



Impact of Your Local Workforce Investment Board

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It is becoming increasingly evident that new partnerships and strategic alliances forged among employers, educators, training providers and labor are the most effective ways to address the complex issues related to ever-changing workforce needs. These collaborations are even more critical as federal and state resources continue to dwindle.

Although this past fiscal year has been full of challenges, the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board, Inc. (BCREB) has responded and had a productive year. The mission of the BCREB is to provide leadership for workforce development in Berkshire County by facilitating the development of

and access to education, training and employment opportunities designed to meet the needs of the region's employers and diverse workforce. To highlight a few projects:

High Performing Workforce Board –one of six workforce boards to receive this designation

- Leveraged \$5.2 million through a mix of federal, state and private sector dollars to advance the workforce goals of the region
- Will receive \$100,000 towards developing innovative projects
- Engaged more than 70 employers and 1,500 individuals with training programs
- Active Board Membership and Committees

Training Dollars for Berkshire County - \$2 million to train 1,220

- Project HEALTH – Workforce

Competitiveness Trust Fund Grant of \$500K to train 132 people from Berkshire Health Systems, Northern Berkshire Health Systems, Berkshire Healthcare Systems and Northern Berkshire Community Services (LPN/Technician training, workplace readiness, career pathway and outreach activities)

• Workforce Training Fund Grants - \$361,000 to train 210 people in 3 companies. Berkshire County receives about 2.3% of resources with a population of 1.9%.

• Green Technologies – Northern Tier project \$800K to train 125 people in green jobs.

• Pathways Out of Poverty Grant - \$280K through Berkshire Community College to develop Green Jobs Career Pathways

Connecting People to Jobs/Training - \$3 million to serve 5,000 people

• Berkshire Works –served 4,778 customers and 409 employers. Approximately 450 customers served weekly.

• Job fairs attracted more than 750 job seekers and 65 employers.

• Adult Basic Education – served 375 customers through Pittsfield Adult Learning Center, South Berkshire Educational Collaborative and Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

Helping Youth Succeed - \$200K to serve 2,170 youth

- Connecting Activities – 425 internships, 12 high schools, 65% of seniors participate
- Job Shadowing – 1,250 students
- STEM internships – 65 youth
- Career Ladder programs – 350 youth

- Project Reconnect – Berkshire Community Action Council connected 100 youth to education and employment options. Established partnership to reduce the dropout rate.
- Summer Youth Works - \$45K program for 30 at-risk youth
- Teacher Externships – 25 educators developed curriculum and provided mentorships

Gathering Labor Market Information

- Conducted a needs assessment for Berkshire employers. Applied for 6 grants, received 3 to date, generating more than \$250,000 for the region
- Conducted an impact study on the importance of non-profit organizations in the region
- Stronger connection to Chambers of Commerce, Berkshire Compact, Berkshire Economic Development Corporation, Berkshire Creative, Berkshire Visitor's Bureau, Berkshire Blueprint, labor, and higher education.
- Overall funding for the workforce system in the region was decreased by 19%, despite receiving America Recovery and Reinvestment Act resources.

And the list goes on and on. It is the commitment from the 32 Board Members and 3 employees to workforce development that has allowed our Board to be recognized as one that is proactively addressing important issues of economic development, training, and school-to-work connections. Our ingenuity, work ethic and spirit of cooperation are the keys to moving our citizens into the 21st century. ■

Impact of Immigrant Entrepreneurs in the Leisure/Hospitality Study Conducted

The BCREB, together with the Berkshire Immigrant Center and Immigrant Learning Center, unveiled a report in June which identifies the vital and substantial presence of immigrant entrepreneurs and workers in leisure and hospitality businesses in Massachusetts. The report can be downloaded from the www.BCREB.com website. Below are some statistics that Berkshire Immigrant Center's Director Hilary Green highlighted.



Immigrant Entrepreneurs Panelists and Speakers Impact Study



Key Statistics for Berkshire County

- Approximately 12,000 immigrants residing in Berkshire County
- Leisure and Hospitality is the third largest sector in Berkshire County at 15% of employment.
- 25% of hospitality workers are immigrants (2,500)
- 41% of storefront businesses on North Street in Pittsfield are owned by immigrant entrepreneurs
- Of 66 hotels, 16 owned by immigrant entrepreneurs (13 by Indian, Indian/American families)
- Seasonal labor shortages are often filled with immigrant workers ■

Berkshire County Youth ages 14-24 Do You Need a Job This Summer? Go to the Youth Virtual Job Fair

The region's one-stop career center - Berkshire Works assists young job seekers and has been hosting job fairs and workshops to help youth create a resume, know workplace basics, and how to make a good impression at a job interview. Visit www.BerkshireWorks.org/servicesFY for links to "youth-friendly" employers and get some tips on how to land that job! Berkshire Works has also has a list of job opportunities for adults. www.berkshireworks.org has great employment information and their blog www.IwantAjobNow.org has great pointers for the job seeker on how to be prepared at the worksite. ■