



**GREATER LOWELL  
WORKFORCE BOARD**

**Greater Lowell Workforce Board**

**Strategic Plan**

**January 1, 2022 – June 30, 2025**

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## Executive Summary

The MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board (GLWB) developed a three-and-a-half-year strategic plan, covering January 1, 2022 – June 30, 2025, that would guide the board through the ever changing economic and political landscape. The Commonwealth continues to place a strong emphasis on the workforce development system and the GLWB recognizes that workforce development will continue to be a critical piece in sustaining the economic health of our region.

The GLWB strategic plan focuses on key operating principals of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Committed to serving both the job seeker and the businesses in our region, we recognize the need to identify ways to streamline our processes to be more efficient while remaining effective. There is an emphasis on maximizing resources and exploring new revenue options and diversifying our approach to the opportunities as well as challenges faced in our region. This will ensure that we will be effectively serving our customers.

The agenda set forth is rooted in the philosophy that a skilled workforce is critical for our region and our businesses to remain competitive in the Commonwealth. Our approach strives to ensure that the workforce in our region has access to career pathways that will lead to sustainable wages and self-sufficiency. In addition, our businesses will have a highly skilled workforce that will contribute to our current economy and regional growth.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic global health crisis caused an economic slowdown that greatly affected the Greater Lowell region. Business employment needs shifted with many needing to temporarily shut down. This health crisis affected long-term labor market information where many businesses had to respond to the immediate crisis.

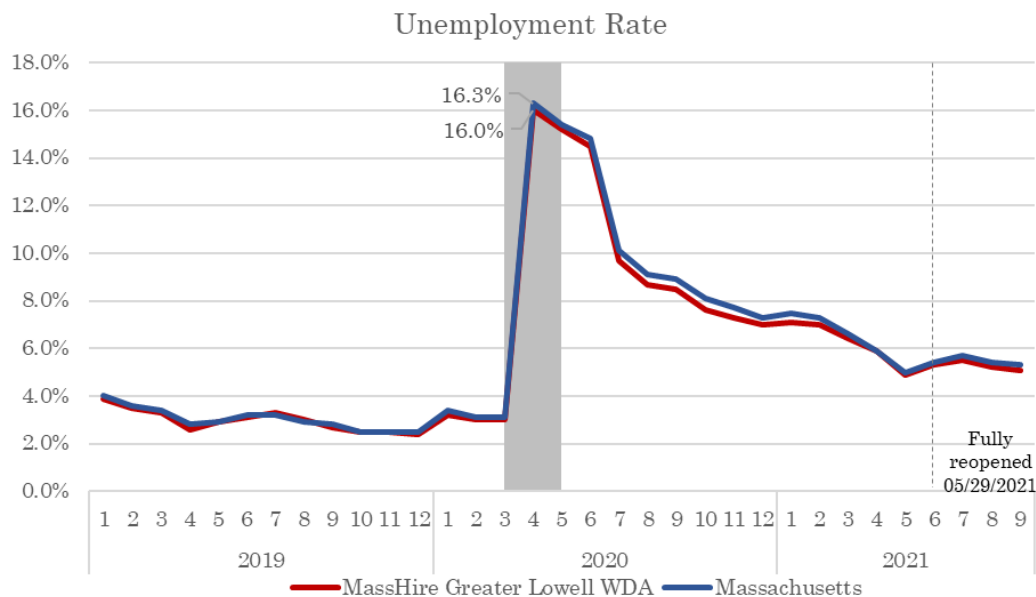
According to the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Department of Economic Research's 2020 Annual Economic Analysis Report. The twelve-month moving average unemployment rate prior to the onset of COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 in the MassHire Greater Lowell WDA was 2.9 %. At the height of the pandemic in April 2020 in the state, the unemployment rate for the WDA was 16.0 %. During the April 2020 reference week, 21,571 regular unemployment insurance (UI) claims were filed. The largest number of claims filed in the WDA during the peak of the pandemic was in May 2020 at 23,209 claims.<sup>1</sup>

Following the end of the stay-at-home advisory in May 2020, the area's unemployment rate in June 2020 was 14.5 %. Over the year, the area's unemployment rate in June 2021

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<sup>1</sup> Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Department of Economic Research; 2020 Annual Economic Analysis Report, Massachusetts Workforce and Labor Area Review 2020, page 76.

dropped 9.2 % to 5.3 %. Compared to June 2020, 19,089 fewer claims were filed in June 2021. The chart below shows the unemployment rate for the WDA compared to MA from 2019 to 2021.<sup>2</sup>



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

As of October 2021, we are seeing an uptick in the economy as unemployment rates have fallen to 5.1% in the Greater Lowell Region and the labor force has increased again to about 151,385 people, closer to pre-Covid statistics.<sup>3</sup>

While the economy is improving, the region continues to face challenges that need to be addressed:

- Long term affect COVID-19 has on the workforce supply and business demand
- Equity and the ability for all populations to be able to go back to and access work
- Long term unemployed/underemployed workers – many populations continue to struggle to obtain employment or are underemployed
- Skills gap – many industries currently have a shortfall of qualified workers

These challenges are not unique to our region, but it is important for us to identify a set of best practices based to address these challenges. As a result of analyses and business focus groups we identified six priority areas to help us meet these challenges. The priority areas will each contain action items and goals for the region. The six priority areas are as follows:

<sup>2</sup> Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Department of Economic Research; 2020 Annual Economic Analysis Report, Massachusetts Workforce and Labor Area Review 2020, page 77.

<sup>3</sup> BLS Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) compiled by MA DUA, not adjusted for seasonality.

1. Align workforce and business demands to promote and expand career pathways, skills development, and stackable credentials to address the skill gap and hiring needs of the identified priority industries and occupations
2. Effectively serve all job seekers, in particular those with barriers to employment, by improving the education and employability skills of youth and adults leading to competitive wage employment
3. Be viewed as the leading advocate, convener, and resource for workforce development activities in the in the Greater Lowell region
4. Create and leverage partnerships to raise and develop additional funding and resources
5. Continue to maintain strong board and career center operations including a system that values all partners, and supports collaboration, communication, and visibility
6. Continue to improve access to services through technology and virtual tools

In addition to identifying these strategic priorities the plan is focused on utilizing labor market data to inform decision making. The GLWB will be positioned to understand trends in the workforce, as well as be the lead on workforce policies. Utilizing the regional data will assist us in developing career pathways for sustainable job growth, identify industry clusters and develop best practices. By being able to assess and understand trends through data analysis, the GLWB will be a resource for our region's businesses as they seek to address their workforce needs. The GLWB will be able to assemble strategic partnerships to implement programming that will drive economic growth in our region.

The plan identifies priority industry clusters, and the strategic priorities and goals for those industries. The strategic priorities and goals mirror the values and purpose of the GLWB and are rooted in the principals of economic self-sufficiency. Achievement of these goals will require the collective commitment of our partners, as well as time, resources, creativity and the willingness to take risks. To that end we have engaged our business and industry partners, education partners, One-Stop Career Center, program partners and government colleagues.

## Greater Lowell Workforce Board Mission and Vision

### Mission

The mission of the Greater Lowell Workforce Board (GLWB) is to provide high quality, innovative and collaborative workforce development programs. The GLWB promotes a skilled and educated workforce that will meet the needs of employers in the region. The GLWB supports economic development, business competitiveness and job creation in Greater Lowell.

### Vision

The Greater Lowell Workforce Board (GLWB) will be the leader in workforce development policies and programming for the Greater Lowell Area, ensuring that job seekers have access to and are prepared for quality employment opportunities. The GLWB will work with stakeholders, businesses and partners to identify the challenges and seek solutions to address the skills gaps in our region and contribute to the economic growth of our communities.

## Overview of the Greater Lowell Workforce Board

The Greater Lowell Workforce Board is one of 16 Workforce Boards throughout Massachusetts, servicing the communities of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Lowell, Tewksbury, Tyngsboro, Dunstable and Westford.



We are charged with overseeing and implementing workforce development initiatives throughout the Workforce Development Area. The Greater Lowell Workforce Board is a private non-profit organization and Board members offer a wide range of skills and experience. The Board consists of private business representatives, educational leaders, labor groups, community-based organizations, local and state agencies, economic and other partners.

The Greater Lowell Workforce Board oversees various workforce development activities, representing a multitude of federal and state funding streams. These include Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), School to Career Initiatives, Adult Basic Education Activities, The Workforce Training Fund, overseeing the MassHire Lowell Career Center, and other specifically funded workforce development activities.

The Board, working in partnership with the Chief Elected Official (Lowell City Manager), provides policy guidance for workforce development initiatives in the Greater Lowell Area.

The Board works in concert with business, education, labor and other agencies dedicated to improving and promoting economic sufficiency for residents of Greater Lowell.

The GLWB offers a wide range of services to employers and job seekers throughout our region. Many of these services can be found at the MassHire Lowell Career Center, the region's One-Stop Career Center.

The GLWB is governed by the provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA provides for specific functions of the local workforce board such as: conduct workforce research and regional labor market analysis, convene local stakeholders and engage them in the development of a local plan, collaborate in regional planning with other areas and lead efforts to engage with a diverse range of employers and other entities in the region.

### **One-Stop Career Center**

Within the Greater Lowell Service Delivery Area, the GLWB is responsible for overseeing the operation of the local One-Stop Career Center, the MassHire Lowell Career Center. The career center services a dual-customer: jobseekers and businesses. The career center staff members develop expertise in the workforce needs of employers and seek to match job seekers with appropriate vacant positions based on skills and interests. The career center manages the training vouchers and assesses which job seekers can best benefit from skills training and which programs are best designed to meet labor market needs.

### **GLWB Committees**

The GLWB has various committees designed to assist in carry out its mission. See below for a brief outline of each of the committees and their roles.

**Executive Committee:** The Executive Committee has many of the same powers as the Board with the exception of those stated in the by-laws. All actions of the Executive Committee must be referred to the full Board for ratification. The Executive Committee meets on an as needed basis.

**Strategic Planning Committee:** The Strategic Planning Committee, comprised of GLWB members, assisted in the development of the Strategic Plan. The committee will meet over the course of the plan to address its implementation and progress.

**Workforce Performance and Opportunities Committee:** The Workforce Performance and Opportunities Committee, comprised of GLWB members, is responsible for making recommendations to the GLWB with respect to the One-Stop Career Center and the services it provides to jobseekers and businesses.

**Youth Council:** The primary role of the Youth Council is to provide insight and expertise regarding youth policy. Its members reflect the region and assist the GLWB in understanding and addressing youth workforce development topics. The committee is comprised of GLWB members, youth service providers, community-based organizations, and private sector businesses.

### **Strategic Planning Process**

Over the course of a year the GLWB developed a plan that would be approved by the full membership of the Board. The GLWB conducted a review and analysis of labor market information and developed a group of priority industries. These industries would be the focus of the GLWB for the life of the plan. The GLWB in collaboration with the WIOA core partners also updated and identified a group of priority populations.

The mission and vision statement of the GLWB were reviewed - these guiding principles will reflect the activities of the GLWB, both as the leader in the workforce development area and a member of the larger Northeast Region.

### **Regional Planning**

In the spring of 2017, the Commonwealth launched a regional planning process. The workforce skills cabinet comprised of the Secretaries of Labor and Workforce Development, Economic Development and Education, were charged with the oversight of the process and created seven mega regions. The GLWB was combined with the Merrimack Valley Workforce Board and the North Shore Workforce Board to create the Northeast Region. The areas continue to meet and convene community partners from Education and Economic Development to work on supporting and developing the three priority industries: Advanced Manufacturing, Professional/Technical/Scientific and Healthcare. They also identified occupational clusters within those regions.

The GLWB continues to run the local strategic planning process parallel to that of the regional planning process. Three of the priority industries that we have identified for our WDA overlap



with those chosen for the Northeast Region - Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Professional, Technical and Scientific Services.

## Regional Demographic Analysis

### Demographics

One of our core community partners and local community action agency, Community Teamwork Inc., recently released their 2021 Community Needs Assessment.<sup>4</sup> The MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board utilized that report as part of the demographic review of the region. We have included several tables below to illustrate a snapshot of our region. Per the federal guidance for Community Action Agencies, the bulk of the assessment took place in the first quarter of 2020 – before COVID-19 and the current national conversation on race. As such, the majority of the data from the 2021 Community Needs Assessment should be considered “pre-pandemic.” Per the report, based on publicly available data, trends, and utilizing assessment tools, CTI identified the top needs at the individual and community levels. Top Needs at the Individual Level: 1. Housing Affordability 2. Living Wages 3. Education and Training 4. Employment Supports 5. Affordable Childcare. Top Needs at the Community Level: 1. Creation of Quality, Affordable Housing 2. Industry and Employment 3. Mental Health and Counseling.

According to the 2018 data, the Greater Lowell communities are still predominantly white, with the exception of the urban City of Lowell.

Race and Ethnicity					
Town/City	Population	% White	% Black/ African American	% Asian	% Hispanic or Latino
Billerica	43,044	85.6 %	3.3 %	7.0 %	4.0 %
Chelmsford	35,086	87.2 %	0.8 %	9.1 %	3.6 %
Dracut	31,266	88.6 %	3.9 %	3.9 %	6.2 %
Dunstable	3,345	93.8 %	-	4.5 %	1.3 %
Lowell, City	111,249	60.9 %	7.4 %	23.2 %	18.8 %
Tewksbury	31,002	92.2 %	1.9 %	3.4 %	1.6 %
Tyngsborough	12,272	87.7 %	1.1 %	7.5 %	3.3 %
Westford	24,194	78.7 %	0.8 %	18.8 %	1.9 %
Massachusetts	6,830,193	78.5 %	7.5 %	6.5 %	11.6 %
United States	322,903,030	72.7 %	12.7 %	5.4 %	17.8 %

Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate

<sup>4</sup> Community Teamwork’s “2021 Community Needs Assessment”. <https://www.commteam.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CNA-Digital-FINAL.pdf>.

## **Population Trends**

From 2010 to 2018, each Greater Lowell community has experienced population growth, increases in the overall population, and diversification in terms of race and ethnicity. The entire region experienced a 7.4% change in total population from 2010 to 2018. The Greater Lowell Community had significant increases in the Black/African American and Asian populations. The changes also indicate diversification occurring in the suburban communities surrounding the City of Lowell, including the increases of community members identifying as Hispanic.<sup>5</sup>

<b>Changes in Population and Demographics, 2010 to 2018</b>					
<b>Town/City</b>	<b>% Change in Population</b>	<b>% Change in White</b>	<b>% Change in Black/ African American</b>	<b>% Change in Asian</b>	<b>% Change in Hispanic or Latino</b>
Billerica	8.8 %	3.1 %	89.6 %	30.5 %	109.6 %
Chelmsford	5.1 %	1.8 %	75.4 %	44.4 %	22.7 %
Dracut	8.0 %	3.0 %	84.7 %	56.2 %	169.1 %
Dunstable	8.7 %	5.8 %	N/A	128.8 %	-45.8 %
Lowell, City	5.9 %	7.1 %	19.6 %	22.8 %	19.5 %
Tewksbury	8.3 %	7.6 %	49.2 %	-1.9 %	-34.0 %
Tyngsborough	10.3 %	4.4 %	382.1 %	63.6 %	49.1 %
Westford	12.6 %	2.1 %	112.2 %	113.0 %	60.5 %
Greater Lowell	7.4 %	4.7 %	34.7 %	32.3 %	26.8 %
Massachusetts	5.5 %	1.3 %	20.9 %	31.8 %	34.9 %
United States	6.2 %	4.5 %	7.7 %	23.9 %	20.5 %

*Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*

Despite what looks like significant diversification, according to the 2018 data, the Greater Lowell communities are still predominantly white, with the exception of the urban City of Lowell.<sup>6</sup>

<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>					
<b>Town/City</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>% White</b>	<b>% Black/ African American</b>	<b>% Asian</b>	<b>% Hispanic or Latino</b>
Billerica	43,044	85.6 %	3.3 %	7.0 %	4.0 %
Chelmsford	35,086	87.2 %	0.8 %	9.1 %	3.6 %
Dracut	31,266	88.6 %	3.9 %	3.9 %	6.2 %
Dunstable	3,345	93.8 %	-	4.5 %	1.3 %

<sup>5</sup> Community Teamwork's "2021 Community Needs Assessment," page 36. <https://www.commteam.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CNA-Digital-FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Community Teamwork's "2021 Community Needs Assessment," page 36. <https://www.commteam.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CNA-Digital-FINAL.pdf>.

Lowell, City	111,249	60.9 %	7.4 %	23.2 %	18.8 %
Tewksbury	31,002	92.2 %	1.9 %	3.4 %	1.6 %
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Westford	24,194	78.7 %	0.8 %	18.8 %	1.9 %
Massachusetts	6,830,193	78.5 %	7.5 %	6.5 %	11.6 %
United States	322,903,030	72.7 %	12.7 %	5.4 %	17.8 %

Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

When looking at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the EOLWD 2020 Annual Economic Analysis Report in the historical claims data, Whites filed the most claims in the MassHire Greater Lowell WDA and this trend continued during the pandemic. In June 2020, over 67 % of the total claims were filed by Whites and 14 % by Asians. At the beginning of the recovery period in June 2021, 18.1 % of the claimants were Asians, an increase of 4.1 % compared to the % of claims in June 2020. Seven % of the total claims in June 2021 were filed by Black/African Americans; this is an increase of 1.6 % from the previous year's %.<sup>7</sup>

RACE	June 2019	%	June 2020	%	June 2021	%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	10	0.4%	75	0.3%	9	0.4%
Asian	272	12.0%	3,036	14.0%	462	18.1%
Black/African American	90	4.0%	1,163	5.4%	179	7.0%
Race Do not wish to respond	224	9.9%	1,722	8.0%	251	9.8%
More than one race	76	3.4%	1,031	4.8%	127	5.0%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		0.0%	69	0.3%	12	0.5%
White	1,591	70.3%	14,542	67.2%	1,509	59.2%
Total	2,263	100.0%	21,638	100.0%	2,549	100.0%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA)

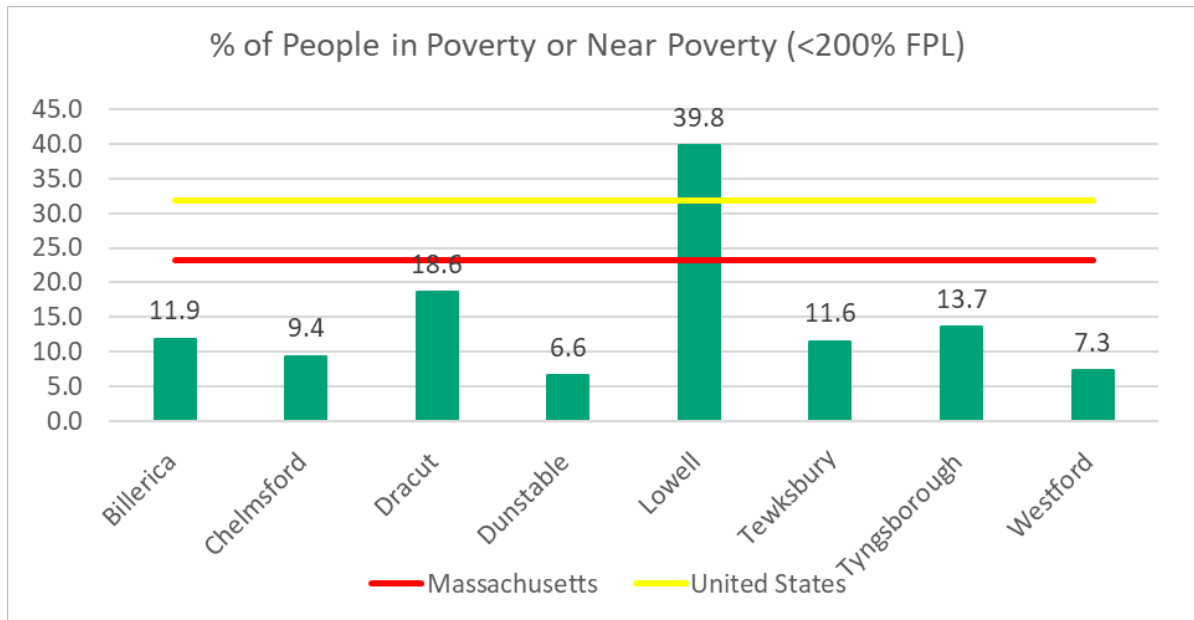
In June 2019, over 80 % of the claims were filed by claimants not of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity and 12.9 % from Hispanic or Latino claimants. In May 2020, when the claims count was the highest in this WDA during the peak of the pandemic, the % of the total claims from Hispanic or Latino claimants was 14.2 % while those not of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity was 80.9 %.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Department of Economic Research; 2020 Annual Economic Analysis Report, Massachusetts Workforce and Labor Area Review 2020, page 80.

<sup>8</sup> Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Department of Economic Research; 2020 Annual Economic Analysis Report, Massachusetts Workforce and Labor Area Review 2020, page 81.

## Poverty

Five of the eight towns in Greater Lowell have over 11% of people living at or near poverty, based on 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Only the City of Lowell surpasses both the Massachusetts average of 23.2% and the United States average of 31.9%.



There are over 30,000 residents in Greater Lowell who are living in poverty (<100% of FPL). An additional 33,000+ residents are documented as near poverty (<200% of FPL), in the chart above. It is important to understand poverty in a working sense as 200% of FPL because the Massachusetts minimum wage is far higher than the federal minimum wage (\$12.25 and \$7.25, respectively). In the charts below the prevalence of poverty is reviewed by race and ethnicity.

Prevalence of Poverty by Race										
Town/City	Population # 2018	% people at <100% of FPL	% White	% White at <100% of FPL	% Black/ African American	% Black/ African American at <100% of FPL	% American Indian/ Alaskan Native	% American Indian/ Alaskan Native at <100% of FPL	% Asian	% Asian people at <100% of FPL
Billerica	43,044	3.8%	85.6%	3.7%	3.3%	7.4%	0.0%	-	7.0%	2.7%
Chelmsford	35,086	3.8%	87.2%	3.3%	0.8%	20.8%	0.3%	0.0%	9.1%	5.5%
Dracut	31,266	6.8%	88.6%	6.8%	3.9%	4.4%	0.0%	-	3.9%	7.7%
Dunstable	3,345	2.6%	93.8%	2.6%	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	4.5%	0.0%
Lowell	111,249	18.7%	60.9%	18.7%	7.4%	22.8%	0.6%	33.4%	23.2%	17.4%
Tewksbury	31,002	5.2%	92.2%	5.2%	1.9%	44.3%	0.1%	0.0%	3.4%	4.2%
Tyngsborough	12,272	6.7%	87.7%	6.7%	1.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	7.5%	8.6%
Westford	24,194	2.4%	78.7%	2.4%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	-	18.8%	2.9%

Prevalence of Poverty by Race and Ethnicity										
Town/City	Population # 2018	% of people at <100% of FPL	% Some Other Race	% Some Other Race at <100% FPL	% Two or More Races	% Two or More Races at <100% of FPL	% Hispanic or Latino	% Hispanic or Latino at <100% of FPL	% Non - Hispanic or Latino	% Non-Hispanic or Latino at <100% of FPL
Billerica	43,044	3.8%	2.0%	7.4%	1.9%	4.8%	4.0%	4.3%	83.9%	3.7%
Chelmsford	35,086	3.8%	0.9%	3.1%	1.6%	11.3%	3.6%	1.0%	85.1%	3.4%
Dracut	31,266	6.8%	1.1%	5.6%	2.5%	37.4%	6.2%	20.7%	84.3%	6.3%
Dunstable	3,345	2.6%	0.1%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	1.3%	0.0%	97.5%	2.7%
Lowell	111,249	18.7%	5.6%	50.4%	2.3%	25.3%	18.8%	39.8%	48.8%	14.2%
Tewksbury	31,002	5.2%	0.7%	18.8%	1.7%	1.7%	1.6%	0.6%	91.0%	5.2%
Tyngsborough	12,272	6.7%	0.6%	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	3.3%	0.5%	84.8%	6.9%
Westford	24,194	2.4%	0.1%	0.0%	1.6%	4.7%	1.9%	4.4%	77.0%	2.4%

For those members of the Greater Lowell community who identify as “Some Other Race,” two data points stand out – that in 50.4% in Lowell and 18.8% in Tewksbury are living at or below the FPL. Individuals who identify as two or more races are impacted as follows: In Chelmsford, 11.3%; in Dracut, 37.4%; and in Lowell, 25.3% are living below the federal poverty level. These statistics indicate that poverty is clustered in the communities of color in the Greater Lowell region.<sup>9</sup>

### Education

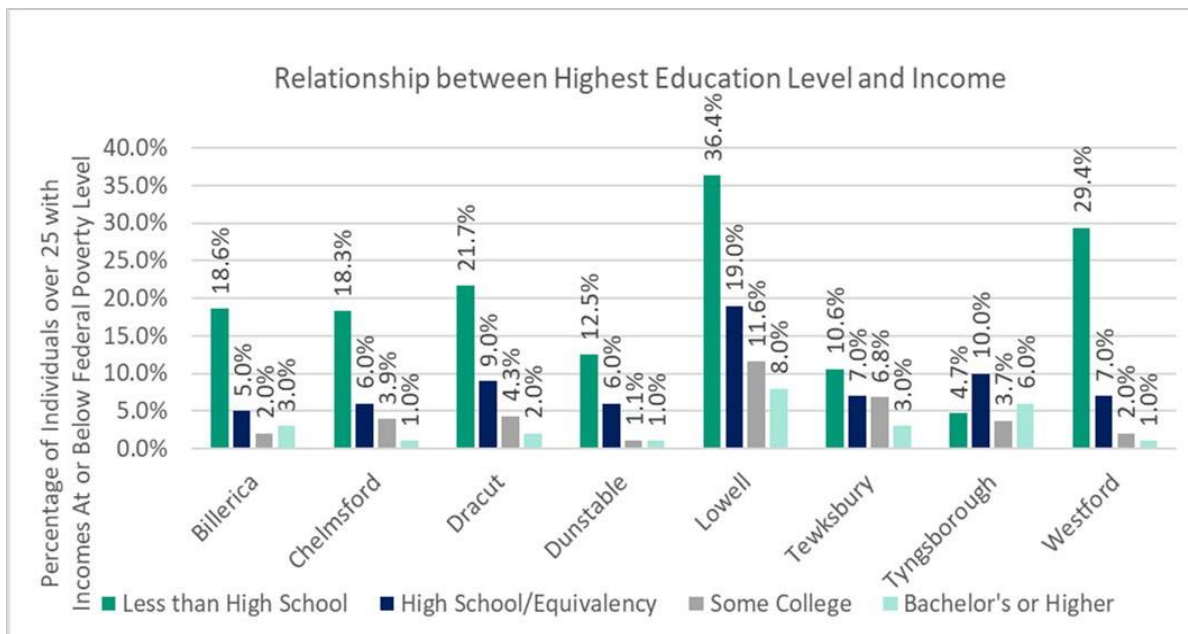
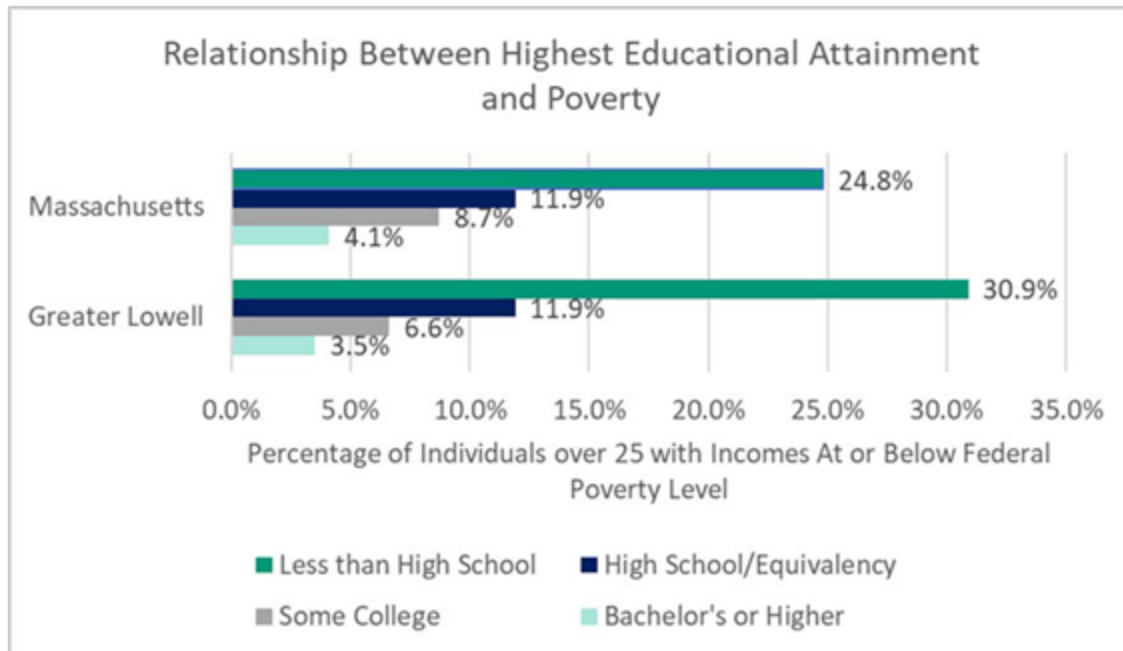
The City of Lowell is seeing a positive trend in the school system. Graduation rates are trending upward in recent years and the drop-out rates have lessened. For the City of Lowell, a new high school has been approved and funded, and construction is beginning.<sup>10</sup>

Looking at how poverty and education intersect, in Lowell, 17.8% more individuals without a high school diploma or equivalency have income at or below the poverty line than whose highest education level is high school. Educational attainment is a major contributor to the cycle of poverty; children who grow up in poverty are less likely to graduate high school, and in turn, they continue the cycle of poverty as adults. Adult educational attainment is strongly correlated to future income earnings and employment status; it also impacts an individual’s health outcomes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated that,

<sup>9</sup> Community Teamwork’s “2021 Community Needs Assessment,” page 39. <https://www.commteam.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CNA-Digital-FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Community Teamwork’s “2021 Community Needs Assessment,” page 14. <https://www.commteam.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CNA-Digital-FINAL.pdf>.

“persons with low levels of education and income generally experience increased rates of mortality, morbidity, and risk-taking behaviors and decreased access to and quality of health care.” The following charts portray the relationship between education attainment and poverty.<sup>11</sup>



<sup>11</sup> Community Teamwork’s “2021 Community Needs Assessment,” page 48. <https://www.commteam.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CNA-Digital-FINAL.pdf>.

When looking at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the EOLWD 2020 Annual Economic Analysis Report in the MassHire Greater Lowell WDA, the historical monthly claims data shows the highest number of claims were filed by claimants with high school or GED diploma. During the peak months of the pandemic, those with high school or GED diploma remained at the top with the most claims filed. In this WDA, the highest number of claims were filed in May 2020 with 39.8 % of the claims filed by those with a high school or GED diploma. Over 39 % of the claims in June 2020 were filed by claimants with a high school or GED diploma and 19.6 % had some college education. In June 2021, of the 2,549 claims filed, 41.6 % were from claimants with high school or GED diploma and 16 % from claimants with some college education.<sup>12</sup>

### Regional Labor Market Analysis

Most recent data from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development report as of October 2021 indicates the Greater Lowell region has approximately 159,175 in the labor force and of those 151,385 are employed. Our current unemployment rate is slightly below the state average at 5.1%. The workforce board reviewed several data sets from the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, including but not limited to, its Employment and Wage report for the first quarter as well as the short and long term industry projections to assist in determining the priority industries.

The chart below indicates short-term industry projections, 2020-2022, for the Greater Lowell region. The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development analyzed data with the base period of 2020 Q2 to provide the short-term projections. This included large employment drops due to COVID-19. As a result, growth rates appeared to be unusually large in recovering industries. Assumptions about the economic impact of COVID-19 were built into the projections process.<sup>13</sup>

Short-Term Industry Projections for Greater Lowell: 2020 - 2022					
NAICS Code	Industry Title	Employment 2020	Employment 2022	Change Level	Change Percent
310000	Manufacturing	17,650	17,573	-77	-0.44%
620000	Health Care and Social Assistance	17,287	19,138	1,851	10.71%
540000	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	13,500	13,473	-27	-0.20%
610000	Educational Services	10,466	11,796	1,330	12.71%
440000	Retail Trade	9,757	10,215	458	4.69%

<sup>12</sup> Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Department of Economic Research; 2020 Annual Economic Analysis Report, Massachusetts Workforce and Labor Area Review 2020, page 80.

<sup>13</sup> Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, <https://lmi.dua.eol.mass.gov/LMI/ShortTermIndustryProjections>.

230000	Construction	7,632	7,613	-19	-0.25%
334000	Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing	7,314	7,198	-116	-1.59%
720000	Accommodation and Food Services	6,311	9,724	3,413	54.08%
560000	Administrative/Support/Waste Management/Remediation Services	6,229	7,215	986	15.83%
000670	Self Employed and Unpaid Family Workers, All Jobs	5,748	6,331	583	10.14%
420000	Wholesale Trade	4,194	4,316	122	2.91%
510000	Information	3,382	3,401	19	0.56%
810000	Other Services (except Government)	2,835	3,534	699	24.66%
550000	Management of Companies and Enterprises	2,470	2,463	-7	-0.28%
522000	Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	1,903	1,957	54	2.84%
333000	Machinery Manufacturing	1,853	1,815	-38	-2.05%
332000	Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	1,370	1,344	-26	-1.90%
452000	General Merchandise Stores	1,245	1,350	105	8.43%
484000	Truck Transportation	1,069	1,158	89	8.33%
	<b>Total All Industries</b>	<b>121,479</b>	<b>132,785</b>	<b>11,306</b>	<b>9.31%</b>

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Short-Term Industry Projections, Greater Lowell WDA.

The chart below indicates long-term projections over a 10-year period for the Greater Lowell region:

<b>Long Term Industry Projections for Greater Lowell: 2018 - 2028</b>					
<b>NAICS Code</b>	<b>Industry Title</b>	<b>Employment 2018</b>	<b>Employment 2028</b>	<b>Change Level</b>	<b>Change Percent</b>
620000	Health Care and Social Assistance	20,101	21,162	1,061	5.28%
310000	Manufacturing	18,556	17,970	-586	-3.16%
540000	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	13,790	15,558	1,768	12.82%
610000	Educational Services	11,565	11,701	136	1.18%
440000	Retail Trade	10,486	10,556	70	0.67%
720000	Accommodation and Food Services	9,935	10,399	464	4.67%
334000	Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing	7,995	8,131	136	1.70%
230000	Construction	7,524	8,727	1,203	15.99%
000670	Self Employed and Unpaid Family Workers, All Jobs	6,872	7,116	244	3.55%
560000	Administrative/Support/Waste Management/Remediation	6,214	5,995	-219	-3.52%
480000	Transportation and Warehousing	4,839	4,673	-166	-3.43%
510000	Information	3,924	3,452	-472	-12.03%
810000	Other Services (except Government)	3,775	3,762	-13	-0.34%
423000	Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	2,940	2,940	0	0.00%



520000	Finance and Insurance	2,498	2,454	-44	-1.76%
710000	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,892	2,030	138	7.29%
550000	Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,822	1,858	36	1.98%
333000	Machinery Manufacturing	1,743	1,502	-241	-13.83%
332000	Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	1,467	1,852	385	26.24%
	<b>Total All Industries</b>	<b>134,822</b>	<b>138,011</b>	<b>3,189</b>	<b>2.37%</b>

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Long-Term Industry Projections, Greater Lowell WDA.

When looking at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the EOLWD 2020 Annual Economic Analysis Report in June 2019, the top three industries in the MassHire Greater Lowell WDA with the most claims were Construction with 12.7 % of the total claims, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services with 12.5 % of the total, and Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services with 12.2 % of the total count. In June 2020, Healthcare and Social Assistance topped the list with 16.3 % of the total count followed by Accommodation and Food Services with 15.9% and Retail Trade with 11 % of the total claims count. During start of the recovery period in June 2021, Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services was at the top with 13.1 % of the total count followed Healthcare and Social Assistance at 11.3 % and Management at 10.6 % of the total claims count.<sup>14</sup>

When looking at occupations in June 2019, the top three occupations with the most claims were Management with 14 % of the total claims, Construction and Extraction with 12.4 % of the total claims and Office and Administrative Support with 11.6 % of the total claims count. In June 2020, 15.4 % of the claims were filed by claimants in Food Preparation and Serving Related occupations, 12.4% in Office and Administrative Support occupations, and 8.1 % in Transportation and Material Moving occupations. In June 2021, 13.3 % were claimants in Office and Administrative Support occupations, 10.6 % in Production occupations, and 9.9 % in Management occupations.<sup>15</sup>

### Priority Industries

The priority industries for the GLWB are as follows:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Healthcare and Social Assistance
- Education
- Professional, Technical, and Scientific (IT)

<sup>14</sup> Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Department of Economic Research; 2020 Annual Economic Analysis Report, Massachusetts Workforce and Labor Area Review 2020, page 82.

<sup>15</sup> Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Department of Economic Research; 2020 Annual Economic Analysis Report, Massachusetts Workforce and Labor Area Review 2020, page 81.

- Construction

These priority industries were identified through a number of factors. While the Workforce Board relied heavily on the labor market data we felt it was important to take into account other determining factors such as feedback from discussions/focus groups with industry and company leaders and the success of training, career pathways, job placement, retention and wages in a particular industry.

On the other end of the spectrum, retail and hospitality have high concentrations. However, many of the jobs in these industries are low wage/low skill that do not require additional training and support. They do not meet the core values of providing resources to establish career pathways that ensure working families can acquire a position with a sustainable living wage that leads to self-sufficiency. Overall, the GLWB is committed to providing services to all the industries and employers in the region.

### **Priority Industries – Labor Market Information**

#### **Advanced Manufacturing**

The GLWB is one of the partners of the Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC). NAMC is a collaboration among of industry, academia, and workforce development that was created to define and implement the Commonwealth’s advanced manufacturing strategy within the Northeast region of Massachusetts, covering the four workforce regions of Metro North, North Shore, Greater Lowell, and Merrimack Valley. This four-region partnership consists of community colleges, vocational technical schools, workforce development boards, and one-stop career centers. Key areas of focus include developing the pipeline for job openings, developing training and aligning education/training curricula with employer needs, and promoting manufacturing as a career option.

The advanced manufacturing sector presents numerous career pathway opportunities for the region’s residents to enter into a growing sector. Manufacturing can be characterized by two primary sub sectors of Navigational, Measuring, Electromedical, and Control Instruments Manufacturing and Semiconductor and Other Electronic Component Manufacturing.<sup>16</sup>

The growing number of anticipated retirees in the manufacturing workforce presents a current and future workforce need to address.

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<sup>16</sup> Massachusetts Office of Labor and Workforce Development – Economic Research Office. “Massachusetts 2016 Workforce and Labor Area Review”, [https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/10/04/MA2016\\_Workforce\\_and\\_Labor\\_Area\\_Review\\_0.pdf](https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/10/04/MA2016_Workforce_and_Labor_Area_Review_0.pdf)

The chart below is a list of common advanced manufacturing positions and related occupational information.

SOC Code	Occupation Title	# of Employees in Greater Lowell	Median Annual	Typical education needed for entry
51-2028	Electrical and Electromechanical Equipment Assemblers except coil winders, tapers and finishers	1,320	\$41,419	No formal educational credential
51-9061	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	610	\$45,560	High school diploma or equivalent
51-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	420	\$74,957	High school diploma or equivalent
51-4041	Machinists	280	\$52,409	High school diploma or equivalent
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	120	\$54,904	High school diploma or equivalent
51-9161	Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Operators	90	\$58,731	High school diploma or equivalent
17-2141	Mechanical Engineers	800	\$104,791	Bachelor's degree
17-3023	Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technologists and Technicians	340	\$63,106	Associate's degree
17-3026	Industrial Engineering Technologists and Technicians	330	\$56,579	Associate's degree
17-3024	Electro-Mechanical and Mechatronics Technologists and Technicians	150	\$65,584	Associate's degree
17-3027	Mechanical Engineering Technologists and Technicians	70	\$52,268	Associate's degree
17-3012	Electrical and Electronics Drafters	60	\$63,819	Associate's degree
17-3013	Mechanical Drafters	40	\$62,467	Associate's degree

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2020.

### **Healthcare and Social Assistance**

The healthcare and social assistance sector accounts for the second largest share of jobs in the region at 14.2% according to the short-term industry projections.<sup>17</sup> This is a shift from the past where the healthcare and social assistance sector predominantly represented the largest share of jobs in the region. The data collected in Q2 of 2020 captured the affects COVID-19 had on employment in the region. Though during the pandemic employment in the healthcare and social assistance sector dropped in 2020 - between 2020-2022, the industry is expected to grow by 10.71%, an increase of 1,851 jobs becoming the largest share of jobs in the region again.

<sup>17</sup> Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Short-Term Industry Projections, Greater Lowell WDA.

Similarly, between 2018 -2028, the industry is expected to grow by 5.28% resulting in an additional 1,061 jobs.<sup>18</sup>

The chart below is a list of widespread healthcare and social assistance occupations and accompanying salary and education levels typical for the positions.

SOC Code	Occupation Title	# Employees in Greater Lowell	Median Salary in Greater Lowell	Typical Education Level
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	3,850	\$34,572	High school diploma or equivalent
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	1,630	\$34,540	Postsecondary non-degree award
29-1141	Registered Nurses	2,030	\$89,765	Bachelor's degree
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	850	\$61,976	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-9092	Medical Assistants	410	\$42,175	Postsecondary non-degree award
21-1018	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	350	\$61,013	No formal educational credential
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	310	\$124,515	Master's degree
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	280	\$37,007	High school diploma or equivalent
29-1123	Physical Therapists	200	\$96,498	Doctoral or professional degree
29-1292	Dental Hygienists	190	\$94,296	Associate's degree
29-1122	Occupational Therapists	180	\$93,392	Master's degree
29-1051	Pharmacists	160	\$123,669	Doctoral or professional degree
31-9091	Dental Assistants	150	\$43,637	Postsecondary non-degree award
21-1021	Child, Family, and School Social Workers	130	\$50,142	Bachelor's degree
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	110	\$63,078	Associate's degree
21-1015	Rehabilitation Counselors	110	\$51,265	Master's degree
21-1022	Healthcare Social Workers	80	\$69,097	Master's degree
31-2022	Physical Therapist Aides	40	\$31,832	High school diploma or equivalent
21-1094	Community Health Workers	40	\$40,788	High school diploma or equivalent

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development – Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, <https://www.mass.gov/find-employment-information-by-industry>.

## Education

The education industry holds the fourth largest share of jobs in the region at 8.6%.<sup>19</sup> According to the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, between 2018 - 2028 the education field is expected to grow at 1.18% and employ 11,701 people in the region.

The Greater Lowell region is home to two public institutions of higher education – UMass Lowell and Middlesex Community College. According to U.S News & World Report, UMass Lowell is the second-fastest growing national university in the nation.

In addition to higher education institutions, the region also has three vocational technical high schools – Greater Lowell, Shawsheen Valley, and Nashoba Valley Technical High Schools. The chart below demonstrates the expected long-term demand within the early childhood and elementary and secondary systems.

SOC Code	Occupation Title	Employment 2018	Employment 2028	Percent Change	Educational Attainment	Mean Wages
119032	Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary School	8,540	8,832	3.4%	Master's degree	\$113,273
252021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	1,555	1,559	0%	Bachelor's degree	\$99,028
259041	Teacher Assistants	1,418	1,407	-1%	Some college, no degree	\$33,508
252022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	827	830	0%	Bachelor's degree	\$87,906
252011	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	874	815	-7%	Associate's degree	\$35,385
252031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	778	783	1%	Bachelor's degree	\$89,068
252052	Special Education Teachers, Kindergarten and Elementary School	295	301	2%	Bachelor's degree	\$84,833
252032	Career/Technical Education Teachers, Secondary School	294	292	-1%	Bachelor's degree	\$82,347
253021	Self-Enrichment Education Teachers	245	275	12%	High school diploma or equivalent	\$45,197
251011	Business Teachers, Postsecondary	202	224	11%	Doctoral or professional degree	\$107,029

<sup>19</sup> Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Short-Term Industry Projections, Greater Lowell WDA.

252054	Special Education Teachers, Secondary School	179	179	0%	Bachelor's degree	\$86,423
253098	Substitute Teachers	149	149	0%	No formal educational credential	\$32,957
252012	Kindergarten Teachers, Except Special Education	117	117	0%	Bachelor's degree	\$71,355

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development – Long Term Occupational Projections – Greater Lowell WDA.

### **Professional, Technical, and Scientific (IT)**

Computer Systems Design and Related Services and Scientific Research and Development Services are the two primary subsectors under Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services. A second tier is comprised of a) Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services and b) Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services.

The chart below illustrates occupations in information technology and the long-term growth projections in the Greater Lowell region.

SOC Code	Occupation Title	Employment 2018	Employment 2028	Numeric Change	Percent Change	Typical education needed for entry	2020 Mean Annual OES Wage
151133	Software Developers, Systems Software	1,440	1,588	148	10.27%	Bachelor's degree	***
172071	Electrical Engineers	1,118	1,098	-20	-1.78%	Bachelor's degree	\$123,010
113021	Computer and Information Systems Managers	1,097	1,180	83	7.56%	Bachelor's degree	\$171,980
172141	Mechanical Engineers	934	941	7	0.74%	Bachelor's degree	\$112,578
151132	Software Developers, Applications	668	815	147	22.00%	Bachelor's degree	***
151151	Computer User Support Specialists	658	712	54	8.20%	Some college, no degree	***
151121	Computer Systems Analysts	527	618	91	17.26%	Bachelor's degree	***
151142	Network and Computer Systems Administrators	233	244	11	4.72%	Bachelor's degree	***
151143	Computer Network Architects	188	184	-4	-2.12%	Bachelor's degree	***
172081	Environmental Engineers	151	162	11	7.28%	Bachelor's degree	\$110,319
172061	Computer Hardware Engineers	137	144	7	5.10%	Bachelor's degree	\$127,087
151152	Computer Network Support Specialists	104	106	2	1.92%	Associate's degree	***

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development – Long Term STEM Occupational Projections for Greater Lowell WDA.

## Construction

Out of the region's five priority industries according to the long-term industry projections, between 2018-2028, the construction industry is expected to experience the highest rate of growth at 15.99%. Followed by the Professional, Technical, and Scientific industry which is anticipated to have the second highest growth at 12.82%.

According to the City of Lowell there are several construction projects ongoing and occurring in Greater Lowell including the Lowell Canal Bridges Project, Lord Overpass, Merrimack Riverwalk Phase II, and the Lowell High School Construction Project.<sup>20</sup>

With this large number of public construction projects and ongoing private sector construction taking place throughout the region, the construction industry remains a critical component of the Greater Lowell workforce system.

SOC Code	Occupation Title	Employment	Median Annual	Typical education needed for entry
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	1,070	\$58,259	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2111	Electricians	1,050	\$56,876	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2061	Construction Laborers	650	\$57,954	No formal educational credential
47-2031	Carpenters	620	\$50,258	High school diploma or equivalent
47-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	610	\$76,854	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2073	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	350	\$88,642	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2141	Painters, Construction and Maintenance	170	\$40,526	No formal educational credential
47-2211	Sheet Metal Workers	160	\$65,292	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2221	Structural Iron and Steel Workers	140	\$91,158	High school diploma or equivalent
53-7051	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	130	\$35,839	No formal educational credential
47-2021	Brickmasons and Blockmasons	120	\$76,200	High school diploma or equivalent
11-9021	Construction Managers	110	\$105,789	Bachelor's degree

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development – Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2020.

\*\*\* Data not available

<sup>20</sup> City of Lowell Construction Projects, <https://www.lowellma.gov/1152/Construction-Projects>.

## Priority Populations

In discussion and development of the WIOA Partner MOU the GLWB and WIOA core partners came to an agreement and identified the following as target populations:

- Unemployed insurance claimants
- Adult education participants (Title II)
- Long-term unemployed
- Veterans
- Low-income (including but not limited to TANF & SNAP recipients and homeless)
- Older workers (Title V)
- Young adults including youth with barriers to employment
- YouthBuild and Job Corps participants
- Individuals with disabilities (Vocational Rehabilitation Title IV)
- Re-entry population
- Individuals in recovery
- Refugees and immigrants

This list of target populations is also identified in our WIOA Partner MOU to better serve these populations cross agencies and to effectively utilize our resources. It is the intent of the GLWB to expand/establish an MOU with our non-mandated community partners to capture and service additional job seekers.

The GLWB also recognized that as ongoing discussions occur with job seekers, partners and businesses these populations could be expanded on or policies could be developed to better serve the region.

The GLWB reaffirmed its commitment to serve all job seekers and businesses in our WDA.

## Strategic Priorities

**1. Align workforce and business demands to promote and expand career pathways, skills development, and stackable credentials to address the skill gap and hiring needs of the identified priority industries and occupations**

Activities:

- Fully integrate and utilize the demand driven philosophy and tools to engage businesses
- Strong partnerships with businesses and coordination with training partners to ensure services are in line with demands
- Assist employers in identifying and hiring skilled workers and accessing relevant resources including education and training for their current workforce



- Promote, expand or develop industry/occupation career pathways to fill identified skills gaps
- Understand the workforce needs of industry and companies and respond quickly to their needs for talent
- Emphasize training that leads to an industry recognized credential
- Strengthen career pathways, work-based learning, apprenticeship programs, and sector strategies

**2. Effectively serve all job seekers, in particular those with barriers to employment, by improving the education and employability skills of youth and adults leading to competitive wage employment**

Activities:

- Utilize partners to continue to expand access through improved accommodations for people with disabilities
- Develop education and training opportunities in priority industries for eligible participants with employment barriers
- Reestablish a Youth Council to assist in the development of key policy and decision making to help youth achieve successful transitions to further education and employment.
- Monitor local demographics and make recommendations for trainings/curriculum based on needs of local job seekers
- In collaboration with the MassHire Lowell Career Center:
  - Educate and encourage job seekers to focus on gaining in-demand skills
  - Educate local vendors to provide training and opportunities for job seekers that focus on in-demand skills required by the region’s businesses and credentials

**3. Be viewed as the leading advocate, convener, and resource for workforce development activities in the in the Greater Lowell region**

Activities:

- Gather, analyze and disseminate labor market data to a variety of audiences including industry, community partners, institutions of higher education, and high schools
- Expand career awareness activities with a focus on STEM
- Provide accurate and timely information on current and future employer hiring and training needs

#### **4. Create and leverage partnerships to raise and develop additional funding and resources**

Activities:

- Leverage and foster partnerships with the following:
  - One-Stop Career Center
  - Employers
  - Higher Education Institutions – MCC and UMass Lowell
  - Vocational Technical Schools – Nashoba Valley Technical High School, Greater Lowell Technical High School, and Shawsheen Valley Technical High School
  - Community Based Organizations
  - Elementary and Secondary Education Schools
  - Labor Unions
- Develop a strategic plan with a focus on securing funding through, but not limited to, the following sources: corporate and private foundations, other state and federal funding outside of core funding
- Work with community partners to capture additional resources to support providing services to fill the skills gap within our priority industries
- Work with our regional partners to ensure our strategic priorities are aligned with regional planning to maximize resources

#### **5. Continue to maintain strong board and career center operations including a system that values all partners, supports collaboration, communication, and visibility**

Activities:

- Ensure WDB staff and board members have relevant and professional networks in priority industries and with political leadership in the region
- Ensure core programs are aligned with WIOA and state priority areas
- Build and leverage State House, legislative, and municipal relationships
- Engage board members to strengthen the visibility, opportunities, and visibility of the GLWDB
- Strengthen marketing and relationship with local media outlets
- Maintain strong career center performance through oversight of the one-stop career center

## 6. Continue to improve access to services through technology and virtual tools

Activities:

- Identify tools and technology to assist customers in exploring career pathways to increase their knowledge of the different types of jobs available, and to support customers in moving up the career ladder.
- Support Career Center of Lowell in providing online services to jobseeker workshops, job fairs, and career exploration tools.
- Strengthen referrals made through the WIOA Partner Portal.

## Conclusion

The GLWB has created a three and half year strategic plan that renews our commitment to our dual customer, the job seeker and our regions businesses. The plan focuses and streamlines our organization so that we will be a leader in creation and implementation of policies and best practices in the workforce development area. We will seek to create innovative approaches to expand our work - work that will create new strategies to address the skills gaps, provide access to opportunities for our job seekers - in particular those with barriers, and enhance our business services.

For information regarding this plan, please contact:

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