

The Pioneer Valley



**PLAN FOR
PROGRESS**



2015 – 2025

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Plan for Progress

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Building on Success: Economic Strategies for the Region
2015

Prepared by:

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

60 Congress Street, Floor 1
Springfield, MA 01104-3419

www.pvpc.org

The Plan for Progress is made possible in part by a grant from the
U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration

Acknowledgements

Plan for Progress Coordinating Council

Kathleen Anderson

President, Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce

Teri Anderson

Consultant

Suzanne Beck

Executive Director, Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce

Ellen Bembien

President, T2 Foundation

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

Martha Field, Ph.D.

*Dean of Institutional Support & Advancement,
Greenfield Community College*

Brooks Fitch

Consultant

John Gallup

Wanda Givens

Director, Mason Square Health Task Force

Nicole Griffin

President, Griffin Staffing Network

Jeffrey Hayden

*Vice President, Business and Community Services,
Holyoke Community College*

Daniel Hodge

Director of Economic and Public Policy Research, UMass Donahue Institute

Samalid Hogan

*Senior Project Manager and Brownfields Coordinator,
Office of Planning & Economic Development, City of 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

William Messner, Ph.D.

President, Holyoke Community College

Marla Michel

*Executive Director, Economic Development Strategies & Regional Partnerships,
UMass/Amherst and Director, Business Growth Center at Springfield Technology
Park*

Marikate Murren

Director of Training and Workforce Development, MGM Springfield

Russell Peotter

General Manager, WGBY - 57

Katherine Putnam

President, Package Machinery Company, Inc.

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

Oreste Varela

Springfield Branch Manager, U.S. Small Business Administration

Michael Vedovelli

Senior Regional Director, Massachusetts Office of Business Development

Mary Walachy

Executive Director, Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation

Lora Wondolowski

Executive Director, Leadership Pioneer Valley

David Woods

Principal, Woods Financial Group

Katie Zobel

President, Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Staff

Timothy W. Brennan

Executive Director

Lori Tanner

Senior Economic Development/Policy Analyst

Todd Zukowski

GIS/Cartographic Section Manager

Ray Centeno

Graphic/Web Designer

Photos courtesy of:

Ed Cohen

Valley Venture Mentors

Todd Zukowski

A Ten-Year Update of the Plan for Progress



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

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

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

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

They can be found at www.stateofthepioneervalley.com.

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

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

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



Four Plan for Progress Goals

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

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



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



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



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





Talent Pipeline is Primary Focus

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

New Decade Declarations

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

**10
YEAR**

The Region's Key Opportunities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





The Region's Key Challenges

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

1) Talent Pool and Pipeline Challenges

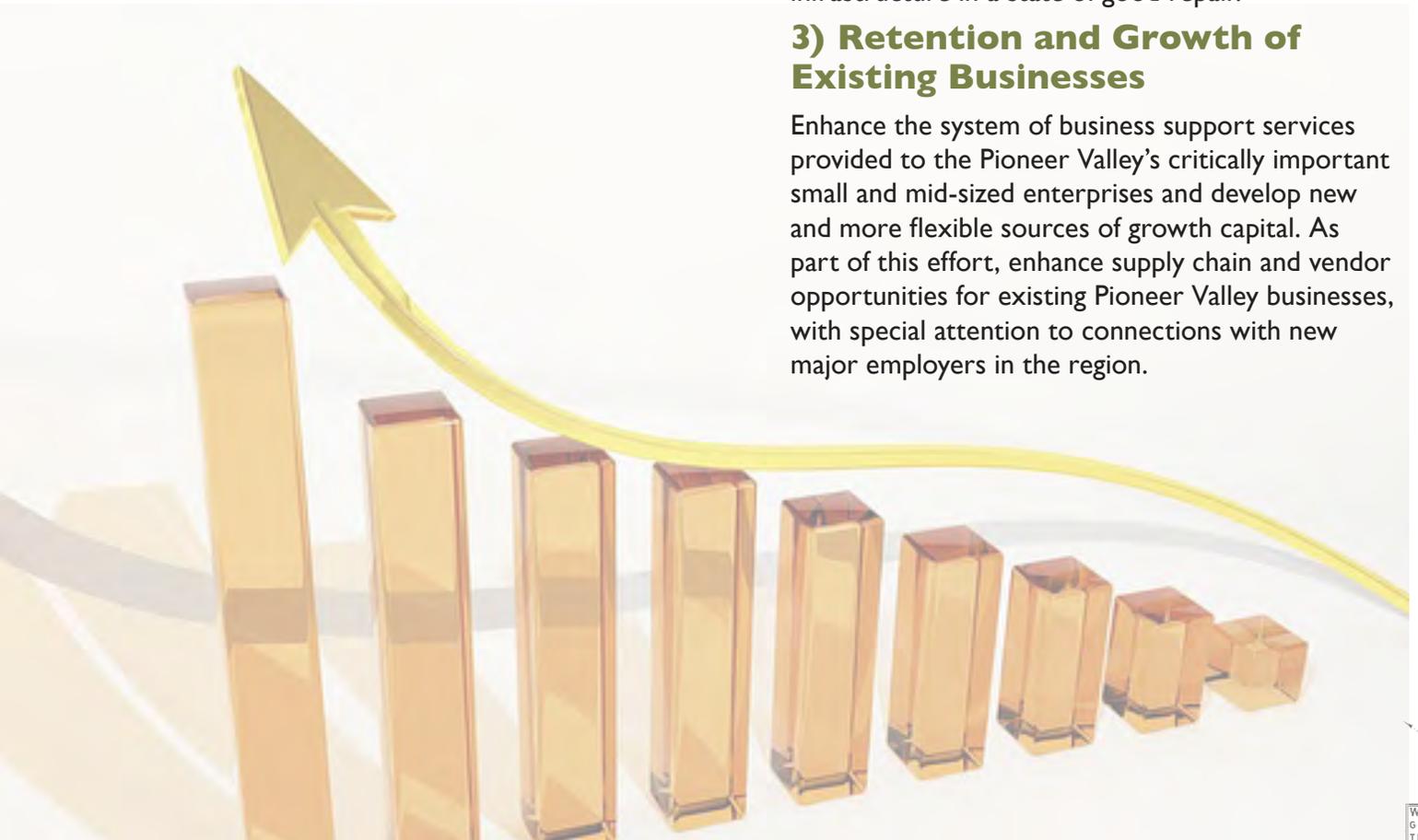
Identify and implement actions that both retain and expand the Pioneer Valley's supply of educated, skilled workers by a target of +6% or the equivalent of 25,000 workers. Critical to this effort is the improvement of educational outcomes and graduation rates in the region's public school systems, particularly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

2) Fragile Infrastructure Systems

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

3) Retention and Growth of Existing Businesses

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



Implementation of the Plan for Progress

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



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

To view the full Plan for Progress document, please go to www.pvpc.org/plans/plan-for-progress.





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