

# Massachusetts Jobs and Workforce Summit Report

Strategies to Grow Jobs and Increase the Skills of the Workforce in the Commonwealth

On June 22, 2010, more than 300 attendees gathered for the Massachusetts Jobs and Workforce Summit to discuss the current state of employment and skills in the Commonwealth. Cosponsored by [Massachusetts Workforce Board Association](#), [The Workforce Solutions Group](#), [Massachusetts AFL-CIO](#), [Massachusetts Business Roundtable](#), [Center for Labor Market Studies](#), [Massachusetts Workforce Professionals Association](#), [Massachusetts Communities Action Network](#), [Crittenton Women's Union](#), and [SkillWorks](#) – with financial support from [Verizon](#), [Eastern Bank](#) and the [US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration](#) – attendees represented employers, labor organizations, educators, workforce professionals and state and federal leaders.

The goal of the Summit was to improve collaborative efforts as we all strive to answer the question that has plagued the state since this nationwide recession began: How do we create more jobs for those in need of work?

Those assembled agreed that there is not an easy solution or a quick fix—but rather we must work together, one person, and one job at a time. The answer lies in our ability to define how we collaborate, and the Summit provided the environment to reflect on the past, promote strategies to continue our progress, and propose actions to achieve even better results. Clearly no new jobs were created on the spot, nor did unemployment lines instantly evaporate, but the lively discussions brought to bear by the dozens of powerful Massachusetts leaders who attended, drove multiple plans of action.

The issues surrounding the workforce in Massachusetts require immediate attention -- and the Summit generated several plans of action to improve the current conditions. These proposals can be consolidated into four main areas:

- 1.) Investment in the Community
- 2.) Education and Training
- 3.) Public and Private Sector Partnerships
- 4.) National Attention

Or in other words: who to help, what they need, how to utilize the available resources, and how to achieve long-term success.



“The opportunities of a crisis [are] thinking in fresh ways about what we do and how we do,” said Governor Deval Patrick, pictured here with Bill Tinti, Chairman of Massachusetts Workforce Board Association and partner of Tinti, Quinn, Grover & Frey, PC. “We need to be all about continuous improvement.”)

Even to those currently employed in Massachusetts, joblessness is never far removed. Bill Tinti, Chairman of the Massachusetts Workforce Board Association, began the Summit by posing this simple question: “How many of you have lost a job or know someone who has?” Nearly every one of the 300 attendees raised their hand.



(The overwhelming response to Bill Tinti’s question. This underscores the fact that unemployment affects most residents of the Commonwealth in one way or another.)

The impact was not lost on the crowd. Most Commonwealth citizens are affected by unemployment, either personally or by at least one degree of separation. And while Tinti pointed out that projections show that the state has begun a five-month upward trend in job creation, it is our job to continue pushing for employment opportunities and better training for those who have not yet benefited from the recent job hike. This increase is, as he said, “only a beginning to what

must be achieved.” (Click [here](#) to read the latest report from the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.)

### Investment in the Community

The key component of improving the current labor market conditions is the ability to foster leadership and cooperation in the local community. According to reports from the Center for Labor Market Studies, the number of people unemployed for six to twelve months is at a record high. They must work in their own communities by investing in the local workforce and ultimately rebuilding the local economies.



(Mayor Lisa Wong of Fitchburg spoke of her own experience seeing unemployment affect small towns through her family’s restaurant. She described how her local community came together to support its neighbors during hard economic times. She recommended that we help foster this sense of community in the state to help those hindered by the recession.)

Mayor Lisa Wong of Fitchburg reflected on the fact that massive increases in unemployment affects the small towns, the local economies, and the individual citizens as much as the nation as a whole. This needs to be recognized and taken on as the first step in tackling joblessness in the Commonwealth.

One element necessary to build strong communities is the participation of local youth in the labor market, and the topic was not lost on the speakers. “We need to support jobs for kids, teen employment in Massachusetts and across the nation is at a record low,” said Dr. Andy Sum of the Center for Labor Market Studies. “We need to petition the government [to pass] the [Youth Solutions Act](#).” Sum is not alone in acknowledging how important it is to provide the opportunity for younger citizens to become a part of the labor market in their community, to learn the basics of work and the skills necessary to compete in the workforce. As Dr. Gary Gottlieb, CEO of Partners HealthCare and Chairman of Boston PIC, stated, “opportunities within the youth community for a future sustainable workforce.” It is time to invest. (Click [here](#) to read Sum’s report “Vanishing Work Among U.S. Teens.”)

Congress has failed to act to continue youth job programs. As Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Joanne Goldstein pointed out, the summer jobs program needs more money to be able to get youth trained, and certified. They need, as she said, “a partner...to address the challenge of declining resources in the face of overwhelming demand.” And that level of support is as much a local responsibility as federal or state.

The idea of community also invokes the notion of the small local business. According to Governor Patrick, small businesses account for 85% of the state’s workforce. His administration has placed a focus on small businesses, helping them with issues such as taxes and lower health

insurance so that they can be better equipped to employ workers in their communities. The Governor believes that strategies for solving the unemployment crisis should begin with improving conditions for small, local businesses.



(Bill Tinti, Governor Patrick, Secretary Goldstein, and former Massachusetts Congressman Michael Harrington discuss the partnerships necessary to grow the economy.)

### Education and Training

To successfully help those looking for jobs - as well as businesses looking for skilled workers to fill open positions - the most effective solution is education and skills training for current and future employees. As Bob Haynes, President of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO said, it's about both the workers and the employers. Each needs support right now to grow jobs and to build a stronger and more productive workforce. This happens on two levels: in basic education and in career training.

“We need to align skills and knowledge with the needs of the labor market,” said Massachusetts Education Secretary Paul Reville during his closing remarks at the Summit. Secretary Reville – as well as many of the participants of the Summit – stressed that this goal can only be achieved through worker education and up-to-date training systems.

Community colleges play a key role in workforce development by providing the basic skills needed for a wide range of jobs in the state. But these programs too are underfunded.



(The Mobile Training Unit on display at the Summit. Innovative programs to revamp workforce performance such as a mobile training van allow for the field of job training to grow and aid more people. This specific unit features the resources to teach job skills to out of work residents, who upon completion of the program will be offered jobs by local affiliated employers. Click [here](#) to read more about the M.T.U.)

More attention must be paid to the services and opportunities that two year colleges can provide for workers. According to Dr. John Sbrega, President of Bristol Community College, there

is currently a waiting list for adults, just to get into the Adult Basic Education programs (A.B.E.). The college simply does not have the resources to provide this fundamental education course for the amount of people who need it. But with more funding, community colleges can train people for jobs, creating a more educated and skilled workforce.

Training, both for those looking for jobs and those currently employed, is essential if we are to remain competitive in this labor market.



(Dr. Andy Sum, Director of the Center for Labor Market Studies, presented his most recent analysis on joblessness in the Commonwealth. He highlighted the challenges of the “true labor market crisis” and proposed six strategies for improvement – employment in green technology fields, federal job creation support, year-round youth programs, additional job training, an overhaul of the current training programs, and a closer evaluation of the state’s job bank systems. Click [here](#) to view Sum’s presentation from the Summit.)

Many Massachusetts industry sectors are undergoing change, enhanced skills are constantly required, and new opportunities – such as alternative energy and the life sciences – demand new

sets of skills. As Don Anderson, Director of Workforce Central One-Stop Career Center said “our workforce needs to be adequately prepared to keep up with changes in the economy.” (Click [here](#) to view Anderson’s presentation from the Summit.)

This requires that Massachusetts’ key industries become closely associated with training organizations. Private sector companies benefit from a more educated and skilled workforce – and this is why training offers a high return on investment.

While discussing the nature of the current labor crisis, Dr. Sum highlighted the record jobless rates – not only for the unemployed, but for an increasing number of people unemployed for six to twelve months, or more. He advocated for direct training investment to counteract this trend:

“We need to identify all those individuals who have been out of work for six to twelve months and give them one-on-one support with job training and placement,” said Sum. To achieve this level of support, however, the organizations providing aid to the unemployed need more resources and support themselves. (Click [here](#) to read Sum’s report “Employment Developments in Massachusetts [...]”)

### **Public and Private Sector Partnerships**

**T**raining and education must be the result of partnerships between the public and private sectors. As Dr. Gottlieb said, private industry needs to step up when the public sector is strapped. It is, as he said, the “rent” that private industry pays to “live in this community.” This relationship cannot be overlooked, because without the collaboration between these sectors many workers will fall through the cracks. (Click [here](#) to view Gottlieb’s

presentation.) Harneen Chernow, Director of the 1199 Training and Upgrading Fund, added that employers and employees benefit by a commitment to worker training. (Click here to [view](#) Chernow’s presentation.)

To achieve this synergy, employers need to be more involved with the efforts of their employees to improve their skills. As Alan MacDonald, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, said, “Training is the key to career advancement and success in the workplace.” It becomes a responsibility of an employer to support their employees in this regard.



(Ron Painter, CEO of the National Association of Workforce Boards, Alan MacDonald, Executive Director of Massachusetts Business Roundtable, Dr. Gary Gottlieb, Chairman of Boston PIC and CEO of Partners HealthCare, Angelo Sabatalo, Corporate Director of Organizational Development at Nypro University, and Steven Tamasi, CEO of Boston Centerless, presented their ideas on Engaging Employers in the Workforce System.)

Angelo Sabatalo from Nypro University discussed the concept of “proactive training,” which consists of responding to changes in the workforce and offering help to both existing workers and new recruits. As Corporate Director of Organizational Development, Sabatalo said this tactic is employed under the idea that training is an investment, not an expense. Training programs at Nypro University are charged back to the departments at Nypro Inc. which benefit from them. It is a progressive vision of human resources in a large business setting. (Click [here](#) to view Sabatalo’s presentation.)

“Training new employees,” said Steven Tamasi of Boston Centerless, “is an investment in the success of the industry itself.” When the private company funnels efforts toward building its personal workforce, the effects and ideas are transmittable to other companies. As Dr. John Sbrega pointed out, the workforce needs the private sector to be as involved as the public sector. And by getting the individual companies involved in employee training as Sabatalo’s or Tamasi’s are, we have concrete examples of the private sector adding efforts to the public sector’s efforts – with marked success. (Click [here](#) to view Tamasi’s presentation, and [here](#) for Sbrega’s presentation.)

### **Initiating the National Dialogue on Job Creation**

**T**he first three challenges and opportunities to improve the workforce in the Commonwealth work on the local level - a short term solution. Yet the long term solution needs to be focused on bringing national attention to the state of the American labor market. As Ron Painter, CEO of the National Association of Workforce Boards, pointed out, there is a significant lack of national dialogue on workforce policy at the moment and this inability to

discuss the conditions as a country is one of our largest challenges. According to Painter, “if we can unite to talk about these problems than we as a nation can solve the problems.”

Yet while we can do much to help the private sector by creating training systems to give workers a leg up in our community, ultimately “support for job creation needs to occur at a federal level,” said Dr. Sum. The relationship between state and federal initiatives on workforce development needs to be strengthened for local efforts to succeed.

President of Massachusetts AFL-CIO Robert Haynes suggested a “National Call to Action” to promote collaboration and partnerships around the nation. “We have to be politically more focused on what needs to be done,” he said. This includes working with the United States Department of Labor to engage the nation and help local communities. And it involves getting people from different industries and in different locations to acknowledge the universality of joblessness.



(“Working at the national level, with the Department of Labor [we can] support workers in the Commonwealth,” said Robert Haynes, President of Massachusetts AFL-CIO, in his appeal for national reform of workforce development.)

Haynes’ call for a political strategy to address workforce development will be central in tackling issues of unemployment and joblessness. We can sustain communities, prepare individuals, and unite efforts – but at the end of the day it is political support that will move local efforts at job creation and training forward.

### Seven Hours to Affect Change

**W**ith the multitude of strategies to affect a change in the current labor market, our next step is to act. The main themes of the Summit have been broken down into four areas of improvement, but each of these categories suggests several ways to undertake efforts to change unemployment and underemployment.

After two days of discussion, the next logical move is to join together—as employers, labor, education, workforce and community leaders—to put selected ideas into action. When we meet next year, our hope is to not only discuss fresh, innovative ways to create jobs and help the unemployed in the Commonwealth, but to understand which of the strategies developed at the Summit have been most beneficial to our partners in business, education, labor, and the community. And we will continue from there.

The Summit identified numerous issues important to workforce and employers in Massachusetts and proposals in several broad categories including Investment in the Community; Education and Training; Public and Private Sector Partnerships; and Raising National Attention. We should continue to elevate this conversation and bring key leaders together to enact the changes necessary as soon as possible.

## Next Steps and Recommendations

**Based upon the discussions and presentations, the Massachusetts Workforce Board Association culled out the following recommendations and action steps:**

- 1- Enact the Youth Solutions Act and provide meaningful job and training opportunities for young people on a year round basis including expanding School-to-Career Connecting Activities;
- 2- Institutionalize and fund the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund to develop target training strategies for growing industry sectors;
- 3- Implement a subsidized employment strategy for low-income unemployed and TANF recipients and target training resources through the existing workforce system;
- 4- Workforce Boards and One-Stop Career Centers should continue to expand their employer outreach efforts and cultivate relationships with local employers to increase the listing of job vacancies;
- 5- Fully fund the Workforce Training Fund which is supported by employer contributions and establish an evaluation model for the WTF. Target WTF funds more strategically to support growth sectors;
- 6- Link workforce training funds to state economic development initiatives and projects, especially capital spending and streamline multiple agency efforts for workforce training and education;
- 7- Sufficient funding for community colleges to meet the increased demand for their services and to improve graduation rates. Reforms should include uniform transferability of credits and better alignment of credentials with industry needs.
- 8- Identify and support education and training resources for pathways to middle skills jobs; and
- 9- The Workforce Solutions Group should reconvene the cosponsors and key Summit participants to develop legislative and action strategies for these and other Summit recommendations before the end of 2010.

*Report Prepared by the Massachusetts Workforce Board Association*

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