

**COMMONWEALTH
CORPORATION**



**Workforce Training
Fund Program**

WTFP^{FY}₂₅ ANNUAL REPORT



MASSACHUSETTS EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF
LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION



The Workforce Training Fund is a resource for Massachusetts employers to train incumbent workers, which in turn strengthens the productivity and competitiveness for employers in a variety of industries throughout the state. The Workforce Training Fund Program is funded through an assessment on Massachusetts employers' Unemployment Insurance contributions. Commonwealth Corporation, a quasi-public agency, administers the Workforce Training Fund on behalf of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

The Workforce Training Fund Program is funded through an assessment on Massachusetts employers' Unemployment Insurance contributions. The enabling legislation for the Workforce Training Fund (Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 29 Section 2RR) calls for an annual report to be filed with the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development and the House and Senate Ways and Means Committees. The report highlights grants made during the previous fiscal year together with recommendations and additional information as considered appropriate. The report must also include information concerning the collection of the workforce training contributions for the previous calendar year including (i) the amount collected in each quarter and the total amount collected for the calendar year; (ii) the total number of employers that contributed to the fund and the total number of employees employed by that group of employers; and (iii) the contribution rate.

GRANTS AWARDED

FISCAL YEAR 2025



GRANTS AWARDED IN FY 2025

During Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025), the Workforce Training Fund Program awarded funding to Massachusetts businesses to upskill incumbent workers through two different grant programs, the General Program Training Grant and the Express Program Grant. In FY25, these grants supported skills acquisition for nearly 28,000 workers and improved the competitiveness and productivity of more than 1,600 businesses across the Commonwealth.

GENERAL PROGRAM

Massachusetts-based businesses of any size are eligible to apply, and intermediaries may lead a consortium application. Entering FY25, applicants could request up to \$200,000 for up to two years to support training. Beginning in October 2024, maximum grant limits were decreased to \$125,000 over two years due to higher demand for grants and finite program funding. Grant funds must be matched, dollar-for-dollar. The match may be cash or in-kind (including wages paid to employees during training).

[Visit our website for more information about the General Program](#)

EXPRESS PROGRAM

Massachusetts-based businesses with 100 or fewer Massachusetts employees are eligible to apply for grants to cover training selected from a database of registered courses. Entering FY25, businesses could receive up to \$20,000 per calendar year; the maximum per trainee, per course is \$3,000. Beginning in November 2024 the maximum businesses could receive was decreased to \$15,000 per calendar year due to higher demand for grants and finite program funding.

[Visit our website for more information about the Express Program](#)

GRANTS AWARDED IN FY 2025

In FY25, Commonwealth Corporation approved more than 2,500 grant applications totaling over \$24 million through the Workforce Training Fund Programs, including grants from the General Program and Express Program. In FY25, the Workforce Training Fund Programs engaged 1,617 employers to fund training for over twenty-one thousand Massachusetts workers.

New Grants Awarded During FY24	Trainees*	Amount	Employers*	Average Cost Per Trainee
General Program	7,324	\$9,465,999	133	\$1,292
Express Program	13,740	\$14,605,797	1,484	\$1,063
Total	21,064	\$24,071,796	1,617	\$1,143

*May include duplication if an employer/employee participates in both programs within one fiscal year.



Kushala Sip Lounge Cafe & Bar, Chelsea

WORKFORCE TRAINING FUND

FY25 HIGHLIGHTS





2025 HIGHLIGHTS

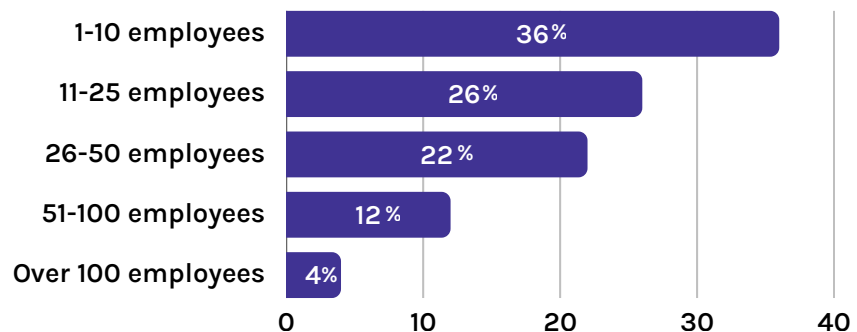
JOB CREATION IMPACT

Previously awarded General Program grantees that completed training in FY25 added 2,218 additional employees to their Massachusetts workforce, growing their net number of Massachusetts employees by 8.4 percent over the past two years (June 2023 - June 2025). According to preliminary data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, during the same period, Massachusetts experienced a 7.7 percent statewide decrease in employment. This comparison demonstrates the Workforce Training Fund as an effective tool to spur job creation, helping Massachusetts employers maintain and also grow a skilled workforce.

SMALL BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

Commonwealth Corporation continues to invest deeply in streamlining access to training grants and improving the experience of our grant recipients. These improvements continue to provide fast and simple access to resources for small businesses, primarily via the Express Program. Ensuring Massachusetts' small businesses and the workers they employ are consistently accessing resources to train their workers is a top priority of Workforce Training Fund Program administrators. In FY25, the Commonwealth's smallest businesses, those with ten or fewer employees in Massachusetts, made up 36 percent of those served--the largest share of all participating employers. The vast majority of grant recipients (84 percent) have 50 or fewer employees in Massachusetts.

Organizations served by number of employees in Massachusetts



2025 HIGHLIGHTS

DIVERSE BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

In FY25, Commonwealth Corporation approved grants involving 475 diverse businesses in 150 different cities and towns across Massachusetts through Workforce Training Fund grant programs. In total, this included \$5.9 million to train more than 4,871 employees of diverse businesses. Diverse businesses include employers certified by the Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office as meeting at least one identified diverse business certification standard, including minority-owned, women-owned, LGBT-owned, veteran-owned, or disability-owned business enterprises.

Additionally, Commonwealth Corporation recognizes employers certified by other authorities such as the New England Supplier Diversity Council or the Women's Business Enterprise National Council. Applicants may also be considered a diverse business if they provide a rationale but have not pursued formal certification. Total funding to diverse businesses was led by Manufacturing firms (\$1.1 million), followed by firms providing Other Services (except Public Admin) (\$799,499), and firms providing Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (\$740,350).

INVESTMENT IN GATEWAY CITIES

In FY25, Commonwealth Corporation approved 392 grants involving 257 employers located in [Gateway Cities](#) through Workforce Training Fund Programs. In total, this represented \$4.4 million to train more than 3,580 workers in 32 Gateway Cities. Total funding in Gateway Cities was led by grants to Manufacturing firms (\$1.5 million), followed by grants to firms providing Healthcare and Social Assistance Services (\$813,874).

WORKPLACE ESOL

Commonwealth Corporation has established Workplace ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) training as a priority of the Workforce Training Fund Program. The most transformative impact of any training funded by Workforce Training Fund Program grants takes place when workers with low English-language proficiency access training to improve their ability to read, write, and communicate in English. In FY25, investment in workplace ESOL training included 26 grants awarded through both Workforce Training Fund programs for an investment of \$1,267,285 to train 758 workers in ESOL from 28 employers.



2025 HIGHLIGHTS

WORKPLACE DEI TRAINING

Commonwealth Corporation promotes workplace Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training for employers. Through the Workforce Training Fund programs, 80 applications were approved in FY25 for training related to DEI for a total of \$605,478 to train 2,466 workers from 78 employers. Examples of training related to DEI include Working with Families from Diverse Backgrounds, Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Addressing Implicit Bias.

TRAINING RELATED TO CLIMATE-CHANGE

Commonwealth Corporation also promotes climate change-related training for employers. Through the Workforce Training Fund programs, 88 applications were approved in FY25 for training related to climate change for a total of \$247,773 to train 474 workers from 70 businesses. Examples of climate-related training include Certified Passive House Consultant (CPHC) Training, High-Performance Building for Carpenters, and Intro to Designing a Net Zero Building.

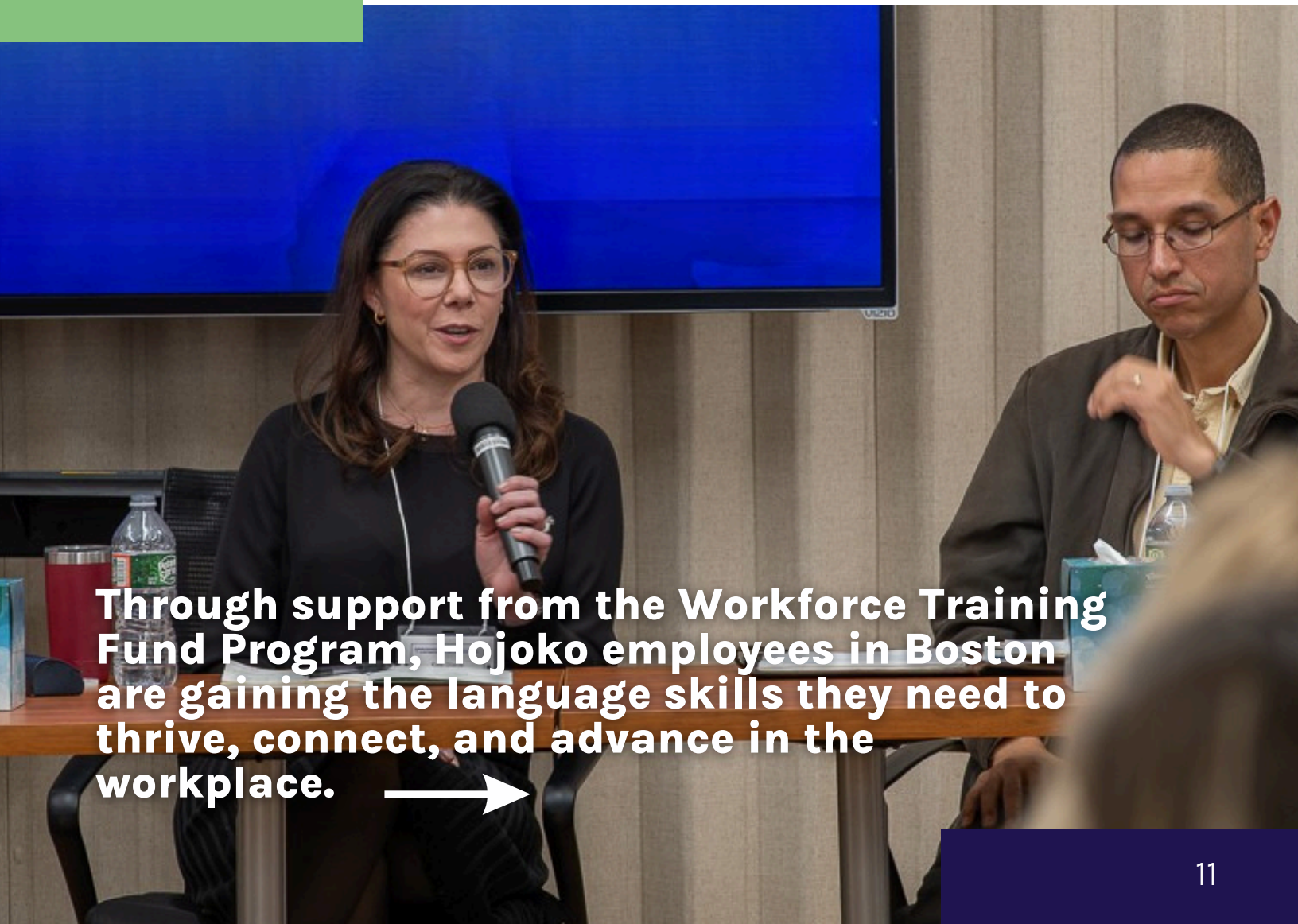
STRATEGIC POLICY CHANGES

While demand for incumbent worker training continues to grow and awareness increases about the Workforce Training Fund Programs, available funding has remained level-funded over the years, and the available funding also has not adjusted for inflation; there was a surplus of funding in recent years due to unused funding early in the pandemic. Recognizing this, Commonwealth Corporation has implemented a series of strategic policy changes that seek to engage as many businesses and workers as possible.

The following policy changes were adopted in November of 2024:

- Reduction of the Express Program annual max from \$20,000 to \$15,000 per org, per year.
- Reduction of the General Program grant maximum from \$200,000 to \$125,000.
- Average cost per trainee in the General Program grants shall not exceed \$3,000.
- WTFP Express and General Program investment in training shall not exceed \$300 per instructional hour. Employers are responsible for covering instructional costs beyond this cap.
- Express Program reimbursement rates have been revised according to org size:
 - 100% reimbursement: orgs w/ up to 50 MA employees
 - 50% reimbursement: orgs w/ 51 to 100 MA employees

SUCCESS STORIES

A woman with long brown hair and glasses, wearing a black zip-up shirt, is speaking into a black microphone. She is seated at a wooden table. To her right, a man with short dark hair and glasses, wearing a brown jacket over a yellow shirt, is looking down. On the table, there are water bottles, a red cup, and a box of tissues. A large blue screen is visible in the background.

Through support from the Workforce Training Fund Program, Hojoko employees in Boston are gaining the language skills they need to thrive, connect, and advance in the workplace. →

FINDING A COMMON LANGUAGE: BUILDING CONFIDENCE, CONNECTION, AND CAREERS



In today's diverse workforce, talent knows no language barrier—but communication often does. Multilingual employees bring valuable skills, experience, and perspectives to the workplace, and bridging communication gaps by enhancing their English skills can expand their potential for growth, strengthen team dynamics, and improve customer service. Accessing community English language learning services in the Commonwealth can sometimes be a challenge due to high demand and conflicting schedules with work and other responsibilities. Through the Workforce Training Fund Program (WTFP), businesses can integrate customized English language courses into their schedules and unlock their team's full capabilities.

In Boston, the restaurant group Umami Riot Experience (formerly Cushman Concepts) introduced English training to their employees to promote strong communication and encourage staff retention and advancement. In a restaurant setting, where relationships among teams and with customers are crucial, supporting English development has many positive outcomes – both expected and unexpected.

Hojoko, one of Umami Riot Experience's restaurants, trains their employees in English language concepts directly related to their workplace. They provide training sessions that align with the team's working hours, typically four hours a week. Located in Boston, Hojoko provides specific scenarios, recipes, and operational standards to the training provider, English for New Bostonians (ENB), to ensure the training is as relevant as possible to learners. The customized training strengthens communication around ingredients to maintain customer safety and addresses common workplace conversations like requesting time off and receiving paychecks. "To be in control of your communication and understand the situation around you is important for agency," said Kate Gilarde, VP of Talent and Culture for Umami Riot Experience. The team attends training each week knowing how they will use what they learn in their role each day, creating stronger buy-in and a sense of belonging to a team that cares about them.



ENB supports community-based English learning programs serving immigrant workers, small business owners, and parents by partnering with companies across Massachusetts to offer workplace English training to their employees. Their goal is to provide free or low-cost English classes to everyone who needs them. Partnerships with employers like Hojoko are effective in creating wider and more sustainable opportunities for accessing English language learning. “Our goal in partnering with employers is to promote the value of a multilingual workforce,” says ENB Business Partnerships Manager Suzanne Metro. “Businesses work more efficiently when everyone can speak together.”

Hojoko was committed to delivering English training from the start, experimenting with different time frames and locations to find what worked best for their team. Now that they successfully integrated it into their routine with support from ENB and funding from WTFP, it’s there to stay. English learning is a key training goal, and staff response is consistently positive, in part due to the high-quality instruction delivered by ENB. Classes are growing as employees spread the word and demand for participation increases.

“Receiving respect and being heard are tied to creating a healthy workplace – it takes time and effort to make it work, but if an employer is open to trial and error at the onset, they will see the results firsthand,” says Metro.

The Hojoko and ENB teams are seeing significant improvements in employee confidence, interpersonal dynamics, and customer satisfaction from better communication. According to Gilarde, staff retention is steady, and several employees have received promotions. Team members are moving from after-hours to daytime roles, and from part-time to full-time. In addition to these improvements in staff performance, the extra time spent together in this program has led to better rapport and respect among the team, as well as a stronger ability to address challenges in the workplace.

“We don’t understand each other 100% of the time, but we’re all there trying,” Gilarde shares. “We’re all doing something better for the business and ourselves. It’s a beautiful program.”

Hojoko is actively applying for additional funding from WTFP to continue the training and ensure that all their employees have the tools they need to thrive at work. “We’d love to offer this everywhere, as much as possible,” says Gilarde.

GENERAL PROGRAM

GRANT AWARDS



FY25 GENERAL PROGRAM TRAINING GRANT AWARDS



At Kadant Inc. in Auburn, employees are strengthening their skills through Workforce Training Fund Program-supported training in Kaizen Improvement, Lean Manufacturing, Total Productive Maintenance, Setup Reduction (SMED), Workplace Organization, and Basic Manufacturing Skills.

In FY25, Commonwealth Corporation awarded 112 General Program Training Grants involving 133 employers, totaling \$9,465,999 in grants to train 7,324 workers. This includes 5 consortium grants and partnership projects involving 26 employers. The employers who received General Program grants in FY25 project a net increase of 2,848 additional workers employed in Massachusetts by the end of these two-year grants. Training topics represent a range such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); technical and business software; process improvement; quality assurance; diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); productivity skills; sales and customer service; supervision and leadership; project management; and much more.

GENERAL PROGRAM AWARDS BY INDUSTRY

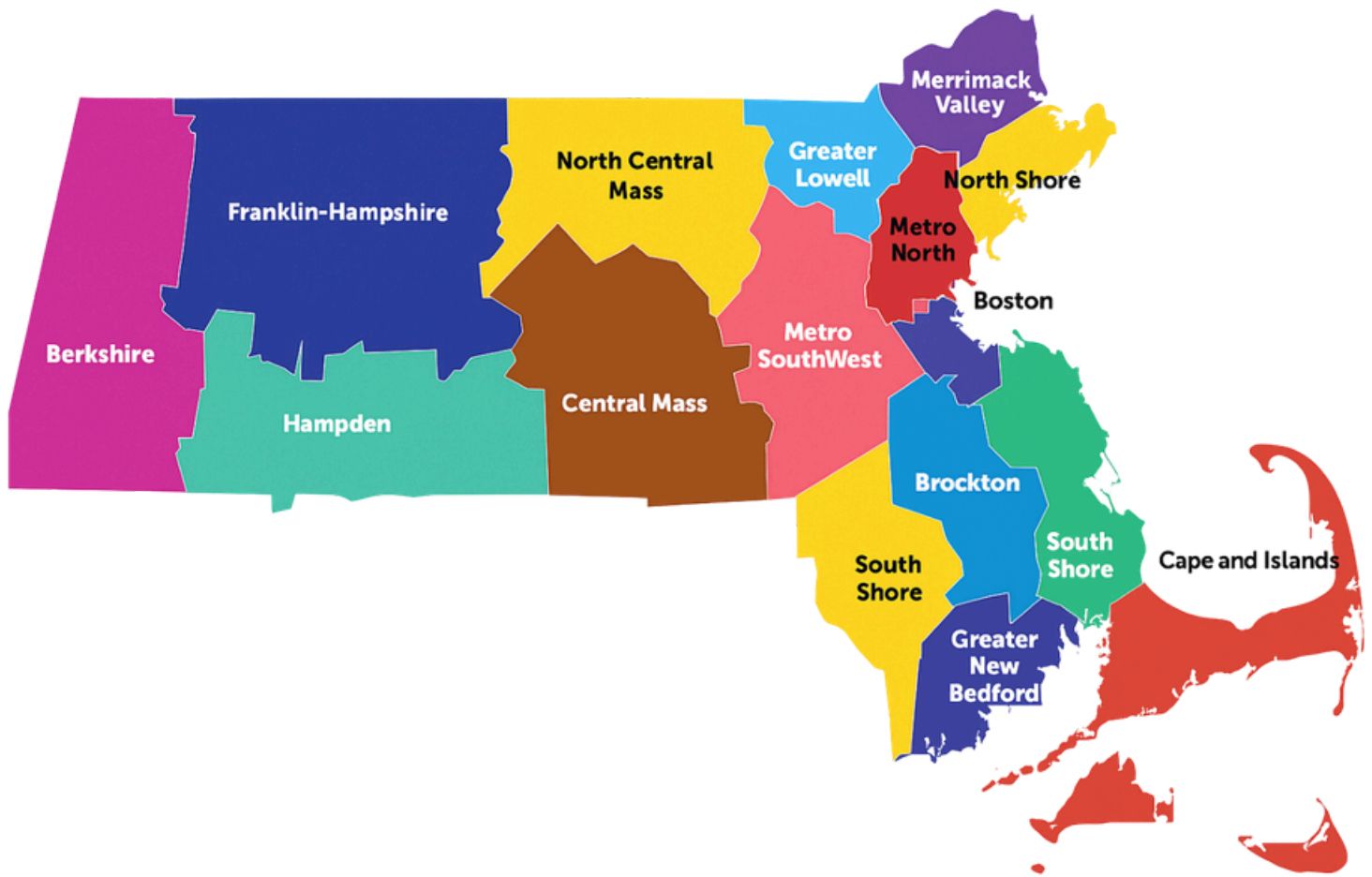
Industry	# of Grants Awarded	# of Employers	# of Trainees	Amount Awarded	Share of Funds Awarded
Manufacturing	57	73	2,952	\$5,320,472	56.2%
Healthcare & Social Assistance	12	12	1,134	\$934,235	9.9%
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	10	13	793	\$917,175	9.7%
Construction	8	8	568	\$452,534	4.8%
Finance & Insurance	5	5	378	\$339,450	3.6%
Other Services (except Public Admin)	4	4	198	\$338,435	3.6%
Retail	4	6	393	\$310,050	3.3%
Accommodation/Food Service/Hospitality	4	4	196	\$277,410	2.9%
Arts/Entertainment/ Recreation	2	2	146	\$259,273	2.7%
Educational Services	2	2	195	\$142,450	1.5%
Admin/Support and Waste Management/Remediation	1	1	57	\$95,315	1.0%
Information	1	1	274	\$36,000	0.4%
Transportation & Warehousing	1	1	31	\$31,200	0.3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1	1	9	\$12,000	0.1%
Grand Total	112	133	7,324	\$9,465,999	100%

GENERAL PROGRAM AWARDS BY WORKFORCE BOARD REGION

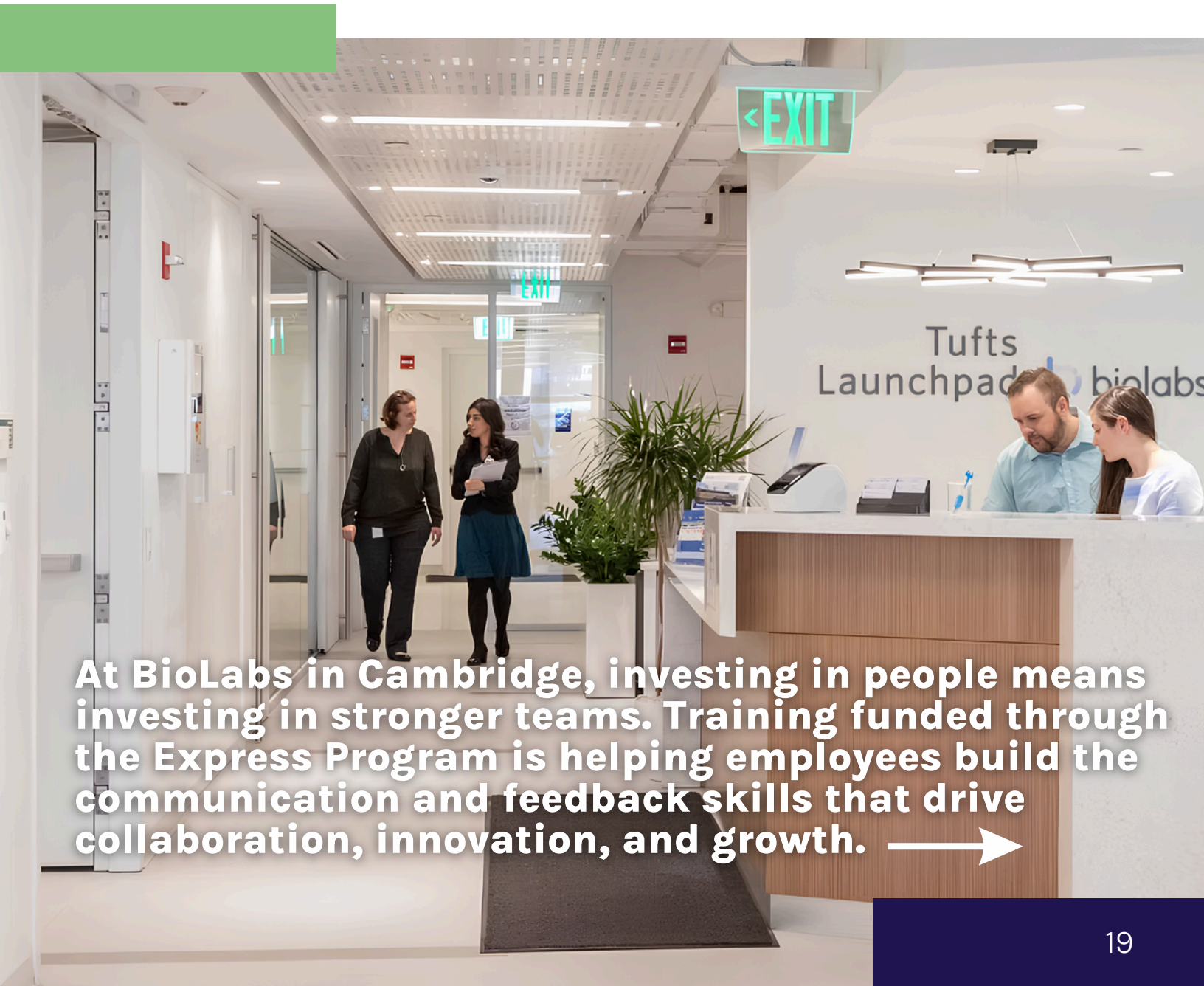
Workforce Region	# of Grants	# of Employers	# of Trainees	Amount Awarded	Share of Funds Awarded
Metro South/West	19	19	1,339	\$1,517,001	16.0%
Central MA	15	31	1,149	\$1,304,500	13.8%
Boston	16	16	867	\$1,130,218	11.9%
Metro North	13	18	897	\$1,108,267	11.7%
North Shore	8	8	510	\$584,400	6.2%
Hampden	6	6	313	\$551,882	5.8%
South Shore	6	6	471	\$502,365	5.3%
Merrimack Valley	4	4	232	\$411,366	4.3%
North Central MA	4	4	209	\$408,135	4.3%
Franklin/Hampshire	3	3	255	\$370,115	3.9%
Bristol	5	5	209	\$366,850	3.9%
Greater Lowell	6	6	306	\$362,200	3.8%
Brockton	2	2	198	\$260,710	2.8%
Greater New Bedford	2	2	134	\$251,800	2.7%
Cape & Islands	2	2	149	\$190,590	2.0%
Berkshire	1	1	86	\$145,600	1.5%
Grand Total	112	133	7,324	\$9,465,999	100.00%



MASSHIRE WORKFORCE BOARD REGIONS



SUCCESS STORIES



At BioLabs in Cambridge, investing in people means investing in stronger teams. Training funded through the Express Program is helping employees build the communication and feedback skills that drive collaboration, innovation, and growth. —————>

GROWING TOGETHER THROUGH TEAMWORK AND COMMUNICATION

BioLabs supports scientific advancement globally and locally by creating unique shared laboratory and office work environments for early-stage science-based start-ups. With a strategic presence in key innovation hubs including Munich, Paris, and Boston, BioLabs offers science-based startups access to shared lab and coworking spaces with premium scientific equipment. In addition to lab space, BioLabs provides access to a global network of scientists, executives, and industry leaders to foster connection and exchange of ideas, knowledge, and resources.



As a company in the business of people, building strong relationships, maintaining trust, and creating space for authentic communication is crucial. For small businesses, funding for training that facilitates team development can be limited. That's why BioLabs pursued a grant through the Workforce Training Fund Express Program (WTFP), which provides fast, easy-to-access funding for small and medium-sized businesses in Massachusetts to train their employees in response to emerging needs.

“Our entire company is based on teamwork,” shares Barbara Leven, Director of People & Culture at BioLabs. “We are happy to have diverse talent on our team, and this program helps them to leverage their skill sets to work in a global and diverse environment.”

The long-term growth of BioLabs depends on the productivity of their 23-person team in Massachusetts today. To thrive, BioLabs employees need more than technical expertise—they need to be able to work effectively across departments, communicate clearly under pressure, and resolve challenges without slowing down projects. In a fast-paced environment where startups rely on BioLabs to keep operations running smoothly, even small miscommunications can lead to delays or missed opportunities. BioLabs chooses to conduct training for their employees in “Giving and Receiving Feedback” – including using radical candor and case-based reasoning. This training, provided by Elysian HR, was funded through the Workforce Training Fund Express Program.



By sharpening their ability to collaborate, share feedback constructively, and align around shared goals, BioLabs employees strengthen both their individual contributions and the collective output of the team.

The training delivered high-quality instruction and meaningful content targeted to BioLab’s needs. Employees were excited to participate and responded well to the training. They embraced specific techniques and integrated them into their day-to-day operations; when providing feedback on the course, employees used the radical candor method learned through the training. In particular, the procurement team has improved their communication and increased engagement in their workflows.

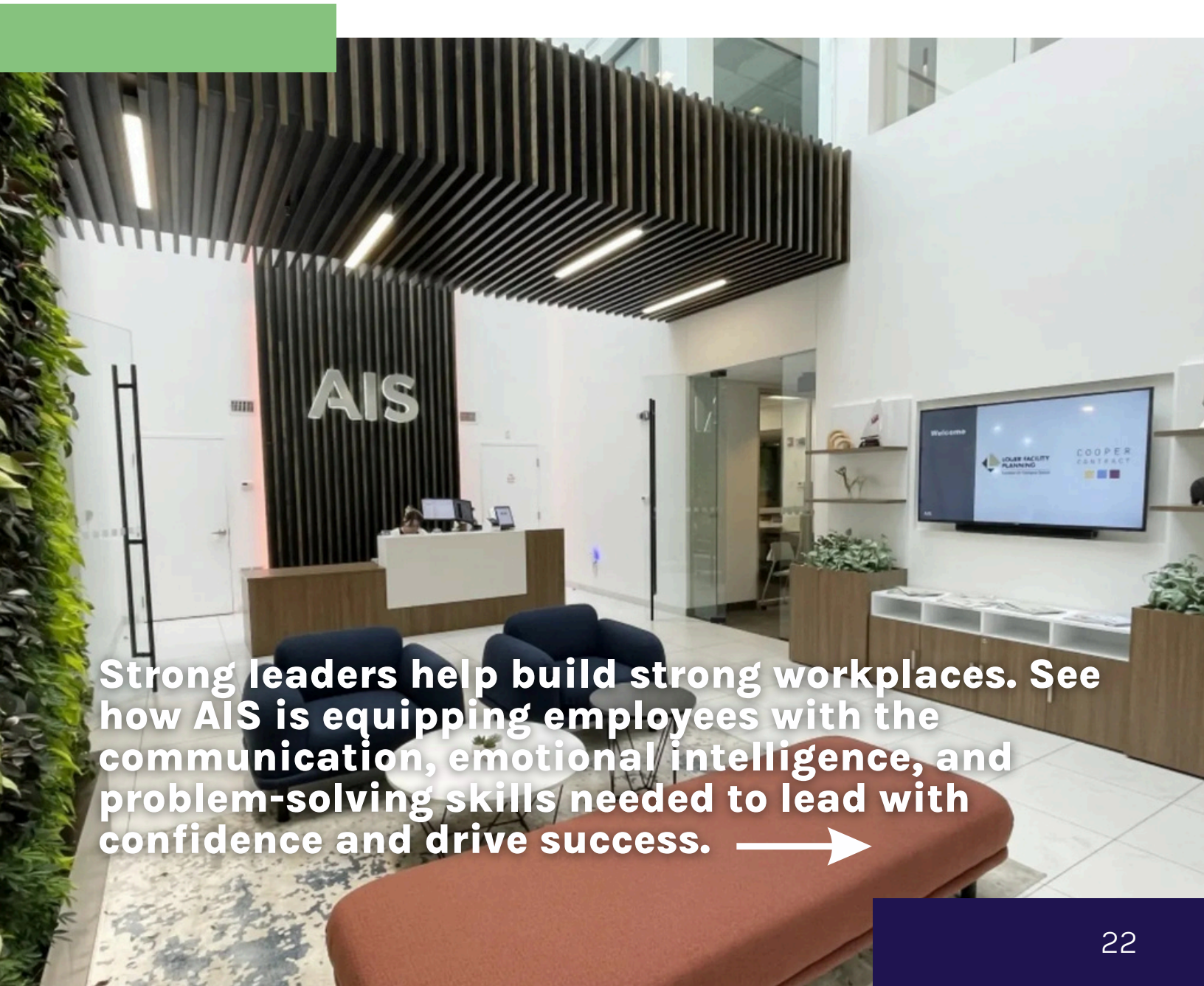
The training, according to Director of Procurement Thierry Leclerc, enhanced evaluation by establishing a more robust communication framework to deliver feedback. “I think the training enabled managers to feel more confident and better prepared for challenging conversations,” Leclerc shares. Creating better feedback mechanisms allows for more inclusiveness of team members’ opinions and better alignment on problem-solving. While the procurement team had productive workflows in place, the training clarified the “why” behind the workflows and encouraged staff to contribute more. The ability to explain the purpose of a workflow – such as regular review meetings – and how it benefits the team has also eased the onboarding of new managers.

As Leven shared, the training BioLabs received was small in scale, but large in impact. It has helped to influence company culture and create effective team dynamics, leading to more productive employees. Their focus on creating positive and direct internal feedback methods – now used for performance reviews – has reduced friction that can lead to employee turnover. When teams know how to give feedback in ways that are candid yet supportive, they are more likely to innovate, experiment, and take ownership of their work. Similarly, when employees trust each other and understand how to leverage one another’s strengths, they can move more quickly from problem to solution, increasing efficiency and productivity.

BioLabs encourages other Massachusetts businesses to apply for funding through WTFP. Leven shares that the training program was easy to navigate and approachable. “If the idea of the training is to serve small and medium-sized companies in Massachusetts, it is 100% achieved. It was very worth it for us to participate,” she says. BioLabs plans to participate in another training course this year – the Five Behaviors for Team Development – on building interpersonal skills to create positive team dynamics.

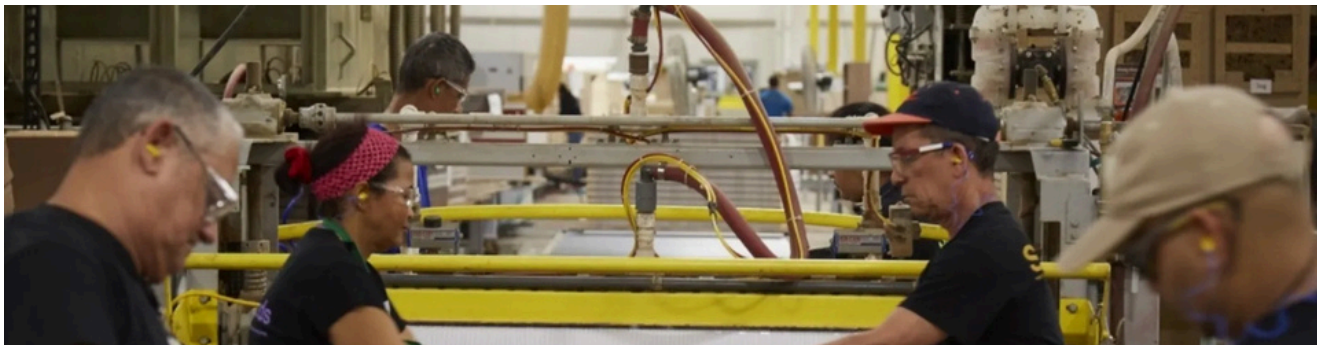
“Investing in our people and making our workforce stronger is tremendously important for our business. We are grateful to the Commonwealth for this opportunity,” said Barbara Leven.

SUCCESS STORIES

A modern office interior with a high ceiling featuring a series of dark, angled wooden slats. A reception desk with the 'AIS' logo is visible in the background. To the right, a large screen displays 'COOPER CONTRACT' and 'LOWER FACILITY PLANNING'. The foreground shows a red ottoman and a small table with blue armchairs. A green vertical garden is on the left.

Strong leaders help build strong workplaces. See how AIS is equipping employees with the communication, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving skills needed to lead with confidence and drive success. →

AIS BUILDS LEADERS: HOW CULTURE REDESIGNED AND WTFP ARE POWERING CAREER GROWTH



AIS (Affordable Interior Systems, Inc.) is a leading U.S. manufacturer of high-quality, affordable office furniture with a reputation for speed, efficiency, and workplace innovation. With 30 years in business and a rapidly growing workforce, AIS has always believed in investing in people as much as in products.

Vice President Deanna Zarrella shared, “What sets AIS apart is that anyone can get a job, but what we offer is a career. We’ve had many success stories where someone comes in for one role and, through training and development, we identify skills and create a customized career path for them. That’s been part of our culture for the last 8 years.”

As AIS grew, however, the leadership noticed a gap: while technically skilled employees were being promoted into leadership roles, many lacked the soft skills to lead effectively. “We promote employees because they are technically skilled, but we lacked leadership training. Leaders directly impact engagement, retention, and performance. I’m not a trainer, nor is my HR team, so meeting Adriana from Culture Redesigned was huge. She understood manufacturing, bilingual needs, and customized training for us.”

AIS’s training provider, Culture Redesigned, led by Adriana, recognized the workforce needs for AIS. Adriana says, “They wanted to provide leadership skills. Their employees are bilingual, but some of them have bachelor’s and master’s in other Spanish-speaking countries. So, we tried to really think creatively because we knew they didn’t need English as a second language. What we were trying to prepare them for was leadership positions.”

To meet those needs, Culture Redesigned facilitated training in both English and Spanish: “Even though they speak English fluently, we realized they would learn and retain more if the class was in Spanish. That adjustment made a big difference in how employees felt about coming to training and how much they participated.”

The program was customized for AIS’s culture. “They have a great culture! They’re a very diverse company. So, we were working on really creating frameworks, regardless of what level you’re at, that you could really practice. So, we’re talking emotional intelligence, effective communication, anti-harassment, conflict resolution... everything has been tailored for them, and the training materials become theirs so new employees can learn the same frameworks.”



The results were immediate and inspiring. Adriana noted, “I think the employees have responded well. They want to come and they want to learn, not just go through the motions. They’re very engaged in all the activities.”

Deanna saw a similar perspective, she says “One of the biggest takeaways is conflict management and situational leadership. Before, we promoted people without giving them the soft skills to lead. Now, they’re applying what they learn every day. I hear feedback like ‘I just used what I learned in module 15 this week.’ It’s not material they file; it’s being used actively on the job.”

The program also gave growth opportunities for individuals. “Some individuals in the training are becoming team leaders. One moment that stood out was when they had to do a three-minute leadership presentation. Many were overwhelmed by public speaking, but after doing it, they felt proud and accomplished. The feedback was very positive, and they realized they needed to take that step even though it was unfamiliar. “Much of this progress was made possible through the Workforce Training Fund Program (WTFP), which enabled AIS to invest in long-term employee growth. Deanna praised the fund’s accessibility. Deanna says, “There’s a stigma that the grant is clunky or burdensome, but it’s actually very simple. The state has kept it easy – like putting gas in your car. Reporting is straightforward, payments are timely, and support is responsive. Overall, it’s been seamless. I’d encourage businesses to apply.”

Adriana shares why these workforce programs matter to companies: “AIS has been very creative about cultivating talent, supporting working mothers, and helping people with degrees from other countries grow within the organization. They keep retention in a healthy place and are a poster child for manufacturing. Programs like this complement workforce strategy. State investment in private company training makes a big difference in helping employees gain new skills, which benefits both the employee and the company.”

With 90 employees added and 64 already trained, AIS has strengthened its culture of continuous improvement. “Employees are more motivated and loyal.” said Deanna “They see leaders who support, coach, and inspire them. That reduces turnover and builds a culture where people want to stay and grow. We want AIS to be the premier employer in North Central Massachusetts, where it’s not just a job, it’s a career.” With the support of the WTFP grant and Culture redesigned leadership training, AIS is equipping today’s workforce with the leadership skills needed to drive the company forward.

SUCCESS STORIES



At Bake’N Joy, developing leaders is part of the recipe for success. Leadership training is helping employees build skills, strengthen teamwork, and create pathways for career growth. →



A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS: HOW BAKE'N JOY IS RAISING CARING LEADERS WITH WTFP SUPPORT

Bake'N Joy Foods, a Massachusetts-based leader in the baking industry, has grown from a small, family-run bakery supplier into a fourth-generation leader in the baking industry. Known for its high-quality mixes, frozen doughs, and finished baked goods, the North Andover-based company serves supermarkets, foodservice operators, and convenience stores nationwide. But behind its signature products, the company is equally focused on developing its people.

With more than 300 employees and plans to grow, in 2024 Bake'N Joy leadership saw an opportunity to invest in developing leaders by expanding their training programs. Through the Workforce Training Fund Program (WTFP) and in partnership with MassMEP as their training provider, the company launched a 13-week training initiative that sustains growth, retains talent, and strengthens leadership pipelines.

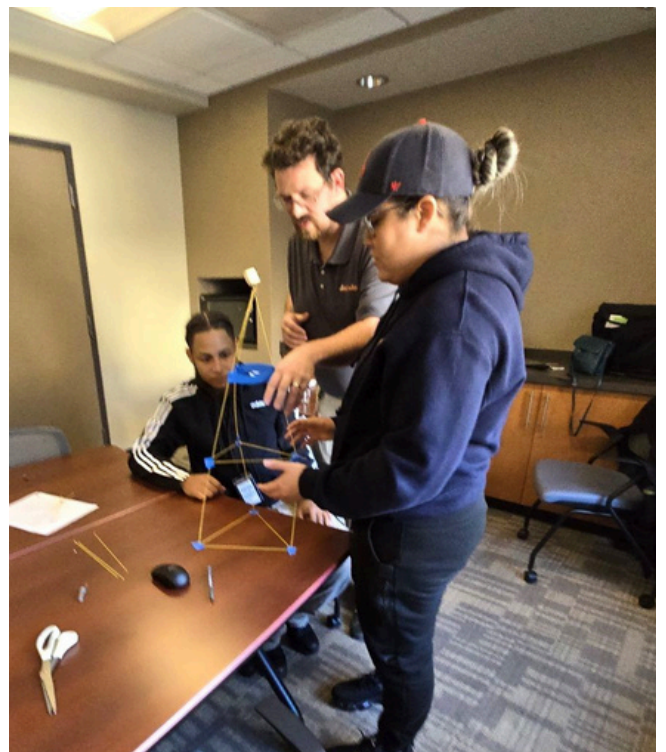
Brian Harper, Operations Training & Development Manager at Bake 'N Joy, shares a profound view on how much the WTFP grant has impacted the company's future. "When I first joined the company back in 2023, they were starting to talk about planning for the next year, and one of the things the company has been doing is we're in the long-range planning goal right now, we're planning through 2041, which will be our 100th year," said Harper. "One of our focuses that came from these executive meetings was that we need to focus on leadership and how to develop and create caring leaders and build our pipelines. We reached out to MassMEP, and they connected us with Commonwealth Corporation's grant," he added.

MassMEP (Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership) is a nonprofit organization that supports small and medium-sized manufacturers in their business growth services, operational excellence, technology acceleration, and training & workforce development. Describing the impact of the funding opportunity and their partnership with MassMEP, Harper said: "We are implementing a 13-week program focused on leadership development. We talk about things like change management, skills matrix, onboarding, and HR principles. A huge strength of the program is how it brings together staff from different departments – warehousing, production, and office. This mix helps participants realize that, although their challenges differ, many are actually very similar. It's broken-down silos that sometimes businesses fall into and encourage cross-department communication. The curriculum has also evolved as MassMEP adapted the content for future groups. We're about to launch our fourth class, and both we and MassMEP now have a clearer sense of what works best, including adding team-building exercises and other hands-on elements."



Bake’N Joy recognized that their leadership development and training programs needed a bit of whisking to help employees rise to the next level. Brian says, “Our biggest priority has been building a strong skills matrix and job architecture. Like many manufacturers, we’re always looking for talent we can retain and develop, and a skills matrix will show our employees a clear path for growth. For example, someone hired as a packer can see the specific steps needed to progress to the next role.”

Harper also shares the results of how these trainings impacted the employees. “The response has been positive. One standout example was in our first class, where managers from our two warehouses were able to sit together in the class once a week for four hours. That face-to-face time deepened their connection and allowed them to discuss challenges in real time. We’ve also seen newer managers, many of whom had never received formal leadership training, benefit by asking practical questions about issues they face daily, and in that experience, other peers in the room can share advice to give them new tools and perspectives. It’s beneficial because they really get to connect with people they don’t normally connect with on that level, which is important to Bake’N Joy because we want to have caring leaders, we want to have people that are empathetic and we know that it’s going to help everybody developmentally grow.”



While there is a positive view from the employees, the company has also experienced how the training program positively impacted productivity, quality, and overall growth, especially with new hires. “We’ve seen real results on the floor. Participants have applied the skills matrix with their teams, breaking down jobs into steps that employees can master progressively. This has given new hires more attention and clearer development paths, which has improved retention.” Brian also adds, “Instead of just standing at a station and repeating tasks, employees are now guided through structured learning, which motivates them and strengthens their contributions. This shift has helped us retain talent and increase productivity.”

MassMEP’s Business Development Advisor, Ron Giard, shares how employees respond to the training: “The biggest impact I’ve seen is people stepping out of their comfort zones, like presenting in front of a group. This training really pushed them to grow in that area. It got them out of their shell, which is huge.”

Bake’N Joy’s leadership and MassMEP’s training program has helped develop the future of Bake’N Joy’s workforce development, here is what Brian Harper had to say to other businesses considering the WTFP funding: “For us, it was a no-brainer. MassMEP and Commonwealth Corporation provide excellent guidance, and Massachusetts has a strong manufacturing network that businesses can lean on.” Harper also says, “The grant program is an incredible tool, it allows companies to invest in growth and create jobs.”

Giard adds, “For small and medium-size companies, the Workforce Training Fund is a great vehicle. It helps them invest in their people while getting some of the cost covered through the program. Larger organizations often have budgets and departments for this, but smaller ones usually don’t. What we hear consistently from client surveys is that having this support available is invaluable for manufacturers. It gives them the resources to upskill their employees in ways they couldn’t afford otherwise.”



EXPRESS PROGRAM

GRANT AWARDS



FY25 EXPRESS PROGRAM GRANT AWARDS

In FY25, Commonwealth Corporation approved 2,399 Express Program grant applications from 1,484 unique businesses for more than \$14.6 million in grant funds to train more than thirteen thousand trainees. (Note: Businesses may submit multiple applications; employees may participate in multiple courses.)

Training topics included process improvement; quality assurance; diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); IT administration; English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); Intro to Designing a Net Zero Building; marketing; sales and customer service; supervision and leadership; occupation-specific skills training; project management, business software; and much more.



Secretary of Labor Lauren Jones visits Evans Machine Company in Brockton, where employees are strengthening their skills in continuous improvement, quality management systems, and cybersecurity compliance through training supported by the Workforce Training Fund Program.

EXPRESS PROGRAM AWARDS BY INDUSTRY

Industry	# of Grants Awarded	# of Employers	# of Trainees	Amount Awarded	Share of Funds Awarded
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	658	377	3,434	\$2,939,874	20.1%
Manufacturing	271	207	2,016	\$2,484,419	17.0%
Other Services (except Public Admin)	352	216	1,927	\$2,294,962	15.7%
Construction	216	142	1,438	\$1,544,883	10.6%
Healthcare & Social Assistance	149	105	791	\$1,266,503	8.7%
Finance & Insurance	372	153	1,364	\$1,097,925	7.5%
Educational Services	106	75	1,166	\$933,654	6.4%
Accommodation/Food Service/Hospitality	45	42	265	\$365,790	2.5%
Real Estate/Rental/Leasing	50	38	546	\$363,357	2.5%
Arts/Entertainment/Recreation	38	30	203	\$293,716	2.0%
Information	30	17	59	\$231,334	1.6%
Retail	27	19	108	\$214,415	1.5%
Wholesale Trade	13	11	37	\$131,090	0.9%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	29	22	155	\$129,888	0.9%
Utilities	7	7	41	\$105,397	0.7%
Transportation & Warehousing	22	13	100	\$93,675	0.6%
Management of Companies & Enterprise	9	5	71	\$77,415	0.5%
Admin/Support and Waste Management/Remediation	5	5	19	\$37,500	0.3%

Grand Total	2,399	1,484	13,740	\$14,605,797	100%
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EXPRESS PROGRAM AWARDS BY WORKFORCE BOARD REGION

Workforce Region	# of Grants Awarded	Amount Awarded	Share of Funds Awarded
Metro South/West	531	\$3,077,872	21.1%
Boston	293	\$2,193,000	15.0%
Metro North	320	\$2,087,046	14.3%
Central MA	178	\$1,122,754	7.7%
South Shore	168	\$905,199	6.2%
North Shore	124	\$707,217	4.8%
Hampden	157	\$691,266	4.7%
Bristol	97	\$599,317	4.1%
Greater Lowell	83	\$574,063	3.9%
Merrimack Valley	83	\$502,640	3.4%
Greater New Bedford	60	\$498,167	3.4%
Cape & Islands	77	\$473,533	3.2%
Franklin/Hampshire	98	\$465,543	3.2%
Brockton	42	\$306,780	2.1%
North Central MA	42	\$249,614	1.7%
Berkshire	46	\$151,787	1.0%
Grand Total	2,399	\$14,605,797	100%

SUCCESS STORIES



At Gary BenDavid Builders, workforce training is helping bring specialized construction expertise to Martha's Vineyard while creating new opportunities for employee growth. —→

BUILDING ENERGY EXPERTISE ON MARTHA'S VINEYARD

Gary BenDavid Builders, Inc., a general contracting firm on Martha's Vineyard, has served the island community since 1994. Known for building and renovating both new and historic homes, the company is committed to craftsmanship, conservation, and long-term client relationships. The firm also supports local workforce development by offering skilled employment opportunities and contributing to the strength of the island's building trades.



"I had a vision of getting more involved in the energy compliance side of it," said founder Gary BenDavid. As energy codes evolved and compliance became increasingly important, founder Gary BenDavid had a vision of strengthening the firm's role in energy efficiency. On the island, however, conducting Home Energy Rating System (HERS) assessments was challenging, according to company founder Gary BenDavid, only two people were able to do the work, making the process costly and difficult to coordinate. For years, Gary BenDavid Builders had to outsource these assessments to external providers, which further highlighted the need to bring this expertise in-house.

When Mark Leonard, now a Certified HERS Rater, joined the company in 2024, he took the initiative to research workforce development opportunities and identified the Workforce Training Fund Express Program (WTFP) as a resource. Through a WTFP grant, Mark was able to complete the Hybrid HERS Rater Training offered by the Northeast Home Energy Rating Systems Alliance. The course combined online learning with hands-on sessions, giving him both the technical knowledge and practical skills to perform HERS assessments. "The training was convenient and effective, with online sessions here on the island and in-person testing in Watertown," said Leonard.

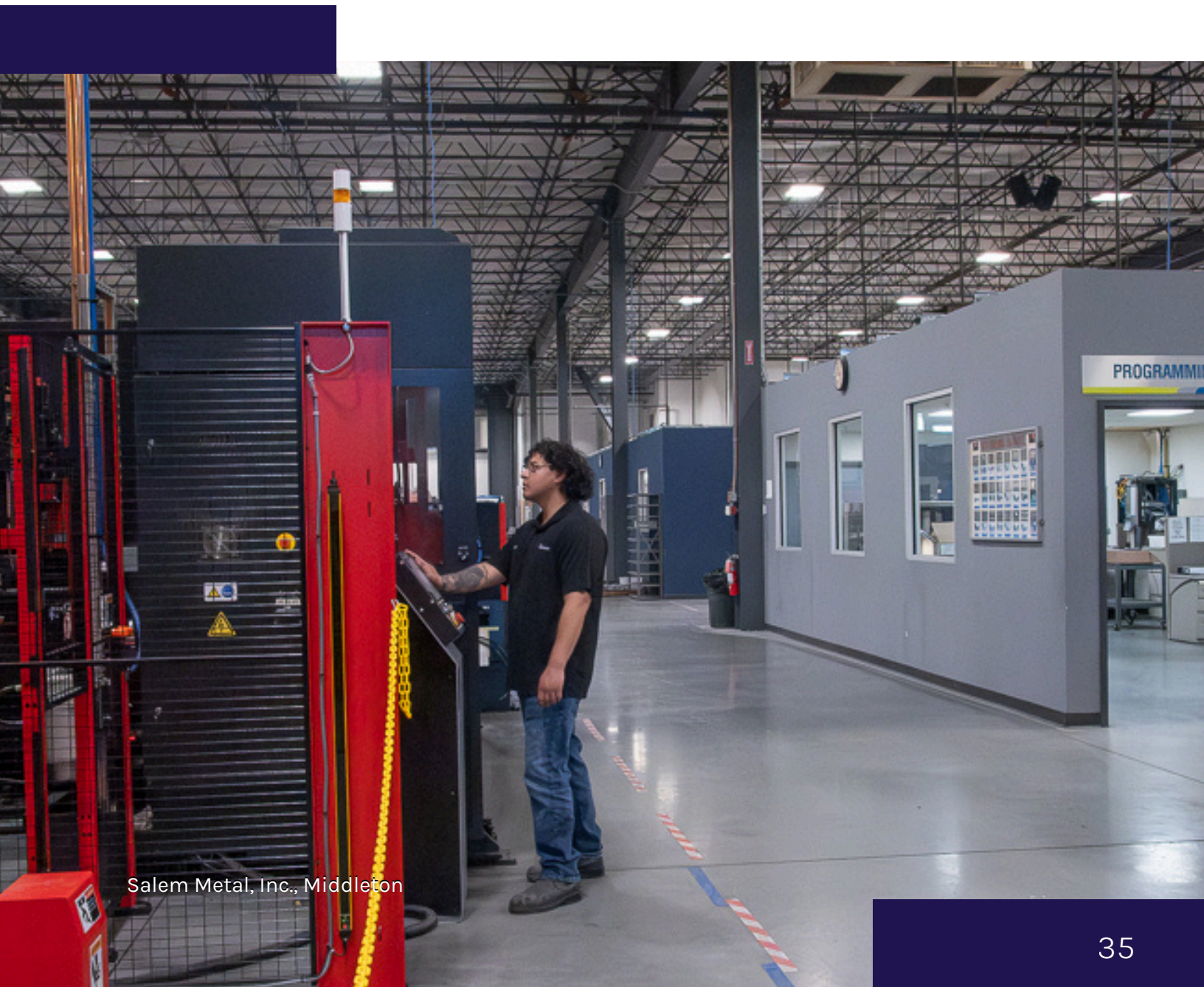
By developing this expertise in-house, Gary BenDavid Builders no longer needs to rely on outside consultants. The training has improved efficiency, reduced costs, and positioned the company to meet stricter energy standards. It also gave Leonard a valuable credential that will support his career growth. "It was a quick turnaround to get approved. The ease of use was the best part – it wasn't labor-intensive to apply," Leonard noted.

For Gary BenDavid, the investment reflects both industry change and community need: "Things are evolving and changing rapidly. Being here on the island, it's not easy to find people with that expertise, so this training filled a real need."

He also encourages other small businesses to explore the program: "Don't let the funding hold you back. There are resources out there," he said.

Through the Workforce Training Fund Express Program, Gary BenDavid Builders strengthened its capabilities, supported its employees, and enhanced its ability to deliver energy-conscious construction to the Martha's Vineyard community. Their experience demonstrates how the Workforce Training Fund Program helps small businesses across Massachusetts become stronger, more self-reliant, and better positioned for a sustainable future.

FY25 GENERAL IMPACT ANALYSIS



Salem Metal, Inc., Middleton

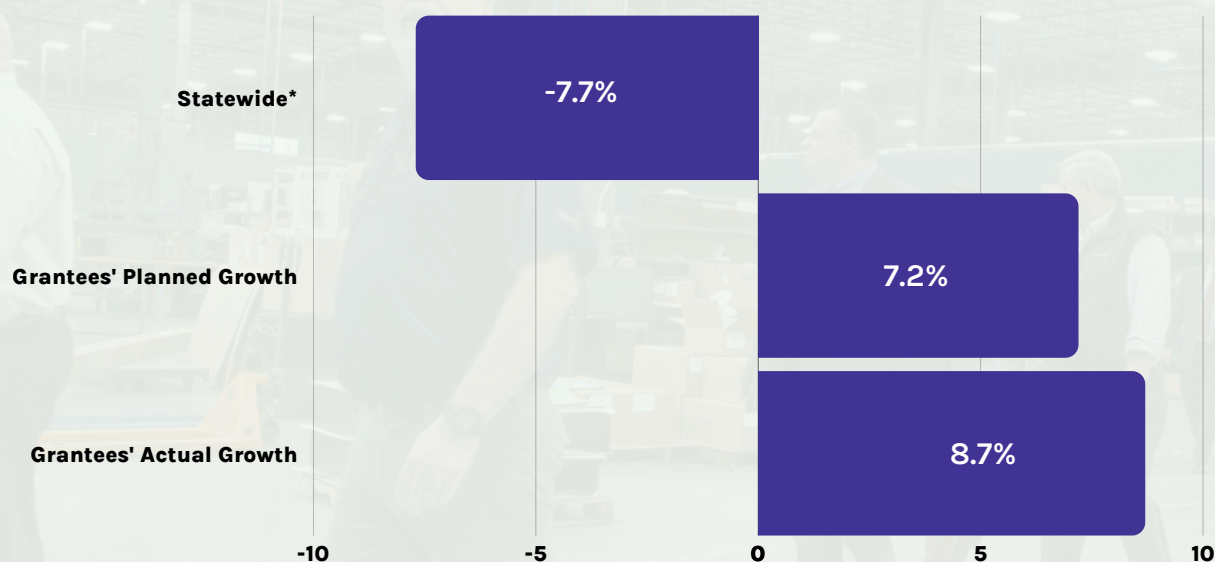
IMPACT ANALYSIS: WTFP GENERAL PROGRAM GRANTS CLOSED IN FY25

General Program Training Grants Completed in FY25

In FY25, 116 General Program Training Grants closed after completing two-year training initiatives. While the 116 grantees originally projected to add 1,887 workers by the end of the two-year grants, these grantees actually added 2,259 net new Massachusetts-based jobs by the end of their grant period.

Employers who completed training during FY25 increased their workforce in Massachusetts by 8.7% over their two-year grant period. This exceeds the 7.2% growth estimated by grantees when grants were approved. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, during the same two-year period, the total number of jobs in Massachusetts decreased by 7.7%. General Program training grants are a transformative tool to generate private-sector job growth in the Commonwealth. Grantees who completed training in FY25 averaged 19 new jobs per grant.

JOB GROWTH RATE COMPARISON FY25



*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Of the 116 grantees to complete training in FY25, 69 experienced a net increase in their Massachusetts workforce, 9 grantees maintained the same employment levels, and 38 reported they had fewer employees at the end of their grant period.

GRANTS COMPLETED IN FY25 BY INDUSTRY

Grants Completed in FY25 (by Industry)	Expenditures	% of Total	# of Grants	Total Trained	Net Jobs Added
Manufacturing	\$5,885,628	54.4%	67	3,261	707
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	\$1,420,982	13.1%	16	1,031	199
Other Services (except Public Admin)	\$733,253	6.8%	7	439	330
Construction	\$630,124	5.8%	6	386	137
Transportation & Warehousing	\$462,277	4.3%	3	308	77
Healthcare & Social Assistance	\$389,220	3.6%	5	307	741
Finance & Insurance	\$384,721	3.6%	3	637	75
Retail	\$211,476	2%	1	61	14
Admin/Support and Waste Management/ Remediation	\$179,725	1.7%	1	42	(1)
Accommodation/Food Service/Hospitality	\$164,397	1.5%	2	78	(56)
Wholesale Trade	\$149,450	1.4%	2	112	37
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	\$107,000	1%	1	15	12
Real Estate/Rental/ Leasing	\$78,400	0.70%	1	24	1
Information	\$24,500	0.20%	1	15	(14)
Grand Total	\$10,821,154	100%	116	6,716	2,259

GRANTS COMPLETED IN FY25 BY WORKFORCE REGION

General Program Grants Closed in FY25 (by Region)	Expenditures	% of Total	# of Grants	Total Trained	Net Jobs Added
Metro North	\$1,740,777	16.1%	15	905	367
Metro South/West	\$1,581,670	14.6%	17	755	10
Boston	\$1,131,087	10.5%	13	736	110
North Shore	\$809,187	7.5%	9	470	3
Hampden	\$798,322	7.4%	8	444	(8)
Greater Lowell	\$798,037	7.4%	9	658	(132)
Bristol	\$740,746	6.8%	8	853	85
Central MA	\$659,535	6.1%	9	643	1,078
South Shore	\$642,950	5.9%	6	202	611
Brockton	\$624,080	5.8%	6	295	17
North Central MA	\$580,150	5.4%	6	352	64
Merrimack Valley	\$280,414	2.6%	2	138	(2)
Franklin/Hampshire	\$154,650	1.4%	3	80	14
Greater New Bedford	\$150,508	1.4%	2	77	5
Cape & Islands	\$78,000	0.7%	1	21	2
Berkshire	\$51,040	0.5%	2	87	35

Grand Total**\$10,821,154****100%****116****6,716****2,259**

For the calendar year January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024, a total of 242,316 employers contributed to the Workforce Training Trust Fund, the source of grant funding. These organizations employed a collective total of 3,334,755 workers* for the same period.

The following table shows the amount collected in each quarter and the total amount collected for the calendar year. The contribution rate is 0.056 percent of the unemployment insurance taxable wage base. Accordingly, the maximum annual contribution for employers is \$8.40 per employee.

Quarter	Amount Collected
2024 Q1 (January-March)	\$2,440,077.19
2024 Q2 (April-June)	\$15,932,226.61
2024 Q3 (July-September)	\$4,748,060.27
2024 Q4 (October-December)	\$3,154,027.64

Total Collections

\$26,274,391.71

**Count of workers includes duplication of individuals if workers are employed by two or more different contributing organizations during one calendar year.*

COMMONWEALTH
 **CORPORATION**

**Workforce Training
Fund Program**

**Thank you for
your continued
support.**

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