

## PART III. PLAN NARRATIVE

### A. JOB SEEKER CUSTOMERS

#### **1. Please describe the policies of the Workforce Investment Board and One-Stop Career Center(s) to address the trends in unemployment and the service needs of unemployment insurance claimants.**

The Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Board (WIB) has adopted a course of action that expedites its addressing trends in unemployment and service needs of unemployment insurance claimants.

It's the WIB's policy to:

#### ***Stay current***

During the business planning process in preparation for the new fiscal year, the WIB reviews prior year trends, and reviews and researches new trends prior to updating and setting its goals. The WIB's Resource Development and Planning Director, in conjunction with key staff at the One-Stops consolidate current information to help inform key decisions of the WIB

Resources are maintained and updated periodically throughout the year:

- a) Internal knowledge (weekly or more frequently)
- b) Latest labor market information (monthly/quarterly)
- c) Career center performance trends (weekly)
- d) Employer feedback through meetings and surveys (semi annually)
- e) State versus local labor market trends (monthly)
- f) Specialized third party studies and reports (as developed)

#### ***Remain flexible***

Fiscal allocation is reviewed on a monthly basis through the Finance Committee using current Career Center Performance reports and other data acquired during that time to help inform whether or not reallocation of certain dollars, within state guidelines, is necessary. Votes will be carried from the Finance committee, to the Executive Committee, and then to the WIB (quarterly) for approval.

Changes in welfare reform has caused us to reduce our time to service welfare recipients by 50%. We are meeting these continued pressures only by applying additional job developer resources to this program, at the expense of other needs. We are also looking at ways to better partner and streamline activity with DTA training providers such as LifeStream, Inc.

#### ***Empower***

The WIB empowers the Lead Operator to make recommendations and to develop and deliver variations of their services to best suit the populations and volume of training needs at any given time, within budget. Progress in these areas is reviewed and updated by WIB sub committees.

The WIB Staff also meets for a bi weekly Leadership meeting with key personnel of our One-Stop partners to discuss trends, progress, and new thinking as it relates to the One-Stops and

support of the WIB. This information is funneled through the sub committees when needed to accelerate WIB level decision-making.

To accelerate Individual Training Account (ITA) vendor approval of training, the WIB staff is empowered to approve ITA vendors as needed, based on pre-established criteria and qualifications. Approved vendors are maintained in a vendor database for easy reference.

### ***Prioritize***

The WIB maintains Adult Basic Education/English for Speakers of Other Languages (ABE/ESOL) and Literacy (including computer) as a high priority for this region and makes every effort to ensure that these basic skills are met before referring individuals into the workplace. For example, we will be looking at increasing the number of computer classes at the One-Stop Career Center (OSCC) and finding other ways to support computer training over the next year as it directly relates to filling skills gaps of Unemployment Insurance (UI) customers. The WIB also identifies and works to nurture relationships with new ABE/ESOL friendly employers that will host and support ABE/ESOL initiatives in the region.

The WIB prioritizes opportunities that will support its Regional Economic Transformation Model (RETM), where individuals move from less than 4<sup>th</sup> grade education, through to some college; more specifically, in an area specifically recognized as critical or emerging in our region. In addition, the WIB stands behind building strong employer relationships and providing support at each tier within the model.

The WIB/One-Stops also uses the information on skills gaps of UI claimants as primary points of decisions for both existing and new services to ensure claimant skills best align with the needs of local employers.

### ***Maintain Accountability***

The WIB conducts an annual Charter Review, an integrated review that targets the OSCC and one of three primary targets each year (reviewed on a cyclical basis. These areas being jobseekers, businesses and partner/vendors

#### **a. Has a change in your job seeker base resulted in a change in your locally apportioned funding (e.g. transfer of funds between Adult and Dislocated Worker categories)?**

Yes, we moved dollars from Adult into Dislocated Worker. Perennially, we look at our training dollars that are typically depleted well before the end of the fiscal year (April this year). This cripples our ability to help large numbers of eligible customers. We're faced with the dilemma of trying to help large numbers reach basic literacy levels, but spending Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds to provide these basic skills does not result in a customer obtaining a credential. Furthermore, achieving performance criteria required by WIA common measures becomes more remote. In the past, we have reallocated funds based on need and will continued to review and make adjustments as necessary.

#### **2. Please describe how skill requirements for job seekers in your workforce investment area have changed over the past several years and how those changes have affected**

**training and counseling activities in the One-Stop Career Center(s) and/or policies of the Workforce Investment Board.**

Industries that need skills requiring some post secondary education are not being supplied with job seekers from our area to any significant degree. More and more, employers demand skills that require a higher level of technical aptitude. Computer and critical thinking skills are being viewed as entry-level skills by many of our regional employers. As noted before, many of our customers do not even meet the minimum requirements necessary to enter the skills training courses that would help them to obtain the skills sought by these employers. For those that do meet the requirements, many training facilities are not available in our area, and public transportation limits access outside the area, and in the case of higher level health care training (Licensed Practitioner Nurse (LPN), Registered Nurse (RN), technical skills) the waiting lists at these training facilities is extensive.

Retail is an industry that has provided a good portion of entered employments for our area, and this will significantly increase with the new Wareham Crossing Mall and the accompanying 1200 retail jobs over the next two years. Many will require customer service skills blended with a level of technical aptitude that will help individuals proceed up a career ladder. We have partnered with several employers, the National Retail Federation (NRF) and area education institutions to develop a skill center concept to provide certified retail focused training. We expect that some resources will be shifted to address this need, but that the scale to which we are effective will largely depend on our ability to acquire the necessary funding.

The most significant change is the increase in numbers of job seekers coming to the Career Centers. Also, as mentioned earlier, the skill levels of these job seekers continues to decline with more needing basic computer training, ESOL, and increased education in math and reading. Many workers in the manufacturing industry that have lost their jobs do not have transferable skills to the industries in our region needing job ready workers, i.e. health care and retail, customer service and more advanced manufacturing. This has created a situation where any training funds directed to address these basic literacy and ESOL issues do not produce a credential and therefore do not meet the Common Measures WIA performance standards. We have provided in house basic computer training on a limited basis and have searched for other opportunities from partner organizations. Our more comprehensive computer classes are full as is our in-house General Equivalency Diploma (GED) classes. The overall need far surpasses our ability to provide appropriate assistance. This situation has strained our staff and affected morale as the desire to help remains strong but the ability to help does not exist in all cases.

**a. What service strategies will be undertaken with respect to post-secondary education entities to promote lifelong learning opportunities as a focus of the workforce system?**

We maintain a strong working relationship with our local secondary education partners: UMass Dartmouth UMD), Bristol Community College (BCC) and Fisher College. We are also working more closely with Bridgewater State College and Cape Cod Community College for the Wareham Career Center. Our continuing focus is the development of projects and grant proposals where the WIB can work in concert with both education and economic development. As a system, we strive to create career ladders that will lead to increased opportunities for

economic self-sufficiency. The additional priority in this regard is the use of ITAs with other post secondary partners.

The WIB will continue to leverage its partnerships with Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), BCC and others to focus attention on opportunities to provide post secondary education. We are currently working with BCC and local employers in a Marine Trades oriented program that provides credit courses that lead to degrees in marine trades' oriented fields.

As we apply for grants and sponsorships of various programs, we will continue to include higher education partners and post secondary scholarships when possible for participants in our training programs so they can pursue additional education (for credit) beyond the basic skills training provided by the grant.

The WIB also recognizes that both apprenticeships and career ladder opportunities need to be consistently included in its planning as both lead to life long learning opportunities for successful candidates. We have also increased ITA caps for Rapid Response AT&T Set a Side funds to allow access to higher education (primarily in LPN programs) for qualified Dislocated Workers (see D.4.a).

The *LiteracyWorks* initiative started up during the latter half of the last fiscal year where the WIB hired a *Literacy Entrepreneur* to address the impending literacy problems throughout Greater New Bedford. During the first few months, the Entrepreneur met with key stakeholders, including the local public schools system, post-secondary educational institutions, community-based organizations, and OSCC staff. The purpose of these meetings was to ascertain the availability of ABE/ESOL courses in the area, to determine if the programs in place meet the needs of the community, and to identify any shortcomings.

In addition, the Entrepreneur has gathered information that will become part of a comprehensive database of businesses that are ABE/ESOL friendly, as well as a database of service providers. Compiling this information and making it available to the public represents an important component of the initiative.

The WIB, in partnership with many regional ABE/ESOL stakeholders has continued to pursue funding to put its RETM into practice. The model illustrates the infrastructure needed to support a demonstration project in the area that directly aligns ABE/ESOL learning with critical and emerging industries in the region and supports systemic funding versus programmatic funding to bring individuals up to the level oft having "some college" training. The WIB has also committed to be an active member of the Massachusetts (MAWIB) WIB's ABE/ESOL Committee.

**3. Please describe the Priority for Services policy for your workforce investment area including the population(s) to which it applies.**

**a. Will "low-income" priority be applied to the delivery of adult intensive employment and training services in your region for FY2008 in accordance with Section 134(d)(4)(F) of the Workforce Investment Act and Subpart F §663.600 of the Regulations.**

Yes. The WIB has adopted income eligibility requirements for WIA Title I training funds. (see 3. c.)

**b. If “low-income” priority *will not* be applied to the provision of adult intensive employment and training services for FY 2008, describe the criteria that was used to determine that other funds *are not limited* therefore negating the need to apply a low-income priority.**

Not Applicable

**c. If “low-income” priority *will be* applied to the provision of adult intensive employment and training services for FY 2008, describe the process established by the board that ensures priority is given to public assistance and other low income adults and veterans.**

The established process uses the following thresholds to determine priorities: Income eligibility is: 70% Lower Living Standard Income Levels (LLSIL), 100% LLSIL for those not working and 175% of the poverty level guidelines for those who are working. In addition, priority (ITA access only) is given to residents of the greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Area and those who worked or lived in the Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Area within the previous 6 months.

The WIB has also determined that training funds for Dislocated Workers are limited. Through intake and assessment, priority of intensive and training services (ITA access only) is determined for this customer group as it directly relates to the following criteria: Must be a resident of the Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Area and must have worked or lived in the Greater New Bedford Workforce Investment Area within the previous 6 months.

Once eligibility is determined, priority of services is given to veterans (all eligible categories), recipients of public assistance, and then other low income, in that order.

**4. Does your workforce investment area employ a residency requirement for job seeker access to intensive and/or training services? If yes, please describe.**

ITA funds are restricted to those who have either worked or lived within our WIA within the last 6 months. Other types of intensive services are not limited to WIA eligible participants.

**5. With respect to job seeker customers, please describe additional priorities and/or strategies that have been planned for your region’s workforce development system in FY 2008.**

Our regional picture includes an increased customer flow; reduced customer skills; limited training funds; increased employer dissatisfaction levels with available pool of applicants and increased State performance expectations. The local skills gap is growing. We are finding ourselves attempting to find low skill/low pay jobs (providing lower wages and fewer benefits) for our customers, and few resources available to upgrade those poor skills. This is a far cry from our stated mission objective of working toward economic self-sufficiency with our job seekers.

Our FY '08 Business Plan objectives address these demands, but they are reliant on the funding and staffing to make it happen.

- #1. Increase our ability to provide basic computer literacy training for the increased numbers who do not possess this skill.
  - Identify rolling admission classes by other agencies and develop internal capability for additional intensive computer training courses.
  - Constant assessment of customer computer skills through Resource Room observation and feedback from employers and Job Seekers.
  - More involvement of Job Specialists to investigate competency of customer in completing on-line applications, resumes, etc.
  
- #2. Identify increased opportunities to provide ESOL classes for both unemployed and incumbent workers.
  - Increase programs/services for Spanish customers i.e. ESOL slots.
  - Educate employers in assessing internal needs within their workforce and assist in applying for Workforce Training Fund (WTF) and other funds for workplace ESOL for both line-staff and managers
  - Leverage the opportunities identified by the Literacy Works program to identify additional training slots.
  
- #3. Build on successes of Re-Entry and Apprenticeship programs.
  - Identify grants / funding to provide continued resources at OSCC for these targeted groups
  - Improve staff training on methods of working with these populations.
  - Educate employers to Bonding, Work Opportunity Training Credit (WOTC), Hiring Incentive Training Grant (HITG) opportunities and Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) thus increasing employers willing to hire ex-offenders
  - Maintain the new relationships with collaborating law enforcement agencies and apprenticeship-interested groups.
  - Continue to educate employers about apprenticeship options and successes
  
- #4. Increase efforts to identify specific skill gaps and develop resources to address them.
  - Identify additional educational resources for incumbent / unemployed
  - Identify short-term skills training opportunities.
  - Identify employers targeting low-skilled workers.
  - Identify On the Job Training (OJT) (unofficial) opportunities and apprentice opportunities.
  - Increase awareness of labor market shift from manufacturing base to customer service base and provide training accordingly.
  
- #5. Develop area specific programs/events that focus on Veterans.
  - Educate Employers to Bonding, WOTC, HITG opportunities and responsibility of Federal Contractors as it relates to veterans.

- Continue OSCC participation in statewide Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and manual development for veterans.
- Tighten collaboration with existing partnerships and identify new veteran-focused Community Based Organizations (CBO).
- Cross train Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) for shared responsibility of case management and job development.

#6. Devote resources in Wareham to address the needs presented by the 1200 retail jobs coming into the region in the next two years.

- Implement a Retail Skills Center – largely dependent on obtaining funds and new area employers.
- Focus additional attention on youth and senior citizens in the area and expand on new relationships with the local alternative High School.
- Continue to build relationships with the area post secondary schools – Cape Cod Community College and Bridgewater State.

#7. Continue with internal staff Continuous Quality Improvement and Professional development to ensure quality service to our job seekers and employers.

- Create “special team” for targeted populations across all departments.
- Improve staff understanding of customer demographics and local Labor Market Information (LMI).
- Link professional development to staff performance.
- Implement departmental surveys to fine-tune identification of job seeker systems strengths and weaknesses.

## **B. BUSINESS CUSTOMERS**

### **1. Please describe how the board will align workforce investment activities with high-growth industry sectors or those deemed “critical” in the region and also with small businesses in FY08.**

The WIB still looks toward large employers first for both placement and collaboration. These large employers represent a significant number of vacancies, however, 60% of businesses we work with are small businesses. Through surveys we determined that the employers that are using the OSCCs are happy and the one’s who are not, are not dissatisfied. What we have found is that small business targets in local neighborhoods are more receptive to working with the OSCCs than those small businesses some distance away. We’ve also had success working with small businesses in pairing them with jobseekers that have specialized needs such as language barriers and individuals with disabilities.

The high growth industries in our area are health care, and retail and hospitality, with some additional growth in business services (primarily banking and call centers) and transportation.

Health Care, while a growth industry, provides a limited number of jobs for a large majority of our clients except for entry level positions in the home health/Certified Nurses Aid (CNA) field,

and a few in medical billing and medical secretary. Still, we have developed strong relationships with healthcare Human Resources departments throughout the region so as to expedite referrals. There are very few health care training facilities in our area for technicians or LPN/RN, and many of our job seekers do not meet the minimum education and language requirements to get into these programs. We don't see this changing in the near future. We will continue to look for opportunities to partner for more training opportunities in Health Care, and to increase the literacy levels of our customers so they can meet the minimum training requirements for this industry. However, the long-term solution is a major investment by the Federal and State governments in the health care education infrastructure.

The WIB is proactive in its workforce investment activities. For instance, the WIB has partnered in a pending 9-region grant application for the Department of Labor (DOL) Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) Initiative that deals our healthcare partner, SouthCoast Hospitals, to bring 3 pilot training programs to fruition. The WIB is also a critical ally with other workforce initiatives as it continues to advocate and help inform state policy. Still, there is a lot of work that has to be done as the skills gap of the workers we see coming into the OSCC is often too big for them to jump to obtain higher paying healthcare jobs.

Retail is a growth industry in our area and it does offer a promising career ladder profile. The NRF has articulated a number of moves up a career ladder that would take individuals from a clerk or stock person, up through purchasing and merchandising, through to upper management, providing the technical and customer relations skills are present. However, many job seekers lack the basic job readiness and customer service skills called for by employers, so retention rates in this industry are low, preventing employees from reaching the higher positions that provide life-sustaining levels of pay and benefits. We have implemented two specific programs that address this need, which apply to retail as well as other industries.

Our Work Readiness program (25 hours), started with our Bay State Works manufacturing grant in FY 2006, continues today with our re-entry programs, and we have built the model into other grant requests. In addition, our very successful Work Certified program is ongoing and provides 90 hours of instruction in 50 disciplines identified by employers. While limited to three communities in our workforce investment area (Community Development Grant), it has a 50% entered employment rate thus far and continues to build momentum. We're looking at options to sustain this program through BCC and it is also part of grant requests and efforts to earmark State funding to expand and sustain the program.

**a. What training will be provided to front-line One-Stop Career Center staff in FY08, if any, to impart knowledge of high-growth occupations and critical job vacancies?**

We are developing a comprehensive local LMI product to be used by Job Specialists and Case Managers to ensure quality guidance to job seekers. This will include industry specific information. Our ongoing professional development program includes guest lecturers as well as access to *Mindleaders* that provides a variety of on-line courses that we now require staff to complete as part of their annual performance review.

**2. How does your workforce area determine the employer “menu” of services (in addition to the core services listed in WIA Policy #04-46), taking into account job vacancy data, regional surveys and employer input?**

**a. What strategies does your region employ to ensure that the workforce system has the agility to respond quickly and effectively to meet the needs of business customers, particularly the needs of small businesses driven by the fast pace of innovation?**

Our Business Services unit maintains contact with a variety of businesses in all area industries as well as with the local business associations. We have further developed our relationship with the local Economic Development organizations in both New Bedford and Wareham, as well as with the four different Chambers of Commerce in our region. We attend business related functions and meetings such as Business-After-Hours, business associations.

We have sponsored informational meetings with employers to educate them about CC services. We have had limited success with seminars as employers, especially small businesses that don't want to take the time to attend these types of meetings. We are examining co-sponsorship of workshops that will target employers in specific industries that will discuss industry specific topics and use these as an opportunity to also educate them about the OSCC, and for us to be educated about what is happening in their businesses. We also survey each of our current employer customers regarding our services and query them regarding their skill needs and attempt to align our trainings to fit their parameters. For example, we developed a needs analysis for the banking industry that involved representatives from three different banks to determine skills for entry-level customer service positions. We are now in the process of developing the curriculum to provide this training to our job seekers.

**3. Please describe the extent to which employer services are integrated with other workforce or partner programs to minimize duplicative employer contact and maximize access to employment information.**

**a. Describe how employer outreach is coordinated with other workforce or partner programs to minimize repetitive contacts.**

Employer outreach is coordinated through our business services team to minimize repetitive contacts. The team is established as our primary point-of-contact for both employers and all OSCC activities that involve employers. This includes our youth programs, our navigator programs that educate employers about hiring the disabled, our veteran programs, and our DTA staff who work with our Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) customers. Under the roof of the OSCC reside many partners, all of whom are brought up to speed with new developments regarding companies in the area. Weekly business services meetings include all staff that interact with employers to ensure continuity of information and minimizes multiple contacts. All interactions are documented on an Employer's Career Center record in the Massachusetts One-Stop Employment System (MOSES).

By improving relationships with Economic Development, we are now seeing streamlined activity and communication emerge. Increased WIB marketing efforts targeting the business community were implemented as part of the overall marketing plan developed by the WIB Marketing

Committee in conjunction with New Directions, our Career Center operator. These have included the establishment of press releases that focus on customer testimonials (both job seekers and businesses), newly designed brochures, efforts to include job listings on the local newspaper web site, and a large billboard, donated by a WIB member for a six month period) with a message to employers that will go up in June.

Both New Directions and the WIB utilized survey tools this year to obtain feedback from the business community with particular focus on small businesses. Both efforts were less than spectacular but did provide some useful information. While small businesses that currently use the OSCC are satisfied with the services, other small businesses that do not use the OSCC are also satisfied with their current workforce related services not provided by the OSCC and will continue to stay with current processes. This has validated the OSCC historical efforts to focus most of its limited resources on larger employers that offer multiple jobs at higher salaries and better benefits.

Increased referrals as a result of our new relationship with the Economic Development agencies in our region has provided a few opportunities (four so far) to interact with new businesses contemplating moving into our region, and has allowed us to educate new and existing businesses about business related services, training opportunities and tax incentives. This is a growing relationship and promises to improve as we go forward. Our former WIB Chair is now the New Bedford Economic Development Council (EDC) Chair who will only solidify this partnership.

Our partnerships with the State Department of Apprenticeship Training (DAT) and our collaborations with the Federal, State and Local law enforcement agencies in our re-entry program have provided increased opportunities to educate employers about our services.

New businesses in the Wareham Crossing Mall will provide up to 1200 jobs in the next two years. Efforts to contact these employers are underway and will continue through the next several months. We have partnered with the NRF and other area businesses, economic development, educators, and adjacent WIB's to establish a Skills Center based in Wareham that will provide certified training for job seekers to fill these positions. Our Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund (WCTF) proposal was not funded but we will continue to pursue funding opportunities. Without this funding, we will attempt to establish the ability to provide a scaled down version of the training with current resources however, this will not meet the overall needs of the businesses for job ready hires.

Historically, manufacturing has been the dominant industry in our area and while it still comprises a large share of our available jobs, it continues to decrease. This year we did not see the usual annual spring hiring by our larger manufacturing companies. More and more of our efforts are focused on Retail as more and more retail businesses have established facilities in our area. Considerable growth in the Dartmouth area has occurred and the new Mall in Wareham will be a significant increase in new businesses.

**4. With respect to business customers, please describe additional priorities and/or areas of focus that have been planned for your region's workforce development system in FY 2008.**

- #1. Continue with curriculum development and then implement the banking industry customer service readiness training program, and examine other industry needs for similar training modules.
- #2. Work closely with all businesses in the Wareham area, especially the new Wareham Crossing Mall businesses, to provide job ready hires with good customer service skills.
- #3. Develop in-house ability to provide and then export the customer service retail training program to other areas including Greater New Bedford.
- #4. Make major effort to identify and educate employers who will hire job seekers with significant barriers, i.e. ex-offenders, Department of Youth Services (DYS) youth, DTA customers, the disabled, vets, etc.
- #5. Develop a comprehensive marketing package that will complement and/or link to the Economic Development Council's efforts to draw new business to the area.
- #6. Develop a comprehensive process for accurately determining employer skill needs and align training programs that match.
- #7. Improve the level of information received from employers during job orders. Better information regarding skills and experience needed, will help identify better matches.
- #8. Continue developing strong partnerships and working relationships with economic development resources such as the EDC, Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD), New Bedford Industrial Foundation, and educational resources such as Vocational Technical High Schools, community colleges and ITA vendors to identify synergies and to develop strategies and create and roll out training programs to meet emerging business needs and improve the service mix.

## C. YOUTH

### **1. Please describe the region's overarching initiatives/priorities for providing services to youth for FY 2008.**

Our focus has been WIA year round programs that provide for both in school and out of school youth. We have had successful programs in both categories and have met or surpassed our annual goals in years past and will likely do so again in FY 2007. Our WIA youth program in 2006 was one of the best in the State.

We will continue to provide year round programs as we shift more and more WIA funds toward out of school youth but still try to maintain a 65/35 ratio of services of in school/ out of school youth through other funding.

Our P21 plan received a big boost this year with funding by Commonwealth Corporation for a P21 Coordinator that was hired this winter and is located at the OSCC to serve all youth there but

primarily serve needy youth who are not WIA eligible. This is a valued program and we hope to get funding to continue it beyond the current level.

Our DYS Bridging Opportunity Gap program that we started in March with funding from Commonwealth Corporation is providing a valued service for the DYS youth and we are committed to finding the funds to continue this program in the future.

We are also committed to expanding our services to the youth in the Wareham area and have applied for grants to increase programs there.

Solidifying employer relationships regarding youth continues to be a top priority and we are dedicating efforts to maintain and build on the relationships with youth friendly employers. We are continuing to increase the number of summer job placements and are supporting the Mayor of New Bedford's emphasis on meaningful activities for youth during the summer with WIA, YouthWorks and private donations. Our annual Youth Expo provides the forum to identify youth seeking services for all our programs and especially summer activities and employment and we will continue to sponsor this event in 2008. Our youth job readiness workshops, Summer of Success program, and specific emphasis on engaging youth input in the design, planning and implementation of programs will continue. We will also be benchmarking other youth oriented programs nationwide to determine if any would be appropriate models for our area. We have also engaged employers as interviewers in our youth mock interview sessions and we were able to get the endorsement of our youth workshop curriculum by employer Human Resource (HR) Managers who belong to the Southcoast Human Resource Council.

The WIB will continue to partner with local employers, New Directions Youth Department and the Mayor's office to create meaningful summer employment experiences for disadvantaged residents of New Bedford. This summer will mark the third year that the region has obtained YouthWorks funding to connect at-risk youth to employers and organizations that traditionally do not consider hiring at-risk youth. Additionally, YouthWorks funding allows us to recruit, engage, and retain a significant number of hard to reach and hard to serve youth in summer employment experiences. YouthWorks aligns with the target populations of Pathways to Success by 21 as well as our local WIA FY'07 focus on out of school youth. New Bedford sees YouthWorks as an outreach and engagement tool for year round services through the Greater New Bedford OSCC. Employers have the opportunity to sponsor a young person through a financial donation or hire them directly at their organization.

We will continue our pursuit of funding for a Youth Dual Customer Model. This is a community-based initiative whose goal is to engage disadvantaged young adults, especially those who have not graduated from high school, in work and work-related experiences. The program is designed to meet the needs of employers while providing the opportunity for participants to gain, retain, and advance in employment that leads to self-sufficiency. The foundation of the program is the *dual customer model*; employer needs are as important as the services and supports provided to participants. This program can meet the needs of various businesses that rely on large numbers of entry-level employees, but are challenged in retaining or developing promising employees. The Youth Council is committed to securing funding that would support this initiative. The long-term goal of the program is to quantify employer saving associated with retaining program employees. Employers will be expected to provide the program with a proportion of those savings in order to sustain the program beyond initial foundation funding.

#1 Increase the number of Job Training and Employment opportunities for Youth.

- Explore other successful Youth Programs and determine applicability for our area.
- Examine other methods and opportunities to provide support for youth with disabilities.
- Identify non-WIA sources of funds to support in school and other programs
- Maintain a 65% out of school and 35% in school split of all youth oriented resources.
- Find ways to shift WIA focus toward out of School youth in order to meet new Common Measures without significantly degrading in school programs.
- Emphasize youth cultural competencies in the development of youth programs.
- Secure funding and implement Dual Customer Model Initiative with participating employers.

#2 Make the Career Center the primary resource for youth seeking education and employment related services.

- Continue with current Career Center activities that focus on youth – workshops, mock interviews, P21 staff, etc.
- Sponsor a Youth Expo in Wareham and continue to sponsor one in New Bedford
- Continue cultivating the new and existing relationships with other organizations in order to leverage opportunities to partner and collaborate on youth programs.
- Continue to work with employers hiring youth to increase their participation in youth programs in order to maximize youth job opportunities.
- Take advantage of the many job opportunities to be available to youth at the new Wareham Crossing Mall by preparing youth in retail customer service skills.
- Continue to work with the City of New Bedford in their Youth Summer Jobs Initiative and to maximize opportunities to find meaningful employment or other activities for 14 to 21 year olds.

**2. Please describe strategies or program models that you have implemented or will put in place in FY08 that have improved retention and completion for hard-to-serve youth populations (e.g. Foster Child, Adjudicated, Severely Low-Income, Educationally Deficient).**

The following DYS program is currently serving as a pilot model for successfully addressing the needs of these specific youth populations. The DYS Bridging the Opportunity Gaps program provides direct services to youth committed to the DYS system and are intended to improve retention and completion by employing the following strategies:

- Job readiness training
- Subsidized internships
- Stipends and incentives
- Connections to adults
- Connection to Career Center

- Inclusive model- youth have input in determining incentives and services

**a. Please describe your region’s strategy for ensuring that WIA youth programs will lead to post-secondary education, advanced training or employment outcomes.**

All of our vendor contracts for WIA programs for youth require they meet the performance measures with positive outcomes that are connected to employment, training or post secondary education. Our FY 2007 performance criteria are based on WIA Title I performance and common measures. We also have an increased focus on Out of School Youth with Connecting Activities and School to Career initiatives.

**b. What strategies are in place to address the needs of youth with very low (5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade) numeracy and literacy skills?**

Our UMASS Dartmouth program services youth in ABE with specific focus on literacy and numeracy levels below the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. We also have a contract with Training Resources of America (TRA) to provide ABE services for youth, and New Directions has established a relationship with the New Bedford Public Schools Adult Education program for additional referrals for ABE for older out of school youth.

**3. Please describe the youth provider partnerships that are in place in your region and the effect of these partnerships on WIA youth formula funds. (provide examples, e.g. P-21).**

Local Government	2A. Leadership Strengths	2B. Existing Role
City Human Services	Executive Team Leadership Access to Mayor, financial resources, Meeting coordination	Provides afterschool programming support
Drug Court	Provides information and leverage	Provides treatment resources and referrals to youth in need
CS <sup>2</sup>	Executive Team Leadership, Building capacity within the community to better serve youth	Existing services within the school system. Networking , Freshman Academy
New Directions	Executive Team Leadership, Leader in youth employment services and coordination of vendors (employment services, Access to youth input	Provides oversight for youth employment services
School Depts.	Executive Team Leadership Educational Services	Committed to improving the drop out rate and allocating funding to support the goal
Westside High	Provides educational services for the youth most at risk within the school system	Outreach and recruitment of at risk youth
WIB Youth Council	Community partners working to shape policy to best serve disconnected youth	Reviews and shapes policy effecting the disbursement of funding to support employment and training efforts for WIA eligible

		youth
<b>State</b>		
Department of Social Services (DSS)	Executive Team Leadership, Primary child protection agency in the region	Provides resources, information and services to at risk youth
BCC	Executive Team Leadership Organizational and Educational Resources	Local Community College providing secondary educational services for a wide variety of people.
DYS	Executive Team Leadership Organizational and planning resources	Provides correctional services for youth involved in the juvenile justice system
DTA	Organizational and planning resources	Provides transitional assistance to youth and families that qualify
Department of Mental Health(DMH)/Department of Mental Retardation (DMR)	Executive Team Leadership Organizational, Planning and outreach resources	Provides services for people with Mental Health Illnesses/Mental retardation
Juvenile Court	Organizational, Planning and Policy development resources	Provides juvenile justice services
Career Center	Organizational, Planning, Policy, Development and Meeting Space resources	Provides technical support and guidance to the P21 process and support for policy development
Juvenile Resource Center	Outreach and Referral services	Provides alternative to incarceration intensive case management services
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth	Executive Team Leadership Organizational, Development and Resources	Provides a wide variety of educational opportunities for disconnected youth
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission	Executive Team Leadership Organizational, Planning, Policy and Resource development	Provides training/ opportunity for disabled disconnected youth
Department of Education (DOE)/Connecting Activities	Provides training, tracking and referrals for youth and providers. Provides organizational and planning resources. Partners with Workforce Development team.	Provides training in Work-Based Learning Plan to providers. Coordinates internships for youth and implements and tracks individual Work-Plans.
Department of Public Health	Funded Community Planning Processes that have strengthened the P21 process	Provides substance abuse treatment services and other services for disconnected youth.
<b>Local Non- Profits</b>		
Boys & Girls Clubs/YMCA	Outreach Services	Provides service to young people
Catholic Social Services	Outreach and Supportive Services	Provides Housing, support groups and other services for disconnected

		Youth
Center for Health & Human Services	Outreach and Referrals	Provides a host of counseling services
Child & Family Svcs.	Outreach and Referral Services	Provides a host of counseling services
GNB Chamber of Commerce	Outreach, Knowledge of Community	Provides opportunities for youth Summer employment
InterChurch Council (ICC)	Executive Team Leadership, Community Outreach	Non-Traditional Partner committed to improving the lives of disconnected youth
Job Corps	Outreach and Referral	Provides job training and employment opportunities for disconnected youth
Kennedy Donovan	Outreach and Referral	Provides a host of services for disabled youth
My Turn	Executive Team Leadership, job placement and training, Access to youth input	Provides educational workshops to assist disconnected youth with the skills they need to succeed in the workforce
Positive Action Against Chemical Addiction (PAACA)	Executive Team Leadership, Organizational services, outreach and referral, Access to youth input	Provides substance abuse, housing and other youth development services
People Acting in Community Endeavors (PACE)	Outreach	Provides a wide variety of childcare, housing and anti-poverty programs
Treatment on Demand	Outreach, Access to youth input	Provides street outreach and educational services.
Young parents support	Executive Team Leadership, Knowledge of community, Access to youth input	Provides wrap around services to pregnant and parenting youth in the region
Youth Build	Outreach, Knowledge of Community, Access to youth input	Provides training and employment services for disconnected youth.

**4. Please describe whether or not your region has “created a space” for youth in the mainstream workforce development system and the factors/policies that led to this decision (e.g. are youth served in the One-Stop Career Centers?).**

**a. Have there been significant physical, philosophical, or programmatic changes in your One-Stop Career Center(s) to better accommodate youth? Please describe.**

It has been our philosophy for the past few years to mainstreaming youth as much as possible into the OSCC and we will continue to do so in the future. The following processes and programs attest to some of our successes in this regard.

- P21 funding was used to create a position at the OSCC specifically for youth.
- We have revised the OSCC SOP for youth walking into the OSCC to include the P21 Coordinator.

- All youth workshops are scheduled at the OSCC.
- Mock interview sessions for youth are held at the OSCC.
- The annual youth Career Expo is held at the OSCC.
- We have scheduled a youth oriented Barn-Raising (special grant funded networking program) event at the OSCC.

Program change: We have also reduced the time it takes to deem out of school youth WIA Title I eligible by having our Youth Department complete the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) testing and pre-intake interviews. Our regular Career Center eligibility staff then completes the process.

**5. What specific occupational or technical skill certificates/credentials will your youth program emphasize? How those certificates/credentials are matched with the requirements for employment in the critical and high growth industries in the area (skills gap, retention, required certification, etc.)?**

We sent our Pathways Coordinator to a Train the Trainer class by the National Retail Foundation to be able to develop a youth oriented retail training program that will result in a nationally recognized certificate that will support local growth in the retail industry – one of our regional high growth industries. New Directions is a NRF testing site and our Youth Senior Case Manager is certified to administer the NRF certification exam.

We are incorporating retail training into the State funded Youth Works summer jobs program.

We have set aside Title I youth funds to provide scholarships for youth using the waiver that allows youth access to adult individual training accounts. Examples of past training include CNA, Medical Assistant, Commercial Drivers License (CDL), and patient care technician.

**6. What segments of the Title I WIA eligible youth population will have the highest priority for FY 2008? If your workforce investment area failed one of more youth performance measures in FY 2007, what steps will be taken in FY 2008 to ensure continuation of performance improvement?**

In addition to our usual WIA eligible youth, whose numbers far surpass the available WIA resources, our other target populations for FY 2008 include DYS youth and P21 target populations which are youth who come to the Career Center with particular emphasis on youth not able to access WIA funds. We are on target to meet all WIA youth performance measures for FY 2007.

## **D. TRAINING RESOURCES**

**1. Please describe how the workforce investment board has aligned training policies to prepare individuals for demand-driven occupations in high-growth industries within the context of moving to a “talent development” system.**

The WIB recognizes the high growth in healthcare and retail trades with more modest growth in business services and transportation in its region. It also recognizes the technical aptitude and

customer service skills required throughout these and many other industries as an integral component of a jobseekers skill set.

We established renewed relationships with the Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School and now offer 15 different credentialed courses for our customers. However, their two-semester system (as opposed to open enrollment) limits the number of customers able to take advantage of this initiative. We also now have access to insurance industry related training as a result of a new initiative with *Coastline Elderly*. This program is very new as results have not yet been documented.

New relationships with Bridgewater State College, Cape Cod Community College, and Upper Cape Regional Vocational Technical High School are resulting in discussions around providing more training choices for customers in the Greater Wareham area. Also, our collaboration with the Division of Apprentice Training is slowly but surely producing opportunities for customers to attain apprenticeships.

Our internal Computer and GED classes provide opportunities for customers to obtain needed skills not necessarily available elsewhere. This year we trained 81 in our computer class and project another 10 by the end of the FY. Our GED class has trained 30 thus far and will have trained 34 by the end of the FY.

Meetings with vendors were initiated to review contracts, to stress weekly and other reporting requirements, determine if additional/modified curriculum would better suit individual trainees, and to offer assistance with Training Pro. These efforts have provided improved information sharing and better management of vendor training programs. Also, our staff is better educated about the various vendors and the services they provide. Job placement in training related positions for our ITA customers has improved but we need to make the vendors that advertise placement as one of their services more accountable for this service. We are also exploring ways to effectively modify our vendor contracts so payment for services is not all up front but tied to course completions.

Coordination and referrals between our Partner organizations continues to be effective and we have several representatives from our partner organizations occupying space in the Career Center at various times during the week. This has proven extremely important especially in addressing the various barriers to employment for our customers. Informal partnerships have also increased and are providing more exposure of the Career Center services to a wider variety of potential customers – both job seekers and employers. Quarterly meetings with management level decision makers from our formal partner organizations provide opportunities to share information and feedback. We have struggled with identifying a way to develop a common performance measurement that is applicable to all partner organizations in order to help us determine levels of effectiveness. Each organization documents different statistics based on their parent organization or funding source and most measurements are not common.

Improved local LMI continues to be a significant need. We have gotten better but in FY 2008 we will launch a major effort to improve this information so training choices are more effective and guidance provided by case managers and job specialists is more timely and accurate.

The WIB also play a significant role in convening and building partnerships, finding funding, outreach, and supporting and helping mobilize local initiatives that support talent development.

**a. What strategies does your region employ to ensure that training activities are concentrated in occupational areas having critical job vacancies and/or high-demand jobs in high-growth sectors? Where are the strategies?**

Training policies are driven by the needs/abilities of the job seekers as related to the needs of the area employers as well as the availability of training dollars and accessible training programs. The majority of our job seeker needs are very basic – reading and math literacy, computer literacy, and entry-level job readiness. We have attempted to focus training dollars on these areas but doing so does not allow us to maximize our ability to meet WIA performance standards.

Those job seekers that have access to ITA training dollars are coached to pursue training in industries that will provide life-sustaining jobs after training. An examination of our ITA expenditures for the past three years shows a steady pattern of training in three primary fields; health care, business services and transportation. These are also three of the primary growth and critical industries in our area.

**2. To what extent do customer choices for training coincide with the targeted occupations in high-growth areas?**

**a. Please analyze training enrollments in your region and compare trends to job vacancies and critical sectors in your region.**

Statistics for ITAs (all categories – Adults, Dislocated Workers, Youth, Rapid Response) for the past three years are as follows:

ITA Statistics for Greater New Bedford SDA								
Year	# of ITAs	Total Cost	Average Cost	Health Care	Business Services	Transportation	Construction	Retail
<b>FY2005</b>	166	\$488,081 realign	\$2,940	32%	54%	13%	1%	0
<b>FY 2006</b>	152	\$448,325	\$2,949	34%	32%	24%	7%	2%
<b>FY 2007 thru March</b>	155	\$473,944	\$3,057	34%	39%	17%	0	0

Enrollments clearly support our job vacancies and critical industries. However, in health care, these trainings are almost entirely for entry-level positions such as CNA/home health, medical transcription/billing, etc, and not in the higher paying positions of LPN, RN or technical jobs such as radiology tech. Access to these higher level trainings is very limited in our area. Business Services includes Information Technology (IT)-related positions, or other positions requiring computer skills such as secretaries, filing clerks, payroll clerks, etc. Transportation is

primarily CDL drivers for a variety of industries. All of these industries have job vacancies and have been, as can be seen from the above statistics, consistent over time for our region.

**3. Please provide specific examples of how your region has leveraged WIA formula funds and additional resources to support talent development and life-long learning strategies.**

Our Work Certified program, funded by a grant from Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for residents of the towns of Dartmouth, Fairhaven, and Wareham has trained 69 through March with 35 entered employments thus far. This program, a 90 hour program addressing 50 employer identified competencies) is well respected and well received in the business community. We've been able to train staff to deliver this program, so the knowledge base is in-house. We have included the program in several of our grant initiatives but are waiting to see if we are awarded these grants. The current grant will fund us through October 2007. Other funding sources will allow us to expand the program to the other communities in our WIA, especially New Bedford where there is a great need. In addition, our Work Readiness program (25 hour program) in collaboration with BCC is continuing on a small scale through funding from the Bristol County House of Corrections for their re-entry program. We hope to continue this into FY 2008.

We've also established very good working relationships with local, State and Federal agencies that deal with ex-offenders. We held job readiness workshops at the Career Center and at the Bristol County House of Corrections, training 49 ex-offenders. We also held two ex-offender job fairs at the Career Center, one in the fall and another in the spring. These provided us opportunities to educate employers about incentives for hiring ex-offenders, and allowed the ex-offenders to utilize their new job search skills learned in the workshops. We have had 8 entered employments as a result of these efforts.

**4. How will the region's FY 2008 level of budgeted training funds meet the needs of the area's workers and businesses?**

Regardless of our level of funding for training, we will not be able to meet our training needs in FY 2008. We have historically exhausted all training funds well before the end of the fiscal year and have no reason to believe this will not be the case again in FY 2008. In addition, as mentioned in several previous areas of this plan, the need for basic literacy, ESOL and basic computer skills for increased numbers of job seekers continues to be a significant need. We are exploring ways to address these needs beyond current levels.

The WIB does utilize any dollars it may accrue from interest, however, tries to refrain from spending core reserve dollars as a practice. The WIB concedes to management for recommendations with the expectations that management will deliver a budget that will not perpetuate stress and anxiety, but that reduces it.

The Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) program, which was in place for the period from July through December 2006, proved to be very effective with our UI customers. We were told but never received any measured documentation, that this program reduced the historical timeline for getting this customer base back to work and off unemployment insurance. We believe this program was successful and feel resources should be provided for continuing it.

**a. Does the region employ a limit or “cap” on the amount of ITA funds available to the customer? Please describe.**

ITAs are capped at \$4000, except for customers with Associate Degrees it is \$2500, and for those with Bachelor Degrees or higher it is \$1500. We allow a cap of \$6000 for the Dislocated Workers in our current Rapid Response Grant for AT&T/Interstate Brands/AMI/Polaroid to accommodate some individuals who were able to leverage other funding to get into more advanced training such as LPN training, but only when the entire cost of the training exceeded \$10,000.

**E. OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENT**

**1. What operational improvements are planned for FY 2008 with respect to the local One-Stop Career Center(s) and/or Youth Services?**

#1. Provide better local LMI information to ITA customers so training choices result in training related hires in industries and occupations identified as high growth.

#2. Utilize New Directions' new status as a 501(c)(3) non-profit to identify funding opportunities not previously available as a city affiliated agency.

#3. Continue with efforts to expand training choices through enhancement of relationships with education and other training organizations.

#4. Continue efforts to make vendors more accountable through contract modifications and improved communications.

#5. Utilize feedback from employers to develop skills related trainings that meet employer needs.

#6. Explore common methods to measure effectiveness of Career Center and Partner relationships in furthering job seeker and employer services.

#7. Continue to explore ways to address methods to improve the low literacy levels, lack of English speaking ability and computer skills of job seekers.

#8. Better define our internal processes and definitions for determining if a customer should get access to ITA training dollars, and develop a marketing strategy that supports the process.

#9. Accelerate needs assessment and support of resource room users.

**a. Why were these planned operational improvements deemed necessary at this time?**

**b. What specific impact will these planned operational improvements have for job seekers (including youth if appropriate) and business customers?**

**(a & b combined)**

Improved and current LMI provides the foundation for much of the WIB's discussion and decision making process. For instance, recognizing the growing skills gaps, we are re-evaluating several of our workshop offerings to ensure we can adequately address the basic needs of many of our lower skilled job seekers. In this regard, those without the most basic computer skills, or those who cannot complete an on-line employment application are at a distinct disadvantage. Additional basic computer workshops will focus on the completion of on-line employment applications and the creation of a generic application form. This is in addition to current workshops on basic resume preparation

With New Directions new capacity as a 501(c)(3), it can now apply for funding outside of conventional sources. In response to the 1200 retail jobs being created by the new Wareham Crossing Mall, we plan to develop a Wareham Skill Center in partnership with the National Retail Federation and a variety of business, education and workforce partners. This project is progressing but is highly dependent on obtaining outside funding that can now be pursued by both the WIB and New Directions. The focus is NRF certified customer service training, as well as work certified and computer skills training that will provide the employer a job ready hire thus reducing employer training needs, improving customer service and reducing turnover. A considerably scaled down plan will be considered if outside funding is not obtained.

Another example of business customer impact is that New Directions has applied for a grant from the A. D. Makepeace organization to conduct youth oriented workshops and a 2008 Youth Career Expo for summer jobs in Wareham modeled after the very successful Youth Expo held in New Bedford.

The WIB is constantly looking at ways to expand training choices. As a result of a recognized need and a recent WIB Charter review recommendation, we are examining opportunities to expand our CC services for youth in the Wareham area. We have also established a relationship with the principal of the Wareham alternative high school who has expressed interest in examining the possibility of incorporating the Work Certified Program into his curriculum. Our Wareham CC partner *My Turn* operates a very active youth GED program and we are partnering with them in these initiatives. Previous efforts to engage the Wareham school administration in youth oriented programs had not been successful.

Employer feedback is critical to our success in aligning our efforts with their needs. We are physically relocating our business services team to a remodeled corner of the New Bedford CC so they are all co-located in an area that will provide space to bring in employers to brainstorm services, establish focus groups, strategize best use of services, allow closer collaboration between team members, and better serve the business customer. In addition, other staff that interact with employers have been relocated to be closer to the BS team.

Job seekers who present themselves at the career center often have multiple barriers, making it difficult for them to find employment or to be mainstreamed within the career center system. Many of these customers think they are ready to actively job search and therefore skip some of the available services (resume, on-line application, interviewing skills, basic computers). They go directly to the Resource Room and start their own job search. After weeks or even months without success, they then realize they need help and attempt to access the services they should have used initially.

Career Center staff recognizes the need to capture these customers earlier is the focus of a planned triage unit. This unit will evaluate our resource room customers and will consist of case managers, job specialists and intake specialists who will monitor and assess these customers to identify those experiencing difficulty in their job search and those in need of computer or other skills needed to be competitive in today's labor market. An individual job search plan will be created that will address specific areas for improvement and provide them with a series of time sensitive action steps for their Job Search/Job Ready plan that will bring focus to their goal of employment. A well- executed plan will increase their marketability and provide a better matched employee for our business customer, and significantly reduce the time it takes for them to obtain employment.

## **F. RAPID RESPONSE PLANNING**

### **1. Have any changes been made to the local Rapid Response Planning team(s) for your region?**

No changes have been made. The following is what is currently on record. For New Bedford our team is composed of Craig Baker, WIB Representative, Ed Dennehy, New Directions President; Brenda Francis, Career Center Director; Carl Waal, Division of Career Services (DCS) Field Manager, plus the DCS Rapid Response Coordinator and Rapid Response Business Services Representative. For Wareham, it is the same list but we add the Career Center Manager, Tim Nelson.

#### **a. If yes, please submit the names of any new members, who they are replacing (if applicable) and indicate which position on the team they are representing.**

NA

#### **b. What is your region's threshold number for FY 2008 that will determine when a Rapid Response Planning Team meeting will be convened?**

50 layoffs is our threshold.

## **G. PARTNERSHIPS**

### **1. Please describe the regional strategies employed by your workforce investment area to utilize the specialized services of other partner programs and avoid duplicating services that are already available.**

Our partnerships are designed to complement each other, and the needs of our customers in this region are so great and so far exceed the available resources that the issue of duplication is rarely if ever a factor. Our biggest frustration is that even when we leverage one another's programs and services, we still have customers that we are not able to serve due to insufficient resources. We have very good communications with our partners and try to resolve any competing issues quickly and to the benefit of the customer. In the past, we have had only limited success with our Senior Programs partner who refused to both contribute funds or provide a staff person in the OSCC. However, the new senior program provider (Coastline Elderly) is working out very well

and they have recently provided a senior to help staff the OSCC and focus attention on our senior customers.

DTA provided literacy funds (pilot program) that enabled us to start a Section 30 approved ABE program (pre GED) provided by UMASS Dartmouth, and an ESOL (Spanish speakers) program provided by New Bedford Public Schools. Success during the first half of the year allowed us to get funding for the entire FY. The primary focus of this program has been on DTA clients but we were able to enroll a few other Title I adults at no charge to fill the class. Class size is 14 students, and we were able to enroll 14 students in each program this FY. We are hopeful that DTA will continue to provide funding next FY.

We continue to refer customers to other agency programs where available. There are limited Section 30 approved ABE or ESOL programs accessible by public transportation which significantly limits many of our clients. BCC recently started an ESOL program at its downtown New Bedford campus which improves customer access and we will refer our customers to this opportunity.

LiteracyWorks is just underway this year, but has already established strong community partnerships that will target streamlining and accelerating resources to support ABE/ESOL. In addition, the WIB supports the region's LifeLong Learning Group, a group of ABE/ESOL providers and other stakeholders. In addition to regular meetings, a public web site is established that shows ABE/ESOL provider information and class openings.

The WIB pursues ways that it can better integrate into economic development, and education association by staying in contact, actively partnering on projects, and presenting before their boards and associations on what the WIB is doing. The objective is to identify if there are opportunities to align and/or create initiatives of mutual interest and focus. We will continue to develop our plan to provide services to any company that is looking to locate to our region. These services include recruitment, hiring, training and linkage to resources. This will also require stronger collaboration with economic development and education. Ideally, we plan to develop a regional team consisting of representation from each entity that works in tandem to attract new businesses to the region, and that is equipped with marketing material that presents the diverse suite of services and benefits that each entity can provide to prospective companies.

**a. Please refer to attachment D (MOU Sheet). Describe any MOUs (financial or non-financial) that have yet to be developed with critical partners and the anticipated timeline for their final execution.**

We continue to look for and actively engage in partnerships. To date we have four that we are actively pursuing. Although WCTF partners have signed Memorandums of Agreement (MOA), Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) will need to be prepared as they relate to the grant. New grant seeking opportunities with Community Based and Faith Based Organizations (CBO/FBO) are also in progress with possible MOUs being signed later this year.

**b. Please describe examples of how executed MOUs have resulted in improved services to your customer base.**

Referrals between partners and jointly addressing how we can overcome some of the barriers to employment for our customer base have been the primary areas of emphasis and have been most successful.

Examples include: PACE providing assistance with child care and home heating fuel support as well as helping to supplement some of the costs for training that we cannot provide with our limited ITA funds; close coordination with Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) to address the barriers for our disabled customers; our education partners – UMASS Dartmouth, BCC and New Bedford Public Schools- along with the Education Opportunity Center have been invaluable with referrals, programs to place our customers, assistance with finding funding sources to attend higher education, etc. All of our partners are valuable to our system, not only those with formal MOUs but the many others with whom we work in the community on a daily basis.