



Vision Statement

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

Plan for Progress Goals

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

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

Goal #1:

Develop and Maintain a Globally Competitive and Regionally Engaged Talent Pool

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

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



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

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

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

Action Steps:

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

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

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

Action Steps:

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



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

Action Steps:

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

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

Action Steps:

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

Strategy #5: Enhance Career and Workforce Training

Action Steps:

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

Implementation Team for Goal #1:

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

