

MassHire Bristol Workforce Board
Quarterly Meeting
September 25, 2025 – 8:30 am
ZOOM

Members in Attendance: Carl Garcia (chair), Natasha Azevedo, Steve Benson, Marilyn Boyle, Tim Burke, Paul Dumouchel, Pat Emsellem, Maria Ferreira-Bedard, Steve Merrill, Michael O’Sullivan, James Pimental, Jason Rua, Dick Shafer

Guests: Amanda Blount, Sedgwick Harris, Holly Hill-Batista, Chris Mittell, Sally Pais

Staff: Thomas Perreira, Maria Frazier, Nick Church

Maria Frazier confirmed the presence of a quorum in accordance with the MassHire Bristol Workforce Board By=Laws. Mr. Garcia called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. The minutes of the June 26, 2025 annual meeting were reviewed. Motion was made to approve the minutes, and was seconded. Motion was passed.

Mr. Perreira reviewed the federal and state budget. He noted that the MA state budget was tightened across the board. He noted that the three state budget line items that directly fund the career centers and the workforce board all received cuts. He noted that the FY’ 26 federal appropriations is in process, with three proposals on the table from the administration, the US House, and from the US Senate. Mr. Perreira briefly reviewed each proposal:

Administration: eliminates certain programs that affect us directly.

House: would make cuts to certain programs. They would eliminate WIOA adult and youth programs. This passed on a party line vote. The House did a similar proposal last year, which did not pass.

Senate: will keep everything similar to what it is. The proposal will level fund WIOA adult, youth, and dislocated workers. This passed on a bi-partisan vote.

Mr. Perreira noted that if both the House and Senate bills pass, there will be a lot of work to reconcile both bills. When asked about what will happen if there is a government shutdown, Mr. Perreira noted that we will be impacted, but not as much as state employees that are funded through Wagner-Peyser. He noted that it could cause less state staff at the career center, which would affect the services to veterans.

Ms. Batista noted that the career centers have served 2,666 customers so far this year, while serving 9,492 last year. She noted the career center has spent down the DTA contract funding for FY’ 25 and has received the funds for FY’26. She noted that many

clients on assistance lose their benefits all at once when they reach a certain income level, which makes it very hard for some of them not having those benefits to rely on.

Ms. Batista also noted cuts were made to youth funding. Even with the cuts, she noted that they were still able to serve 406 youth.

She noted that a job fair was held in May at the Fall River Government Center, with 39 companies participating. She noted that pre-COVID over 3,000 job-seekers would attend job fairs, but that number has dropped drastically.

Ms. Batista also reviewed the U.I. numbers for our area: MA 4.7%, Bristol Workforce Development Area 5.1%, Attleboro 4.9%, Fall River 6.1%, Taunton 6.0%.

Mr. Perreira noted that BWB released the out of school (OOS) youth RFP earlier this year. He noted that in the RFP there is 14 youth elements that proposers must integrate into their proposal. Some are mandatory and others are optional. He noted that WIOA requires that at least 75% of funding is used on OOS youth, but noted that some time ago, the BWB voted to use 100% of funding on OOS. He noted that of the four proposals received, three were funded: SER, TASC, and Junior Achievement. Ms. Bedard noted that SER has been providing this youth program for a long time, and have had a great success rate. Mr. Perreira noted that program outcomes are very important and the BWB monitors them to make sure they are meeting the numbers proposed.

Mr. Perreira noted that he is currently working on the SE Labor market update, noting that the data is already about two years old. He reviewed the short term (2 year) and long term (10 year) occupational projections. He noted that short term projections show an increase in health care and social assistance, along with manufacturing. The increase for long term shows a large growth in home health and personal care aides. Mr. Harris, president of Bristol Community College noted they need to look at industrial programs that will give individuals the skills needed, and is looking to partner with anyone who is interested in making it happen.

Mr. Perreira noted that the FY' 26 Local Plan was submitted in August and will be posted on the MassHire BWB website when it is approved by the state.

Mr. Perreira noted that due to a reduction in the state budget, the YouthWorks program will see a notable decrease in funding for the summer of 2026. This will likely mean that fewer youth will be served next year.

Mr. Perreira noted that an application for the Gateway Cities Learning Community Pilot program was submitted in September, with awards coming at the end of September. He noted that the pilot will engage up to four teams comprising of a MH WB lead and up to two Gateway cities and at least one anchor employer to work with EOLWD and its partners. He noted that any activity will benefit all three Gateway cities of Fall River, Taunton, and Attleboro. He also noted that both the Fall River and Taunton mayors have expressed interest in the program. The program is scheduled to run through the summer of 2026.

Ms. Blount from the Literacy Center noted that they launched an ESOL and Early Childhood Education program. She noted that training takes 9 months. Anyone who is

intermediate/advanced in ESOL is eligible, along with other eligibility. She noted that they have also partnered with three regional YMCAs, where the program will be run from.

Mr. Perreira noted that the next BWB quarterly meeting will be held December 18, 2025, with location to be determined.

Meeting adjourned.