

The Pioneer Valley



**PLAN FOR
PROGRESS**



2015 – 2025

**Building on Success:
Economic Strategies for the Region**



The Pioneer Valley

Plan for Progress

Building on Success: Economic Strategies for the Region
2015

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A Ten-Year Update of the Plan for Progress

This third version of the region’s Plan for Progress builds upon the successes of the first two plans, completed in 1994 and 2004, respectively. The Plan and its comprehensive economic development approach has now been in place and utilized for over 20 years serving as the Pioneer Valley’s strategic economic development guide.

The 2015 Plan for Progress is structured to revolve around four major goal areas, each with a set of related strategies to be undertaken by lead implementers.

For more than a decade, lead implementers of the Plan have taken responsibility for key action steps, and this organizational structure continues in the 2015 update. A number of major accomplishments have been achieved, and the region is now celebrating some success and overall improvement in the economic outlook.

A metrics-based accountability system is in place, utilizing critical data to assess economic trends and determine whether the region is achieving its stated goals. These metrics will continue to be used as benchmarks so that there is consistency over time.

They can be found at www.stateofthepioneervalley.com.

Building on the Pioneer Valley’s Tremendous Assets: The Vision

The Pioneer Valley of western Massachusetts is one of the most desirable places to live in New England due to its natural beauty, range of housing and lifestyle options, cultural and recreational opportunities, and spirit of opportunity and innovation. These assets and many other strengths and opportunities in our region are the foundation for the Plan for Progress and its broad Vision Statement:

“A strong, innovative, engaging, and vibrant economy and quality of life that fosters prosperity and sustainability and is driven by collaborative leadership.”



Four Plan for Progress Goals

To achieve this vision, in practical terms, the Plan for Progress sets forth the following four major goals, each of which includes a set of detailed strategies, with short- and long-term action steps. Plan for Progress implementers will:

1 Develop and maintain a globally competitive and regionally engaged talent pool.



2 Foster an environment where established, new, and growing businesses and organizations thrive.



3 Implement and enhance the infrastructure that connects, sustains and ensures the safety and resiliency of the region.



4 Conduct economic development activities in a regionally responsible manner, prioritizing collaboration and engagement.





Talent Pipeline is Primary Focus

The 2015 Plan for Progress includes a primary focus on the most important factor confronting the Pioneer Valley economy, namely the talent, or human capital, that comprises the current and future workforce for our region. Workforce and talent issues today constitute the most important of all factors for both attracting and retaining businesses and jobs and, thus, are pivotal to the sustained economic success of metropolitan regions across the U.S. – including the Pioneer Valley and its larger, interstate region, the New England Knowledge Corridor. Thus, a significant emphasis will be placed on these efforts and on collaboration among the lead implementers.

New Decade Declarations

Including the primary focus of the new Plan for Progress on talent and workforce training, several issues are called out as the most significant and pressing needs and opportunities to address in the next decade. They are based on region-wide feedback obtained through public Coordinating Council meetings and a series of feedback sessions with key leaders with widely ranging expertise. The following are abbreviated versions of the New Decade Declarations in the plan:

**10
YEAR**

The Region's Key Opportunities

Over the next decade encompassing 2015 – 2025, the Pioneer Valley will steadfastly pursue its most promising economic opportunities in the following ways:

1) Leverage New Connections that Significantly Enhance the Region's Economic Competitiveness

Complete the reconstruction, reactivation and service expansions along the Pioneer Valley's principal north-south (Knowledge Corridor) and east-west (Inland Route) rail corridors to accommodate both passenger and freight traffic. Simultaneously tackle the remaining "last mile" phase required to build out western Massachusetts' new, "middle mile" high-speed broadband network.

2) Lead the Commonwealth's Clean Energy Transformation While Moving the Region Toward a Balanced and Diversified Energy Portfolio

Specifically, by 2025 strive to achieve parallel goals of: a) realizing over 600 million kWh of new clean energy generation coupled with a cut of 3.2 metric tons of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions emanating from Pioneer Valley sources, and b) growing our clean energy industry, which has approximately 500 establishments and 7,000 workers, as a region-specific initiative that is consistent with the most recent Massachusetts Clean Energy and Climate Plan.

3) Harness the Economic Development Potential of the New England Knowledge Corridor

Leverage the impressive and wide range of economic attributes and assets concentrated in the interstate New England Knowledge Corridor (NEKC) encompassing the Greater Springfield, Hartford and New Haven metropolitan areas, an economic region with a population of nearly 3 million; a workforce of more than 1.25 million; 215,000 college students enrolled in 41 colleges and universities; and in excess of 64,000 businesses; making the NEKC the 20th largest market in our nation.





The Region's Key Challenges

Over the next decade encompassing 2015 – 2025, the Pioneer Valley will act to address its most pressing economic challenges by addressing:

1) Talent Pool and Pipeline Challenges

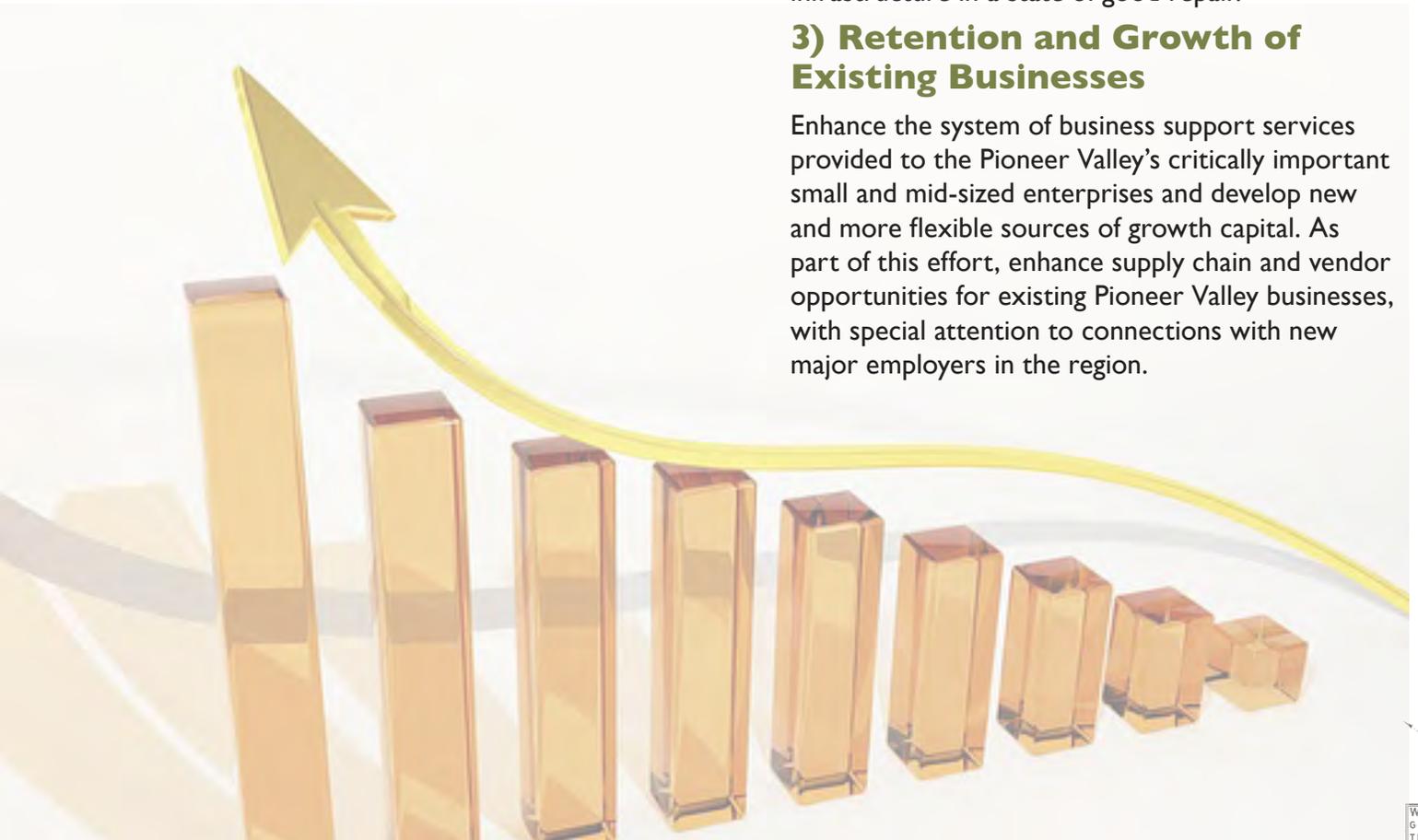
Identify and implement actions that both retain and expand the Pioneer Valley's supply of educated, skilled workers by a target of +6% or the equivalent of 25,000 workers. Critical to this effort is the improvement of educational outcomes and graduation rates in the region's public school systems, particularly in the urban core's distressed cities.

2) Fragile Infrastructure Systems

Address and resolve an ever-expanding list of the region's critical infrastructure system needs and deficiencies (e.g. roadway, transit, bridge, rail, water and sewer, etc). Simultaneously advocate for increased and multi-year infrastructure funding commitments by the federal and state governments that are at levels of investment commensurate with maintaining all forms of the Pioneer Valley public infrastructure in a state of good repair.

3) Retention and Growth of Existing Businesses

Enhance the system of business support services provided to the Pioneer Valley's critically important small and mid-sized enterprises and develop new and more flexible sources of growth capital. As part of this effort, enhance supply chain and vendor opportunities for existing Pioneer Valley businesses, with special attention to connections with new major employers in the region.



Implementation of the Plan for Progress

The Plan for Progress is a collaborative effort of many public, private and civic sector organizations and businesses. Everyone is needed in the efforts to implement the Plan; a few dedicated agencies and businesses cannot do it alone. The Plan for Progress Coordinating Council plays several roles in the region's economic development initiatives, one of which is to oversee implementation of the Plan. As convener of the Coordinating Council and its partners, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission will track and measure progress in order to support and encourage all implementation efforts. Other partners will implement strategies in their areas of influence and expertise.



In addition to these qualitative assessments, the PVPC will track metrics using key benchmarks and will present the information annually. Detailed data on metrics is available at www.stateofthepioneervalley.org. The collaborative spirit of the Plan for Progress Coordinating Council and lead implementers will be the driving force behind the implementation of the Plan.



2015 Plan for Progress Update

This third decade overhaul and updating of the Plan for Progress was completed at the end of 2014. The original version of the Plan for Progress was completed and released in 1994, with a subsequent ten-year overhaul produced in 2004. Thus, the Plan has now been in place and utilized for nearly 20 years serving as the Pioneer Valley's strategic economic development guide. For the past 10 years, it has been anchored by 15 integrated action strategies, each with assigned key implementers, designed to foster the creation of job opportunities and a collaborative region that is capable of addressing its most pressing economic problems and leveraging its most important opportunities and assets to foster economic growth and enhanced prosperity for all segments of the Pioneer Valley's population.

To streamline and enhance the utility of the document, the 2015 Plan for Progress is structured to revolve around four major goal areas, each with a group of related strategies to be undertaken by lead implementers. For more than a decade, lead

implementers of the Plan have taken responsibility for key action steps, and this organizational structure continues in the 2015 update. A number of major accomplishments have been achieved, as detailed in the 2014 CEDS Ten-Year Update. As these 15 strategies have now been distilled into four major areas, it is intended that lead implementers in each group collaborate and work together towards related goals.

In 2008, a new accountability system was established for the Plan for Progress, utilizing critical metrics to assess economic trends and determine whether the region is achieving its stated goals. Each year, the data is compared to the prior year, and in the 2014 CEDS update, changes over the entire period from 2008 to 2014 were analyzed. These metrics will continue to be used as benchmarks so that there is consistency over time. They can be found at www.stateofthepioneervalley.org.



The Pioneer Valley Region

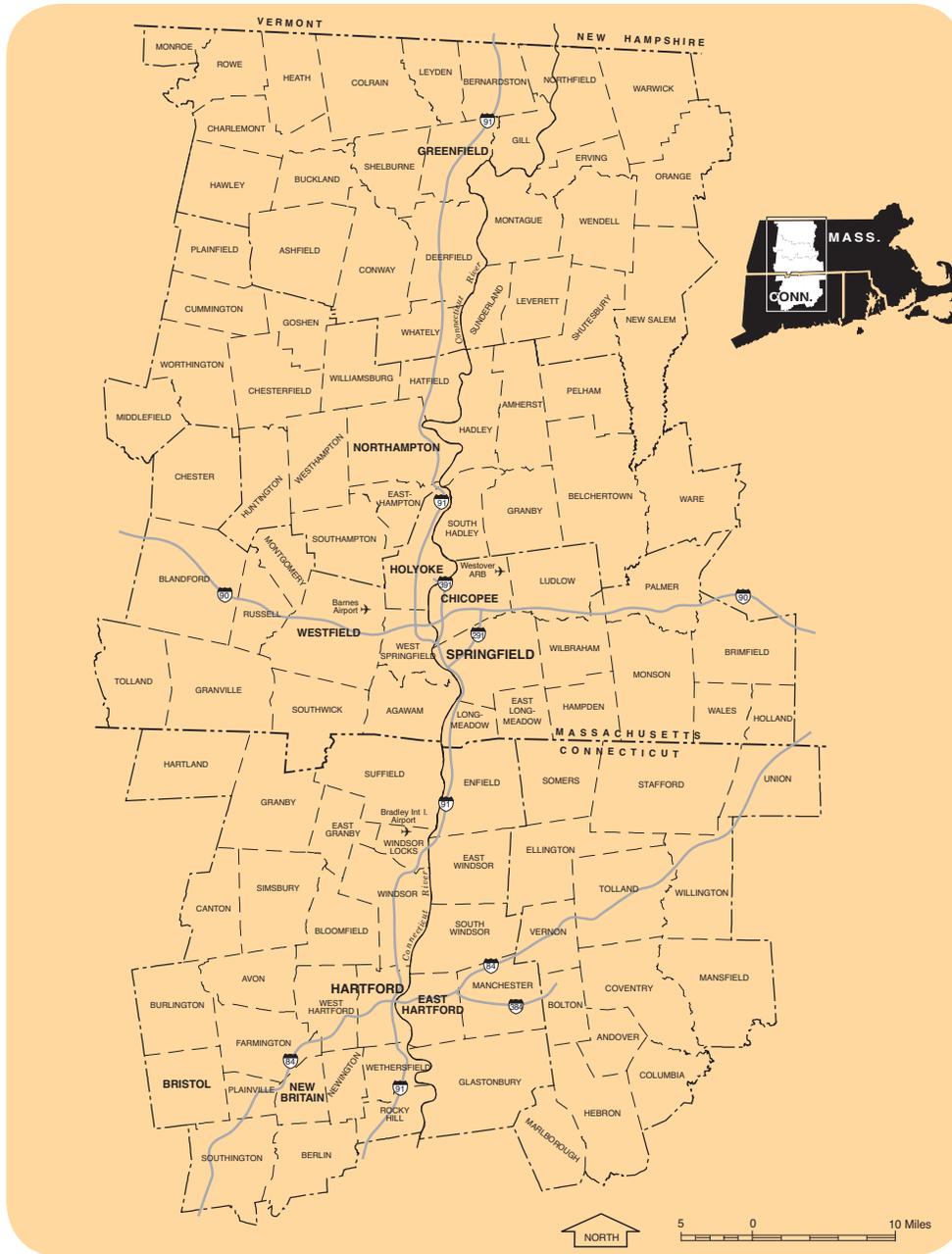
The Pioneer Valley consists of the 69 cities and towns composing the Hampden, Hampshire and Franklin county areas of western Massachusetts. This region is oriented around the Connecticut River valley, where fertile farmland and abundant water power have long provided sustenance and economic opportunity for its inhabitants. The river, and later the railroad, Route 5, and Interstate 91 created the primary north-south transportation corridor, with east-west access provided by I-90, the Massachusetts Turnpike. The cities of Springfield, Chicopee and Holyoke anchor the region's urban core and are major employment centers, while Northampton and Amherst are the heart of the Five College area and a second concentration of employment and population. The rivers, mountains and natural landscapes of the Pioneer Valley provide tremendous recreational opportunities, while the built environment showcases its industrial past, based on mills, manufacturing and rail transport. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, this landscape is transforming, utilizing historic physical features for a new era of high technology and innovation.

THE PIONEER VALLEY



The region is also linked economically to northern Connecticut, as part of the New England Knowledge Corridor, which shares the Connecticut River, Interstate 91, and Bradley International Airport. This relationship, long evident in the daily commute of thousands of people who cross the border for work or shopping, has been formalized as an economic region that is marketed nationally and internationally.

THE KNOWLEDGE CORRIDOR



	Pioneer Valley	Knowledge Corridor
Population (2013)	698,136	1,747,785
Land Area (square miles)	1,904	3,072
Employment (2013)	284,768	820,326
Number of Businesses (2013)	22,897	52,164
Higher Education Institutions (2013)	14	30

NEW DECADE DECLARATIONS

Based on region-wide feedback, the following are the most significant and pressing needs and opportunities to address in the next decade:

The Region's Key Opportunities

Over the next decade encompassing 2015 – 2025, the Pioneer Valley will steadfastly pursue its most promising economic opportunities in the following ways:

1) Leverage New Connections That Significantly Enhance the Region's Economic Competitiveness

Work in concert with government leaders and agencies at all levels, along with the region's business and civic sectors, to complete the reconstruction, reactivation and service expansions along the Pioneer Valley's principal north-south (Knowledge Corridor) and east-west (Inland Route) rail corridors to accommodate both passenger and freight traffic. Simultaneously tackle the remaining "last mile" phase required to build out western Massachusetts' new, "middle mile" high-speed broadband network, thereby allowing the Pioneer Valley to realize the full range of potential economic and job creation benefits while ensuring a favorable return on this substantial investment of public funds.

2) Lead the Commonwealth's Clean Energy Transformation While Moving the Region Toward a Balanced and Diversified Energy Portfolio

Maintain the Pioneer Valley's efforts to lead multifaceted efforts by the Commonwealth to significantly reduce our heavy reliance on fossil fuels and accelerate the region's transition to emerging clean energy sources, broadly employing energy conservation measures and technologies, and overall fostering the creation of a far more balanced, diversified, reliable and affordable energy supply portfolio to support the Pioneer Valley and its regional economy. More specifically, by 2025 strive to achieve parallel goals of: a) realizing over 600 million kWh of new clean energy generation coupled with a cut of 3.2 metric tons of Greenhouse

Gas (GHG) emissions emanating from Pioneer Valley sources, and b) growing our clean energy industry, which has approximately 500 establishments and 7,000 workers, as a region-specific initiative that is consistent with the most recent Massachusetts Clean Energy and Climate Plan.

3) Harness the Economic Development Potential of the New England Knowledge Corridor

Realize and tap the impressive and wide range of economic attributes and assets concentrated in the interstate New England Knowledge Corridor (NEKC) encompassing the Greater Springfield, Hartford and New Haven metropolitan areas, an economic region which boasts a population of nearly 3 million; a workforce of more than 1.25 million; 215,000 college students enrolled in 41 colleges and universities; and in excess of 64,000 businesses; thereby making the NEKC the 20th largest market in our nation. Correspondingly, utilize the NEKC with its combination of academic power, strategic location, high productivity workforce and innovative talent pool to elevate the NEKC's visibility, reputation and combined strength to participate and successfully compete in a global marketplace where critical mass, thought leadership, workforce talent and the ability to collaborate are now essential to achieving sustained economic progress.



The Region's Key Economic Challenges

Over the next decade encompassing 2015 – 2025, the Pioneer Valley will act to address its most pressing economic challenges by addressing:

1) Talent Pool and Pipeline Challenges

Pursue a broad array of policy reforms and aggressive program initiatives and interventions that work together to identify and implement actions that both retain and expand the Pioneer Valley's supply of educated, skilled workers by a target of +6% or the equivalent of 25,000 workers, while also striving to mitigate adverse impacts to the region's higher education, manufacturing, health care and technology clusters. Critical to this effort is the improvement of educational outcomes and graduation rates in the region's public school systems, particularly in the urban core's distressed cities.

2) Fragile Infrastructure Systems

Invest and leverage limited federal, state and local financial resources, as well as public-private partnerships where possible, in order to address and resolve an ever-expanding list of the region's critical infrastructure system needs and deficiencies (e.g. roadway, transit, bridge, rail, water and sewer, etc). Simultaneously advocate for increased and multi-year infrastructure funding commitments by the federal and state governments that are at levels of investment commensurate with maintaining all forms of the Pioneer Valley public infrastructure in a state of good repair.

3) Retention and Growth of Existing Businesses

Proactively respond to the critical importance of small and mid-sized enterprises to the Pioneer Valley economy's strength, vitality and potential for long-term jobs growth by enhancing the system of business support services provided to them and developing new and more flexible sources of growth capital. Provide these services in a way that is highly visible, accessible, coordinated and aligned with the needs of those small and mid-sized firms that

demonstrate the potential to innovate, create and grow. As part of this effort, enhance supply chain and vendor opportunities for existing Pioneer Valley businesses, with special attention to connections with new major employers in the region.



Building on the Pioneer Valley's Tremendous Assets

The Pioneer Valley of western Massachusetts is one of the most desirable places to live in New England due to its natural beauty, range of housing and lifestyle options, cultural and recreational opportunities, and spirit of opportunity and innovation. Among the many assets that distinguish this region from its neighbors and even from comparable areas outside New England are the following standout features:

Ideal Location

The Pioneer Valley region is centrally located in New England's Knowledge Corridor, an important bi-state economic region with easy access to the Boston, New York City, and Albany metropolitan centers. The Knowledge Corridor benefits from its excellent transportation access afforded by highway, rail, and aviation facilities, thereby giving the region a major advantage in moving both people and freight and being a freight distribution hub for New England and the Northeast.

Bradley International Airport, 20 minutes south of Springfield, has become a significant northeastern hub for short and long-distance flights as well

as service to the west coast and linkages to international destinations. The airport continues to grow and accommodate additional carriers and is poised to offer more long-distance service.

Linking with air travel and major urban centers is the north-south passenger rail route that is currently being enhanced, upgraded and expanded to increase speed, frequency of service, and the number of stations. Commuter rail service will be vastly enhanced, and passenger rail will operate at a speed not seen before in this region.

Broadband and Telecommunications Hub

The Pioneer Valley is host to a key northeast U.S. fiber-optic backbone junction, serving as the primary telecommunication access hub for eight states. Fiber-optic cables are laid alongside the region's interstate highways along with a direct fiber connection to the University of Massachusetts and the Five College system. The fiber-optic backbones provide high-speed service throughout most of the urban and suburban landscape, and a "middle mile" project has been completed to extend service to underserved rural areas. Once "last mile" projects are complete, the region will have full Internet access.



Center of Education Excellence

The Pioneer Valley region has one of the most skilled and highly educated workforces in the world, a fact which has resulted in its designation as part of New England's Knowledge Corridor. The region's 14 colleges and universities, several of which are nationally recognized institutions, are home to approximately 65,000 undergraduate and 12,000 graduate students each year.

Together, these educational institutions employ over 12,000 people; afford residents of the Pioneer Valley region a multitude of educational opportunities; and provide employers with an annual pool of skilled talent. Many specialized training programs and area trade schools also exist to support and enhance the region's major industry clusters by offering advanced programs in the fields of manufacturing, precision machining, health care, information technology, life sciences, medical devices, financial services, biotechnology and renewable energy.

The "Knowledge Corridor" Region and Identity

An evolving cross-border economic partnership between Massachusetts and Connecticut has spawned the New England Knowledge Corridor brand, which arose from the strength of the region's educational institutions and led to new collaborations: the InternHere.com program, Sustainable Communities Initiative, and a cross-border Growth Business Study, as well as the new 2014 Plan for Progress Talent Development Strategy. The designation has drawn the attention of national and international site selectors and their clients, and the region is represented at trade shows in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and numerous locations throughout the U.S.

Small Businesses Increasing and Growing

In the last two decades, the Pioneer Valley region has undergone a profound shift as the number of very large employers has diminished and the importance of small businesses has grown. There is also a rich tradition of social entrepreneurship in the region. In response to these trends, the system of entrepreneurial and business growth support services has expanded and includes the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center, the Business Growth Center, SCORE, Valley Venture Mentors, Common Capital, the UMass Family Business Center, and several local Community Development Corporations, among others. A recent study showed that many small businesses in the region continued to grow even during the recession of 2008-2009 (Pioneer Valley Growth Business Study at <http://www.pvpc.org/content/pioneer-valley-growth-business-study-report>).

High-Technology Ventures Based on Local Research

Technology companies are linked with the area's universities and colleges in a number of ventures, including a precision machining initiative and the development of clean energy resources, to increase the pace of innovation and technology commercialization and to build a growth-oriented economy in the Pioneer Valley region and throughout western Massachusetts. The establishment of the Massachusetts Green High Performing Computing Center in downtown Holyoke, along with a new Holyoke Innovation District and a set of local and regional innovation strategies, will leverage these resources.

Given these and many other strengths and opportunities in our region, a broad Vision Statement is set forth for the future, especially the next decade which is encompassed by this 2015 Plan:





Vision Statement

A strong, innovative, engaging, and vibrant economy and quality of life that fosters prosperity and sustainability and is driven by collaborative leadership.

Plan for Progress Goals

To achieve this vision, in practical terms, the Plan for Progress sets forth the following four major goals, each of which includes a set of detailed strategies, with short- and long-term action steps. Plan for Progress implementers will:

- 1. Develop and maintain a globally competitive and regionally engaged talent pool.**
- 2. Foster an environment where established, new, and growing businesses and organizations thrive.**
- 3. Implement and enhance the infrastructure that connects, sustains and ensures the safety and resiliency of the region.**
- 4. Conduct economic development activities in a regionally responsible manner, prioritizing collaboration and engagement.**

Goal #1:

Develop and Maintain a Globally Competitive and Regionally Engaged Talent Pool

The 2015 Plan for Progress includes a primary focus on the most important factor confronting the Pioneer Valley economy, namely the talent, or human capital, that comprises the current and future workforce for our region. Workforce and talent issues today constitute the most important of all factors for both attracting and retaining businesses and jobs and, thus, are pivotal to the sustained economic success of metropolitan regions across the U.S. – including the Pioneer Valley and its larger, interstate region, the New England Knowledge Corridor. Thus, a significant emphasis will be placed on these efforts and on collaboration among the lead implementers. To this end, Knowledge Corridor leadership worked with the Donahue institute at the University of Massachusetts to develop detailed strategies and action steps for the interstate region, and the 2015 Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress aligns well with the framework that was developed for that bi-state effort. For more information on the Donahue Institute report, please see the Knowledge Corridor Talent and Workforce Strategy report at <http://www.pvpc.org/content/knowledge-corridor-talent-and-workforce-strategy>.

Plan for Progress implementers affirm the importance of a core talent development pipeline that provides an unbroken continuum of preparation for young people in our communities. This “core” pipeline includes pre-K programs, the existing public school system, vocational training, community colleges and four-year colleges. Additional workforce training initiatives that address changing workforce needs are part of the core as well. However, ultimately, a healthy, vibrant and successful core pipeline will mitigate the need for remedial measures at every level. At every stage now in the educational and talent pipeline, including students beginning community college and workers entering their first jobs, full readiness often requires additional instruction, tutoring or training. While remedial actions will be needed for the foreseeable future to meet current workforce needs, we anticipate a gradual reduction in this need as the core programs are strengthened and more and more resources are directed to them.



The strategies below are grouped into traditional educational time periods and systems, while always recognizing the linkages between these elements so that there is a continuum of preparation. There is a need to align each stage of education and training with the previous stage as well as with the programs, schools and workplaces that follow it. In order to accomplish this, it is critical for education and business interests to recognize their common mission. There is also a pressing need for greater engagement by parents, guidance counselors, and others whose responsibility it is to provide support and direction the region's students. These individuals have a tremendous influence on young people's perceived choices and long-term prospects.

Our ultimate goals in strengthening this core talent development pipeline are to improve the high school graduation rate, improve workforce readiness, and thus greatly reduce the need for remedial and supplemental tutoring and training at every level. In addition, we endeavor to increase the engagement of talented young workers in their communities and the region. These broad goals will be achieved through the following strategies (See the Donahue Institute report for additional details¹):

Strategy #1: Strengthen Regional Engagement and Coordination in Talent Development Initiatives

Action Steps:

- ❑ Promote business community engagement in the region's workforce and talent initiatives, in coordination with educational institutions.
- ❑ Increase the region's own investment in talent, workforce and education.
- ❑ Foster and enhance foundational, "soft" skills programming at all educational levels in the region.
- ❑ Engage young workers to increase their role and voice in envisioning the future of the region.

¹The Knowledge Corridor Talent and Workforce Strategy report is available at <http://www.pvpc.org/content/knowledge-corridor-talent-and-workforce-strategy>

Strategy #2: Make the Implementation of High Quality Early Education an Essential Element of the Region's Economic Development

Action Steps:

- ❑ Advocate for increased access to early childhood education (including infant/toddler programs) through state and federal funding streams, prioritizing Gateway Cities.
- ❑ Advocate for increased funding for higher education access for early childhood workforce as a method of continuous improvement and increasing quality of teaching.
- ❑ Promote use of shared data systems which will enable tracking of services for children, beginning at birth, and using data to ensure improved outcomes in all settings.



Strategy #3: Improve K-12 High School and Vocational School Achievement and Graduation Rates

Action Steps:

- ❑ Strengthen vocational and high school links/ pathways to employers and education.
- ❑ Widen middle and high school career awareness of job and career opportunities in the region's target industries.
- ❑ Expand innovative approaches to training and education beyond traditional high school, such as programs in advanced manufacturing and information technology.
- ❑ Develop training academy and coaching for administrators and teacher leaders in K-12 schools serving disadvantaged populations.
- ❑ Minimize institutional and attitudinal barriers such as stereotyped socioeconomic and cultural "tracks" to free students to pursue all potential opportunities.
- ❑ Ensure that all teachers embrace their role in preparing their students for future success in the workplace and in their careers.

Strategy #4: Improve Community and Four-Year College Programs and Graduation Rates

Action Steps:

- ❑ Improve the funding process for community colleges.
- ❑ Improve recruitment and retention for technical programs and technical program instructors.
- ❑ Create targeted urban teacher education curriculum at area colleges.
- ❑ Support and expand adult basic education using "pay for success" models.
- ❑ Ensure that faculty embrace their role in preparing their students for future success in the workplace and in their careers.

Strategy #5: Enhance Career and Workforce Training

Action Steps:

- ❑ Increase employer access to state-funded workforce training grants.
- ❑ Expand industry engagement in workforce training efforts in target sectors.
- ❑ Pilot employer-driven customized training programs with employer funding matches.
- ❑ Provide links to potential entrepreneurship opportunities throughout educational and training programs.

Implementation Team for Goal #1:

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Community Colleges (STCC, HCC and GCC)*
Major Regional Employers
Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation
Institutions of Higher Education
K-12 Superintendents
Leadership Pioneer Valley
*Potential lead implementer



Goal #2:

Foster an Environment Where Established, New, and Growing Businesses and Organizations Thrive

The number of businesses in the Pioneer Valley continues to grow – consisting predominantly of small enterprises of less than 50 employees – and despite the “Great Recession” of 2008-09, some industries have been expanding, developing new products and services, and hiring more employees. An enhanced entrepreneurial ecosystem is coalescing, with new and expanded business mentorship programs, co-working spaces, innovation centers, and incubators. This goal of the Plan for Progress focuses on providing the essential ingredients for businesses of all sizes to thrive, from the sole proprietor to the largest corporations, with special emphasis on increasing coordination and outreach to entrepreneurs of all ethnicities. The Plan also strongly encourages impact investments into companies, organizations and funds with the intention to generate measurable social, environmental and employment impact as well as strong financial return.

These results cannot be achieved without also bolstering the strength of the urban, suburban and downtown employment centers in communities throughout the Pioneer Valley. In particular, as we look ahead, the Pioneer Valley must increasingly focus on its urban core area comprised of three of the region’s four state-designated “Gateway Cities,” namely Springfield, Holyoke, and Chicopee. The urban core is a crucial part of our region’s economy since it is a primary source of the Pioneer Valley’s business capital, labor force, work sites and buildings, mobility assets, power and communications infrastructure, innovation capability and jobs. Other urban areas, including Northampton, Easthampton, Greenfield and the fourth Gateway City of Westfield, must also be strengthened so that all parts of the region have strong employment and commercial centers. Finally, we must leverage the strength of the business ecosystem in other parts of the state, particularly the Greater Boston area, by making lasting connections for providers and businesses; these established networks are crucial to the growth of this region.



The following strategies will address these needs:

Strategy #1: Retain, Attract, and Grow Businesses and Priority Clusters

Action Steps:

- ❑ Encourage development and support of entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship, throughout the region through a coordinated and accessible network of services.
- ❑ Generate flexible risk capital by supporting the creation and attraction of new venture capital firms and revolving loan funds to stimulate new product development, new business formation, and expansion of existing businesses in the region.
- ❑ Enhance opportunities for regional businesses to connect to global markets and international trade opportunities.
- ❑ Establish a comprehensive technical support network that responds to all levels of need (e.g. financial literacy, fundamental business concepts, and multilingual communications); acknowledges different phases of business maturity; and provides expertise in critical areas such as financial management, legal, marketing, operations, human resources, technology, and succession and resiliency planning.
- ❑ Advocate for companies to use local suppliers and consumers to patronize local businesses.

- ❑ Promote redevelopment of shovel-ready sites such as pre-permitted commercial and industrial sites to support new businesses and relocation and expansion of existing businesses.
- ❑ Regularly review and prioritize high-growth businesses and high-growth and high-potential industry clusters to target the region's economic development efforts.
- ❑ Monitor changes in the region's most significant employment sectors to identify and address potential threats or weaknesses.
- ❑ Promote and support community development efforts to revitalize commercial districts.
- ❑ Advocate for increased involvement of colleges and universities, as key economic drivers in their roles as property owners, developers, and employers, in regional economic development activities.

Strategy #2: Advocate Efficient Regulatory Processes at All Levels of Government

Action Steps:

- ❑ Maximize efforts to streamline and make more predictable the permitting process at both state and local levels.
- ❑ Actively engage the administration, the legislature, and all applicable state agencies and quasi-public organizations to advance the Pioneer Valley region's economic development priorities.

Strategy #3: Market Our Region

Action Steps:

- ❑ Support and align with efforts of the New England Knowledge Corridor Partnership to proactively market the Knowledge Corridor regionally, nationally and internationally as a premier place to live, work and play.
- ❑ Increase collaboration among the regional tourism councils and regional economic development agencies to promote and attract visiting, exploring and enjoying the broad array of Pioneer Valley sites and attractions.



- ❑ Support regional collaborations, such as the New England Knowledge Corridor Partnership and the Knowledge Corridor Sustainable Communities Initiative, by sponsoring cross-border meetings, conferences and social gatherings.
- ❑ Specifically market the region's assets to all area residents, with a particular focus on students, recent graduates, and young workers.

Implementation Team for Goal #2:

EDC of Western MA*
 New England Knowledge Corridor Partnership
 Economic Development Partners
 Chambers of Commerce
 Regional Tourism Councils
 MA Office of Business Development
 MA Small Business Development Center
 Business Growth Center at Springfield
 Technology Park
 Common Capital
 *Potential lead implementer



Goal #3:

Implement and Enhance the Infrastructure that Connects, Sustains and Ensures the Safety and Resiliency of the Region and its Economy

Without a modern, high quality network of infrastructure, a region cannot sustain economic activity, retain its students and workers, or attract visitors, tourists and investment. The Pioneer Valley's infrastructure includes its transportation, broadband and energy networks; public health and safety resources; housing supply; and natural resources including water supplies, agricultural land and open space/recreational areas. Both local and regional efforts are necessary to ensure consistency, resiliency, and sufficient redundancy to withstand disruptions. The following strategies are meant to achieve these goals:

Strategy #1: Enhance High-Tech and Conventional Infrastructure

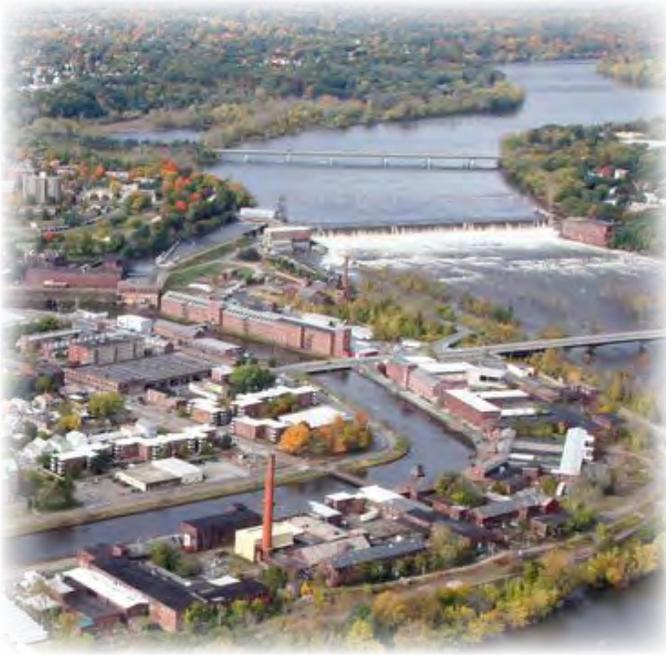
Action Steps:

- ❑ Complete build-out of broadband technologies and access to serve all residents, businesses, and institutions. Explore regional approaches as appropriate.
 - Ensure build-out of the “last mile” of the network through public-private partnerships.
 - Foster greater utilization of broadband anchor institutions to promote new innovative uses and better distribution of Internet content.
 - Support universal broadband adoption through digital literacy, public Internet access points, affordable Internet access, and other initiatives
 - Ensure resiliency and redundancy in the broadband system.
- ❑ Support and advocate for expanded service at Bradley International Airport, including direct flights to Europe.
- ❑ Strengthen efforts to increase rail passenger and freight services including:
 - Intercity service along the Knowledge Corridor line including the Amtrak Vermonter service and implementation of expanded shuttle runs along the corridor between Springfield and Greenfield.
 - Commuter rail service connecting New Haven, Hartford and Springfield
 - The Inland Route rail passenger corridor connecting Springfield to Boston and possible connection with Montreal.
 - Rail freight facility upgrades, including ongoing access improvements to the region's primary freight and intermodal yard in West Springfield.



- ❑ Improve transit and intermodal infrastructure, including:
 - Complete rehabilitation of Union Station in Springfield as a regional intermodal transportation hub as well as rail passenger facilities in Holyoke, Northampton and Greenfield.
 - Complete Westfield intermodal transportation facility.
 - Improve bus facilities and infrastructure to improve region-wide transit service and connections with other travel modes.
- ❑ Proactively address the region's substantial and growing road and bridge repair and improvement needs and the federal, state and local funding required to do so, particularly the I-91 Viaduct Rehabilitation Project.
- ❑ Conduct environmental assessment, cleanup and redevelopment of brownfield sites throughout the region.
- ❑ Increase the region's energy distribution capacity for a variety of energy sources.
- ❑ Support efforts to increase regional shared transportation programs, such as shared cars and bicycles.
- ❑ Support public and private sector funding to replace the region's aging underground infrastructure, including water, sewer, electric, and natural gas conduits.
- ❑ Pursue alternative methods of waste management and enhanced recycling.





Strategy #2: Increase Use of Clean Energy to Reduce Business Costs and Improve the Environment

Action Steps:

- ❑ Encourage conservation efforts such as operational efficiencies and demand management as a key to reduce regional energy use.
- ❑ Support continuing transition to clean energy sources, including wind, solar and geothermal.
- ❑ While steadily increasing the generation of affordable clean energy, at the same time take steps to increase the supply of natural gas and the acquisition of hydro-generated electric power from Canada that can keep energy costs affordable to businesses and institutions throughout the Pioneer Valley.
- ❑ Use the city of Holyoke as test bed for innovative energy testing and product development.
- ❑ Link new and existing regionally-based clean energy companies to research and product development assets located in the Pioneer Valley.
- ❑ Encourage participation of the region’s municipalities in state clean energy programs.

Strategy #3: Enhance Regional Approaches to Public Safety, Public Health and Disaster Resilience

Action Steps:

- ❑ Ensure effective collaboration and outreach among agencies and groups addressing public safety, disaster resilience and public health needs.
- ❑ Increase the resilience of the region’s communities to withstand and recover from extreme weather events, public health crises, or all-hazard incidents including acts of domestic and foreign terrorism.
- ❑ Identify and prepare for likely impacts to the region’s critical infrastructure, and prepare residents and businesses for disruptions.
- ❑ Investigate the feasibility of a regional holding facility (lock-up) with state of the practice technology which could allow police officers to return to community patrols.
- ❑ Improve local food production infrastructure (processing, storage, distribution) to provide a reliable and healthful local food supply.





Strategy #4: Develop an Array of Housing Options that Foster Economic Competitiveness

Action Steps:

- ❑ Develop and implement solutions to overcome the challenge of a weak housing market in the urban core and some of the region's other communities.
- ❑ Use Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) potential to create market rate housing opportunities in the region's core cities.
- ❑ Increase and preserve the supply of private income-restricted housing outside of the central cities.
- ❑ Ensure effective collaboration and outreach among agencies and groups which are focused on addressing the region's array of housing needs.
- ❑ Increase homeownership opportunities, including options that are affordable at a range of incomes and physically accessible.
- ❑ Encourage zoning that allows more housing choices such as duplexes, multifamily housing, and accessory apartments as well as regulations that encourage physically accessible housing.
- ❑ Promote outreach and education initiatives centered on Fair Housing laws and their enforcement to landlords, tenants, banking and lending institutions, and the general public.
- ❑ Reduce homelessness through supportive housing, rehousing, and prevention initiatives.
- ❑ Increase homeownership literacy, particularly for first-time homebuyers.

Strategy #5: Revitalize and Protect the Connecticut River and its Watershed

Action Steps:

- ❑ Improve Connecticut River water quality in urban areas by securing continued funding support via MA Environmental Bond and other sources which advance the remediation of combined sewer overflows.
- ❑ Reduce flooding and erosion damage and costs caused by stormwater runoff by utilizing green infrastructure, including green roofs, permeable paving, and on-site stormwater recharge.
- ❑ Reduce and manage natural and man-made debris in and adjacent to rivers through new removal technologies and greater public education.
- ❑ Enhance regional tourism and recreation resources by increasing and enhancing public access points, including boat launches, parks, riverwalks, and trails.
- ❑ Preserve prime farm land for active agriculture use as a means to preserve the local agricultural economy.
- ❑ Preserve open space in environmentally sensitive and scenic areas in order to maintain habitat, conserve resources and enhance the region's living environment.

Implementation Team for Goal #3:

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission*
Franklin Regional Council of Governments*
Connecticut River Clean-up Committee
WMA Connect/MBI
Valley Development Council
Pioneer Valley Regional Housing Advisory Committee

*Potential lead implementer



Goal #4:

Conduct Economic Development Activities in a Regionally Responsible Manner, Prioritizing Collaboration and Engagement

The new Plan for Progress celebrates our pioneering history of innovation, social responsibility, freedom and collaboration. However, there remain economic disparities in the region (as well as across the state) which must be addressed if the region is to fully embrace success and long-term prosperity. The recent success of the Leadership Pioneer Valley program is an indication of the need and desire to sustain and improve broad collaboration and develop a succession strategy for regional leadership. This leadership must engage with those it serves on a regular basis to ensure that needs are being met. Furthermore, responsible economic development includes a regular and honest evaluation of progress through measurable benchmarks, intended to guide us as well as demonstrate progress to those outside our region.

Strategies to address these issues include:

Strategy #1: Foster Equity and Economic Opportunity through Public Policy Decisions, Educational Opportunities and Advocacy

Action Steps:

- ❑ Strengthen outreach efforts to Congress and the Massachusetts legislature to ensure that the region's policy priorities are at the forefront.
- ❑ Promote statewide fiscal equity in local aid, transportation investments, public schools funding, and other programs.
- ❑ Prioritize economic opportunity initiatives in the region's areas of concentrated poverty.

Strategy #2: Engage, Convene and Collaborate with Diverse Groups to Maximize Regional Success Action Steps:

- ❑ Collaborate with existing civic leadership development programs and community organizations that advance civic engagement.
- ❑ Support and expand Leadership Pioneer Valley and other leadership programs to reach a greater number of individuals.
- ❑ Encourage the creation of public art and broad access to cultural activities and resources.
- ❑ Encourage community engagement strategies that include underrepresented populations (immigrant, migrant, ethnic minority, low-income and geographically isolated).
- ❑ Support the City2City Pioneer Valley program, and promote adoption of best practices from other regions.
- ❑ Encourage and publicly celebrate civic engagement of local companies and institutions.
- ❑ Increase awareness and utilization of the Plan for Progress, including its use as a guide for other strategic plans, through outreach and advocacy by Plan for Progress members and implementers.
- ❑ Regularly review the accountability measures and dashboard metrics for the Plan for Progress to be sure that strategies are relevant, widely shared and accessible.

Implementation Team for Goal #4:

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission*
Franklin Regional Council of Governments
Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation
Community Foundation of Western MA
Leadership Pioneer Valley

*Potential Lead Implementer

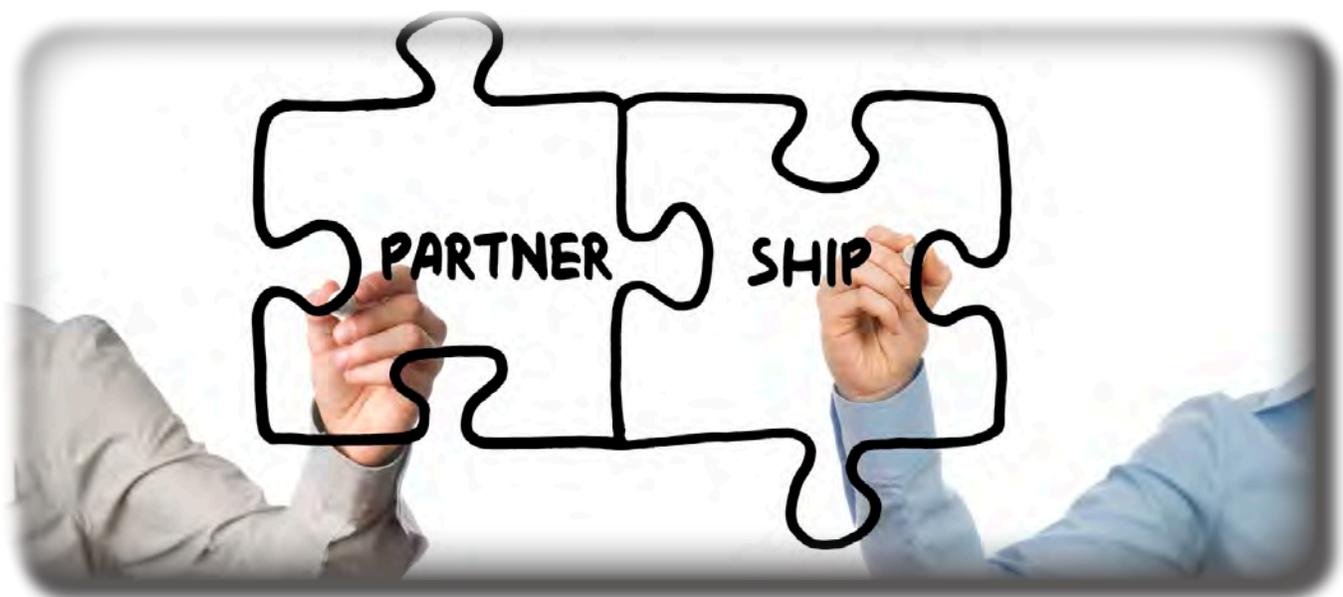


Implementation of the Plan for Progress

The Plan for Progress is a collaborative effort of many public, private and civic sector organizations and businesses. Everyone is needed in the efforts to implement the Plan; a few dedicated agencies and businesses cannot do it alone. The Plan for Progress Coordinating Council plays several roles in the region's economic development initiatives, one of which is to oversee implementation of the Plan. As convener of the Coordinating Council and its partners, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission will track and measure progress in order to support and encourage all implementation efforts. Other partners will implement strategies in their areas of influence and expertise.

The Coordinating Council proposes implementation teams and potential lead implementers based on the compatibility of their organizational missions with the relevant Plan for Progress strategy. Lead implementers then indicate their ability and willingness to take on this responsibility. If the organization or entity accepts the role of lead implementer, it will take ownership of a given strategy for a period of 2-5 years. It will then be their responsibility to determine what specifically must be accomplished in order to achieve the larger goals of the strategy. Lead implementers will report on the progress of the initiative once or twice a year to the full Coordinating Council to inform other partners of their efforts and obtain feedback. If progress has been difficult, the reasons will be examined by the full Council and possible readjustments to the strategy will be considered. In addition to these qualitative assessments, the PVPC will track metrics using key benchmarks and will present the information annually. Detailed data on metrics is available at www.stateofthepioneervalley.org.

In order to formalize the process, a set of MOUs will be created between the PVPC and each lead implementer to clarify roles. At the present time, seven MOUs are in place, although some are nearing time for renewal. The MOUs state that the Plan for Progress Trustees and Coordinating Council will maintain and keep current the Plan for Progress as the Pioneer Valley's comprehensive strategic economic development plan, provide suggested short- and long-term strategy milestones, provide meetings and other forums, and measure and periodically report on the programs and progress of the lead implementers. It states, as well, that the lead implementers will acknowledge and accept their designation and role as lead implementers of the Plan for Progress provide their most recent strategic plan or organizational work program to assist in coordination, work to achieve the suggested milestones, and provide modifications or additions to these milestones as deemed necessary. The collaborative spirit of the Plan for Progress Coordinating Council and lead implementers will be the driving force behind the implementation of the Plan.



Selected Resources for Development of the 2015 Plan for Progress

Regional Reports		
Knowledge Corridor Talent and Workforce Strategy	UMass Donahue Institute	2014
The New Opportunity to Lead	Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, Brightlines	2014
Our Next Future: An Action Plan for Building a Smart, Sustainable and Resilient Pioneer Valley	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)	2014
Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts: Strategic Goals 2013	EDC of Western MA	2014
Pioneer Valley Growth Business Study	UMass Donahue Institute	2013
State of the People	PVPC	2013
Pioneer Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)	PVPC	Annual
Greater Franklin County CEDS	Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG)	Annual
Labor Market Trends in the Pioneer Valley Region	New England Public Policy Center at Federal Reserve Bank of Boston	2012
Regional Transportation Plan	PVPC	2012
Franklin Hampshire Workforce Area: Labor Market Blueprint	LMI Works	2012
Western MA EDC Economic Development & Business Attraction Opportunity Report	CWS Consulting Group	2011
Innovation-Based Economic Development Strategy for Holyoke and the Pioneer Valley	HDR Decision Economics, Fairfield Index, & Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University	2011
Hampden REB Strategic Workforce Development Plan	Regional Employment Board (REB) of Hampden County	2011
2008 Major Employers	PVPC	2008
Pioneer Valley Clean Energy Plan	PVPC	2008
Reconnecting Massachusetts Gateway Cities	MassINC and Metropolitan Policy Program, The Brookings Institution	2007

PVPC data digests	
<i>Clean and Renewable Energy</i>	2013
<i>Impacts of the Community Preservation Act</i>	2012
<i>Housing and Ownership Shifts</i>	2011
<i>Population Shifts</i>	2011
<i>Home Foreclosures</i>	2010
<i>Aging Workforce</i>	2010
<i>Creative Economy</i>	2009
<i>Self-Employed and At-Home Workers</i>	2005

City of Springfield Reports and Plans

Rebuild Springfield Plan	Concordia, Goody Clancy, BNIM, Project for Public Spaces	2012
“Toward a More Prosperous Springfield” (an initiative generating numerous reports)	Federal Reserve Bank of Boston	2009-2011
Building for the Future: Foundations for a Springfield Comprehensive Growth Strategy	MassINC and UMass/Dartmouth Urban Initiative	2009
Advisory Services Panel Report: Springfield, MA	Urban Land Institute	2006

State Economic Development Plans

Closing the Massachusetts Skills Gap	2013
Choosing to Compete in the 21st Century	2011
A Framework for Action	2008-10

Other Resources

City2City Initiative
New England Knowledge Corridor Partnership
ROADS (Regional Organizations Advanced Data Sharing) Partnership





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