordinated with other systems providing employment and training services to improve services for both job seekers and employers. Our region's workforce development priorities continue to have an emphasis on alignment with BWB goals and initiatives; alignment of program design with local labor market trends to create a demand-driven system; developing career pathways and industry sector strategies; continuous improvement of the One-Stop Career Center system as the primary vehicle for delivering services; integration of WIOA and non-WIOA systems and programs to enhance services for job seekers and employers; minimizing duplication; and improving performance and accountability. The local plan will include performance and participant planning forms and the budget for how funds will be allocated. The comprehensive plan can be found after September 11, 2026 on the BWB website www.MassHireBerkshire.com.

The Chief Elected Official and the BWB are seeking public comment on the proposed draft plan. Interested parties may submit written comments regarding this document to the BWB by September 10, 2026 in order to be included with the plan.

All questions or comments should be directed to Heather Boulger at Heather@MassHireBerkshire.com.

WIOA FY27 Anticipated Allocations

Grant Source	Berkshire County FY26	Berkshire County FY27	% change from 2026
Adult	\$273,390	\$336,229	23%
Dislocated Worker	\$299,163	\$289,218	-3.3%
Youth	\$324,758	\$411,589	26.7%
WagnerPeyser 10% & 90%	\$183,953	\$192,961	4.9%
Total LWIB	\$1,081,264	\$1,229,997	13.8%

CC Allocation	\$201,009	\$216,840	7.9%
*WIB Portion (8%)	\$72K	\$98K	13%

Training continues to be a priority of the Berkshire Workforce system with 20% of WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Program funds to be used for training/education. The Berkshire County Individual Training Accounts will be capped at \$7,500. Training opportunities include a customer-choice driven form of individual training accounts that will help pay for the costs of approved training programs. We have requested a training waiver due to the limited number of customers entering training due to free training options.

Below are the proposed performance goals.

Title I Adults: Approximately 30 adults will be served in FY27. Goal of 22 entering training.
Negotiated Performance Goals:

- Entered employment: 67%
- Training Activities Obtaining Credential: 65%
- Average Earnings: \$23.00/hr

Adult job seekers will have access to a broad array of services from a comprehensive assortment of employment programs. WIOA provides for basic core services, which are available to all job seekers, and additional intensive and training services may be available to persons who meet certain eligibility criteria. On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunities are also available which is occupation specific training provided by an employer for a limited duration.

Additional collaborations included the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education funded adult education and post-secondary vocational education; Massachusetts Ability and Commission for the Blind vocational rehabilitation for persons with disabilities; Department of Transitional Assistance funded education and training services to public assistance and food stamp recipients; and Title V services to older workers.

Title I Dislocated Workers: Approximately 29 DW will be served in FY27 with 24 entering training.
Proposed Performance Goals:

- Entered employment: 74%
- Training Activities Obtaining Credential: 68%
- Average Earnings: \$25.00

Dislocated workers are those who have been permanently laid off or have received a notice of termination or layoff from employment and are eligible for the same WIOA core, intensive and training services provided to Title I Adults. Other training resources include National Emergency Grants for targeted company lay-offs, On-the-Job Training, Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund grant, and other industry-specific training grants in the region.

Title I Youth Programs: Approximately 56 youth will be served in FY27
Proposed Performance Goals will be negotiated:

- Employment or Education rate: 78%
- Attained Degree/Diploma/HISET/Cert.: 65%
- Degree or certificate attainment: 62%

Youth programs are selected through a competitive bidding process and target low-income, at-risk youth ages 14-25 who are in-school or out-of-school. Key services to *in-school youth* are dropout prevention;

academic support; career and leadership development; work experience; and case management services that link youth to other community resources and youth partnering agencies. Primary outcomes for in-school youth are successful completion of high school with a transition to employment and/or postsecondary education and attainment of a degree or certificate/credential.

Key services to *out-of-school youth* include programs that raise educational attainment levels and provide academic support; occupational skills development; career and leadership development; work experience; and case management services that link youth to other community resources and youth partnering agencies. The primary outcomes for out-of-school youth are transition to employment and/or post-secondary education, attainment of a degree or certificate/credential, and literacy/numeracy gains.

The Berkshire Region works closely with the Department of Social Services and Department of Youth Services to better coordinate dropout prevention and reintegration activities. Additional collaborations for youth include School-to-Career Connecting Activities programming which encompasses 12 school districts in providing internships to high-school students; Youth Works which places low-income, at-risk youth from Pittsfield into summer jobs; and adult education providers who work to reconnect youth to school, develop alternatives and/or identifies employment opportunities.

Wagner-Peyser:	FY2027 Goals:
• Labor exchange services	3,750 individuals
• Employers to be served	730 (230 new employers)
• Persons with Disabilities served	275
• Unemployment Insurance	2,000
• Veterans served	150

Wagner-Peyser provides universal access to core services as delivered through the One-Stop Career Center and an integrated array of labor exchange service activities between the job seeker and employer. The Berkshire Region will continue to be closely aligned with our economic development partners and implement strong business outreach and employer services programming to help connect our companies with training opportunities including the Workforce Training Fund, WTFP Express, Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund, and other industry-sector training programs.

Hours/Locations:

- 160 North Street, 3rd Floor open Monday-Thursday 8AM-4PM; Fridays 9AM-4PM;
- Unemployment Insurance Navigation Services Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 8AM-12PM
- MassHire Career Center will provide services at the North Adams Public Library on the 2nd & 4th Tuesdays from 9AM-3PM. Services include job search assistance, resume review, and RESEA appointments. Youth Services provided by appointment.

Narrative & Threshold Attached

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ATTACHMENT X

MassHire Key Considerations – Local Response

MassHire Workforce Board: Berkshire Workforce Board

MassHire Local Workforce Boards should incorporate the key considerations below within local planning to ensure proposed activities will support equitable access, operational sustainability, stronger employer and youth engagement, and improved outcomes for customers and businesses.

Please briefly describe how your local area will support or expand activities related to these Key Considerations.

KEY CONSIDERATION	RESPONSE
1. Expanding Accessibility and Inclusive Service Delivery Local Workforce Boards should consider how they will expand accessibility options and improve service delivery for a broader range of customers, including individuals with disabilities, individuals with limited English proficiency, and other populations that may experience barriers to accessing services. Considerations: Compliance with ADA accessibility requirements for websites and digital service platforms; Compliance with ADA accessibility requirements for documents, forms, notices, and other customer-facing materials; Strategies for gathering input from customers, staff, partners, and other stakeholders regarding accessibility needs and service barriers; and how such input will be used to inform implementation and continuous improvement.	MassHire Berkshire is committed to ensuring that the workforce system is accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all Berkshire County residents. Masshire Berkshire works closely with Title I (WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth), Title II (Adult Education and Literacy), Title III (Wagner-Peyser Employment Services), and Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation) partners to ensure that all eligible individuals—particularly those facing systemic barriers—can access services and supports. Strategies include: • Universal access through MassHire Career Centers, with multilingual staff, ADA compliant facilities, and digital access points • Access to real-time translation devices to loan out to employers to assist with interviews, onboarding, orientations, and training employees. 20 devices were loaned out in FY2026 • Targeted outreach to disconnected youth, low-income adults, individuals with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, and reentry populations • Co-located and coordinated services, often offered at partner or community-based sites, including adult education programs and vocational rehabilitation offices • Integrated supportive services, including referrals for childcare, transportation, housing,

	digital literacy, and mental health support to increase program retention and success • Career Center Services are delivered virtually and in person at multiple locations, including co-located at North Adams Public Library • Staff are trained in DEI and use culturally responsive approaches to engage disconnected youth, immigrants, justice-involved individuals, and individuals with disabilities. MassHire Berkshire and its partners are fully committed to ensuring physical and programmatic accessibility for individuals with disabilities: • Our Board and Career Center websites were audited and updated for ADA Compliance to ensure that people with disabilities are provided equal access to essential information online • ADA-compliant facility- Career Center is fully accessible and regularly assessed to meet physical accessibility standards. • Accessible technology and materials: Job search computers, website content, and digital tools meet or exceed WCAG accessibility standards. • Assistive technology: Available at career center to support customers with vision, hearing, or mobility impairments. • Staff training: Regular training on disability awareness, reasonable accommodation, and how to provide inclusive, individualized service. • Strategic partnerships with MassAbility and MCB go beyond compliance—they support co-enrollment, assistive tech, and inclusive placement Customer and stakeholder input is an important part of our continuous improvement process. Feedback is gathered through customer surveys, direct conversations with jobseekers and employers, staff observations, partner discussions, and engagement with community organizations that serve populations experiencing barriers to employment. The Board uses this information, along with performance and participation
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	data, to identify gaps, address barriers, and inform improvements to service delivery. Our regional approach is collaborative and proactive. Through the Berkshire Skills Cabinet and ongoing engagement with education, workforce, human service, and community partners, we identify populations that may be underserved and work collectively to improve access to services and supports. This includes strengthening connections to transportation, language services, education and training, work supports, and other resources that can help individuals participate successfully in the workforce. The Board views accessibility as an ongoing responsibility rather than a one-time compliance activity. We regularly evaluate customer experience, partner feedback, service utilization, and outcomes to identify opportunities for improvement. This structured, data-informed approach helps ensure that the Berkshire County workforce system remains welcoming, accessible, and responsive to the diverse needs of the community while maintaining high standards for service quality and accountability.
2. Strengthening Operational Efficiency and Addressing Funding Gaps Local Workforce Boards should consider how they will use available resources to strengthen operational efficiency, support staff capacity, and address service or staffing gaps resulting from the expiration, full allocation, or closeout of temporary funding sources. Considerations: Prioritization of staff time and responsibilities; Addressing gaps previously supported by expiring or fully allocated funding streams; Braid, blend, or coordinate funding streams to support staffing, service delivery, and administrative functions; and any planned changes to service models, workflows, or staffing structures to improve operational effectiveness.	MassHire Berkshire takes a disciplined, strategic approach to managing limited resources while maintaining a high level of service to Berkshire County residents, employers, and youth. We continually assess staffing capacity, workload, funding availability, and regional priorities to ensure that available resources are directed where they can have the greatest impact. Staff time and responsibilities are prioritized based on required Board functions, compliance responsibilities, customer and employer needs, and the priorities identified in the Berkshire Blueprint and State Workforce Agenda. The Board & Career Center maintains a lean organizational structure, with staff taking on multiple roles and collaborating closely with partners to avoid duplication and maximize capacity. Clear prioritization allows MassHire Berkshire to remain responsive while protecting essential oversight, fiscal, performance, and strategic functions. Board and Career Center staff convene weekly to review blended/braided opportunities and management

	convenes quarterly to identify strategic opportunities for funding and collaboration. MassHire Berkshire seeks opportunities to braid and coordinate funding across programs and partners. WIOA resources are considered alongside state, federal, philanthropic, employer, and partner resources to support workforce development activities, and WIOA partners are on-site at the Career Center weekly. WIOA funds are blended with our WIOA-partners to co-enroll participants. Our industry-sector training programs utilize the Career Center to assist with marketing, recruitment, support services, and follow-up (we utilize this model for CTI and healthcareHubs grants). Our regional partnerships are particularly important in this effort. By aligning resources and avoiding duplication, Berkshire County can leverage relatively limited investments to support broader outcomes for residents and employers. We target competitive grants, philanthropic funding, and state funds to launch specialized pilots outside of our formula allocation. Operational efficiency is also strengthened through collaboration, technology, and continuous improvement. The Board regularly reviews workflows, meeting structures, reporting requirements, data systems, and administrative processes to determine where staff time can be redirected toward higher-value strategic and workforce development activities. We use technology and shared processes where they can reduce administrative burden without compromising accountability or customer service, this includes utilizing AirTable for recruitment. Going forward, the Board and Career Center will continue to evaluate our staffing structure and service model based on available resources, workload, performance data, and regional need. Where funding gaps emerge, we will prioritize essential services and statutory responsibilities, pursue resource alignment and partnerships, and make thoughtful adjustments rather than simply attempting to maintain every activity at its previous level.
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	Our goal is to remain a small and mighty workforce area—efficient, fiscally responsible, collaborative, and focused on outcomes.
3. Advancing Youth Service Strategies Local Workforce Boards should consider how they will strengthen youth service delivery and align local strategies with lessons learned from the 2026 Youth Pilot. Considerations: Development of a year-round calendar of youth activities; Dedicated staffing or staff capacity for employer engagement, business relationships, and youth recruitment; Youth-focused employment events, work-based learning opportunities, and career exploration activities; Strategies piloted by boards in 2026 that will be continued, expanded, or adapted; and Approaches for engaging employers in youth programming.	MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board continues to have a strong, coordinated, year-round approach that connects young people to employers, career exploration, education, and meaningful work-based learning opportunities which impacts 2,500+ youth annually. Berkshires has created a solid career-readiness system that is embedded into our community. Promoted through our Connecting Activities liaisons and team members within our 12 school districts, our priorities for FY2027 include: • Continue to strengthen employer engagement that encompasses all regional career readiness programming (i.e. BWB not only promotes high school internships and K-12 career awareness, exploration opportunities but also summer employment opportunities – Career Center’s Youth Works Program, employer-paid or sponsored opportunities, etc.) and vice versa • School-district career readiness liaisons and team members continue to work with Career Center youth staff in recruiting in-school youth for Youth Works and WIOA programs and services, bringing in Career Center staff for various workshops (work readiness, resume writing, youth employment strategies, etc.) and promotion of available industry training opportunities • Enhance the number of regional employer trainings on ‘how to provide quality work-based-learning experiences’ and enhanced work-readiness trainings for youth embarking on internships and structured summer/school-year work experiences. • Board & Career Center jointly hosting a Youth Job Fair twice annually (lesson from our Youth Pilot) • Strengthen additional opportunities for career awareness, exploration, immersion, and innovative career pathways.

	Board and Career Center staff meet weekly to discuss strategies, services, and marketing for the myriad of youth programming. The MassHire Berkshire will continue to prioritize employer engagement as a key component of youth programming. Dedicated staff capacity (at both the Board and Career Center) and employer partnerships are used to identify youth-friendly employment opportunities, expand work-based learning, and encourage employers to consider young people as part of their talent pipeline. The Board’s recent employer campaign to encourage youth hiring and supplement YouthWorks provides a strong foundation for this work. MassHire Berkshire offers a wide range of youth workforce investment activities which are embedded under our Connecting Activities umbrella. Through partnerships with the schools, community-based organizations, and state agencies, our youth services are designed to prepare ALL youth—particularly those with barriers to employment—for success in education, training, and the labor market. Youth programming aligns with the Massachusetts Workforce Agenda by: • Centering equity and access to ensure all youth, especially those furthest from opportunity, have access to career exploration, skills training, and supportive services • Providing early exposure to high-growth career pathways • Offering work-based learning and credentialing opportunities • Building a connected, cross-system youth talent pipeline which are tailored to in-school and out-of-school youth, ages 14–24, with an emphasis on opportunity youth, youth with disabilities, and those facing systemic barriers. Career Center Activities include: • Career exploration and job readiness training • Paid work experiences, internships, and summer employment • Supportive services such as transportation, childcare, and mental health referrals • Work-based learning, including subsidized placements in high-demand industries
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	• Credential attainment (e.g., ServSafe, OSHA 10, CPR/First Aid, Home Health Aide, CNA) • Alternative education and dropout recovery services • One-on-one case management and career coaching • Postsecondary planning and connection to training or apprenticeships Under our Connecting Activities umbrella, these services are delivered through a network of contracted partners and community-based organizations, ensuring localized, culturally competent support. Our goal is a year-round youth system building strategy—not a seasonal program—that gives Berkshire County young people meaningful exposure to careers, employers, and pathways to education and employment while helping businesses develop their future workforce.
4. Preparing for Implementation of the Workforce Pell Grant Program Local Workforce Boards should consider how they will prepare for implementation of the Workforce Pell Grant program, including how they will strengthen coordination with training providers and support jobseeker navigation. Considerations: Local understanding of training providers in the region and the credentials they offer; Identification of Pell-eligible courses and programs; Models for helping jobseekers understand, access, and navigate eligible training opportunities; The intended “front door” for jobseekers seeking information or assistance related to the Workforce Pell Grant program; Strategies for collaboration with community colleges and other eligible training providers; and Relationship-building necessary to support effective program implementation.	MassHire Berkshire is taking a proactive, partnership-based approach to preparing for Workforce Pell implementation, as it’s another tool in the toolbox for our customers. The Board works closely with the MassHire Career Center, Berkshire Community College, adult education programs, vocational schools, and other eligible training providers to maintain current knowledge of available programs, credentials, eligibility requirements, and career pathways. The MassHire Career Center will serve as the primary “front door” for jobseekers, providing clear guidance on training options, potentially eligible Workforce Pell programs, financial assistance, and connections to appropriate providers. The Board will strengthen provider relationships through regular communication, coordinated outreach, and regional partnerships such as the Berkshire Skills Cabinet. The Board will also use labor market information, employer feedback, provider performance, and Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) oversight to ensure training options are aligned with high-demand occupations and lead to meaningful, portable, and stackable credentials. Priority will be given to flexible pathways that incorporate short-term credentials, credit for prior learning, work-based learning, and

	opportunities to progress toward additional credentials or degrees. To increase credential attainment—especially industry-recognized, portable, and stackable credentials—the Board collaborates with community colleges, vocational high schools, and adult education partners to: • Align training programs with local labor market demand and employer input • Promote short-term credential programs in high-growth fields (e.g., CNA, EMT, CNC Machining, Medical Assisting, Early Childhood Education) • Develop modular, stackable pathways that allow individuals to progress from basic certificates to associate degrees and beyond • Incorporate credit for prior learning, work-based learning, and integrated education and training (IET) models to increase flexibility and reduce barriers • Partner with employers to support work-based training and credentialing, such as on-the-job training and customized incumbent worker training • Masshire Berkshire emphasizes short-term, stackable, and industry-recognized credentials that are portable and accessible to underrepresented populations. Programs include CNA, EMT, Mental Health First Aid, OSHA 10, and ServSafe. Credentials are often embedded within work-based learning or youth internships to increase accessibility and improve labor market outcomes. • MassHire Berkshire ensures the continuous improvement of eligible providers and services in the region by: • Monitoring and evaluation: Conducting regular performance reviews of training providers and career center partners using WIOA performance indicators, participant outcomes, and employer satisfaction. • Local oversight of the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL): Reviewing provider applications and outcomes to ensure offerings are aligned
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	with high-demand occupations and meet quality standards. • Employer feedback loops: Gathering direct input from businesses—especially those in priority industries—on the effectiveness of training programs and job readiness of graduates. • Provider engagement: Hosting regular meetings with education and training providers (including community colleges, vocational schools, and CBOs) to discuss industry needs, program alignment, and opportunities for co-designing curricula. • Data-informed decisions: Using labor market intelligence to assess the effectiveness of programs and to adjust service delivery based on emerging employer needs and skill gaps. Additionally, the unified Board-Career Center structure allows for closer oversight and feedback loops between frontline delivery, fiscal operations, and provider performance As Workforce Pell guidance evolves, MassHire Berkshire will update staff knowledge, local processes, provider information, and customer-facing materials. The goal is to make Workforce Pell an integrated, easy-to-navigate pathway within the workforce system while ensuring training investments respond to Berkshire County employer needs and lead to strong employment outcomes.
5. Enhancing Business Services Capacity Local Workforce Boards should consider how they will strengthen the capacity of the business services representative function to meet employer demand and respond to priority industry needs. Considerations: Additional capacity needed to support the most essential employers in the local area; Cross-regional business services strategies; Processes for responding to dynamic or rapidly developing employer opportunities; Coordination with regional Economic Development representatives; and Partnership with the MassHire Department of Career Services to align employer engagement strategies.	MassHire Berkshire has a strong, engaged Business Services Team and will continue to strengthen business services through a coordinated, employer-driven approach that maximizes limited local capacity and connects workforce resources to Berkshire County’s priority industries. Board and Career Center staff meet weekly to strategize on collaborative outreach and engagement efforts. MassHire Berkshire aligns employer engagement strategies, shares business intelligence, and avoids duplication of outreach. Our cross-regional collaboration allows the Berkshire workforce system to respond to employers and their workforce priorities. Employer needs are identified through direct engagement, sector partnerships, labor market

	information, economic development partners, and the Berkshire Skills Cabinet. This allows the Board to prioritize employers and industries where workforce challenges are most significant and where workforce investment can have the greatest regional impact. The Workforce Board has a monthly column in the Berkshire Eagle which reaches 25,000 households. The Career Center and Workforce Board have an electronic employer newsletter and continuous social media presences to showcase local initiatives and celebrate outcomes. This is part of our strategy to educate and inform the community about business services that are provided. MassHire Berkshire maintains flexible processes for responding to emerging employer opportunities, including rapid hiring needs, customized recruitment services, job fairs, layoffs, new or expanding businesses, and opportunities for work-based learning. Existing tools such as On-the-Job Training, apprenticeships, sector-based training, and the Workforce Training Fund/Express are leveraged when appropriate to meet employer needs. Strong coordination with regional economic development organizations is also essential. MassHire Berkshire will continue to build relationships with economic development partners so that business attraction, retention, expansion, and workforce strategies are aligned rather than operating independently. MassHire Berkshire actively engages employers—particularly those in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and education—through multiple strategies: • Employer Convenings aligned with priority industries, providing regular feedback on hiring needs, skills gaps, and training priorities • Sector-based strategies that involve direct partnerships with employers to co-design training and career pathway programs • Customized recruitment and hiring support provided by Business Services Representatives • Special focus on small businesses, including outreach, job posting assistance, and access to
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	incumbent worker training or subsidized hiring programs • Participation in local and regional chambers, industry associations, and employer networks to promote workforce services • Membership on the MassHire Board of Directors and Blueprint CORE Team MassHire Berkshire supports a responsive and demand-driven workforce system by: • Using real-time labor market data to inform investments in training and career services • Ensuring training programs are aligned with employer demand and offer stackable credentials • Providing incumbent worker training, on-the-job training (OJT), and apprenticeship opportunities that allow businesses to build talent pipelines • Maintaining a strong network of training providers, schools, and colleges to respond quickly to emerging business needs Our focus is on leveraging partnerships, coordinating resources, and responding quickly rather than duplicating services. This approach allows MassHire Berkshire to remain highly responsive to employers while ensuring that business services are connected to broader regional economic and workforce development priorities.
6. Improving Customer Experience Local Workforce Boards should consider how they will improve the customer experience for all critical customers, including jobseekers, students, training providers, employers, and partner organizations. Considerations: Staff training in trauma-informed and resilience-based service delivery; Strategies for working effectively with customers who are experiencing difficult circumstances; Approaches for identifying and responding to customer mental health needs, as appropriate within the workforce system’s role; Coordination with partner programs and	The MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board is committed to creating a workforce system that is welcoming, responsive, and easy to navigate for jobseekers, students, employers, training providers, and community partners. We recognize that many customers face barriers beyond employment and that a positive customer experience requires flexibility, respect, and strong coordination across the workforce system. The Berkshire Career Center staff makes services seamless to any customer registered with the center. The Reception/Front desk staff assess (walk-in) customer needs on their first visit to the Career Center, identifying priority customers, e.g. Veterans, MSFW, individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders, etc., for priority referral.

wraparound services; and Professional development or service improvements designed to strengthen service quality, consistency, and responsiveness.	Information on Career Center services and programs is provided, as is instruction on Career Center membership and JobQuest registration process. Customers are encouraged to use the Resource Room for job search/application, resume writing, labor market data research, and profile completion in JobQuest, LinkedIn, etc. Customers are encouraged by both front desk staff and counselors to register for and participate in job readiness workshops, employer events, and program orientations. For targeted UI recipients, RESEA (Re-Employment) staff review areas of need and recommend appropriate services at the Initial RESEA Review. During this meeting, customer needs and goals are recorded on the Career Action Plan (CAP) as are those Career Center activities and services of interest to the customer. Further discussion of and registration for Career Center services takes place during the final RESEA Review. As per program requirements, all enrollees are registered for a follow-up service, ensuring a repeat visit and further awareness of Wagner Peyser/labor exchange activities available. Participants are offered assistance with job search/application, occupational research, and assessments. Career Services Staff have developed a customer team process which is a collaborative approach involving key program staff who meet weekly as a team to review the needs, employment goals, and qualifications of a customer to jointly develop an action plan for service delivery and to conduct job matching. Areas of need are identified and services provided accordingly, e.g. meetings with respect, deescalation, etc. The Board supports staff development in trauma-informed, resilience-based, and customer-centered approaches so staff are equipped to work effectively with individuals experiencing challenging circumstances. While workforce staff are not mental health providers, they should be prepared to recognize when a customer may need additional support and make appropriate referrals to qualified community-based providers.
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	Strong partnerships are central to this approach. The Board and MassHire Career Center coordinate with WIOA partners, human service agencies, education and training providers, and other community organizations to connect customers with wraparound supports such as behavioral health services, transportation, childcare, education, and other resources that can affect successful participation in employment or training. In addition to bi-monthly WIOA partner meetings, weekly team case counseling meetings, and continuous advocacy through various community networks, the Berkshire Workforce Board and Career Center works with each core partner programs to understand specific educational and services needs of priority populations to ensure that all services are accessible to job seeker with barriers to employment. The Board will continue to use customer feedback, staff input, partner engagement, and performance data to identify opportunities to improve service quality and consistency. Professional development, streamlined processes, clear communication, and stronger referral pathways will remain priorities. Our goal is a customer-centered, coordinated workforce system in which individuals feel respected and supported, employers receive responsive service, and partners can work together effectively to help Berkshire County residents achieve meaningful employment and career advancement.
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Input on local plan - In accordance with WIOA Section 108(d), MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board follows a transparent and inclusive process to solicit public input on its Local Plan prior to submission. This process ensures that stakeholders—particularly representatives from business, education, and labor—have the opportunity to shape the plan and influence regional workforce priorities. The Public Comment Process includes:

- The draft Local Plan is made publicly available for review at least 30 days prior to submission.
- The plan is posted on the BWB official website and shared through social media, email lists, newsletters targeting partners; and press releases or public notices, as appropriate, to reach the broader public:

- Key stakeholders including WIOA partners, education & training partners, union leaders, community-based organizations, and youth & adult education providers are sent the draft plan for comment.
- BWB may hold virtual or in-person public meetings or listening sessions to allow for verbal feedback and dialogue.

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ATTACHMENT X

MassHire Key Considerations – Local Response

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	immigrants and refugees, and reentry populations • Co-located and coordinated services, often offered at partner or community-based sites, including adult education programs and vocational rehabilitation offices • Integrated supportive services, including referrals for childcare, transportation, housing, digital literacy, and mental health support to increase program retention and success • Career Center Services are delivered virtually and in person at multiple locations, including co-located at North Adams Public Library • Staff are trained in DEI and use culturally responsive approaches to engage disconnected youth, immigrants, justice-involved individuals, and individuals with disabilities. MassHire Berkshire and its partners are fully committed to ensuring physical and programmatic accessibility for individuals with disabilities: • Our Board and Career Center websites were audited and updated for ADA Compliance to ensure that people with disabilities are provided equal access to essential information online • ADA-compliant facility- Career Center is fully accessible and regularly assessed to meet physical accessibility standards. • Accessible technology and materials: Job search computers, website content, and digital tools meet or exceed WCAG accessibility standards. • Assistive technology: Available at career center to support customers with vision, hearing, or mobility impairments. • Staff training: Regular training on disability awareness, reasonable accommodation, and how to provide inclusive, individualized service. • Strategic partnerships with MassAbility and MCB go beyond compliance—they support co-enrollment, assistive tech, and inclusive placement Customer and stakeholder input is an important part of our continuous improvement process. Feedback is
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	gathered through customer surveys, direct conversations with jobseekers and employers, staff observations, partner discussions, and engagement with community organizations that serve populations experiencing barriers to employment. The Board uses this information, along with performance and participation data, to identify gaps, address barriers, and inform improvements to service delivery. Our regional approach is collaborative and proactive. Through the Berkshire Skills Cabinet and ongoing engagement with education, workforce, human service, and community partners, we identify populations that may be underserved and work collectively to improve access to services and supports. This includes strengthening connections to transportation, language services, education and training, work supports, and other resources that can help individuals participate successfully in the workforce. The Board views accessibility as an ongoing responsibility rather than a one-time compliance activity. We regularly evaluate customer experience, partner feedback, service utilization, and outcomes to identify opportunities for improvement. This structured, data-informed approach helps ensure that the Berkshire County workforce system remains welcoming, accessible, and responsive to the diverse needs of the community while maintaining high standards for service quality and accountability.
2. Strengthening Operational Efficiency and Addressing Funding Gaps Local Workforce Boards should consider how they will use available resources to strengthen operational efficiency, support staff capacity, and address service or staffing gaps resulting from the expiration, full allocation, or closeout of temporary funding sources. Considerations: Prioritization of staff time and responsibilities; Addressing gaps previously supported by expiring or fully allocated funding streams; Braid, blend, or coordinate funding streams to support staffing, service delivery, and	MassHire Berkshire takes a disciplined, strategic approach to managing limited resources while maintaining a high level of service to Berkshire County residents, employers, and youth. We continually assess staffing capacity, workload, funding availability, and regional priorities to ensure that available resources are directed where they can have the greatest impact. Staff time and responsibilities are prioritized based on required Board functions, compliance responsibilities, customer and employer needs, and the priorities identified in the Berkshire Blueprint and State Workforce Agenda. The Board & Career Center maintains a lean organizational structure, with staff taking on multiple roles and collaborating closely with

administrative functions; and any planned changes to service models, workflows, or staffing structures to improve operational effectiveness.	partners to avoid duplication and maximize capacity. Clear prioritization allows MassHire Berkshire to remain responsive while protecting essential oversight, fiscal, performance, and strategic functions. Board and Career Center staff convene weekly to review blended/braided opportunities and management convenes quarterly to identify strategic opportunities for funding and collaboration. MassHire Berkshire seeks opportunities to braid and coordinate funding across programs and partners. WIOA resources are considered alongside state, federal, philanthropic, employer, and partner resources to support workforce development activities, and WIOA partners are on-site at the Career Center weekly. WIOA funds are blended with our WIOA-partners to co-enroll participants. Our industry-sector training programs utilize the Career Center to assist with marketing, recruitment, support services, and follow-up (we utilize this model for CTI and healthcareHubs grants). Our regional partnerships are particularly important in this effort. By aligning resources and avoiding duplication, Berkshire County can leverage relatively limited investments to support broader outcomes for residents and employers. We target competitive grants, philanthropic funding, and state funds to launch specialized pilots outside of our formula allocation. Operational efficiency is also strengthened through collaboration, technology, and continuous improvement. The Board regularly reviews workflows, meeting structures, reporting requirements, data systems, and administrative processes to determine where staff time can be redirected toward higher-value strategic and workforce development activities. We use technology and shared processes where they can reduce administrative burden without compromising accountability or customer service, this includes utilizing AirTable for recruitment. Going forward, the Board and Career Center will continue to evaluate our staffing structure and service model based on available resources, workload, performance data, and regional need. Where funding gaps emerge, we will prioritize essential services and
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	statutory responsibilities, pursue resource alignment and partnerships, and make thoughtful adjustments rather than simply attempting to maintain every activity at its previous level. Our goal is to remain a small and mighty workforce area—efficient, fiscally responsible, collaborative, and focused on outcomes.
3. Advancing Youth Service Strategies Local Workforce Boards should consider how they will strengthen youth service delivery and align local strategies with lessons learned from the 2026 Youth Pilot. Considerations: Development of a year-round calendar of youth activities; Dedicated staffing or staff capacity for employer engagement, business relationships, and youth recruitment; Youth-focused employment events, work-based learning opportunities, and career exploration activities; Strategies piloted by boards in 2026 that will be continued, expanded, or adapted; and Approaches for engaging employers in youth programming.	MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board continues to have a strong, coordinated, year-round approach that connects young people to employers, career exploration, education, and meaningful work-based learning opportunities which impacts 2,500+ youth annually. Berkshires has created a solid career-readiness system that is embedded into our community. Promoted through our Connecting Activities liaisons and team members within our 12 school districts, our priorities for FY2027 include: • Continue to strengthen employer engagement that encompasses all regional career readiness programming (i.e. BWB not only promotes high school internships and K-12 career awareness, exploration opportunities but also summer employment opportunities – Career Center’s Youth Works Program, employer-paid or sponsored opportunities, etc.) and vice versa • School-district career readiness liaisons and team members continue to work with Career Center youth staff in recruiting in-school youth for Youth Works and WIOA programs and services, bringing in Career Center staff for various workshops (work readiness, resume writing, youth employment strategies, etc.) and promotion of available industry training opportunities • Enhance the number of regional employer trainings on ‘how to provide quality work-based-learning experiences’ and enhanced work-readiness trainings for youth embarking on internships and structured summer/school-year work experiences.

	• Board & Career Center jointly hosting a Youth Job Fair twice annually (lesson from our Youth Pilot) • Strengthen additional opportunities for career awareness, exploration, immersion, and innovative career pathways. Board and Career Center staff meet weekly to discuss strategies, services, and marketing for the myriad of youth programming. The MassHire Berkshire will continue to prioritize employer engagement as a key component of youth programming. Dedicated staff capacity (at both the Board and Career Center) and employer partnerships are used to identify youth-friendly employment opportunities, expand work-based learning, and encourage employers to consider young people as part of their talent pipeline. The Board’s recent employer campaign to encourage youth hiring and supplement YouthWorks provides a strong foundation for this work. MassHire Berkshire offers a wide range of youth workforce investment activities which are embedded under our Connecting Activities umbrella. Through partnerships with the schools, community-based organizations, and state agencies, our youth services are designed to prepare ALL youth—particularly those with barriers to employment—for success in education, training, and the labor market. Youth programming aligns with the Massachusetts Workforce Agenda by: • Centering equity and access to ensure all youth, especially those furthest from opportunity, have access to career exploration, skills training, and supportive services • Providing early exposure to high-growth career pathways • Offering work-based learning and credentialing opportunities • Building a connected, cross-system youth talent pipeline which are tailored to in-school and out-of-school youth, ages 14–24, with an emphasis on opportunity youth, youth with disabilities, and those facing systemic barriers. Career Center Activities include: • Career exploration and job readiness training
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	• Paid work experiences, internships, and summer employment • Supportive services such as transportation, childcare, and mental health referrals • Work-based learning, including subsidized placements in high-demand industries • Credential attainment (e.g., ServSafe, OSHA 10, CPR/First Aid, Home Health Aide, CNA) • Alternative education and dropout recovery services • One-on-one case management and career coaching • Postsecondary planning and connection to training or apprenticeships Under our Connecting Activities umbrella, these services are delivered through a network of contracted partners and community-based organizations, ensuring localized, culturally competent support. Our goal is a year-round youth system building strategy—not a seasonal program—that gives Berkshire County young people meaningful exposure to careers, employers, and pathways to education and employment while helping businesses develop their future workforce.
4. Preparing for Implementation of the Workforce Pell Grant Program Local Workforce Boards should consider how they will prepare for implementation of the Workforce Pell Grant program, including how they will strengthen coordination with training providers and support jobseeker navigation. Considerations: Local understanding of training providers in the region and the credentials they offer; Identification of Pell-eligible courses and programs; Models for helping jobseekers understand, access, and navigate eligible training opportunities; The intended “front door” for jobseekers seeking information or assistance related to the Workforce Pell Grant program; Strategies for collaboration with community colleges and other eligible training	MassHire Berkshire is taking a proactive, partnership-based approach to preparing for Workforce Pell implementation, as it’s another tool in the toolbox for our customers. The Board works closely with the MassHire Career Center, Berkshire Community College, adult education programs, vocational schools, and other eligible training providers to maintain current knowledge of available programs, credentials, eligibility requirements, and career pathways. The MassHire Career Center will serve as the primary “front door” for jobseekers, providing clear guidance on training options, potentially eligible Workforce Pell programs, financial assistance, and connections to appropriate providers. The Board will strengthen provider relationships through regular communication, coordinated outreach, and regional partnerships such as the Berkshire Skills Cabinet. The Board will also use labor market information, employer feedback, provider performance, and Eligible

providers; and Relationship-building necessary to support effective program implementation.	Training Provider List (ETPL) oversight to ensure training options are aligned with high-demand occupations and lead to meaningful, portable, and stackable credentials. Priority will be given to flexible pathways that incorporate short-term credentials, credit for prior learning, work-based learning, and opportunities to progress toward additional credentials or degrees. To increase credential attainment—especially industry-recognized, portable, and stackable credentials—the Board collaborates with community colleges, vocational high schools, and adult education partners to: • Align training programs with local labor market demand and employer input • Promote short-term credential programs in high-growth fields (e.g., CNA, EMT, CNC Machining, Medical Assisting, Early Childhood Education) • Develop modular, stackable pathways that allow individuals to progress from basic certificates to associate degrees and beyond • Incorporate credit for prior learning, work-based learning, and integrated education and training (IET) models to increase flexibility and reduce barriers • Partner with employers to support work-based training and credentialing, such as on-the-job training and customized incumbent worker training • Masshire Berkshire emphasizes short-term, stackable, and industry-recognized credentials that are portable and accessible to underrepresented populations. Programs include CNA, EMT, Mental Health First Aid, OSHA 10, and ServSafe. Credentials are often embedded within work-based learning or youth internships to increase accessibility and improve labor market outcomes. • MassHire Berkshire ensures the continuous improvement of eligible providers and services in the region by: • Monitoring and evaluation: Conducting regular performance reviews of training providers and career center partners using WIOA performance
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	indicators, participant outcomes, and employer satisfaction. • Local oversight of the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL): Reviewing provider applications and outcomes to ensure offerings are aligned with high-demand occupations and meet quality standards. • Employer feedback loops: Gathering direct input from businesses—especially those in priority industries—on the effectiveness of training programs and job readiness of graduates. • Provider engagement: Hosting regular meetings with education and training providers (including community colleges, vocational schools, and CBOs) to discuss industry needs, program alignment, and opportunities for co-designing curricula. • Data-informed decisions: Using labor market intelligence to assess the effectiveness of programs and to adjust service delivery based on emerging employer needs and skill gaps. Additionally, the unified Board-Career Center structure allows for closer oversight and feedback loops between frontline delivery, fiscal operations, and provider performance As Workforce Pell guidance evolves, MassHire Berkshire will update staff knowledge, local processes, provider information, and customer-facing materials. The goal is to make Workforce Pell an integrated, easy-to-navigate pathway within the workforce system while ensuring training investments respond to Berkshire County employer needs and lead to strong employment outcomes.
5. Enhancing Business Services Capacity Local Workforce Boards should consider how they will strengthen the capacity of the business services representative function to meet employer demand and respond to priority industry needs. Considerations: Additional capacity needed to support the most essential employers in the local area; Cross-regional business services strategies; Processes for responding to dynamic or rapidly	MassHire Berkshire has a strong, engaged Business Services Team and will continue to strengthen business services through a coordinated, employer-driven approach that maximizes limited local capacity and connects workforce resources to Berkshire County’s priority industries. Board and Career Center staff meet weekly to strategize on collaborative outreach and engagement efforts. MassHire Berkshire aligns employer engagement strategies, shares business intelligence, and avoids duplication of outreach. Our cross-regional

developing employer opportunities; Coordination with regional Economic Development representatives; and Partnership with the MassHire Department of Career Services to align employer engagement strategies.	collaboration allows the Berkshire workforce system to respond to employers and their workforce priorities. Employer needs are identified through direct engagement, sector partnerships, labor market information, economic development partners, and the Berkshire Skills Cabinet. This allows the Board to prioritize employers and industries where workforce challenges are most significant and where workforce investment can have the greatest regional impact. The Workforce Board has a monthly column in the Berkshire Eagle which reaches 25,000 households. The Career Center and Workforce Board have an electronic employer newsletter and continuous social media presences to showcase local initiatives and celebrate outcomes. This is part of our strategy to educate and inform the community about business services that are provided. MassHire Berkshire maintains flexible processes for responding to emerging employer opportunities, including rapid hiring needs, customized recruitment services, job fairs, layoffs, new or expanding businesses, and opportunities for work-based learning. Existing tools such as On-the-Job Training, apprenticeships, sector-based training, and the Workforce Training Fund/Express are leveraged when appropriate to meet employer needs. Strong coordination with regional economic development organizations is also essential. MassHire Berkshire will continue to build relationships with economic development partners so that business attraction, retention, expansion, and workforce strategies are aligned rather than operating independently. MassHire Berkshire actively engages employers—particularly those in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and education—through multiple strategies: • Employer Convenings aligned with priority industries, providing regular feedback on hiring needs, skills gaps, and training priorities • Sector-based strategies that involve direct partnerships with employers to co-design training and career pathway programs
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	• Customized recruitment and hiring support provided by Business Services Representatives • Special focus on small businesses, including outreach, job posting assistance, and access to incumbent worker training or subsidized hiring programs • Participation in local and regional chambers, industry associations, and employer networks to promote workforce services • Membership on the MassHire Board of Directors and Blueprint CORE Team MassHire Berkshire supports a responsive and demand-driven workforce system by: • Using real-time labor market data to inform investments in training and career services • Ensuring training programs are aligned with employer demand and offer stackable credentials • Providing incumbent worker training, on-the-job training (OJT), and apprenticeship opportunities that allow businesses to build talent pipelines • Maintaining a strong network of training providers, schools, and colleges to respond quickly to emerging business needs Our focus is on leveraging partnerships, coordinating resources, and responding quickly rather than duplicating services. This approach allows MassHire Berkshire to remain highly responsive to employers while ensuring that business services are connected to broader regional economic and workforce development priorities.
6. Improving Customer Experience Local Workforce Boards should consider how they will improve the customer experience for all critical customers, including jobseekers, students, training providers, employers, and partner organizations. Considerations: Staff training in trauma-informed and resilience-based service delivery; Strategies for working effectively with customers who are	The MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board is committed to creating a workforce system that is welcoming, responsive, and easy to navigate for jobseekers, students, employers, training providers, and community partners. We recognize that many customers face barriers beyond employment and that a positive customer experience requires flexibility, respect, and strong coordination across the workforce system. The Berkshire Career Center staff makes services seamless to any customer registered with the center. The

experiencing difficult circumstances; Approaches for identifying and responding to customer mental health needs, as appropriate within the workforce system's role; Coordination with partner programs and wraparound services; and Professional development or service improvements designed to strengthen service quality, consistency, and responsiveness.	Reception/Front desk staff assess (walk-in) customer needs on their first visit to the Career Center, identifying priority customers, e.g. Veterans, MSFW, individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders, etc., for priority referral. Information on Career Center services and programs is provided, as is instruction on Career Center membership and JobQuest registration process. Customers are encouraged to use the Resource Room for job search/application, resume writing, labor market data research, and profile completion in JobQuest, LinkedIn, etc. Customers are encouraged by both front desk staff and counselors to register for and participate in job readiness workshops, employer events, and program orientations. For targeted UI recipients, RESEA (Re-Employment) staff review areas of need and recommend appropriate services at the Initial RESEA Review. During this meeting, customer needs and goals are recorded on the Career Action Plan (CAP) as are those Career Center activities and services of interest to the customer. Further discussion of and registration for Career Center services takes place during the final RESEA Review. As per program requirements, all enrollees are registered for a follow-up service, ensuring a repeat visit and further awareness of Wagner Peyser/labor exchange activities available. Participants are offered assistance with job search/application, occupational research, and assessments. Career Services Staff have developed a customer team process which is a collaborative approach involving key program staff who meet weekly as a team to review the needs, employment goals, and qualifications of a customer to jointly develop an action plan for service delivery and to conduct job matching. Areas of need are identified and services provided accordingly, e.g. meetings with respect, deescalation, etc. The Board supports staff development in trauma-informed, resilience-based, and customer-centered approaches so staff are equipped to work effectively with individuals experiencing challenging circumstances. While workforce staff are not mental health providers, they should be prepared to recognize
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	when a customer may need additional support and make appropriate referrals to qualified community-based providers. Strong partnerships are central to this approach. The Board and MassHire Career Center coordinate with WIOA partners, human service agencies, education and training providers, and other community organizations to connect customers with wraparound supports such as behavioral health services, transportation, childcare, education, and other resources that can affect successful participation in employment or training. In addition to bi-monthly WIOA partner meetings, weekly team case counseling meetings, and continuous advocacy through various community networks, the Berkshire Workforce Board and Career Center works with each core partner programs to understand specific educational and services needs of priority populations to ensure that all services are accessible to job seeker with barriers to employment. The Board will continue to use customer feedback, staff input, partner engagement, and performance data to identify opportunities to improve service quality and consistency. Professional development, streamlined processes, clear communication, and stronger referral pathways will remain priorities. Our goal is a customer-centered, coordinated workforce system in which individuals feel respected and supported, employers receive responsive service, and partners can work together effectively to help Berkshire County residents achieve meaningful employment and career advancement.
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Input on local plan - In accordance with WIOA Section 108(d), MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board follows a transparent and inclusive process to solicit public input on its Local Plan prior to submission. This process ensures that stakeholders—particularly representatives from business, education, and labor—have the opportunity to shape the plan and influence regional workforce priorities. The Public Comment Process includes:

- The draft Local Plan is made publicly available for review at least 30 days prior to submission.

- The plan is posted on the BWB official website and shared through social media, email lists, newsletters targeting partners; and press releases or public notices, as appropriate, to reach the broader public:
- Key stakeholders including WIOA partners, education & training partners, union leaders, community-based organizations, and youth & adult education providers are sent the draft plan for comment.
- BWB may hold virtual or in-person public meetings or listening sessions to allow for verbal feedback and dialogue.

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TRAINING THRESHOLD VARIANCE REQUEST

Local Workforce Board Name: Berkshire

Reason for requesting variance:

Due to limited training providers and a number of no-cost training programs offered throughout the region, Berkshires are seeking a reduction to 20% in the training threshold variance. Reasons include:

- *The Berkshire Workforce area only has one locally approved ITA training provider (Berkshire Community College) who offers limited short-term training opportunities and external grant funded Free trainings.*
- *Berkshires has the Healthcare HUBs grant that offers free Healthcare field trainings for Certified Nursing Assistance certification and Certified Medical Assistant*
- *Berkshires provides an Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship training*
- *Two local technical schools offering multiple Career Technical Initiative grant's that offers eligible Adult and Dislocated workers Free training programs in Automotive field (Auto Tec and Autobody), Welding, Advance Manufacturing, Landscaping, and Carpentry*
- *MassEducate provides free community college. In FY26 the career center had 10 pre-enrolled WIOA customers who choose the Free college over utilizing WIOA training funds.*

Target training % requested: 20%

How will this affect your local area population:

- *The lower training threshold will not have an adverse effect on the local area population.*

Positive impact of the threshold variance (e.g. how will the lower training threshold help?):

- ***A lower training threshold will allow more time for staff to be dedicated to Dislocated Workers and Low-Income Adults. Career Center staff would have more opportunities to provide in-depth assessments and in demand industry career planning with employment plans, with the possibility to include On the Job trainings for long term unemployed customers and build a partnership with local employers to meet workforce needs and other meaningful services that could benefit this population as they prepare to re-enter the workforce.***

Was a full Board vote taken: Yes ☒ **X** No ☐ if yes, Date 9/3/2026

MassHire Board Director: Heather P. Boulger

_____/____/____
Signature Date: 8/25/26 (draft submission)

Please submit completed form to **Lisa Caissie**: Lisa.J.Caissie@detma.org