

# INVESTING IN JOBS AND OPPORTUNITY



# VISION

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A skilled workforce is crucial to our state's productivity and competitiveness. Every Massachusetts resident should have access to at least two years of education or training past high school so that they have the vocational credential, industry certification or Associates Degree needed to succeed in today's economy. Residents should also have access to the basic skills, support and financial aid needed to pursue such education.

In addition, Massachusetts needs to dramatically improve post-secondary credential attainment rates by developing new capacity in high demand fields and educational models that work for youth and adults.

## BACKGROUND

Almost half of Massachusetts jobs are middle-skill jobs, requiring more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year college degree.

- Demand for middle-skill jobs and occupations will remain robust in the future in both the state and the U.S.
- Since 2002, funding for skills training within the U.S. Department of Labor alone has been cut by more than \$2 billion.
- Massachusetts' investment in public higher education is woefully inadequate; the state ranks 46th in the nation in terms of per capita spending on public higher education.
- In Massachusetts since 2001, there has been a 22% decline in funding for public higher education and a 25% decline in funding for adult basic education when adjusted for inflation.
- Over 400,000 Massachusetts residents do not have a high school diploma; over 150,000 have limited English proficiency.
- Only 35.5% of the graduates from the Boston Public Schools Class of 2000 who enrolled in college earned a 2 or 4-year degree within 7 years of graduating high school. This 2 or 4-year credential attainment rate drops to 12.5% for those graduates who enrolled in community colleges.
- Boston, a city of 600,000 residents, will receive fewer than 300 training vouchers through Workforce Investment Act funding in FY2011.

Massachusetts has some pieces of the puzzle in place to help workers advance toward middle-skill jobs. **Still, more needs to be done to ensure our Commonwealth's workforce has the Skills to Compete.**

Three key principles—**Partnerships, Pathways, and Proportionate Investment**—underpin a strategy to help more Bay State residents attain the middle-skill credentials they need to help the Commonwealth maintain its competitive edge and to help our families attain economic independence.

Sources: Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts; Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center; Council for Adult and Experiential Learning; Massachusetts Profile of Adult Learners; National Skills Coalition; Boston Private Industry Council: A Seven Year Longitudinal Study of the Boston Public Schools Class of 2000; City of Boston Office of Jobs and Community Services



# PARTNERSHIPS

Massachusetts needs to invest in and support regional **partnerships** among key stakeholders including employers, local workforce boards, post-secondary institutions, vocational and technical schools, the K-12 system, the adult basic education system, labor and community-based organizations to meet business needs for a skilled workforce and worker needs for good jobs. Partnerships should build on the respective strengths that stakeholders bring to the table and leverage regional resources.

## What's Working

Massachusetts' innovative Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund has invested \$18 million in sector skills training since 2006 and trained over 6,000 people with 255 businesses to date. Despite a deep recession, nearly 900 participants have already been placed in employment, over 1,000 have earned wage gains, and over 3,900 professional credentials have been obtained. The WCTF is a national model that has also helped support the development of new training programs that better meet the needs of businesses and working adults.

Massachusetts' Workforce Training Fund has been investing in workers and employers since 1999. The WTF, which is funded entirely by contributions from businesses through a UI surcharge, provides vital resources for middle-skill training and education, helping thousands of people and hundreds of businesses each year. Since its inception, the WTF has invested nearly \$200 million to train over 210,000 people employed at more than 4,300 companies in a range of critical and emerging industries across the Commonwealth

## Policy Recommendations

- **Fully fund the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund.** Use the innovative WCTF to support partnerships that most effectively help people attain middle-skill training, credentials, and jobs and help businesses find and retain skilled employees.
- **Fully fund the Workforce Training Fund.** Use the WTF to target basic and middle skill training needs of employers, being sure to engage employers to inform training strategies and priorities and measure impact. Allow the fund to support sector training strategies.
- **Link both Funds more closely with the state's economic development initiatives** and ensure that efforts to create jobs and attract business also provide training opportunities for Massachusetts residents.
- **Develop regional training centers** or centers of excellence to make the most efficient use of limited resources and build on local strengths and expertise.

## Partnering for Success: Two Examples

### Healthcare Training Institute

Faced with a growing skills gap between demand for workers in the health services sector and the supply of qualified workers, the Healthcare Training Institute in Boston offers a collaborative model designed to increase educational opportunities for low-wage adults in the health care industry. The Institute provides on-site education and training opportunities as well as support services to help participants overcome employment barriers.

Renee Jackson-Benson, a Training Institute participant at Children's Hospital Boston, is a medical assistant who's moved up to clinical assistant and then surgical coordinator at Children's. Renee had dreamt of becoming a nurse for many years, but with two young children and full-time job, she found it difficult to attain her goal. In the summer of 2009, Renee enrolled in the Bridges to College Program at the Healthcare Training Institute. She received coaching and support as well as help navigating the college enrollment system. Renee is taking prerequisite courses at Bunker Hill Community College, where she plans to enroll in a nursing program. Today Renee strives to be the best role model she can be for her children and wants them to know that it is never too late to further your education and enhance your earning capacity.

### 1199SEIU Training and Upgrading Fund

Thirty-five MA healthcare employers are part of the 1199SEIU Training and Upgrading Fund. This statewide labor-management partnership is a contractual benefit funded by employer contributions as a percentage of payroll, providing a full range of education and training opportunities.

The Surgical Technologist program supported by the Fund in the Cape Cod region provides a good example of how this partnership works to help employers fill skill shortage areas and help workers enter more satisfying and economically rewarding positions.

In Spring 2008, Cape Cod Healthcare (Cape Cod and Falmouth Hospitals) and Jordan Hospital identified Surgical Technologist as a hard to fill position. The Fund's Labor-Management Committee and staff created a Surg Tech program to train incumbent workers. Fund staff identified a training vendor (Quincy College) who agreed to create a part-time option with classes held on-site at Hyannis and clinical placements provided at each hospital location.

Hundreds of employees from the three hospitals attended orientation sessions to learn about the four-semester program. All tuition and fees are covered by the Fund, and each employer provides the employees with 16 hours of paid release time to participate in the program.

The first group of nine students will complete the program in December 2010 and look forward to continuing in their employment at their hospitals in a new, more highly-paid position. Stakeholders are already working together to identify the next skill shortage area and the program to address it.

# PATHWAYS

Massachusetts needs to create better, more accessible **pathways**, particularly for working adults, to middle-skill credentials needed in the labor market.

## What's Working

Massachusetts' Educational Rewards Grant Program provides the only grant funding available for working students attending post-secondary education less than half-time.

College Transitions programs at each of the 15 community colleges are critical to helping adult basic education students move successfully to post-secondary education.

The state's Adult Basic Education and ESOL programs provide high quality services and need to scale up their efforts to help students connect to vocational and post-secondary training.

## Policy Recommendations

- **Appoint a high-level state council** or organization to improve the transition from adult education or developmental education to college and training programs.
- **Help students get through pre-college work more quickly and inexpensively.** Minimize remediation by better aligning ABE and pre-college programs with post-secondary institutions.
- **Create educational models that increase credential attainment.** Align courses of study within and between institutions; support transition to college; expand integrated programming; and create more evening, weekend, modular, on-line, non-traditional courses.
- **Increase financial aid to part-time students,** and include student support services along with that aid.
- **Track, increase and publicly report college completion and credential attainment rates** for all students, including adults and those enrolled in workforce training leading to industry-recognized certification.



## Creating Pathways to Credential Attainment

X-Cel, Inc. Adult Education has taken the mission of an adult basic education (ABE) program and expanded it to make college-level study more accessible to low-income adults in Greater Boston. X-Cel's College Prep program helps adults get ready for college level work, and its College Mentoring Program links first semester college-going adults with a current college student or graduate.

Edell Howard, an X-Cel program graduate, illustrates how an expanded vision for ABE can help adults master basic academic skills and reach college graduation. Aged 37 and a father of five, Edell has life experience that traditional college kids would hardly be able to fathom.

Growing up in Boston, Edell liked school, but by 12th grade, he had two children and dropped out. Edell worked full-time and realized he wanted to go back to school. He went to the principal and asked for a second chance. This time he graduated and went on to community college.

Soon, however, Edell got caught up with the wrong crowd and dropped out of college. He began using and selling drugs, existing under the radar for 15 years. Then he was caught and spent several months in the county jail. There, he vowed to clean up his act and spent his time reading and studying.

Edell was referred to a post-release program in his neighborhood that collaborates with X-Cel Adult Education. Edell completed the program—which helps adult students brush up on college level math and English and prepare admissions and financial aid applications—and returned to the community college he had left more than 15 years before. He credits X-Cel with teaching him “what college is about and how to be a better student. I had to learn how to study at a college level, and to force myself to ask questions when I didn't understand something.”

Edell has earned his associate's degree at Roxbury Community College and is matriculating to the University of Massachusetts Boston, where he will continue to work toward a BA in mathematics and his goal of teaching middle-school math.

Currently, Edell tutors GED-seeking adults in math. His practical, easy-to-comprehend way of explaining math problems brings out the best in his students. It is clear that this is a role that Edell relishes. His personality shines, he is confident, knowledgeable, and respected. Edell brushes it off. “If you have support, anything is possible.”

# PROPORTIONATE INVESTMENT

Massachusetts needs to match our skills investments to the demands of today's labor market. Although 44 percent of our jobs are middle-skill jobs, we are not spending nearly that proportion of our state's education and training dollars to prepare people for these jobs. We need to measure how well current systems are meeting labor market needs and then increase investments in the systems and programs that are effective in helping workers gain middle skill credentials and jobs.

## What's Working

The Commonwealth Corporation's Regional Strategies Initiative has provided some good baseline data and working partnerships to identify and address the skills gaps and training needs in each of the state's sixteen workforce regions.

The Commonwealth Corporation produces an annual report card to the legislature on the results of the state's workforce training programs.

As part of their participation in the Achieving the Dream initiative, Bunker Hill, Roxbury, Northern Essex, and Springfield Technical Community Colleges have used student outcome data to identify promising interventions and practices that help increase student success at the institutional level.

All of these initiatives should help determine appropriate and effective investment targets.

## Policy Recommendations

- **Set integrated statewide performance goals** for the post-secondary and workforce training systems. Goals, taking into account the economic context, should focus on skill attainment, program completion, credential/certificate attainment, employment and wage increases and progress toward filling middle-skill jobs in Massachusetts.
- **Increase funding for post-secondary education and training**, including public higher education and community-based organizations. Funding should particularly be used to create additional evening, weekend, off-site, non-semester-based, and/or modular courses in critical industries that most effectively help adults attain middle-skill credentials and jobs.
- **Increase funding for adult basic education** to provide more adults with access to instructional programs from the most basic to the post-secondary level, including programs that effectively move individuals to post-secondary education through contextualized curriculum, transition planning, education and career counseling, and case management.



## *Investing for Maximum Impact: Washington State*

The state of Washington has a performance management system that includes both workforce and public post-secondary education information to ensure consistent program outcomes and coordination of service delivery. One agency administers the system, which measures progress toward seven desired outcomes, including employment retention, enrollment in further education, increased earnings, skills/credential attainment, customer satisfaction and return on investment to the taxpayer and to the trainees.

As a result of this system, Washington has been able to match workforce participant records with enrollment data from community and technical colleges, all public four year higher education institutions, private career schools licensed by the workforce board, and apprenticeships overseen by the Department of Labor and Industries. This has given the state a much clearer picture of the credentials being pursued and obtained in the state and how the state can invest its workforce dollars for maximum impact.

# WHAT CAN THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE PHILANTHROPIC COMMUNITY DO TO MOVE THESE PRIORITIES FORWARD?

## Businesses can:

- Create and support workplace environments that help promote college success by providing flexible scheduling, release time, tuition advancement or remission, and advancement opportunities tied to skill or credential attainment.
- Increase involvement, engagement, and investment in sector partnerships and career pathways.
- Help measure the Return on Investment (ROI) of workforce training programs.
- Help shape training programs so that graduates meet labor market demands and can quickly find employment or opportunities for advancement.

## Funders can:

- Support the development and maintenance of a continuum of services that takes people from basic skills through the completion of a middle-skill credential.
- Take risks on pilot or innovative programs *and* continue to invest in those programs that work.
- Prioritize long-term funding for partnerships, alignment and coordination of programs, agencies and services as well as for wrap-around supportive services.
- Support the alignment of economic development priorities with the public workforce development system, and support the collaboration of economic development and workforce development professionals.
- Support capacity building efforts to increase the success of sector partnerships and to create systems alignment and coordination.
- Convene community colleges and other post-secondary institutions to facilitate alignment and collaboration with the workforce training system.
- Develop a way to track all corporate and foundation investments in workforce development, with progress toward filling middle skill jobs as a key measure.



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## *Lead Endorsers of Skills2Compete Massachusetts include*

1199SEIU Training and Upgrading Fund  
Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.  
Asian American Civic Association  
Associated Industries of Massachusetts  
Berkshire County Regional Employment Board  
BEST Corp.  
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center  
The Boston Foundation  
Boston Private Industry Council  
Bunker Hill Community College  
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Children's Hospital Boston  
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Green Economy  
Jobs for the Future  
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Massachusetts AFL-CIO  
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Massachusetts Workforce Alliance  
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