



**GREATER LOWELL
WORKFORCE BOARD**

Greater Lowell Workforce Area

Executive Summary of the Fiscal Year 2021 Workforce Development Operational Plan

City of Lowell, Towns of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable,
Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, and Westford

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I. INTRODUCTION

The MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board (MHGLWB), in partnership with the Chief Elected Official (CEO), Eileen Donoghue, Manager, City of Lowell, is responsible for developing an Annual Plan for Fiscal Year 2021 and submitting the plan to the MassHire Department of Career Services. Local Workforce Development Boards, through the annual planning process, must assure that effective service and positive outcomes remain the overarching goal for all local providers and that quality is not compromised in the wake of challenges posed to the workforce system.

Traditionally, due to a low unemployment rate in Massachusetts, federal Department of Labor funding through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) has diminished over the last several fiscal years. This year the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the unemployment rate. As of June 2020, the unemployment rate for Greater Lowell was 17.5%. Despite this exponential increase in unemployment, funding continues to be decreased. The region is hopeful there will be supplemental federal and state funding to provide services to the substantial number of individuals dislocated from the workforce due to the pandemic.

To address the federal budget cuts and the drastic affects COVID-19 has had on businesses and residences, the MHGLWB will continue focusing on developing and strengthening partnerships, leveraging resources, and obtaining grants outside of core funding.

The MHGLWB will continue strong collaboration and integration with its partners to maximize regional resources and sharing of best practices for effective service delivery in support of our goals through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). In addition, Greater Lowell will continue partnering with the Merrimack Valley and North Shore workforce regions to implement the goals and strategies outlined in the Northeast Labor Market Blueprint.

In collaboration with our industry and educational partners, the region looks forward to continuing the regional success of the Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC). Since 2012, the consortium has responded to the advanced manufacturing industry's demands through apprenticeships and occupational skills training programs.

Copies of the plan may be obtained by contacting the MHGLWB, 107 Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA 08152; 978-937-9814.

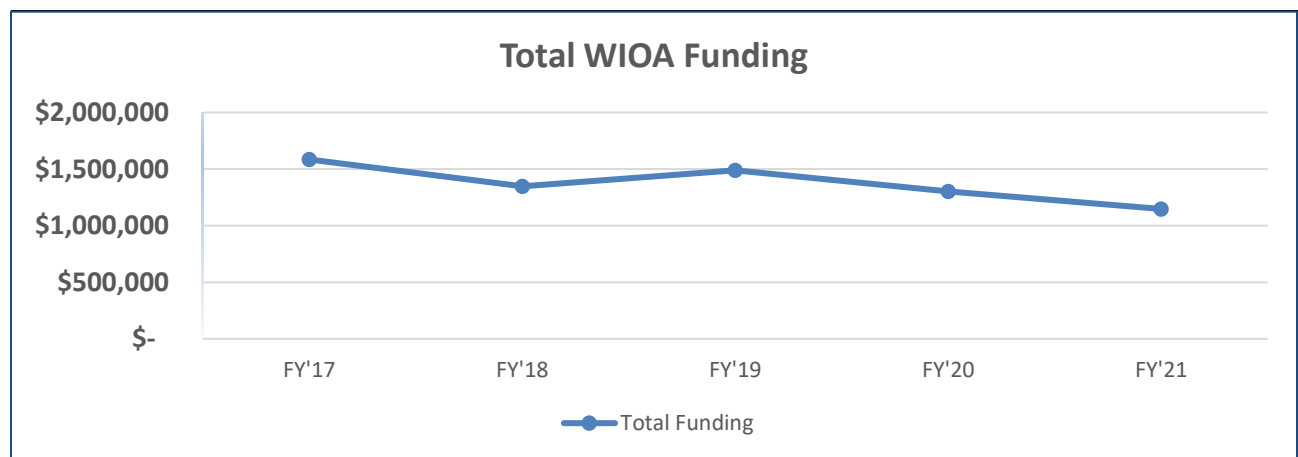
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II. Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) Allocations

For FY'21, Massachusetts experienced an overall decrease in federal WIOA funding by 6.9%. Considering only new FY'21 funding, the Greater Lowell region experienced a decrease of 11.9% or \$154,340 compared to FY'20. The chart below compares WIOA funding over the last three years for Greater Lowell.

	FY'19	FY'20	FY'21	Diff FY'21 Less FY'20	Diff FY'21 Less FY'19
Adult	482,003	390,781	337,478	(53,303)	(144,525)
Dislocated Worker	493,284	472,651	430,462	(42,189)	(62,822)
Youth	515,061	438,161	379,313	(58,848)	(135,748)
Total	1,490,348	1,301,593	1,147,253	(154,340)	(343,095)

Since FY'17, the region has seen decrease in federal funding of \$437k or 27.6%. The chart below breakdowns the combined funding over the last five fiscal years.



III. WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs

Through the MassHire Lowell Career Center, adult and dislocated worker job seekers will have access to a broad array of services from a comprehensive assortment of employment programs. WIOA provides for basic career services, which are available to all job seekers, and additional individualized career training and follow-up services are available to persons predicated on meeting certain eligibility criteria. Examples of these services include:

- Career Center Seminar (CCS)
- Career Action Plan (CAP)
- Job Search/Job Readiness Workshops
- Individual Career Counseling/Career Planning
- Comprehensive Assessments

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- Labor Market Information
- Remedial Education/Occupational Skills Training
- Job Development and Placement Assistance

Training opportunities for eligible adults and dislocated worker job seekers are obtained through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) from a wide network of qualified training providers. Based on funding availability eligible individuals may receive up to \$7,000 in funding assistance for Adult Basic Education (ABE) and/or HiSET (High School Equivalency Test), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and/or Occupational Skills Training.

The workforce board partners with several agencies which provide additional services to adults and dislocated workers including the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, the Department of Transitional Assistance, and the Senior Community Service Employment Program. Veterans have Priority of Service at the MassHire Lowell Career Center.

Adults:

In FY'21, approximately 45 adult job seekers will receive additional intensive and training services that are available to persons predicated on meeting certain eligibility criteria.

Estimated FY'21 WIOA Adult Performance Goals	
• Entered Employment Rate (2 nd quarter after exit)	86.5%
• Entered Employment Rate (4 th quarter after exit)	78%
• Median Earnings (second quarter)	\$5,800
• Credential Attainment Rate	73%
• Measurable Skills Gain	40%

Dislocated Workers:

In FY'21, approximately 122 dislocated worker job seekers will receive additional individualized and training services available to persons predicated on meeting certain eligibility criteria.

Estimated FY'21 WIOA Dislocated Worker Performance Goals	
• Entered Employment Rate (2 nd quarter after exit)	86%
• Entered Employment Rate (4 th quarter after exit)	85%
• Median Earnings (second quarter)	\$8,300
• Credential Attainment Rate	62%
• Measurable Skills Gain	40%

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In addition, other WIOA and non-WIOA funding sources assisting dislocated workers will include:

- Apprenticeships
- MassHire Department of Career Center Services “Rapid Response”
- National Health Emergency Dislocated Worker Grant to Combat Opioid Crisis
- Trade Adjustment Assistance
- Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC) training grants

IV. Wagner – Peyser

Wagner-Peyser funded employment services provide universal access to basic career services delivered through the MassHire Lowell Career Center. The Career Center will focus on providing a variety of employment related labor exchange services including but not limited to job search assistance, job referral, and placement assistance for job seekers. In FY’21, the region received \$459,009 for Wagner-Peyser services. Compared to FY’20, this is a 0.3% increase in funding or \$1,415.

During FY’21, approximately 5,800 job seekers will receive labor exchange services. Of those receiving services, 4,175 will be unemployed, 500 will be persons with disabilities and 170 will be veterans. Due to COVID-19, the total number of job seekers served will be reevaluated midway through the year.

V. Business Services

The Business Services Representatives will assist employers in recruiting and hiring qualified and talented job seekers. During FY’21, approximately 500 employers will be provided services through the Career Center. Services will consist of job postings, applicant screening and referrals; Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC); on site recruitments; job fairs; labor market information; On the Job Training (OJT), Business Workshops. Similarly, to job seeker services the number of businesses served will be reevaluated midway through the year.

VI. WIOA Youth Programs

The MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board provides funds to organizations in Greater Lowell to support and maintain a framework of education, training, and employment services for youth 14-24 years of age. Our goal is to re-connect these youth with education and employment strategies, which will lead to a life-long attachment with the workforce and ultimately economic self-sufficiency.

The MHGLWB funded one in-school youth program for \$45,644 and four out-of-school programs totaling \$339,785. Greater Lowell will serve 31 in-school youth and approximately 69 out-of-school youth through its WIOA youth programs.

Additional Youth Programs

- The Connecting Activities (CA) program, funded through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, will provide on-site services for students at Lowell High School, Greater Lowell Technical High School, Tewksbury Memorial High School, Dracut

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Senior High School, Shawsheen Valley Technical High School, Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School, Billerica High School, and Shawsheen Valley Technical High School. The Connecting Activities program anticipates placing 350 area high school students in part-time jobs or internships. The CA program also anticipates 100 employers sponsoring work placements.

- The FY'21 Young Adult Summer Jobs Program, in a modified format of in-person work and virtual work experience, will provide work readiness training and subsidized employment opportunities for 157 Lowell youth.