

2016 CEDS

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Annual Update



Catalyst for Regional Progress

pvpc

Prepared by
Pioneer Valley
Planning Commission

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
and Economic Development District

The Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress

*The Region's Comprehensive
Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)*

2016 CEDS Annual Update

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INTRODUCTION

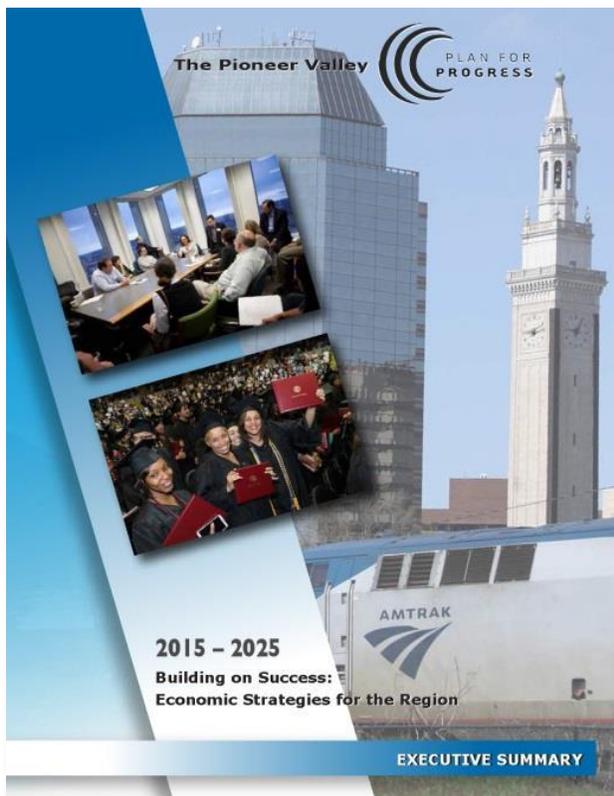
The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a companion document to the region's Plan for Progress, described below, and provides a means for regional collaboration to define and advance key economic interests of the region and its people. The Pioneer Valley region was designated an Economic Development District in 1999 by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration, and in keeping with this designation, the region prepares a CEDS that is updated annually.

The CEDS features a description of regional economic conditions and sets forth goals and objectives for the future, as well as a list of projects seeking EDA Public Works funding in the next year. More detailed information and data about the region's demographics, regional assets, employment, and education system is available in an online Appendix, along with this document, at <http://www.pvpc.org/plans/comprehensive-economic-development-strategy-ceds>.

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), which administers this process, is the designated regional planning agency for the Pioneer Valley region, which includes 43 cities and towns comprising the Hampshire and Hampden county areas in western Massachusetts. In this capacity, the PVPC strives to foster a proactive regional planning process that will help create jobs, support a stable and diversified regional economy, and improve living conditions and prosperity for residents throughout the region.

The Plan for Progress



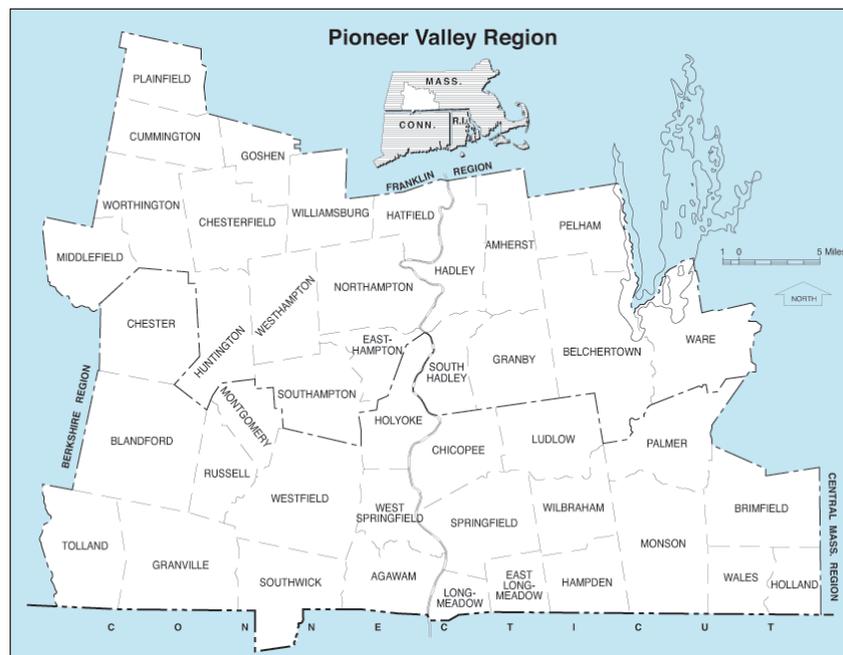
The Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress is a 10-year blueprint for economic development in the region, crafted by the combined efforts of the region's public, private, and civic sectors. It contains a compilation of economic strategies, supported and advanced by a growing network of leaders from across the region, developed through research and business community participation. These strategies are then incorporated into the CEDS and progress is updated annually. The 2015 Plan for Progress is the most current version, with previous editions of the Plan developed in 1994 and 2004.

Overview of the Pioneer Valley Region

Located in the midwestern section of Massachusetts and covering 1,179 square miles, the Pioneer Valley region and Economic Development District encompasses the fourth largest metropolitan area in New England. Its 43 cities and towns are home to about 626,775 people and include the urbanized areas of Springfield, Chicopee, and Holyoke. Springfield, the third largest city in Massachusetts, is the region's cultural and economic center. The city is home to several of the region's largest employers, including Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company and Baystate Health, and is a hub for a growing number of small business and entrepreneurial ventures.

Unique within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Pioneer Valley region contains a diverse economic base, internationally known educational institutions, and limitless scenic beauty. Dominant physical characteristics include the Connecticut River and its broad, fertile agricultural valley; the Holyoke Mountain range that traverses the region from Southwick to Pelham; and the foothills of the

Berkshire Mountains to the west. Choices in life-style range from contemporary downtown living to suburban neighborhoods, vibrant small towns, and scenic rural communities—a variety that contributes to the appeal of the region. The unique combination of natural beauty, cultural amenities, and historical character make the Pioneer Valley region an exceptional environment in which to live, work, and play.



Regional Economic Trends 2015-2016

Economic growth and development have gathered momentum over the past year, as evidenced by economic activity in the region and area-wide metrics (see [Regional Economic Performance Indicators](#) on page 26). Unemployment levels continue to fall, now at 5.9% for the region, compared to 5.3% nationally. The talent “pipeline” has been fortified, with early education enrollment significantly increased, due to a federal grant to Springfield and Holyoke, and high school and community college graduation rates have improved by 6% each. The percent of the local workforce with a four-year degree is also up 5%. Springfield College established a downtown Springfield satellite program, adding to the new mix of higher education opportunities available there – now including Bay Path University, Cambridge College, and UMass.



A significant emphasis on vocational and workforce training promises to ramp up the numbers of skilled workers in fields such as advanced manufacturing, information technology and aviation. Partnerships with business and industry have led to programs like Tech Foundry, HCC and STCC’s Training and Workforce Options (TWO), and the new aviation technology program run by Westfield Technical Academy with Gulfstream Aerospace. The Baker Administration recently released \$9.3 million for community college and vocational school capital improvements for programs such as laser electro-optics, advanced manufacturing engineering technology, computer programming, and construction trades, with additional funding proposed for FY17 and beyond. A new Aviation Research and Training Center is being established at Westover Air Reserve Base, with UMass as the lead institution. In Holyoke, the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration awarded \$1.55 million for the new Center for Hospitality and Culinary Excellence.

The total number of establishments has increased modestly, by 4%, and the overall number of jobs has held relatively steady, with some monthly fluctuations. Jobs in education and healthcare, in particular, are increasing and projected to continue to grow. Entrepreneurship support has grown significantly as well, with Valley Venture Mentors new accelerator program and expansion to Amherst and Greenfield, Click Workspace expanding in Northampton, and CoWork Springfield also moving to a larger space. With the explosion in popularity of craft beer, new breweries in the Valley have been appearing and growing.





Holyoke's new passenger rail platform came online last summer, completing service along the new Amtrak Vermonter route. Next on the agenda is an increase in the number of rail cars on the route to several times daily, in order to maximize the investment and meet growing demand. The Union Station Intermodal Transportation Center in Springfield will be completed by the end of 2016, spurring greater activity in downtown Springfield, with 10,000 square feet of retail space, 57,000 square feet of office space and a six-story parking garage. With this critical piece of infrastructure completed, there will

be even greater momentum for the evaluation and implementation of an east-west rail connection between Springfield and Boston.

Several major projects not already mentioned are under construction, including MGM Springfield, I-91 viaduct repairs, CRRC USA Rail Corporation manufacturing plant, Lyman Mills redevelopment in Chicopee, and the PVTA Transit Pavilion in Westfield. Eversource and National Grid completed the \$483 million Interstate Reliability Project this year, which included station upgrades and a new 75-mile transmission line. The new Kendrick Place building in Amherst now houses the MassMutual Data Labs, which expects to hire 20-30 new computer scientists in the next year, and new Mill District in North Amherst houses a new Atkins Farms Country Market satellite store and several other retail businesses.



Atkins Farms Country Market, North Amherst

Important economic indicators that remain stagnant include poverty levels (worsening over the past year), income inequality, affordable housing outside the urban core, and homeownership. It is hoped and expected that the many initiatives currently under way will begin to have an effect on these areas as more students graduate from high school or vocational school and community or four-year colleges and enter the workforce. New affordable housing developments are planned or under way in a number of communities. The number of shovel-ready sites is also down recently, and the EDC of Western Mass is addressing that with the help of a new state initiative.

Aiding in these many efforts, Springfield now has a Transformative Development Initiative Fellow through MassDevelopment's TDI program, working on solutions to the Innovation District downtown, and following on Northampton's hiring of a new economic development director in 2012, Amherst has also hired an economic development director this year.

The following table gives additional details on some of the largest projects under way in the region.

Please note: an Appendix to the CEDS includes comprehensive information and data about the region's demographics, geography, regional assets, employment, and education system and is available, along with this document, online at <http://www.pvpc.org/plans/comprehensive-economic-development-strategy-ceds>.

Major Committed Projects of Regional Significance

The following projects are planned or under way in our region in 2016:

Project	Key Implementer(s)	Public or Private?	Total Estimated Cost
Center for Hospitality and Culinary Excellence	Holyoke Community College	Public	\$3.3 M
MGM Springfield	MGM Resorts International	Private	\$950 M
Springfield Innovation Center	DevelopSpringfield, MassDevelopment	Public/ Private	\$4 M
Interstate 91 Viaduct Rehabilitation Project	Federal Highway Administration, MassDOT	Public	\$148 M
CRRRC Subway Car Manufacturing Plant	CRRRC USA Rail Corporation	Private	\$95 M
Union Station Regional Intermodal Transportation Center	Springfield Redevelopment Authority, Federal Transportation Administration, MassDOT	Public	\$88.5 M
Lyman Mills Redevelopment	Mount Holyoke Development	Private	\$6 M
Pioneer Valley Transit Authority Transit Pavilion	PVTA, City of Westfield	Public	\$6 M
Aviation Research and Training Center	UMass Amherst, Westover Air Reserve Base	Public	\$5 M
Aegis Energy Services Expansion	Aegis Energy Services, City of Holyoke	Private	\$7 M
John P. Musante Health Center	Hilltown Community Health Center, Town of Amherst, HRSA	Public	\$2.1 M
TOTAL COMMITTED FUNDS			\$1.3 B

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES 2015-2016

The 2015 Plan for Progress

The 2016 CEDS update is based on progress towards goals as outlined in the 2015 Plan for Progress, which presents a vision of:

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



Leadership Pioneer Valley 2015

This vision is expressed through *four major goal areas*, each with its own set of strategies and tangible action steps to guide the Plan's implementation. In addition, six "Decade Declarations" lay out the top priorities for the region. All of the strategies will be periodically revised in order to meet the region's changing economic needs, conditions, and circumstances.

The goals, strategies, and detailed action steps in the Plan for Progress are described in the following sections. The 2015 Plan for Progress and annual CEDS updates are available from the PVPC or online at www.pvpc.org/plans/plan-for-progress.

New Decade Declarations

Based on region-wide feedback, the following are the most significant and pressing needs and opportunities that the 2015 Plan for Progress will address over 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 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.



White Lion Brewing Company

Plan for Progress Goals and Strategies

To achieve the Plan's vision and address its top challenges and opportunities, 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.**

The following sections outline the goals and strategies and indicates highlights of recent progress.

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>.

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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.



Leadership Pioneer Valley Graduation 2015

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). Also please see the 2015 Plan for Progress for further details of the ten-year action steps.

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

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

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

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

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

Strategy #5: Enhance Career and Workforce Training

Implementation Team for Goal #1:

Regional Employment Boards*

Community Colleges (STCC, HCC and GCC)*

Major Regional Employers

Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation

Institutions of Higher Education

Leadership Pioneer Valley

**Lead implementer*



Holyoke Mayor Alex Morse at EDA Grant Announcement for HCC's Center for Hospitality and Culinary Excellence

Selected progress on this goal area during the past year includes:

- Holyoke Community College's planned Center for Hospitality and Culinary Excellence in Holyoke's Innovation District was awarded \$1.55 million from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA).
- Free pre-school was provided to 273 additional children in Springfield and Holyoke with federal Preschool Development Expansion Grants.

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- The REB of Hampden County is working together with the Worcester region to implement an apprenticeship initiative that will train 236 individuals in both regions.
- Tech Foundry received \$135,000 in state workforce development funds and \$300,000 in federal disaster resilience funding (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) to increase community outreach and train additional students in its IT job training program.
- Young professionals from the region participated in the City2City Pioneer Valley program and trip to Chattanooga, Tennessee to collaborate on new initiatives for the region.
- Teach Western Mass, a new partnership between Holyoke Public Schools, the Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership, UP Education Network, and the Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation, is seeking new teachers for the 2016-17 school year.
- Westfield Technical Academy launched a new four-year aviation program in partnership with Gulfstream Aerospace.

Specific objectives for 2016-17 include:

- Work together with lead implementers to identify additional workforce development initiatives.
- Support teacher talent pipeline programs such as Teach For America, Teach Western Mass, and the Teacher Housing Initiative.

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.



Baystate's TechSpring Innovation Center

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

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

Strategy #3: Market Our Region

❖ Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and Economic Development District

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
Common Capital
Valley Venture Mentors
**Potential lead implementer*



SPARK Entrepreneur Graduation
Photo: SPARK Holyoke

Selected progress on this goal area includes:

- Valley Venture Mentors helped 30 startups grow and generate revenue and is expanding its program to Greenfield and Amherst.
- SPARK Holyoke, an entrepreneurship initiative, was launched and has graduated three classes of new entrepreneurs thus far.
- DevelopSpringfield began renovations on the future Springfield Innovation Center on Bridge Street in Downtown Springfield thanks to \$2.2 million in MassWorks funding as well as support from MassMutual and the Beveridge Family Foundation.
- The region's top ten transportation priorities were advanced to MassDOT for priority consideration.
- A bill to modernize the state's zoning laws was brought to a legislative hearing.
- The New England Knowledge Corridor Partnership created new marketing materials and enhanced its marketing efforts for the region.

Specific objectives for 2016-17 include:

- Increase focus on social entrepreneurship in area-wide entrepreneurial support programs.
- Continue to work with legislators and the administration to advance the Pioneer Valley region's economic development priorities.

Goal #3: Implement and Enhance the Infrastructure that Connects, Sustains and Ensures the Safety and Resiliency of the Region and its Economy



Rain Garden at Community Field, Holyoke

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

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

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

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

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



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
- *Lead implementers*

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Selected progress on this goal area includes:

- Springfield received \$17 million in National Disaster Resilience funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), leveraging \$2.4 million in private funds and city investments. Projects include dam and power improvements to protect and support Baystate Hospital, affordable housing, workforce development, community engagement in conservation activities, and support for the Springfield Innovation Center.
- MassDOT, jointly with Vermont and the Federal Rail Administration, has completed a study of the potential for increased and improved passenger rail service from Springfield to Boston and Montreal.
- The new Holyoke passenger rail platform opened in August 2015.
- Aer Lingus announced new service from Bradley International Airport to Dublin, Ireland, the first transatlantic service from Bradley since 2008, and American Airlines announced new non-stop daily service to Los Angeles, both beginning in the fall of 2016.
- The owner of the former Mt. Tom coal-burning plant, GDF Suez Energy, has completed a re-use study for the site and plans to build a new solar-powered plant.
- Holyoke continued its role as clean energy innovator with the first commercial solar array that will power the building and sell low-cost electricity to Holyoke Gas & Electric.
- PVPC researched and addressed the needs of the business community in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery, with funding from an EDA Disaster Recovery grant. A summary of the project and its conclusions and recommendations is included in this document after the listing of CEDS Project Proposals.
- The former Holyoke Catholic High School campus was converted into 54 affordable apartments in downtown Holyoke by developer Weld Management, with DHCD housing subsidies, federal low income tax credits, and historic rehabilitation tax credits.
- PVPC promoted the use of green infrastructure in new development and public properties and worked with the Regenerative Design Group and community members to build 10 rain gardens in Springfield, including one at the Springfield Museums.



Chestnut Park Apartments, Holyoke
Photo: Raphael Centeno

Specific objectives for 2016-17 include:

- Continue to pursue the implementation of expanded shuttle runs along the Amtrak Vermonter corridor in Massachusetts to provide daily commuter service between Springfield and Greenfield and more frequent service to other destinations linked to the Vermonter line, including New York City and Washington, D.C.
- In addition to the above efforts, continue feasibility analysis and advocacy for expanded high-speed passenger rail from Springfield to Boston (the “inland route”).
- Focus on the region’s economic challenge of increasing the region’s energy distribution capacity for a variety of energy sources.
- Work toward building out the last mile of broadband through public-private partnerships.
- Complete I-91 Viaduct Alternatives Study identifying existing issues and evaluating alternative alignments for the viaduct section, including examination of possible at-grade and below-grade alternatives.



Photo: Raphael Centeno



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

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



Leadership Pioneer Valley Class of 2015
Photo: Leadership Pioneer Valley

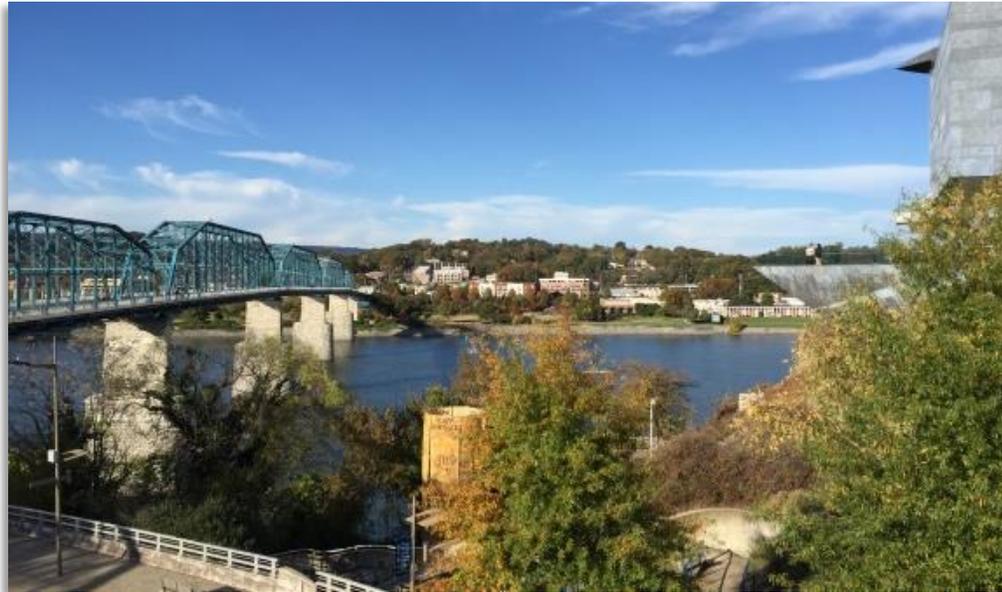
Implementation Team for Goal #4:

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

* *Lead Implementers*

Selected progress on this goal area includes:

- Springfield's Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) was launched, with a designated TDI fellow working with a wide array of partners.
- Leadership Pioneer Valley will graduate its fifth class this June 2016. The program has expanded to offer Leadership 2.0, workshops and seminars available to alumni and the general public.
- The City2City Pioneer Valley program organized a trip to Chattanooga, Tennessee to learn about successful initiatives that could be adapted to this region.



View of Tennessee River and Chattanooga's North Shore from the Bluff View Art District
Photo: Lori Tanner

Specific objectives for 2016-17 include:

- Collaborate with existing civic leadership development programs and community organizations that advance civic engagement.
- Evaluate and revise the accountability measures and dashboard metrics for the Plan for Progress in light of the new goals and strategies.

2016 CEDS Projects

The Project Proposal Process

On an annual basis, the Pioneer Valley Economic Development District that has been designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration solicits proposals from the region for projects that may seek funding under the EDA's Public Works Economic Development Program. The region has been successful in prior years in receiving substantial EDA funding awards for projects that create jobs and stimulate private investment in distressed communities of the Pioneer Valley region. Among these awards and accomplishments are the following:



- In 2016, Holyoke Community College was awarded \$1.55 million for the renovation of the existing Cubit Building in Holyoke's Innovation District to establish the Center for Hospitality and Culinary Excellence, a state-of-the-art workforce training facility.
- In 2014, the City of Springfield was awarded \$1.3 million for the Springfield Job Creation/Technical Training Facility, an 11,400-square-foot facility that will provide space to conduct work skills training in the precision manufacturing and construction trades industry.
- In 2011, the Holyoke Gas & Electric Company was awarded \$2.1 million for hydroelectric infrastructure improvements that will support the development of the Holyoke Innovation District anchored by the Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center.
- In 2011, EDA awarded the Caring Health Center in Springfield \$500,000 for a new community health center in downtown Springfield, in renovated historic buildings.
- In 2010, the Western Massachusetts Enterprise Fund was awarded \$500,000 from the EDA towards a Western Massachusetts Revolving Loan Fund.
- In 2008, EDA awarded the City of Northampton and MassDevelopment \$750,000 for the Village at Hospital Hill Business Park, a redevelopment of a former state hospital site.
- In 2006, EDA awarded the City of Springfield \$1 million for the Memorial Industrial Park II project adjacent to the Smith and Wesson facilities.
- Holyoke Health Center and Medical Mall was awarded a \$1 million grant by EDA in August 2002 to complete Phase II of the project.
- STCC received the EDA's National Award for Excellence in Urban Economic Development in 2001.
- The Latino Professional Office Center in Holyoke was awarded \$700,000 in 1999.
- STCC's Springfield Enterprise Center received close to \$1 million in 1999.

Summary of Project Proposals

This year, proposals were submitted from four Pioneer Valley communities – Springfield, Holyoke, Chicopee, and Ludlow – for inclusion in the 2016 CEDS. After a review of the projects, seven proposed projects have been included on the 2016 CEDS listing. Most of the projects are located in municipalities or neighborhoods that meet EDA Distress Criteria, and some may meet EDA eligibility criteria due to their potential for providing jobs to residents of distressed communities. All seven projects are shown in Table 1. Communities submitting projects for this list expect to apply for EDA Public Works funding during the upcoming year or 18 months.

Table 1: Summary of EDA Public Works Project Proposals for 2016 CEDS Annual Update

Community	Proposed Project Title	Project Type	2015 Project Re-Submittal?	EDA Funding Needed in 2016-17?	Total Est. Project Cost	Local \$ Match in Place?	# Perm. Jobs Created
Springfield	Worthington/Chestnut Street Improvements	Infrastructure improvements for Innovation District	No	TBD	TBD	No	TBD
Holyoke	Parsons Paper Redevelopment	Redevelopment of former paper mill site	No	TBD	\$10.5 million	Yes	30
Holyoke	Lynch School	Redevelopment of former high school	No	TBD	TBD	No	TBD
Holyoke	Victory Theater	Redevelopment of historic theater in downtown	Yes	TBD	TBD	No	TBD
Chicopee	RiverMills at Chicopee Falls	Redevelopment of brownfields site as mixed-use neighborhood	No	TBD	\$25 million	In part	250
Chicopee	Westover Air Park South	Infrastructure improvements for 88-acre industrial park	No	TBD	\$5 million	No	2,000
Ludlow	Riverside Drive at Ludlow Mills	Infrastructure to access mixed use development	Yes	Yes	\$7 million	No	20

Business Resilience in the Pioneer Valley

The newest section of the CEDS addresses disaster resilience for the business community.

Introduction

After a series of natural disasters in the Pioneer Valley in 2011, including a tornado, tropical storm, and severe snowstorm, it became clear that there was a need to better address the needs of the business community in disaster response, recovery and resiliency. The business community and those who serve them have noted that there are gaps in service and coordination for business owners when a disaster occurs, whether major or minor, because many of the existing emergency preparedness and response procedures and resources are primarily aimed at residents, municipalities and large institutions. It has been reported that 40% of businesses never reopen after a disaster, and of those who do open, at least 25% fail within two years, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Numerous obstacles arise, particularly for very small businesses, including the need for emergency funds, relocation assistance, and technical assistance to adapt business models to changing conditions. There may be language and/or cultural barriers for many small businesses, and often they may be underinsured.

Businesses in the Pioneer Valley are still recovering from the impact of these events, such as damage to or total loss of buildings and equipment, loss of data or paper records, loss of inventory, loss of employees (sometimes permanently), and interruption of business for days, weeks, or even longer. In many cases, insurance was inadequate to fully cover losses, and most companies did not have business interruption insurance. Ultimately, such events can result in business failure due to inadequate capital, impacts to the supply chain, loss of customers and entire markets, competition, or overwhelming levels of debt incurred in the effort to start up again.

A disaster resilience project conducted by the PVPC for the Economic Development Administration (EDA) addressed the key difficulties encountered by all parties in the disaster response and recovery process, through interviews and meetings with a wide variety of stakeholders in the Pioneer Valley, and identified best practices based on case studies of several recent disaster events. Several key recommendations can be made for future improvements to the system, with emphasis on the most basic “first steps” that all parties need to take. Many of these steps are ingredients for business resilience in general.

It should be noted that the findings are quite consistent with findings from a number of other plans discovered in the research process, including, for example, a 2010 UALR Institute for Economic Advancement Report: EDA Disaster Response and Preparedness Plan and a 2014 American Planning Association PAS Report on disaster recovery (see bibliography).

Existing Disaster Recovery Framework and Case Studies

The purpose of the project was to assess whether the existing disaster recovery framework was effective in helping businesses survive and recover from disasters. Several recent events were analyzed, including the EF-3 Tornado, Tropical Storm Irene, and October Snowstorm in 2011, as well as a fire in Hadley in 2014. Events outside the area were also instructive, including an EF-5 Tornado in Joplin, Missouri in 2011, Tropical Storm Irene in Vermont, and Cape Cod’s ongoing experience with hurricanes and blizzards. Outreach was conducted with local and regional chambers of commerce, business associations, business assistance providers, and government officials, and After Action Reports and other documents were reviewed.

Best Practices

The following brief summaries describe some of the Best Practices found in the case studies. Additional recommendations are provided in the Final Recommendations section.

Communication with Business Community

When possible, the best and most efficient means of communicating with most businesses is through the local business association and/or chamber of commerce. In some regions, if the largest regional chambers are able to extend and expand their reach temporarily and work with other chambers, this collaboration and communication can be a lifeline for those in less populated areas. For non-member businesses in areas without a well-staffed chamber of commerce, the most efficient means of communicating would be via municipal officials, and ideally, every municipality would have an easily accessible database of all businesses within their borders.

Door to door outreach conducted in Springfield after the tornado and in Vermont after the flooding was extremely helpful to businesses in terms of knowing possible avenues for support. In particular, the ability of staff to speak Spanish was critical for some Latino business owners. Social media was also used to excellent effect in several instances. In Joplin, Missouri, a Joint Information Committee was created that included not only municipal officials and the business community but also schools, hospitals, non-profits and housing agencies. Even small communities could convene as many of these groups as possible.

Emergency Loans or Grants

Because SBA loans take time to process and are not available to all, and building funds from a hospitality sales tax takes even longer, even modest emergency loan funds created by the community can be critical to helping businesses in the short run. In the 2011 disasters, the Amherst Area Chamber and CISA were instrumental in raising and distributing funds to businesses who desperately needed them. Ideally, such funds would be available from state agencies on an as-needed basis.

Designated Technical Assistance

If communities are able to obtain funding from EDA or other sources for a staff person to conduct outreach and technical assistance specifically to disaster victims (as did Dover and Wilmington VT), that can be a significant help in the medium to long-term, as businesses rebuild, relocate and re-evaluate their market.

Summary of Analysis

Because of the infrequency and unpredictability of these events, particularly in this region of the country, the response system has not been fully streamlined to best meet the needs of the business community. For example, emergency response and recovery efforts by public safety and emergency management personnel are highly coordinated and effective, as extensive training and drills are regularly conducted for a variety of potential scenarios. By contrast, most small businesses in this region, beyond any required business continuity measures specified by regulations or insurance, are hoping that they will be fortunate and will be spared any major disaster event. After all, until 2011, such events were few and far between.

There is a distinct separation of government and private enterprise in the area of disaster response and recovery. What repeatedly came through in the interviews was that, beyond public safety functions, businesses did not think that government entities were particularly helpful in the event of a disaster. In addition, every community is different. Some adapted and worked with the private sector more flexibly than others. Although there are similar processes and relationships with state and federal agencies, there are no formulas that will work for every city and town in Massachusetts, and each must address its own needs separately.

At all levels of government, far more resources are allocated to infrastructure and housing repair and reconstruction after a disaster than to business recovery. As just one recent example, after Hurricane Sandy, New York State received about \$17 billion in federal aid for recovery, of which 1.4% was allocated for economic development, with the majority going to small business loans and grants. This amount has since been further reduced (<http://stormrecovery.ny.gov/funding/funding-portal>).

At the same time, there is a strong resistance on the part of most business owners to prepare for emergencies and disasters, as day-to-day concerns and business survival are in the forefront most of the time. And because disasters here are relatively rare, and of course unpredictable, there is concern that extensive preparations may go to waste. From a business standpoint, this is not a high return on investment. Therefore, most small and medium-sized businesses do not engage in disaster preparedness planning and do not have Business Continuity Plans, even very basic ones.

Final Recommendations

Most studies and research conducted to address disaster resilience result in several pages of detailed recommendations for a wide range of stakeholders. However, the sheer enormity of the work to be done may be a partial factor in the widespread reluctance of many to undertake this type of planning and preparedness. Because of this, this research provides three key steps for each category of stakeholders to undertake that will help immeasurably if disasters strike. The primary one in each case is to build relationships, which are ultimately what all parties will rely upon in disaster scenarios.

TOP THREE recommendations for businesses:

- 1) Build relationships in advance. Strengthen your networks and establish relationships with people who provide technical assistance to businesses and can help if disaster strikes.
- 2) Make a simple plan for the worst case scenario – even a “back-of-the-envelope” plan. Think it through, and particularly evaluate whether you have sufficient insurance.
- 3) Seek technical assistance after a disaster even if it feels like there isn’t time. You’ll need to re-evaluate your business plan, including market area, supply chain and customer base.

TOP THREE recommendations for chambers, business service providers and local economic development staff:

- 1) Be aware of potential disaster recovery needs and know that you may be called upon to help. Know that businesses will need a variety of technical assistance and support after an adverse event.
- 2) Build relationships! Discuss and address business continuity planning with your members and clients. Understand that they will most likely not take extensive business continuity planning on their own and ask them pertinent questions to begin the process of thinking through key

preparedness actions. For chambers and providers, build and maintain relationships with local officials.

- 3) Work with other providers on a regular basis and particularly in times of crisis, and consider the possibility of starting a community-supported emergency loan fund after a disaster event.

TOP THREE recommendations for municipalities

- 1) Take advantage of opportunities to have conversations with municipal emergency response staff, local and regional chambers of commerce, and the regional director of the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD) about disaster recovery issues.
- 2) Establish a database of businesses in your community, perhaps as part of the process of granting permits and licenses.
- 3) Provide pertinent local disaster preparedness information (contacts, procedures, etc.) to businesses, possibly at your city or town hall when they apply for business permits.

TOP THREE recommendations for state and federal government agencies:

- 1) Evaluate and streamline FEMA and SBA process at Disaster Recovery Centers established onsite after a disaster has occurred.
- 2) Re-evaluate “unmet” need criteria and eligibility requirements for CDBG-DR business recovery funding. Strive to make the funding available more quickly to greater numbers of affected businesses.
- 3) Incorporate this subject into economic development seminars, conferences, etc., as part of business resilience so that government officials, economic development practitioners, and business providers can be more prepared.

Implementation Projects

As part of the project, a number of implementation efforts were undertaken based on the recommended measures, and ongoing work will continue through the region’s CEDS. Outreach conducted with chamber of commerce and emergency management directors began a process of education that will need to be sustained over the long term. A proposal was prepared, although ultimately not included, for the Massachusetts application to the National Disaster Resilience Competition, addressing the needs of businesses (see proposal in Appendix A of this document).

The National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) included PVPC efforts in a “Lessons from the Storm” Case Study entitled “Southwestern Massachusetts: Strengthening Businesses and Communities through Disaster Recovery” and documents efforts made in the region following the 2011 tornado, tropical storm and severe snowstorm. See the report at: <http://www.nado.org/southwestern-massachusetts-strengthening-businesses-and-communities-through-disaster-recovery-2/>. PVPC worked with several communities on their disaster mitigation plans and with chambers of commerce and other economic development partners on disaster resilience for businesses. NADO highlighted the efforts in a webinar, “An Overview of Planning for a More Resilient Future: A Guide to Regional Approaches” on December 3, 2015. Details on the webinar as well as links to the presentations are available at <http://www.nado.org/webinar-recording-slides-an-overview-of-planning-for-a-more-resilient-future-a-guide-to-regional-approaches/>

Regional Economic Performance Indicators

Summary

The Plan for Progress Performance Indicators are a set of quantitative benchmarks that assist in identifying economic trends and measuring progress towards the goals of the Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress. In order to provide a highly objective, measurable method of accountability, this quantitative system complements the qualitative assessments discussed above. The system does not attempt to evaluate current year statistics in isolation (e.g. judging whether a specific unemployment rate is “good” or “bad”), but rather looks at changes over time and the general trend, indicating whether a situation is improving or not (e.g. observing whether the unemployment rate is increasing or decreasing).

This evaluation section includes a chart of all performance indicators with the current and previous data as well as the percent change in data and the rating that this change warranted. Following this chart is a list of all the performance indicators organized by strategy grouping with a summary of the data and data source for each indicator.

Rating Scale

Each indicator was assigned a rating of positive, negative, or neutral, based on the most recent annual trend in the data available. Once benchmark data was collected for the most recent year available, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) staff calculated percentage changes from one year prior (or the most recent previous year possible if prior year data is not available). An improvement of at least one percent is considered a positive trend, while a decline of at least one percent is considered a negative trend. Between one percent improvement and a one percent decline is considered a neutral trend.

	Positive Trend More than a 1% change in a positive direction.
	Neutral Trend Less than a 1% change in any direction.
	Negative Trend More than a 1% change in a negative direction.

Regional Geography

Because the Plan for Progress was completed in conjunction with our neighbors to the north in Franklin County, ratings for each indicator represent the current trend in the given indicator for the greater Pioneer Valley which includes Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin counties. This evaluation section includes a chart of all performance indicators with the current and previous data as well as the percent change in data and the rating that this change warranted. Following this chart is a list of all the performance indicators organized by major goal area with a summary of the data and data source for each indicator.

Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress Performance Indicators - Pioneer Valley (3 Counties)

Goal #1: Develop and maintain a globally competitive and regionally engaged talent pool							
Measure	Indicator	Prior Data	Year	Current Data	Year	Annual Change	Rating
Early Education Enrollment	Enrollment In Early Education/Preschool Programs For 3 & 4 Year Olds	53.0%	2013	55.6%	2014	4.9%	positive
3rd Grade Reading Proficiency	MCAS 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency	49.0%	2013	49.8%	2014	1.6%	positive
High School Graduation Rate	5 Year High School Graduation Rate	83.20%	2013	87.90%	2014	5.6%	positive
Community College Graduates	# Of Graduates From Community Colleges in Region	2,034	2014	2,155	2015	5.9%	positive
Community College Transfers	Transfers To 4 Year Programs From Community Colleges in Region	2672	2014	2095	2015	-21.6%	negative
Educational Attainment Of Workforce	% Of Workforce 25 And Older With 4 Year Degree	30%	2013	32%	2014	5.2%	positive
Workforce Training Participation	# Of People Served By Workforce Training Programs	7,029	FY2014	6,230	FY2015	-11.4%	negative
Unemployment	Unemployment Rate	6.8%	2014	5.9%	2015	-13.2%	positive
Goal #2: Foster an environment where established, new, and growing businesses and organizations thrive							
Measure	Indicator	Prior Data	Year	Current Data	Year	Annual Change	Rating
Employers	Total Establishments	22,895	2013	23,740	2014	3.7%	positive
Jobs	Total Jobs	285,088	2013	287,946	2014	1.0%	positive
Sites Ready For Development	# Of Pre-Permitted Sites	18	2012	8	2015	-18.5%	negative
Low Income and Poverty	% Of Population With Income Below 200% Of Poverty Line	34.9%	2013	33.7%	2014	-3.4%	positive

Continued on next page.

Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress Performance Indicators (Continued) - Pioneer Valley (3 Counties)

Goal #3: Implement and enhance the infrastructure that connects, sustains, and ensures the safety and resiliency of the region							
Measure	Indicator	Prior Data	Year	Current Data	Year	Annual Change	Rating
High Speed Internet	% Of Communities/Population With Access To Broadband/High Speed Internet (25 MPS Download)	94.8	2013	95.3	2014	0.1%	neutral
Road Pavement Conditions*	Overall Condition Index (OCI)	77.6	2011	65.6	2015	-3.9%	negative
Transit Ridership	Total Annual Rides On PVTA, FRTA, And Amtrak Trains Within The Region	11,993,591	FY2014	12,670,271	FY2015	5.6%	positive
Bike Infrastructure	Completed Bike Facility Mileage			148.07	2013	NA	no trend
Transportation + Housing Costs	Combined Transportation And Housing Costs As A Percent Of Income			52%	2008-2012	NA	no trend
Affordable Housing	# Of Communities Meeting 10% Affordable Housing Threshold	8	2013	9	2014	12.5%	positive
Home Ownership	% Of Housing Units That Are Owner Occupied	63.50%	2013	61.10%	2014	-3.8%	negative
Combined Sewer Overflow Reductions	Total # Of CSOs Feeding Into The CT River Or Its Tributaries	66	2012	62	2014	-3.0%	positive
Goal #4: Conduct economic development activities in a regionally responsible manner, prioritizing collaboration and engagement							
Measure	Indicator	Prior Data	Year	Current Data	Year	Annual Change	Rating
Income Inequality (Gini Coefficient)	Gini Coefficient Of Income Inequality						no trend
	Hampden County	0.473	2013	0.470	2014	-0.7%	neutral
	Hampshire County	0.445	2013	0.469	2014	5.4%	negative
	Franklin County	0.438	2013	0.441	2014	0.8%	neutral
State Funding - Non-School Local Aid	% Of Statewide Non-School Local Aid Per Capita That Goes To The Region	\$212.37	FY2015	\$221.77	FY2016	4.4%	positive
Leadership Program Participation	# Of Graduates From All Leadership Programs In The Region	65	2014	65	2015	0.0%	neutral
Registered Voters	Voter Participation Rates	83.30%	2012	82.70%	2014	-0.4%	neutral

Notes: *Road Pavement Conditions only include Hampshire and Hampden Counties. Comparable data not available for Franklin County. Income Inequality is measured by the Gini coefficient and ranges from 0 to 1. Numbers closer to one indicate more income inequality.

Goal #1: Develop and Maintain a Globally Competitive and Regionally Engaged Talent Pool

Early Education Enrollment

Early childhood education helps provide the opportunities necessary for positive development at this young and critical age. It is now supported by extensive research that a high quality early childhood education experience has significant long-term effects on a person’s life outcomes ranging from their achievement in K-12 school, their economic success, or the probability that they will be involved in the juvenile justice system.

Early childhood education is now recognized as a critical early phase of the cradle-to-career pipeline that takes a comprehensive, long term view of workforce and economic development. The percent of all 3- and 4-year olds who are enrolled in any type of formal early education program (public, private, family child care, center-based preschool) are examined in this indicator. Data is estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey.

Between 2013 and 2014, the percent of children enrolled in early childhood education programs increased at a rate of 4.9% across the Pioneer Valley. Hampshire and Hampden counties saw increases of 14.8% and 7.2%, respectively; however, in Franklin County, the percentage dropped by almost 30%.

It is important to note that these data points are estimates based on a sample of the population, and there are margins of error associated with them. In this particular case, the margins of error for Franklin County are particularly large, so it’s quite possible that, while there was likely a decrease in enrollment in Franklin County, it was not necessarily of the dramatic extreme that these estimates suggest.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year-Estimates

Trend	Rating
+4.9%	

3rd Grade Reading Proficiency

In an educational environment increasingly requiring quantitative measures of achievement and accountability, the scores from the standardized MCAS test are used to “identify the strengths and weaknesses in curriculum and instruction” at the local level and to hold schools and school districts accountable with respect to “established standards for performance for districts that improve or fail to improve student academic performance.”*

Education development standards indicate that students should be able to read proficiently by the end of third grade, that is, have a wide vocabulary, comprehend, write logically, speak coherently, read fluently and understand different types of texts, because, beginning in fourth grade, all these skills are necessary for them to progress with more challenging work. The percent of all children in the third grade who received a score of “proficient” or higher on the MCAS English language arts test in part reflects the level of readiness for kindergarten and early literacy skills achieved in a formal early childhood education experience.

The percent of third-grade students across the Pioneer Valley region who scored 'proficient' on the MCAS reading tests rose from 2013 to 2014.** Scores in Hampden and Franklin counties increased by about 2% each, while the portion of third-grade students scoring proficient in Hampshire County remained fairly stable. At the same time, scores remained highest in Hampshire County.

*MA DESE

** In 2014, some third-grade students in the region took the PARCC test rather than the MCAS test. Only MCAS score results are presented in this report (thus, the sample size in 2014 is smaller than it is for 2013.)

Source: MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

Trend	Rating
+1.6%	

High School Graduation Rate

High school graduation rates are a vital component in assessing the status of individuals and communities because educational attainment has a strong influence on future work and earning potential as well as the ability to constructively contribute to one's community. Graduating from high school has become a minimum requirement for participation in most of our nation's economy. The percent of all students enrolled in grades nine through twelve who graduate within 5 years or less is measured in this indicator. The rate is adjusted for students who transfer in or out of the schools, and thus measures only those students who began at a given school and graduated from that same school.

Trend	Rating
+5.6%	

Across the region, there was a 3.7% rise in graduation rates, with a marked increase in Hampden County from 79.3% to 86.7%, including increases in both Springfield and Holyoke.

Source: MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Community College Graduates

Most of today's well paying jobs require a credential beyond a high school degree. Associates' degrees and/or certificates are the most accessible and promising route to a job with a living wage and a genuine career path for many. This indicator measures the number of people in the who complete an Associate's degree in a given academic year at one of the three community colleges in the region - Greenfield Community College, Holyoke Community College and Springfield Technical Community College.

Trend	Rating
+5.9%	

Between 2014 and 2015, the number of community college graduates in the Pioneer Valley increased by 6% and this trend was consistent across all three counties.

Source: Directors of Institutional Research at Holyoke Community College, Springfield Technical Community College, Greenfield Community College

Community College Transfers

While completing an Associate's degree is one measure of success at a community college, another is when students are ready and able to transfer from a 2-year community college to a 4-year degree program at another college or university. This indicates that they have moved onto a track to obtain a Bachelor's Degree. This indicator measures the number of students who transferred from a community college in the region to a 4-year college program during the past year. Only those students who leave an Associates program and enroll within one year at a 4-year program are counted.

Trend	Rating
-21.6%	

Between the academic years of 2014 and 2015, there was a significant decrease across the region in the number of students who transferred from a community college to a 4-year program. Region-wide, 21.6% fewer students transferred. This decreasing trend was consistent across the region.

Source: Directors of Institutional Research at Holyoke Community College, Springfield Technical Community College, Greenfield Community College

Educational Attainment of the Workforce

Higher education is increasingly necessary for long-term access to well-paying jobs. The extent of educational attainment, therefore, is indicative of a population's ability to function and excel economically and an individual's economic and social opportunities in life. While two-year associate's degrees meet the needs of many positions, the bachelor's degree is rapidly becoming a requirement for even some entry-level positions. Because a solid educational background, typically achieved during high school, is a prerequisite for getting a bachelor's degree, this indicator also measures a

Trend	Rating
+5.2%	

community’s ability to prepare their children for college. The percent of the population over age 25 with a Bachelor’s degree or higher is measured in this indicator.

Across the region, attainment of Bachelor’s degrees increased slightly from 30% to 32% between 2013 and 2014. Trends varied considerably throughout the region. Hampden County experienced a 10% increase while Hampshire County remained stable and Franklin County experienced a slight decrease.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year-Estimates

Workforce Training Participation

Not all jobs require a Bachelor’s Degree to be effective, and not all Bachelor’s Degrees teach the specific skills that each job requires. People switch careers later in life and need specific training to learn skills that will support that shift. The Plan for Progress recognizes that a robust pipeline to a skilled workforce involves training people at all levels of skill and experience for a wide variety of jobs. This indicator evaluates the level of participation in programs that train people with specific skills to prepare them for jobs in the workforce. Data includes the number of people who take part in job skills training programs through the Regional Employment Boards or one of the three community colleges within the region. The majority of these are non-credit courses through the community colleges.

Trend	Rating
-11.4%	

Between FY2014 and FY2015, the number of participants decreased significantly from 7,029 to 6,230 -- a reduction of 11% of the participants from the previous year. Trends varied across the region as Hampden county saw an increase of more than 10%, while Franklin County experienced about 1/3 fewer participants in FY2015 than in FY2014. Of note, even with the significant reduction, the number of Franklin County participants still remained higher than those in FY2013.

Note: Data is aggregated by fiscal year, and some duplication of totals is possible as the REBs and colleges may have the same students.

Source: Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Hampshire/Franklin Regional Employment Board, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

Unemployment

The unemployment rate, produced by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, is the percentage of people in the labor force who do not have a job (the labor force is the sum of those who have a job and those who are looking for a job). The unemployment rates are an often-used indicator to report on the state of the economy: a high unemployment rate can indicate a shrinking economy. Furthermore, unemployment rates give an idea of the portion of a community’s population that is financially insecure because they do not have a job. It should be noted that because unemployment rates are calculated based on a percentage of the people who are looking for work, it is actually an undercount of the total number of unemployed people who may actually wish to be employed. The unemployment rate does not include people who left the official labor force. This too is a significant factor as it underscores the growing portion of the population who are no longer considered employable for any number of reasons.

Trend	Rating
-13.2%	

The Pioneer Valley experienced a significant drop in unemployment between 2014 and 2015, with the number of unemployed people decreasing 13.2% in one year. All three counties in the region experienced similar and significant drops. Franklin County had the largest proportional decrease of 15.1%.

Source: MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

Goal #2: Foster an Environment Where Established, New, and Growing Businesses and Organizations Thrive

Employers

Another method of measuring the strength of an economy and the opportunities within it is to count the total number of employer businesses that exist. When an economy is strong, there are appropriate economic development supports, and confidence is high, existing businesses are more likely to stay operating and within the region. What's more, businesses from outside of the region are more likely to relocate here, and local entrepreneurs are more likely to start and grow a business. This indicator measures the total number of establishments in the area that have more than one employee.

Trend	Rating
+3.7%	

Between 2013 and 2014, the Pioneer Valley region saw an increase of 806 employers, representing a rate of 3.7% growth. While all three counties in the region experience similar trends, the largest area of growth was in Hampden County and within the Urban Core cities of Springfield and Holyoke.

Source: MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

Jobs

In addition to measuring the number of employers supported by an economy, measuring the total number of jobs looks at the size and strength of those employers. It gives perspective on the number of employment opportunities that exist within the region. Additionally, the number of jobs can add nuance to unemployment rates. For example, increased unemployment coinciding with increased jobs may suggest that a larger portion of the employment opportunities are part time and people are working multiple jobs at the same time rather than more people getting full time jobs. This indicator measures the total number of jobs that exist in an area.

Trend	Rating
+1.0%	

Between 2013 and 2014, the Pioneer Valley saw a slight increase in the number of jobs by 1 percent. This trend was in Hampshire and Hampden counties, while Franklin County remained stable, adding just 43 jobs throughout the year.

Source: MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

Properties Ready for Development

A critical component to a region's economic competitiveness is whether vacant commercial properties are available and ready to be used by companies who may want to grow within, or move to, the area. If properties are polluted or have buildings that need to be demolished, the likelihood of new employer prospects choosing that site are significantly diminished. This indicator measures the number of commercial properties that are pre-permitted by WestMass Area Development Corporation and are ready for occupancy.

Trend	Rating
-18.5%	

Between 2012 and 2015, the number of sites ready for development in the Pioneer Valley decreased. There were nine fewer sites in 2015, resulting in an average annual decrease of 18.5%. Most pre-permitted sites are located in Hampden County, with one site in Hampshire County.

Source: WestMass Development Corporation

Low Income and Poverty

Poverty rates are an important indicator of what portion of a community’s population likely lacks the necessary resources to provide for themselves or their families. The most widely used measure of poverty is the Federal poverty rate, which is the percentage of all people who are living in households with incomes that fall below the federal poverty line. The poverty line is established based on the current cost of basic goods and services (such as food, housing, transportation, and other goods and services), and what proportion of family income is spent on those items. While the threshold is adjusted over time and is dependent on family size and ages of family members, it is increasingly thought to understate the extent of poverty. The threshold in 2014 was \$15,730 for a two person household – a very low level of income given that a low-cost one-bedroom apartment in western Massachusetts will typically rent for more than \$8,800 per year.

Trend	Rating
-3.4%	

Because the federal poverty line is so low and generally misses a large portion of the population who are in economic distress, this indicator measures the percentage of the population living below 200% of that line. Poverty rates are calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau based on the income and number of people in each household.

One out of every three people in the Pioneer Valley live in households with incomes below 200% of the poverty line. Across the region, that rate decreased from 34.9% in 2013 to 33.7% in 2014. That trend was consistent across all three counties, with Franklin County residents experiencing the most significant decrease at 3.9%, and Hampden County seeing the smallest decrease at 3.3%.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year-Estimates

Goal #3: Implement and Enhance the Infrastructure that Connects, Sustains and Ensures the Safety and Resiliency of the Region and its Economy

High Speed Internet

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. High-speed internet access has become a core requirement for economic development well beyond technology and business fields. High speed internet is now an expected service for running most businesses, government, education, and even elementary school homework. This indicator measures the percent of the population who have access to high speed internet, as defined by the Federal Communications Commission. In 2015, the FCC increased the download speed standard for broadband, which is now 25Mbps.

Trend	Rating
+0.1%	

Between 2013 and 2014, the percent of the population with access to high-speed internet remained stable, increasing just 0.5% (from 94.8 to 95.3%). This rate is just under the Massachusetts state average of 97%, and above the national average of 85.3 percent.

Source: US Dept of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, State Broadband Initiative (CSV format June 31, 2013).

Bridge Conditions

Safe and efficient transportation of people and goods are essential to an economically vibrant region. The network of roads and bridges must continue to be developed and maintained as both are degraded by use and weather over time. Bridges are considered structurally deficient through a rating system developed by the Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). A bridge is deemed “structurally deficient” when it scores poorly on “structural adequacy, functional obsolescence and serviceability” by MassDOT. Since 2008, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation’s (MassDOT) Accelerated Bridge Program sought to identify and reduce the number of structurally deficient bridges across the state, several of which are located across the Pioneer Valley. This indicator measures the total number of bridges deemed structurally deficient within the region. This data was only available for bridges eligible for federal aid.

Trend	Rating
Data Available Soon	

Source: MassDOT

Road Pavement Conditions

Similar to bridge maintenance, quality of road pavement conditions affect freight deliveries, tourism, and daily commuters. Road Pavement Conditions are measured using the Overall Condition Index (OCI). The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission collects data for all 43 municipalities in the region. The Franklin Regional Council of Governments conducts a survey of road conditions in Franklin County, but uses a different system, thus comparison between the two areas is not possible. OCI values span from 0 to 100, where zero indicates that the road is impassable and 100 indicates that a road in excellent condition. Average OCIs are computed for each community for the total number of miles of road eligible to receive federal aid.

Trend	Rating
-3.9%	

Most recently, data was collected for the Pioneer Valley Region (Hampden & Hampshire Counties) in 2011 and again in 2015. During this time, pavement conditions across the Pioneer Valley region worsened by an average of 3.9% annually. Trends were fairly similar in both counties, though the decrease was more significant in Hampden County which experienced an average annual drop of 4.4 percent.

Source: Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Transit Ridership

Public transit use and access are a direct reflection of the degree to which a regional transit network and its corresponding schedules meet the needs of residents, workers, and employers. An effective public transit system with extensive, regular ridership decreases traffic and travel times, decreases pollution, and creates desirable places to live and work for a diverse area of people. People who cannot afford cars or would rather not drive them on a regular basis are more likely to live near extensive and efficient public transit networks. In this scenario, businesses are also more accessible to employees and customers. This indicator measures the total annual rides on the two major transit authorities within the region (PVTA and FRTA) as well as Amtrak trains that service the region.

Trend	Rating
+5.6%	

In FY2015, train service in the region was expanded in both Hampshire County and Franklin County, which saw increases in train ridership. However, the area's busiest station, located in Springfield, has been undergoing reconstruction during this time. Ridership in Hampden County dropped by over 10,000 during this time period. Total transit ridership between FY 2014 and FY2015 increased at a rate of 5.6%, however, as bus ridership in both PVTA and FRTA regions increased dramatically during this time period. Bus ridership in both Hampshire and Franklin counties increased most dramatically.

Source: Amtrak, Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA), and Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA)

Bike Infrastructure

Bicycling is generally regarded as one of the most efficient means of transportation - both for the user and the environment at large. Providing and continually extending these paths can assist communities in their goals of improving connectivity between destinations, providing transportation options to all users, and reducing the transportation impacts on the environment. The availability of bicycle transportation is also an important factor in individual health outcomes. This indicator measures the total number of miles of on and off-road, improved bike facilities. 'Bike facilities' is a broad term that encompasses sign-posted in-road bike routes, bike lanes, shared use paths and paved bike shoulders.

Trend	Rating
Trend Data Not Yet Available	

At this time, there is only one year of data available for this indicator. In 2013, a total of 148 miles of bike facilities existed across the Pioneer Valley. Since that time, many proposed bike facilities been built, but the exact number of additional miles is not yet compiled. Bike facilities in the region seem to be concentrated in the more rural and less populated areas of the region. Nearly half of these bike facilities are located within Franklin County (63.4 miles), while Hampshire County has about one third of the facilities and Hampden County has just under 25 percent.

Source: Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, MassGIS

Transportation & Housing Costs

Transportation and housing are generally the two most significant expenses for households and, more and more, affordability of a region is being examined specifically based on the cost of those two major domains. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has developed a method of examining these factors in relation to income by comparing these combined average expenses as a percent of household incomes. For this indicator, the average household contains four people, two of whom commute.

Trend	Rating
Trend Data Not Yet Available	

❖ Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and Economic Development District

The LAI is not calculated annually, and the most recent data was published in 2012, and was based on Census data from 2008-2012. At that time, an average four person household with two commuters in the Pioneer Valley spent about 52% of the household's income on housing and transportation costs.

New data is expected to be released in the first half of 2016.

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Location Affordability Index

Affordable Housing

Economic competitiveness of a region depends on workers of all income levels to being able to find reasonably affordable housing that will meet the needs of their households. The state's Comprehensive Permit Law, alternatively called "Chapter 40B" was adopted in 1969 to address racial and economic segregation, shortage of decent housing, inner city poverty, and exclusionary zoning practices in the suburban and rural communities. It compels communities to have at least 10 percent of all housing set aside as affordable housing that is protected by long-term affordability restrictions. Communities below 10 percent must allow a streamlined process for proposed housing developments on the condition that 25 percent or more of the proposed units are reserved for low or moderate income households. This indicator measures the percent of all housing units in a community that are designated as subsidized housing units. Not included in this indicator is housing that is affordable, but does not have established long-term affordability restrictions attached to the property.

In 2013, there were eight communities in the Pioneer Valley that met this requirement, including many of the larger municipalities. One year later, in 2014, there were nine communities, for an annual increase of 13 percent.

Source: MA Department of Housing and Community Development, Subsidized Housing Inventory

Trend	Rating
+12.5%	

Home Ownership

Home ownership is a significant indicator of economic security, because the primary financial investment for the vast majority of people in this country is their homes. Home ownership also strengthens communities by building a strong connection between people and the place they live. However, the downside of a high owner-occupancy rate is that rental options for young, old, or transitional populations are limited. A lack of rental options, often supported by local zoning regulations, can also help to perpetuate socio-economic segregation throughout the region. Home ownership is expressed as the percent of all housing units that are occupied by the property's owner. This indicator measures the percentage of housing units (including condominiums, apartments, houses, and mobile homes) that are occupied by the owner, as opposed to a renter. The recent recession affected the real estate market nationally, and locally as well. The American Community Survey collects and analyzes this data, and provides estimates on an annual basis.

The percent of owner-occupied housing units in the Pioneer Valley dropped from 63.5% in 2013 to 61.1% in 2014. This declining trend was consistent across Hampden and Hampshire counties with Hampshire County decreasing the most significantly (7.8%). Franklin County remained stable, decreasing less than 1 percent.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year-Estimates

Trend	Rating
-3.8%	

Combined Sewer Overflows

Ordinarily, storm water is sent to a wastewater treatment plant before it is emptied to a river. However, during high rainfall events, treatment plants may not be able to process all wastewater. Combined sewer overflows (CSOs) were built as a way to deal with this excess wastewater, essentially bypassing the treatment plant. The Massachusetts DEP is working to reduce the amount of active CSOs across the state, in an effort to reduce water pollution. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental - Western Region maintains a list of active CSOs within the region. Between 2012 and 2014, the number of CSOs draining to the Connecticut River or its tributaries fell from 66 to 62, for an average annual decrease of 3% per year. All four CSOs that were removed were located in the City of Chicopee. All remaining CSOs within the region are located in Hampden County.

Trend	Rating
-3.0%	

Source: MA Department of Environmental Protection

Goal #4: Conduct Economic Development Activities in a Regionally Responsible Manner, Prioritizing Collaboration and Engagement

Income Inequality

In addition to measuring how the average person or family is doing economically in the region or how many households are in a state of crisis, it is beneficial to measure the overall level of economic equality or inequality between the people throughout the region. A community with lower levels of economic inequality is more likely to have economic and social stability at a community-wide level. Income inequality is a good way to provide a snapshot of how income is distributed throughout a particular study area. A way to measure the equality of a region is by using the Gini Coefficient. The Gini is a measure of how income is or is not equally distributed through a particular area. The Gini is measured on a scale of 0 to 1, where 0 is complete equality and 1 is complete inequality.

County	Trend	Rating
Hampden County	-0.7%	
Hampshire County	+5.4%	
Franklin County	+0.8%	

This particular indicator does not allow calculating income inequality across the entire Pioneer Valley in a reliable way, but rates are available for within each county area.

Within the Pioneer Valley, income inequality is growing in Hampshire County, but remaining fairly steady Hampden County and Franklin County. Between 2013 and 2014, income inequality grew 5.4% across Hampshire County. In Hampden County, income inequality is greatest, but becoming more equal. Franklin County is seeing a slight increase in income inequality between 2013 and 2014.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year-Estimates

State Funding - Non-School Local Aid

Local aid provided by the Commonwealth to municipalities is a significant source of budget revenue. While much of this aid provides funding for the local school system, it also funds veterans benefits, public libraries and general aid. Municipalities track their funding on 'Cherry Sheets' which are maintained by the MA Department of Revenue.

Trend	Rating
+4.4%	

❖ Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and Economic Development District

Total non-school local aid increased 4.4% in the Pioneer Valley between FY2015-FY2016. Increases occurred across all three counties in the region and Hampshire and Franklin counties saw increases of 6.5% or more. Hampden County experienced a slightly more modest increase of 3.4 percent.

Source: MA Department of Revenue

Leadership Programs

A key strategy of the Plan for Progress is to ensure the development and mentorship of a new generation of collaborative, diverse, professional and civically engaged leaders who will ensure that the future of the Pioneer Valley continues to be bright. The region has a few specific programs designed for supporting this type of leadership.

This indicator measures the total number of graduates from all leadership programs within the region, including Leadership Pioneer Valley, Leadership Holyoke which is run by the Holyoke Chamber of Commerce, and Springfield Leadership Institute which is run by the Springfield Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with Western New England College of Business.

Leadership programs in the region have been stable between 2013 and 2014, graduating a total of 65 participants in both years.

Source: Leadership Pioneer Valley, Springfield Leadership Institute, Leadership Holyoke

Trend	Rating
0.0%	

Active Voters

Voter registration is one method to measure the level of citizen engagement in the political process and the civic concerns of their community. Low voter registration rates can be interpreted in many ways. Some argue that low voter registration rates reflect a citizenry’s lack of interest in the political process, a disconnection between citizen and government, and a sentiment that participation does not affect outcomes. Another interpretation of low voter registration argues that this trend reflects a citizenry that is satisfied with the status quo. Language and educational barriers also influence voter registration rates by inhibiting participation. Voter registration rates are, in some ways, a better indicator of civic participation than voter turnout rates because the former do not reflect as much year-to-year variation based on the issues or elections on the ballot. This indicator measures the number of total registered voters, divided by the total population over the age of 18 approximates the voter registration rate.

Between 2012 and 2014, the voter registration rate remained stable, decreasing slightly to 82.7% in 2014. While Hampshire and Franklin counties actually saw slight decreases in registration rates (-2 and -1% annual changes respectively), the proportion of adults 18+ who were registered to vote in Hampden county increased just slightly by 0.3 percent.

Source: Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth, Elections Division, U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year-Estimates

Trend	Rating
-0.4%	

APPENDIX A:
PLAN FOR PROGRESS COORDINATING COUNCIL
MEMBERSHIP

May 2016

Kathleen Anderson, *President, Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce*
Suzanne Beck, *Executive Director, Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce*
Ellen Bemben, *President, T2 Foundation*
Debra Boronski, *Western MA Regional Director, Massachusetts Office of Business Development*
Timothy Brennan, *Executive Director, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission*
Patricia Crosby, *Executive Director, Franklin/Hampshire Regional Employment Board*
Dianne Fuller Doherty, *Regional Director, Massachusetts Small Business Development Center*
Kathleen Dowd, *Director, Human Service Forum, Inc.*
Linda Dunlavy, *Executive Director, Franklin Regional Council of Governments*
Jonathan Edwards, *Director of Strategic Partnerships, Tech Foundry*
Martha Field, Ph.D., *Professor, Economics & Business, Greenfield Community College*
Brooks Fitch, *Consultant*
Thom Fox, *Business Management Consultant, Thom Fox Business Advisory Services*
John Gallup
Nicole Griffin, *President and CEO, Griffin Staffing Network*
Richard Griffin, Jr., *Senior Project Manager, Springfield Office of Planning and Economic Development*
Jeffrey Hayden, *Vice President, Business and Community Services, Holyoke Community College*
Daniel Hodge, *Principal, Hodge Economic Consulting*
Samalid Hogan, *Principal, NC&S Consulting; Project Manager, Holyoke Innovation District; Founder, CoWork Springfield*
David Howland, *Regional Engineer, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection*
Geoff Little, *Senior Account Representative, Training and Workforce Options (TWO)*
Larry Martin, *Business Services and Projects Manager, Regional Employment Board of Hampden County*
Terence Masterson, *Economic Development Director, City of Northampton*
Laura Masulis, *Transformative Development Fellow, MassDevelopment*
Kevin Maynard, *Attorney, Bulkley, Richardson and Gelinas and Chairman, Leadership Pioneer Valley*
William Messner, Ph.D., *President, Holyoke Community College*
Marikate Murren, *Director of Training and Workforce Development, MGM Springfield*
Ellen Parisi, *Principal, Parisi Management Group*
Russell Peotter, *General Manager, WGBY - 57*
Katherine Putnam, *Chief Strategy Officer, Tursus LLC and Mentor, MIT Venture Mentoring*
Robert Reckman, *Northampton Chamber of Commerce and Fairgrounds Redevelopment Corporation*
James Shriver, *Chairman, Chamber Energy Coalition, Inc.*
Christopher Sikes, *Chief Executive Officer, Common Capital*
Richard Sullivan, *President/CEO, Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts*
Michael Suzor, *Assistant to the President, Springfield Technical Community College*
Rebecca Townsend, *Chair, Dept. of Communications and Humanities, Manchester Community College*
Oreste Varela, *Springfield Branch Manager, U.S. Small Business Administration*
Mary Walachy, *Executive Director, Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation*
Kwame Webster, *Managing Director, Teach for America – Western Massachusetts*
Alison Werder, *President, MassLive*
Lora Wondolowski, *Executive Director, Leadership Pioneer Valley*
David Woods, *Principal, Woods Financial Group*
Katie Zobel, *President, Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts*

