



Greater Lowell Workforce Development Board

Strategic Plan

January 1, 2018 – June 30, 2021

Approved

December 19, 2017

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Executive Summary

In August of 2017, the Greater Lowell Workforce Development Board (GLWDB) began the process of developing a three-and-a-half-year strategic plan, covering January 1, 2018 – June 30, 2021, 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 GLWDB recognizes that workforce development will continue to be a critical piece in sustaining the economic health of our region.

The GLWDB strategic plan focused on transition to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) and embodied the key operating principals of WIOA. As we approached this new strategic plan we renewed our commitment to serving both the job seeker and the businesses in our region. We recognized 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.

While the economy has improved and the unemployment rate is low, the region is still facing challenges that need to be addressed:

- Long term unemployed/underemployed workers – although unemployment is low, many populations continue to struggle to obtain employment or are underemployed
- Skills gap – many industries projected to have a shortfall of qualified workers
- Uncertainty of funding at the federal and state levels – federal leadership change, low unemployment rate reduces public funding

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. To that end the GLWDB conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis and held business focus groups. As a result of those analyses we identified five priority areas to help us meet these challenges. The priority areas will each contain action items and goals for the region. The five priority areas are as follows:

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.

In addition to identifying these strategic priorities the plan is focused on utilizing labor market data to inform decision making. The GLWDB 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 GLWDB will be a resource for our region's businesses as they seek to address their workforce needs. The GLWDB 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 target those industries. The strategic priorities and goals mirror the values and purpose of the GLWDB 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 Development Board Mission and Vision

Mission

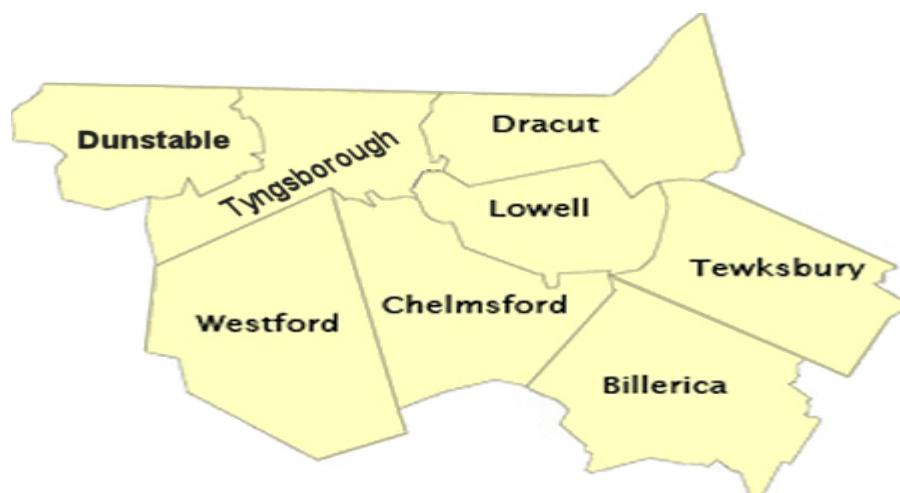
The mission of the Greater Lowell Workforce Development Board (GLWDB) is to provide high quality, innovative and collaborative workforce development programs. The GLWDB promotes a skilled and educated workforce that will meet the needs of employers in the region. The GLWDB supports economic development,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

Vision

The Greater Lowell Workforce Development Board (GLWDB) 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 GLWDB 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 Development Board

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

The GLWDB is governed by the provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA provides for specific functions of the local workforce development 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 the region.

One-Stop Career Center

Within the Greater Lowell Service Delivery Area, the GLWDB is responsible for overseeing the operation of the local One-Stop Career Center, The Career Center of Lowell. 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.

GLWDB Committees

The GLWDB 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 GLWDB 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 GLWDB members, is responsible for making recommendations to the GLWDB 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 GLWDB in understanding and addressing youth workforce development topics. The committee is comprised of GLWDB members, youth service providers, community based organizations, and private sector businesses.

Strategic Planning Process

The strategic planning committee reconvened in August of 2017. Over the course of several months the committee met to develop a plan that would be approved by the full membership of the Board. The planning committee conducted a review and analysis of labor market information and developed a group of priority industries. These industries would be the focus of the GLWDB for the life of the plan. The committee identified a group of priority populations as well. The committee determined the plan would move to a fiscal year time frame.

The mission statement of the GLWDB was reviewed and redrafted and a vision statement was created. These new guiding principles better reflect the activities of the GLWDB, both as the leader in the workforce development area and a member of the larger Northeast Region.

As part of the process, members of the strategic planning committee, the Executive Committee and the staff of the GLWDB and Career Center participated in a SWOT Analysis. The analysis was conducted by a consultant and done over two sessions. The board members and staff each attended a separate session. The result was a report that included common themes from the two sessions. The analysis and subsequent report was utilized to develop the strategic priorities and goals of the plan.

The final part of the process was the development of priorities, activities and goals to focus on over the three and half years. The scorecard was reviewed and the metrics were updated to better reflect the priorities established in the plan.

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 GLWDB was combined with the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board and the North Shore Workforce Investment Board to create the Northeast Region. The areas met as a planning group and convened our various community partners from Education and Economic Development. The partners identified three industries; Advanced Manufacturing, Professional/Technical/Scientific and Healthcare. They also identified occupational clusters within those regions.

The GLWDB felt that it was critical to run our 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.

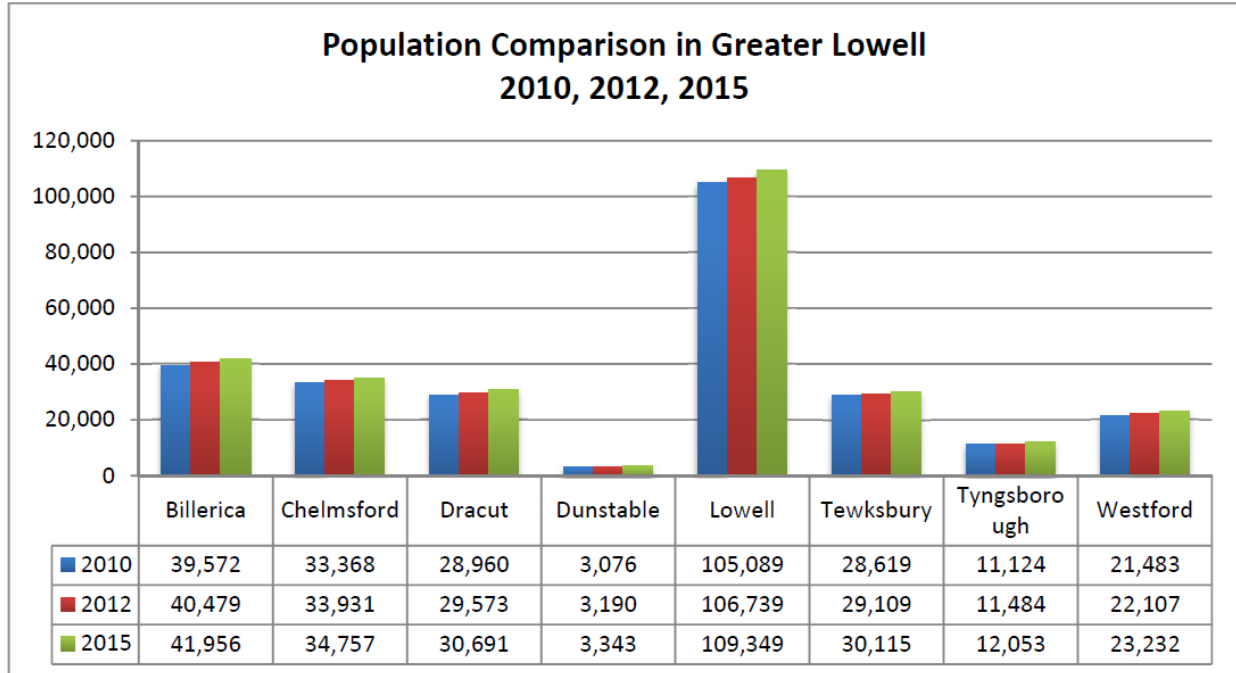
Regional Demographic Analysis

Demographics

In 2017 one of our community partners, Community Teamwork Inc., embarked on a Community Needs Assessment.¹ They created a report and the GLWDB 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.

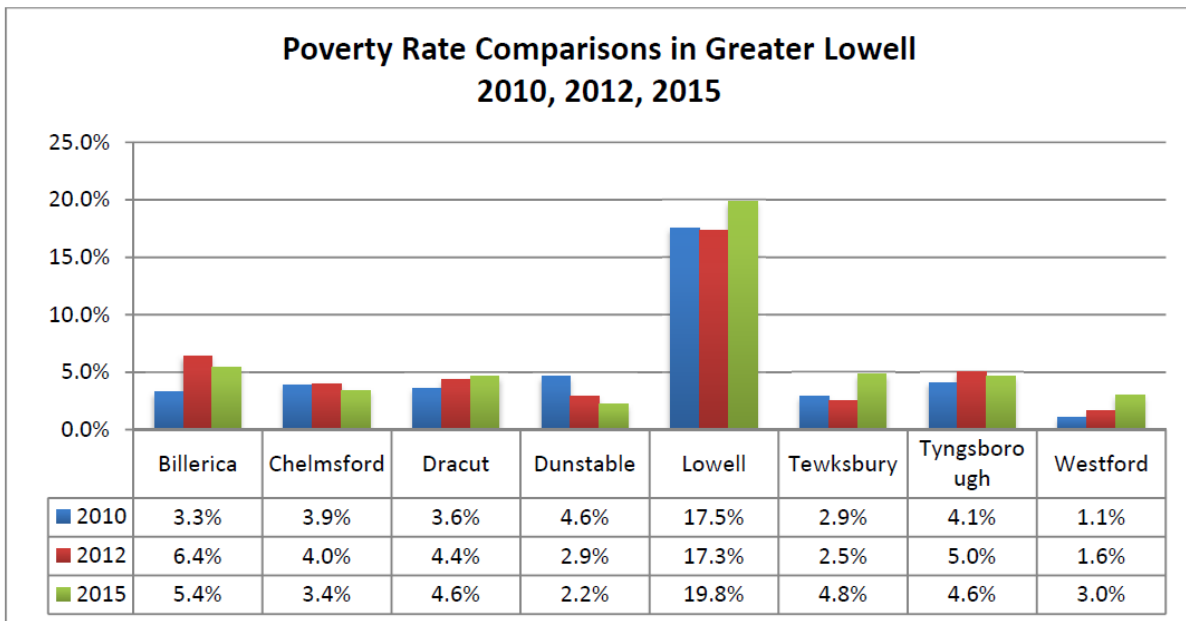
¹ Community Teamwork's "2017 Community Needs Assessment". <http://www.commteam.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2017-Community-Needs-Assessment.pdf>

Population Trends



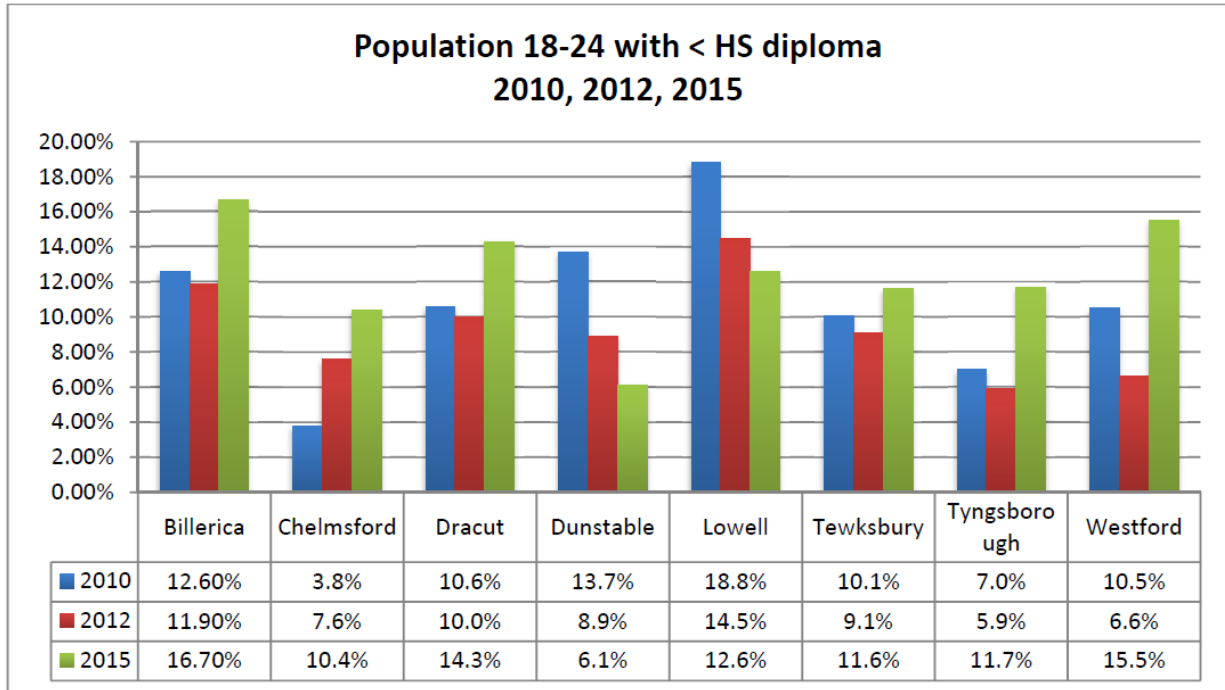
Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2011-2015

Poverty

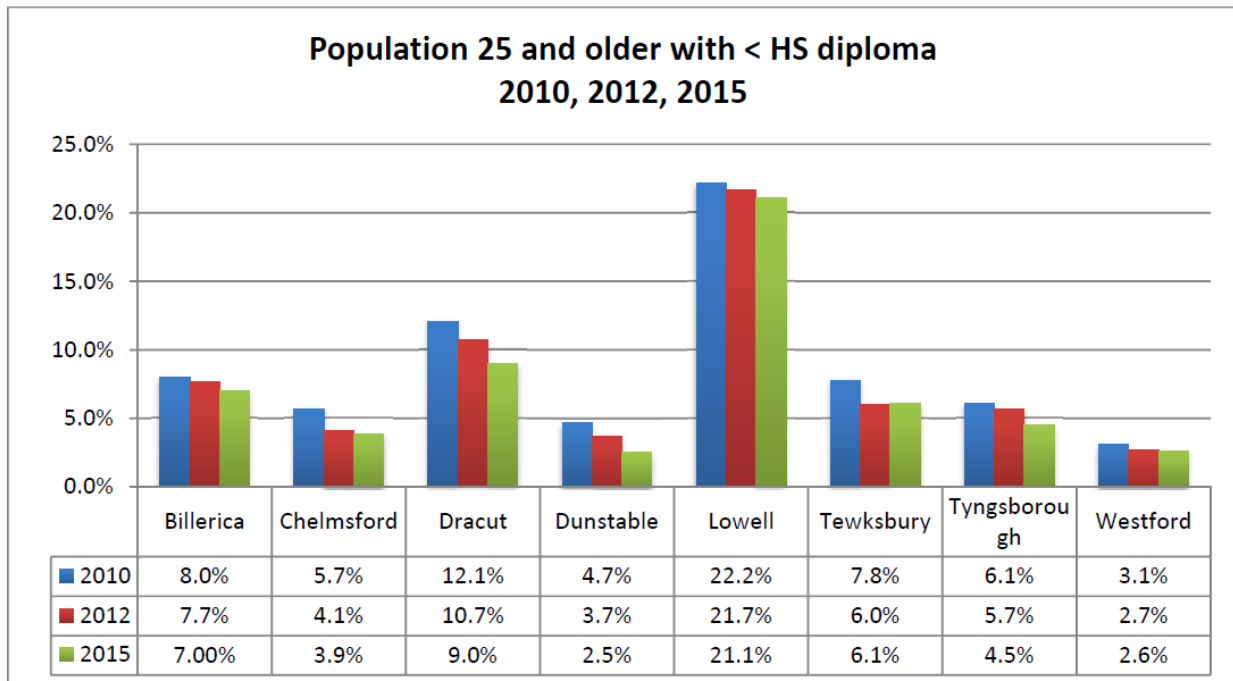


Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2011-2015

Education



Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2011-2015



Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2011-2015

Regional Labor Market Analysis

Most recent data from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development report as of September 2017 indicates GLWDA has approximately 153,000 in the labor force and of those 147,000 are employed. Our current unemployment rate is slightly above the state average at 3.6%

The strategic planning committee also 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, 2016-2018, for the Greater Lowell region:

Short Term Industry Projections for Greater Lowell: 2016 - 2018					
NAICS Code	Title	Employment 2016	Employment 2018	Change Level	Change Percent
620000	Health Care and Social Assistance	19,412	20,524	1,112	5.70%
310000	Manufacturing	17,759	17,870	111	0.60%
540000	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	12,625	14,435	1,810	14.30%
610000	Educational Services	11,280	11,418	138	1.20%
440000	Retail Trade	10,598	11,008	410	3.90%
720000	Accommodation and Food Services	9,643	10,085	442	4.60%
230000	Construction	6,972	7,621	649	9.30%
560000	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediat	6,387	6,599	212	3.30%
480000	Transportation and Warehousing	4,511	4,634	123	2.70%
420000	Wholesale Trade	4,612	4,493	-119	-2.60%
810000	Other Services (except Government)	3,965	4,162	197	5.00%
510000	Information	3,468	3,476	8	0.20%
550000	Management of Companies and Enterprises	2,292	2,402	110	4.80%
520000	Finance and Insurance	2,298	2,302	4	0.20%
710000	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,859	1,999	140	7.50%
530000	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	880	927	47	5.30%
451000	Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, and Music Stores	234	225	-9	-3.80%
220000	Utilities	202	210	8	4.00%
Total All Industries		130,867	136,597	5,730	4.40%

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

Long Term Industry Projections for Greater Lowell: 2014 - 2024					
NAICS Code	Title	Employment 2014	Employment 2024	Change Level	Change Percent
620000	Health Care and Social Assistance	18,013	20,118	2,105	11.70%
310000	Manufacturing	17,402	17,414	12	0.10%
540000	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	9,974	11,233	1,259	12.60%
610000	Educational Services	10,662	11,193	531	5.00%
440000	Retail Trade	10,038	10,401	363	3.60%
720000	Accommodation and Food Services	9,393	9,811	418	4.50%
230000	Construction	6,863	7,215	352	5.10%
560000	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediat	6,026	6,348	322	5.30%
420000	Wholesale Trade	4,745	4,828	83	1.70%
480000	Transportation and Warehousing	4,500	4,577	77	1.70%
810000	Other Services (except Government)	3,899	3,950	51	1.30%
510000	Information	3,787	3,755	-32	-0.80%
520000	Finance and Insurance	2,315	2,337	22	1.00%
550000	Management of Companies and Enterprises	2,172	2,261	89	4.10%
710000	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,573	1,655	82	5.20%
530000	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	844	888	44	5.20%
451000	Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, and Music Stores	263	265	2	0.80%
220000	Utilities	214	225	11	5.10%
Total All Industries		124,063	130,049	5,986	4.80%

Source: Mass.gov/Imi - Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

Industry/Occupation matrix are obtained by applying occupational staffing patterns from the OES to produce base year occupational employment estimates. In turn, expected staffing pattern changes are applied to the base year pattern. The modified staffing patterns are then applied to obtain projected industry/occupational employment levels.

Priority Industries

The priority industries for the GLWDA are as follows:

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

These priority industries were identified through a number of factors. While the committee relied heavily on the labor market data they 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 GLWDB is committed to providing services to all the industries and employers in the region.

Priority Industries – Labor Market Information

Advanced Manufacturing

The GLWDB 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 development 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. According to the “2016 Massachusetts Workforce and Labor Area Review” report, manufacturing, at 14.3%, holds the second largest share of jobs in the region behind healthcare and social assistance. Greater Lowell has one of the larger shares of manufacturing jobs in the Commonwealth, only Merrimack Valley and North Shore WDAs had a greater share.

Manufacturing can be characterized by two primary sub sectors of Navigational, Measuring, Electromedical, and Control Instruments Manufacturing with 5,054 jobs and Semiconductor and Other Electronic Component Manufacturing with 2,236 jobs.²

² 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

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

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

SOC Code	Occupation Title	# Employees in Greater Lowell	Median Salary in Greater Lowell	Typical Education Level
51-2092	Team Assemblers	910	\$32,467	High school diploma or equivalent
51-2022	Electrical and Electronic Equipment Assemblers	750	\$35,977	High school diploma or equivalent
51-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	580	\$65,482	High school diploma or equivalent
51-9061	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	560	\$43,126	High school diploma or equivalent
51-4041	Machinists	460	\$50,997	High school diploma or equivalent
51-9198	Helpers--Production Workers	300	\$28,525	No formal educational credential
17-3023	Electrical and Electronics Engineering Technicians	460	\$60,059	Associate's degree
17-3026	Industrial Engineering Technicians	350	\$51,319	Associate's degree
17-3012	Electrical and Electronics Drafters	190	\$52,856	Associate's degree
17-3013	Mechanical Drafters	120	\$65,079	Associate's degree
17-3027	Mechanical Engineering Technicians	110	\$57,913	Associate's degree
17-2141	Mechanical Engineers	870	\$97,425	Bachelor's Degree

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development – Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2016.

Healthcare and Social Assistance

The healthcare and social assistance sector accounts for the largest share of jobs in the region at 16%. The industry is expected to experience substantial short and long term growth, outpacing the predictable regional growth rates across all industries. Between 2016-2018, the industry is expected to grow by 5.7%, an increase of 1,112 jobs. Similarly, between 2014-2024, the industry is expected to grow by 11.7% resulting in an additional 2,105 jobs.³

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

³ Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development <https://www.mass.gov/find-employment-information-by-industry>

SOC Code	Occupation Title	# Employees in Greater Lowell	Median Salary in Greater Lowell	Typical Education Level
29-1141	Registered Nurses	2,450	\$76,430	Bachelor's degree
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	1,920	\$28,671	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-1011	Home Health Aides	1,470	\$26,934	No formal educational credential
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	920	\$53,954	Postsecondary non-degree award
31-9092	Medical Assistants	420	\$36,341	Postsecondary non-degree award
21-1093	Social and Human Service Assistants	400	\$29,412	High school diploma or equivalent
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	330	\$30,628	High school diploma or equivalent
29-2021	Dental Hygienists	270	\$87,081	Associate's degree
31-9091	Dental Assistants	270	\$39,250	Postsecondary non-degree award
29-1123	Physical Therapists	240	\$84,353	Doctoral or professional degree
21-1014	Mental Health Counselors	210	\$52,780	Master's degree
29-2011	Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technologists	***	\$70,585	Bachelor's degree
29-2031	Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	***	\$94,147	Associate's degree
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists	***	\$57,716	Associate's degree
21-1021	Child, Family, and School Social Workers	***	\$49,396	Bachelor's degree
31-2011	Occupational Therapy Assistants	***	\$52,277	Associate's degree
31-2022	Physical Therapist Aides	***	\$33,894	High school diploma or equivalent

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development – Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2016.

*** Data not available

Education

The education industry holds the fourth largest share of jobs in the region at 10.1%. This surpasses the statewide average of 8.9%. According to the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, between 2014-2024 the education field is expected to grow at 5.0% and employ 11,193 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	Title	Employment 2014	Employment 2024	Change Percent	Typical education needed for entry	2016 Average Annual OES Wage
119032	Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary School	258	269	4.3%	Master's degree	\$104,108
119033	Education Administrators, Postsecondary	319	341	6.9%	Master's degree	***
252011	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	665	721	8.4%	Associate's degree	\$36,456
252021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	1,044	1,085	3.9%	Bachelor's degree	\$78,024
252022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	658	684	4.0%	Bachelor's degree	\$75,849
252031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	831	865	4.1%	Bachelor's degree	\$73,415
253021	Self-Enrichment Education Teachers	389	442	13.6%	High school diploma or equivalent	\$40,703
253098	Substitute Teachers	766	804	5.0%	No formal educational credential	\$29,968
259041	Teacher Assistants	1,418	1,501	5.9%	Some college, no degree	\$28,070

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 that are expected to experience long term growth.

SOC Code	Title	Employment 2014	Employment 2024	Change Level	Change Percent	Typical education needed for entry	2016 Average Annual OES Wage
130210	Computer and Info Systems Managers	613	699	86	14.1%	Bachelor's degree	\$154,190
172061	Computer Hardware Engineers	376	432	56	14.9%	Bachelor's degree	\$139,535
172071	Electrical Engineers	613	644	31	5.1%	Bachelor's degree	\$109,859
172081	Environmental Engineers	154	181	27	17.5%	Bachelor's degree	\$97,175
172112	Industrial Engineers	495	542	47	9.5%	Bachelor's degree	\$99,180
172141	Mechanical Engineers	602	644	42	7.0%	Bachelor's degree	\$100,166
151151	Computer User Support Specialists	741	835	94	12.7%	Some college, no degree	\$58,367
151133	Software Developers, Systems Software	1,372	1,570	198	14.4%	Bachelor's degree	\$122,051
151132	Software Developers, Applications	999	1,102	103	10.3%	Bachelor's degree	\$144,245
151121	Computer Systems Analysts	707	861	154	21.8%	Bachelor's degree	\$96,399

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development – STEM Occupations in Greater Lowell WDA

Construction

According to the short-term industry projections, 2016-2018, the construction industry is expected to experience the second highest rate of growth at 9.3%. Professional, Technical, and Scientific is anticipated to have the highest growth at 14.3%.

According to the Division of Capital Asset Management & Maintenance (DCAMM), between 2016 and 2019, there is \$416,644,000 in active and planned University of Massachusetts Building Authority, City of Lowell, and DCAMM projects scheduled in Greater Lowell.

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	# Employees in Greater Lowell	Median Salary	Typical Level of Education
47-2111	Electricians	1,420	\$58,644	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2061	Construction Laborers	990	\$47,676	No formal educational credential
47-2031	Carpenters	630	\$56,512	High school diploma or equivalent

47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	630	\$55,874	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2211	Sheet Metal Workers	400	\$37,608	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2073	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	360	\$62,926	High school diploma or equivalent
47-2141	Painters, Construction and Maintenance	120	\$45,815	No formal educational credential
53-7021	Crane and Tower Operators	***	\$96,786	High school diploma or equivalent
53-7051	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	210	\$36,131	No formal educational credential
11-9021	Construction Managers	200	\$95,765	Bachelor's degree

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development – Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2016.

*** Data not available

Priority Populations

The GLWDB determined that the target populations would continue to be those that we currently focus on and are identified in WIOA. The target populations are as follows:

- Adult education participants
- Long-term unemployed (30 weeks or more)
- Veterans
- Low-Income
 - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Homeless
- Mature/Older Workers (55+)
- Youth (14 – 24 yrs old)
- Youth and adults with disabilities
- Re-entry-offenders

These populations are also identified in our WIOA Partner MOU. Many of the job seekers cross agencies and the MOU was established with our mandated partners to better serve those populations and efficiently utilize our resources. It is the intent of the GLWDB to expand/establish an MOU with our non-mandated community partners to capture and service additional job seekers.

The GLWDB 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 GLWDB 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 Career Center of Lowell:
 - 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

Conclusion

After months of planning and meeting the GLWDB 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.

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