

**Report to the 189th General Court
Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

Metro North One-Stop Career Centers



Metro North Regional Employment Board

**Submitted by the Metro North Regional Employment Board
125 CambridgePark Drive
Cambridge, MA 02140
www.mnreb.org**

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The **Metro North Regional Employment Board (REB)** charters two career centers, both operated by Middlesex Community College, to serve the 20-community Metro North region:

- ◆ **Career Source, Cambridge and Chelsea (satellite)**
- ◆ **The Career Place, Woburn**

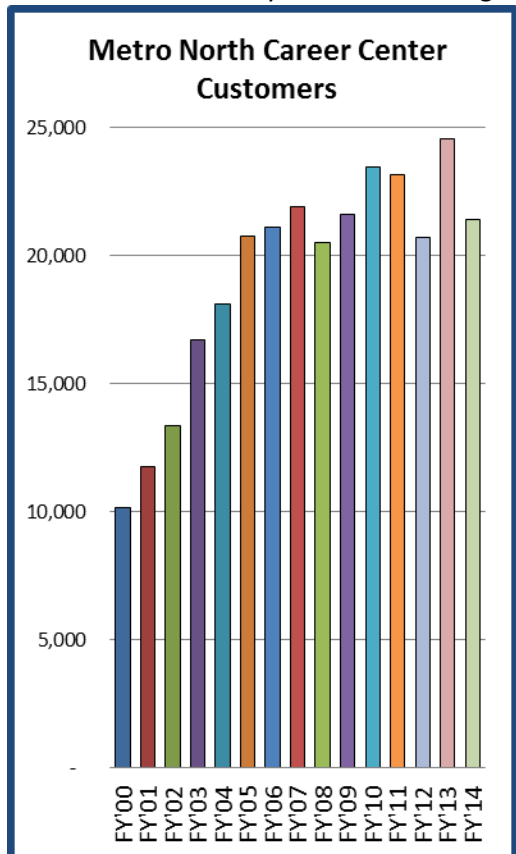
Since their inception, the Metro North career centers have served over 231,600 job seekers, placing an average of close to 10,000 in jobs per year. The current average wage is \$25.22. Our centers are currently serving about 1,000 employer customers per year, listing thousands of job postings, and providing a variety of other employer services, such as job fairs and on-site recruitment.

The Metro North career centers have been recognized for their outstanding performance. In FY'14, the centers had the second highest volume of customer visits (105,623) compared to other regions statewide, the highest number of job placements, the second highest average wage, and the second highest number of individual customers served (21,399). During the last twelve years, the REB has conducted extensive customer satisfaction surveys, with an average of 81% of sampled job seeker customers rating the quality of services as "good" or "excellent." Similarly, over 81% of sampled employer customers rated services as "good" or "excellent."

The Current Economy and Career Center Demographics

The Metro North region has the second largest labor force in Massachusetts, with 435,703 workers; as of December 2014, 16,030 of them were without jobs, a decrease (-6,277) compared to a year ago, and reflecting a return to a low unemployment rate (3.7%, compared to a statewide rate of 4.8%). For the second quarter of 2014, the Metro North industry sectors showing the highest employment were:

Career Center Customers Served in FY'14	
Arlington	764
Belmont	346
Burlington	585
Cambridge	1,320
Chelsea	1,178
Everett	771
Malden	1,078
Medford	935
Melrose	454
North Reading	256
Reading	487
Revere	794
Somerville	1,317
Stoneham	562
Wakefield	521
Watertown	482
Wilmington	483
Winchester	346
Winthrop	162
Woburn	1,417
Metro North	14,258
Non-Residents	7,141
Total	21,399



Education and Health Services (104,461), Professional and Business Services (88,185), Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (68,859), Leisure and Hospitality (35,151), and Manufacturing (23,256). Industries showing growth compared to the same quarter in the prior year include Professional and Technical Services (+2.2%) and Healthcare and Social Assistance (+2.2%), while Manufacturing experienced a decline (-2.1%). As of May 2013, Metro North employment was highest in the following occupations: Office and Admin Support (62,820), Management (35,960), Sales (35,270), Healthcare Practitioners/Technical (28,640), Food Prep/Serving (28,260), and Computer/Math (28,100).

With 50 staff (55 including co-located staff from partner organizations) and a regional budget of \$4.2M, the Metro North One-Stop Career Centers are designed to meet the needs of the full spectrum of workers, from professionals to low-income customers and welfare recipients seeking entry-level positions. Through the provision of a broad menu of workshop services and individualized assistance, customers are provided with job search, training, and job placement services.

The Metro North One-Stops are proactive in working with individuals who have been laid off from area companies. Last year the region was awarded a \$671k National Emergency Grant to support training and job placement for former employees of six companies that had experienced large layoffs.

"For many years I've relied on Career Source to post my weekly "Open Jobs." I've hired a dozen or so Career Source applicants that I was able to meet and prescreen at job fairs. Career Source has been a great tool for me."

--Human Resources, Charles Hotel

"I would like to thank your entire staff for their dedication and professional service that was very informative and educational. I attended many of your workshops and seminars--they helped me believe in myself and regain the confidence I needed to start a new career."

--HG, Watertown resident

"This job fair is one of the best organized and controlled fairs that I have participated in....great number of candidates."

--Employer at Career Source Job Fair, October 2014

"I am writing to thank you for the guidance you provided in your resume and cover letter class. Thank you so much for leading your class in such an engaging manner, and for all of the materials you provided. I have no doubt that you helped me land my new job!"

--AD, now attorney in a medical setting

"Staff is always attentive to our needs – exceptional!"

--Employer at Career Source Job Fair, October 2014

"Thanks to everyone at Career Source for your help during my job-seeking months. You were tremendously respectful, supportive and helpful. I've spoken highly of your organization to many people and wish you continued success."

--EC, now VP Integrated Media, major area retailer

"At the risk of redundancy, I will say it again: Thank you. The Job Search Support Group experience has been invaluable. You did a sterling job of managing the group, providing us with very helpful information and insights, much of which for me, were new."

--JL, Winchester resident

As shown on the previous page, between FY'00 and FY'13, the number of career center customers rose from about 10,000 to almost 25,000 (250% of FY'00 levels), followed by a drop to 21,400 in FY'14 as the economy improved. Since FY'10, despite continued high demand for services, overall career center staffing has declined by almost 24 positions.

On any given week, the two Metro North career centers serve an average of 1000 customers, many of whom visit multiple times. Every year, the career centers assist dislocated workers and low-income adults by assessing their skills and interests, helping them conduct labor market analyses, and evaluating their career options in order to determine whether career training would make them more marketable in the current economy. In FY'14, career center staff provided case management services to 501 dislocated workers and 365 low-income adults who received occupational skills training, short-term skills development, and/or intensive job placement assistance through funding provided by the **Workforce Investment Act (WIA)**. However, WIA enrollees (even with WIA Youth added in) represent only about 5% of all customers making use of the centers.

The Career Place offers about six job fairs per year, with in-house fairs regularly drawing over 200 customers, and off-site fairs drawing 300 to 400 participants. Career Source operates three large job fairs per year, each with hundreds of attendees, and also sponsors popular weekly Employer Forums which bring employers together with 20 to 30 customers to talk about industry trends and to match qualified customers with available job openings. Of customers exiting from career center services in 2013 (the most recent calendar year where employment status can be determined using employer wage match data), 12,967 customers of Metro North career centers entered employment (please see chart at right for a breakdown by community).

The Metro North centers daily meet the challenge of serving a diverse customer population that ranges widely in education, age, and skill levels. While 37% of those served have only a high school diploma or

Job Placements by City of Residence for Career Center Customers Who Exited During Calendar Year 2013		
	Jobs	Customers
Arlington	520	716
Belmont	218	319
Burlington	346	476
Cambridge	831	1,160
Chelsea	628	825
Everett	493	670
Malden	558	780
Medford	630	840
Melrose	301	421
North Reading	186	260
Reading	298	415
Revere	447	624
Somerville	757	1,049
Stoneham	334	463
Wakefield	293	417
Watertown	308	426
Wilmington	283	381
Winchester	195	284
Winthrop	91	137
Woburn	765	1,011
Metro North	8,482	11,674
Outside Region	4,082	5,611
Total	12,967	17,904

less, another 41% have a college or post-graduate degree. Nineteen percent (19%) are primarily speakers of languages other than English, and 33% are black/African-American, Latino, Asian, or representatives of other non-white racial/ethnic groups. Customers represent a full range of ages: 27% are under age 35, while 30% are ages 55 and over.

Services to Veterans

In FY'14, the Metro North region served 1,106 veterans, the second highest number in the state. Specialized veterans staff at each career center work individually with veterans to ensure they benefit from the full range of center services as well as connecting them directly to employment opportunities. In "Hire-a-Veteran Month" (November), each career center sponsors special events to promote the reintegration of veterans into the workforce. For the second year in a row, Career Source received an award based on their achievements in serving veterans.

Services to Youth

For FY'15, the Metro North REB approved a change to our service delivery model on a pilot basis; specifically, it was decided that The Career Place, which had established relationships with many youth service providers in the region, would provide all career center-related youth services in the region, while Career Source would concentrate on serving additional WIA Adults and Dislocated Workers. Following is an outline of youth services provided by The Career Place at locations throughout the region.

The Career Place operates the **School to Career Connecting Activities** program, connecting youth in area high schools to internships, while targeting opportunities in priority industries. Over the years, career center staff have partnered with area schools to connect up to 300 youth each year to jobs. With resources declining since FY'09, service levels have fallen, with 135 youth served in FY'14; 63, or 47%, were placed in internships in priority industries (described below). Youth staff are currently working with students in the following communities: Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Revere, Somerville, and Woburn, in many cases exposing them to their very first employment experience. Research by the Northeastern Center for Labor Market Studies and Drexel University shows that youth connected to jobs early in life are more likely to achieve later academic and career success.

Under what we call the **"WIA Transition Services Program,"** The Career Place staff visit community-based and other local organizations to conduct outreach to high school dropouts and other disconnected youth to encourage them to return to school, attend alternative WIA programs, and/or to assist them with their job search. In FY'14, this outreach program served about 360 youth in the region.

Under **WIA Youth** programming, career center youth staff provide career exploration and employment readiness workshops and case management services to 166 in-school and out-of-school youth enrolled in 12 programs each year. Many youth enrolled in these programs are high school dropouts (52%), and most lack basic skills (64%), and/or have a disability (42%). Seventy-five percent (75%) of WIA Youth funds are dedicated to serving out-of-school youth, to assist them in attaining a high school equivalency credential, exploring career options, and pursuing further education opportunities. The Career Place has also pursued funding from other sources, e.g., **Mass Grad** and the **Working Cities Challenge** in order to expand youth services offerings.

"The Career Place provided me with much needed guidance during my unemployment. Staff quickly assessed my needs and put me in touch with the WorkSmart Program which was a game changer for me. I greatly appreciate your help, and the programs offered by The Career Place."

--KM, now Education Administrator, local home health care agency

"In reference to our hiring needs and your On-The-Job Training Program, I can't say enough good about the high quality service and professionalism that we have received from you and The Career Place! Thank you for making the process easy and painless!"

--GM, Schwartz & Schwartz, PC, Woburn

"You plan phenomenal programs at The Career Place. The SBA's "Starting Your Own Business" presentation was life-changing for me. I now have an infinite amount of realistic business options to follow. Thank you for all you do."

--Job Seeker, The Career Place

"When we started looking to hire employees over the past few months, I never thought things would go as great as they have with [your] help. We have hired two people through The Career Place and they have turned out great so far. If we need to hire any more employees, you will be my first and last call."

--KCM, Rohtstein Corporation, Woburn

"The Career Place did an outstanding job with assisting us fill a position in our regional office. We were extremely impressed with the candidates they provided and their responsiveness was second to none."

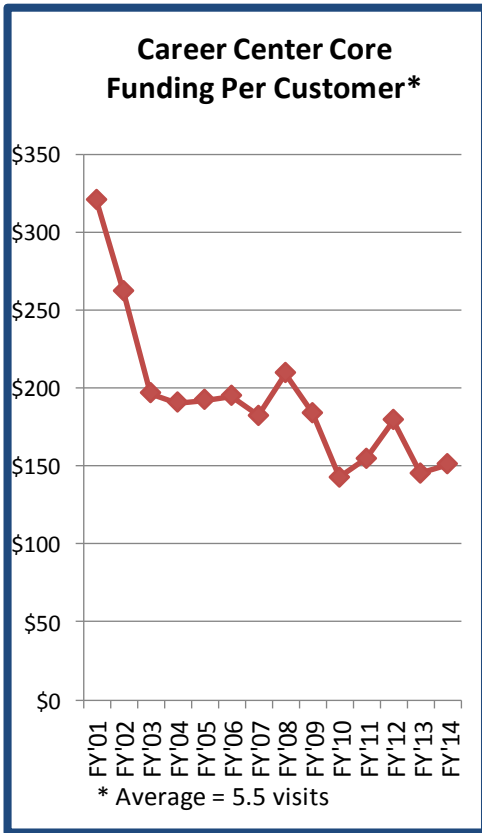
-- CVS Health, Needham, MA

"Thank you for giving me the time, effort, and chance to shine that I will never forget. Thank you for giving me the chance to do just that. I got a job I love."

--Former Job Seeker, The Career Place

The Metro North REB also supports **YouthWorks** programs in six communities: Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Revere, and Somerville. In 2014, 745 youth were placed in summer jobs in Metro North; in five of these communities, an additional 64 students are currently participating in a year-round YouthWorks program, which offers subsidized work experience, and with career centers providing work readiness preparation.

The **Metro North Youth Council** meets bimonthly to coordinate these regional youth activities and to support career exploration events, such as Construction Career Day.



Resources per Customer

Core state and federal funding (including One-Stop Career Center State Line Item funds) for the Metro North centers is at an all-time low when compared with funding for every year since FY'01, while customer volume currently stands at 182% of FY'01 levels. This translates to a startling decline in core funding from about \$320 per customer to \$151 in FY'14, with these funds supporting an average of 5.5 visits per customer. The REB and career centers have pursued additional funding through aggressive grant development and entrepreneurial strategies in order to supplement core funding and enhance their capacity to meet the needs of the 21,000+ customers and 1,000 employers using the Metro North centers each year. For example, in June 2012, the Metro North Regional Employment Board was awarded a \$3M US Department of Labor **Workforce Innovation Fund Grant** to support the **CONNECT** project in Chelsea, a partnership of six organizations geared towards assisting families in achieving economic self-sufficiency. As one of the key partners, Career Source is receiving \$175k per year over a three-year period (ending this June) in order to provide career and job development services to job seekers and training seekers, as well as serving surrounding employers seeking new employees or professional development assistance for incumbent workers. Early results are showing that this innovative model, which co-locates financial literacy/tax assistance, benefits counseling, banking, ESOL, community college, housing, and career center services in one location, has a significant impact on family self-sufficiency.

In recent months, the REB and career centers have worked together on development activities, with grant awards for the **Future City** competition (introducing middle-school youth to engineering through building model cities), **AMP It Up** (exposing youth to careers in advanced manufacturing), **Healthcare Planning and Training Implementation** (working with hospitals/healthcare organizations to develop training related to healthcare reform), and training and placing people with disabilities (led by Triangle). Metro North incorporated the latter model into a successful state-led **Disability Employment Initiative** grant, with the Metro North REB as the local operator. Working with Bunker Hill Community College and other local providers, Metro North will train 100 people in culinary arts, CNA/HHA, and other allied health occupations, with Metro North Career Centers and Triangle providing case management and support services.

Regional Strategy

The Metro North REB FY'13-FY'16 Strategic Plan focuses on creating industry consortia, comprised of companies, community colleges, vocational technical schools, other education/training providers, and career centers, in four priority industries: Healthcare, Advanced Manufacturing, Life Sciences, and Information Technology. The industry consortia are focusing on the development of career pathways, aligning training to business needs, responding as a partnership to grant opportunities that will support new and/or incumbent worker training (e.g., **Workforce Training Fund**), and also act as a resource for labor market data, industry trends, and best practices. To date, the REB convenes the **Metro North Healthcare Partnership**, which focuses on the alignment of curricula with employer needs and the development of career pathways. In November 2013, the Governor's STEM Council designated the REB as the lead of the **Metro North**

STEM Network, which was built upon the existing **Metro North STEM Partnership**. Today the Metro North STEM Network is a strategic alliance between education, business, and workforce development in 18 communities to promote STEM careers and regional STEM activities (see “Upcoming Events” below) in alignment with the MA STEM Plan 2.0.

The **Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC)**, a consortium of four workforce regions, three community colleges, seven career centers, multiple vocational technical schools, and over 20 manufacturers, recently was awarded funding to continue training in machining and electronics technician occupations. Originally funded to train 72 participants through the **Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund** grant, NAMC was recently awarded funding to extend this training to an additional 72 participants through a combination of the **Advanced Manufacturing Pipeline Fund** and a federal **Job-Driven National Emergency Grant**; unfortunately, the Pipeline funds (\$415k) were zeroed out due to the Governor’s 9C Cuts. NAMC is exploring multiple approaches to restoring this important funding. Career centers are key players in this design--recruiting, case-managing, and placing graduates in jobs. In late FY’14, the Metro North REB, on behalf of the four NAMC regions, was also awarded a two-year grant to support two **Manufacturing Marketing Managers** who visit Northeastern MA manufacturers, link them to NAMC and assist them in accessing resources to support their workforce and other needs.

Outlook for the Future

Since career centers are primarily supported with federal and state funds, we are very concerned about the impact of continued funding reductions on our career center capacity. In FY’14, due in part to federal sequestration, the career centers lost about \$378k in core funding, even after an infusion of funds diverted from other uses to compensate. The impact of sequestration was moderated somewhat by the addition of reemployment funds designated for the long-term unemployed; however, these funds were lost mid-year, when Congress chose not to extend emergency unemployment benefits. In FY’15, the decline in core funding continues. Since FY’08, the Metro North Career Centers have lost more than \$1.2M in core funding, and have had to compensate through vigorous resource development activities.

Continued investment in the One-Stop Career Centers is critical as centers continue to work with large volumes of people in need to return them to the workforce. Career centers are valued by Metro North residents and businesses, and have earned a reputation for quality services that make a difference in people’s lives. The return on investment, in terms of dollars reinvested in the economy by people going back to work compared to dollars invested in career center operations, is high—we estimate this to be in excess of 14:1. One-Stop Career Centers need continued support so they can help the men and women of the Commonwealth return to work and, in turn, support their communities and strengthen our still somewhat fragile economy.

Upcoming Events

March 10, 4:00 - 6:00 PM, The Career Place, Woburn, is offering a Tuesday Networking Event, featuring a speaker on the topic: “How to use the Boston Business Journal in Your Job Search.”

March 18, 9:00 - 11:00 AM, Career Source, Cambridge, is offering a Workforce Training Fund Information Session for Massachusetts businesses.

April 16, 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM, Career Source, Cambridge, is sponsoring a multi-industry job fair at the Holiday Inn, 30 Washington Street, Somerville. Veterans receive priority access from 11:00 AM – 11:30 AM.

April 23, 12:00 Noon - 3:00 PM, the Metro North REB, in collaboration with the Cambridge Science Festival, is sponsoring a Metro North STEM Network Event at the Microsoft New England Research and Development Center, One Memorial Drive, Cambridge.

For further information, please contact Linda Bass, Executive Director, Metro North Regional Employment Board, 617-864-1570, lbass@mnreb.org. Please also visit our website at www.mnreb.org.