

— ***Workforce Development***

Introduction

The Convene - Create - Connect - Grow Program is designed to connect local Nashua residents to medium and high paying jobs through a structured, paid workforce development program. Recognizing the barriers of entry currently present that prohibit people from getting involved in training programs, we are specifically recommending a paid training program that would allow them to focus on bettering their employment prospects while serving a need within a sector located near them.

Our analysis and recommendations focus on the core of Nashua - the downtown and Tree Streets. It is within these areas where the most jobs in healthcare exist and some of the highest unemployment in the city is. With healthcare being one of the most stable and fastest growing sectors in Nashua, our Convene - Create - Connect - Grow Program is meant to geographically link low-income populations with the resources and training to connect to medium - to - high paying jobs in their local area. The program outline below focuses specifically on Healthcare, but this strategy can be applied to other sectors as well. The requirement for the sector is that it is growing and needs workers and that the jobs have potential upwards mobility.

The benefits from doing a workforce development approach are numerous. Workforce development strategies can help specific groups or types of workforce, advance economic self-sufficiency, and improve the skills of the local workforce. Workforce Development also helps address skill and occupational gaps in the local workforce and can support growth in key industries by meeting their labor demands locally. Benefits to the City of Nashua residents and local government include creating a more resilient workforce, improving the performance of the local job market (through creating qualified local residents for jobs), enhance the region's ability to adjust to economic changes and by increasing the likelihood that a sector would locate there based on the presence of qualified job candidates. By creating a local

workforce development program and connecting local residents with local stakeholders will help strengthen Nashua's economy and Nashua's future prospects to grow select sectors with local talent.

Through the Convene – Create – Connect – Grow program would convene local healthcare, educational and institutional partners to create a healthcare working group and pilot program. This working group would work together to identify educational opportunities, share and distribute community resources, match open healthcare jobs with qualified or soon-to-be qualified new healthcare workers. This program is targeted towards healthcare jobs and healthcare resources since there are workforce development programs already available and operating in Nashua. Additionally, the many of the healthcare jobs are physically located in areas of high population density and high unemployment. Thus, residents of the downtown and Tree Streets areas would be physically near their potential jobs and increase their earning potential through the Convene – Create – Connect - Grow Program.

Process

After Phase I analysis was completed for the City of Nashua, this group was formed to look at the existing workforce development resources and to formulate strategies for future connections. This topic was identified as an avenue to focus on at a public meeting on April 6th. The analysis and findings below are based on analysis conducted in Phase I and Phase II and interviews with stakeholders and City of Nashua staff. Through analyzing the existing workforce and workforce development programs, we were able to create Convene - Create - Connect - Grow Program. Below is our analysis and an outline of how to create and structure this type of workforce development program.

1. Demand Side Analysis

Nashua's residents are spatially bifurcated by

class. Those who live on the periphery are generally economically comfortable: unemployment rates are low and jobs seem plentiful. It is different for people living in the denser areas near the city's downtown core. While unemployment rates overall in the city are low, this is not as much the case downtown, where some census blocks see unemployment rates greater than 10%. Given this concentration, it makes sense to focus on workforce development in this downtown area: It already has a diverse and dense cluster of jobs, as well as the population most in need of them. This will allow jobs to cluster in areas which are accessible for people walking and people driving, as well as people within Nashua who are able to commute by transit.

Unemployment for residents in Nashua is concentrated in the center of the city, near downtown and within the Route 3 corridor; our goal is to analyze where this is higher and use a place-based workforce development strategy should focus on jobs easily accessible from these high unemployment areas. These are also areas with relatively high housing density, which means that both the rate of unemployment as well as the overall number of unemployed individuals is highest in this area.

Employment diversity is found throughout the city of Nashua, but more so in the Downtown area than other portions of the city. Amherst Street is dominated by retail, as is the Spit Brook Road area near the Massachusetts border (which also has some manufacturing and office space). Location theory tells us that employees will seek to live in areas near to where they work, and as the center of the region, Downtown Nashua is most able to attract a wide set of employees at these jobs. The multiplier effect of developing this workforce will provide more opportunities for the people living nearby, and the existing employers may be interested in public-private partnerships to grow and diversify the nearby workforce. The workforce living in Nashua's core has a lower educational attainment than those who live further out from the downtown core, so a skill training program should be put in place to address this issue among this population. This is not to say that Nashua—and

Downtown Nashua in particular—should not focus on attracting higher-skilled employment, but that localized unemployment may not be possible to overcome if skills of currently unemployed residents in the downtown area are not improved to match future and current demands of employers.

Nashua's Higher Education network is not particularly strong, with only Rivier University and Nashua Community College in town. One issue is the distant location of Nashua Community College four miles from downtown. It may be advisable to consider creating a satellite branch of the Community College downtown (and, in the long term, plan to move the college downtown—Middlesex Community College in Massachusetts has a suburban campus in Bedford and an urban campus in Lowell—although this would require a large expenditure). The Nashua Transit System provides relatively good service to the Community College every 30 minutes from downtown, with hourly service after 6 p.m.; this service could be enhanced to better meet the needs of students there.

Nashua's economy is dominated by four major industries, and we examined the current demand for each to decide how to best include it in a spatially-based workforce development plan:

- Retail
- Healthcare
- Manufacturing
- Education

Education we eliminated, since most of the jobs are scattered around the city at different school sites, and the number of education professionals is tied to the number of students in the city, not something which can be easily changed. Retail is also challenging from an economic development point of view, especially since most retail is scattered at large sites along corridors near the edge of town, far from where the highest levels of unemployed workers exist. Retail is, with some notable exceptions, also a field which does not provide the level of upward mobility present in other fields.

More proximate to the downtown area are health-

care and manufacturing. Healthcare is the larger of these two industries, with more than twice as many jobs in Nashua as the manufacturing sector, most of which are concentrated in and around the two hospitals downtown. Manufacturing is more spread out through the city; while there is a concentration downtown with BAE, there are not anchor institutions in the same way that there are for the healthcare sector.

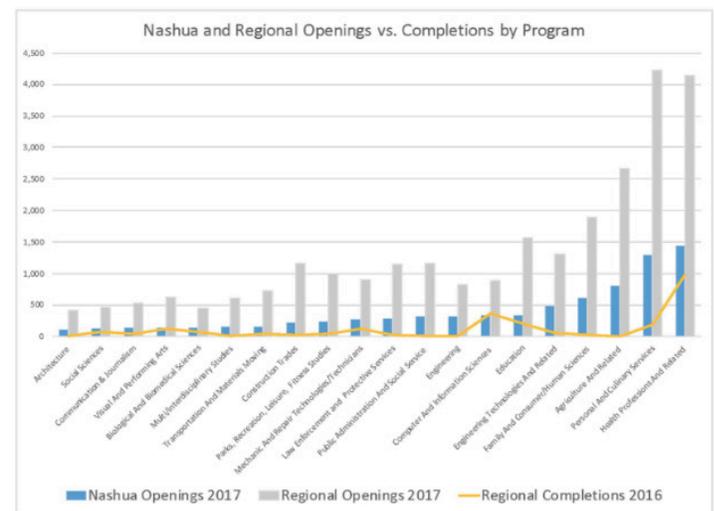
Healthcare jobs are particularly concentrated in this central area. While this is a large sector, entry-level jobs which do not require extensive training are relatively low-paying (and still generally require some schooling). Manufacturing is more spread out, with concentrations in the Spit Brook area, as well as along Amherst Street. Yet in this sector, manual labor is giving way to a more specialized skill set. Not surprisingly, educational attainment is lower in the high unemployment portions of Nashua. In some outer portions of the city, the majority of workers have a college degree, and nearly everyone has at least some college experience. In the downtown, by contrast, there are some census tracts where there are few employees with a college degree, and many with a high school education, equivalency, or less.

The place-based demand analysis shows the need to develop employment opportunities for the less-educated workforce concentrated in the inner part of Nashua. A strategy based on higher-skill jobs would not serve these residents, and may go wanting for employees altogether given the low overall employment in the city, especially amongst employees with higher educational attainment. Healthcare fits this bill, as it is the most stable of these sectors. Retail and manufacturing are less-so: the future of retail is uncertain given the recent increases in online retailing and automation at brick-and-mortar stores, even with Nashua's built-in tax advantage on the Massachusetts border. As for manufacturing, Nashua has been through several boom-and-bust manufacturing cycles, from the woolen mills in the 1800s to the microcomputers of the 1990s. The healthcare sector will provide a steady stream of jobs for these employees, and provide jobs nearby al-

lowing lower-income residents to take advantage of opportunities without the need to invest in a reliable vehicle. These programs could be ported to other industries if successful: healthcare is a good place to start: it has a few large employers, and they are strategically located near the population most in need of employment.

2. Residents of Nashua Analysis

Our “supply-side” analysis of Nashua’s workforce compares the skills of regional and local workers to open jobs that correspond to that particular program. First, in order to better understand how local and regional educational institutions are preparing students for the job market, we examined how program completions from the 14 institutions in the Manchester-Nashua Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) compared to job openings in Nashua and in the larger MSA in 2017 (Figure 4.b1).



F1: Nashua and Regional Openings vs. Completions by Program

Figure 4.b1 indicates that there are an underproduction of graduates compared to available jobs across all sectors — in many cases, all regional completions do not account for the number of Nashua openings, let alone those in the wider region. This gap widens noticeably as the number of openings increases, indicating that there might be a lag between fast-growing industries and educational institutions’ offerings.

Workforce Development

Most relevant to our plan is the finding that there is a clear gap between completions and openings in health professions. Although regional completions in health professions in 2016 (976) was more than double that of the next highest-producing program (business, management and marketing; 408), there were 1,431 jobs to be filled that next year in Nashua alone and 4,138 at the regional scale.

It is important to note that there were significant gaps in personal and culinary services; engineering and engineering technologies; agriculture; and human sciences. Though many of these sectors are low-paid, engineering technologies in particular might be an avenue for future exploration should Nashua decide to expand its focus beyond the healthcare sector.

Figures 4.b2 and 4.b3 indicate the portion of regional completions attributable to Nashua Community College and Rivier University, Nashua's two local institutions most accessible to populations this plan hopes to reach. Nashua CC's completions represent a large portion of completions in liberal arts; health professions; and business and management, while Rivier's are a large portion in computer and IT; education; health professions; and business management. Nashua CC also helps fulfill some of the need for mechanics and repair technicians and precision production, both occupational areas earlier identified as "opportunity occupations" for their low educational requirements but high wage-earning potential.

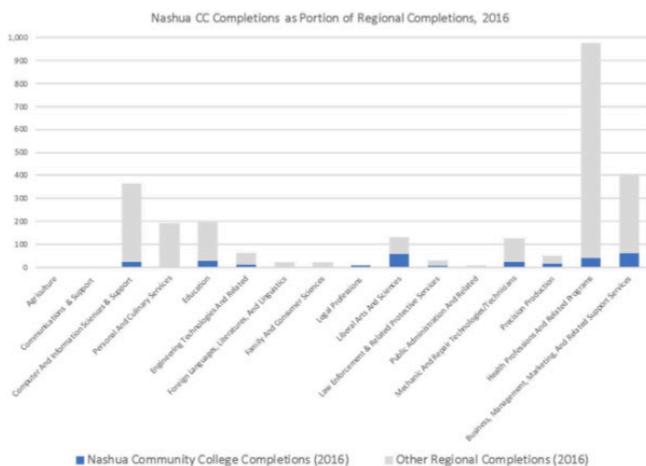


FIGURE 4.b2: Nashua CC completions compared to other completions regionally. Source: ESMI.

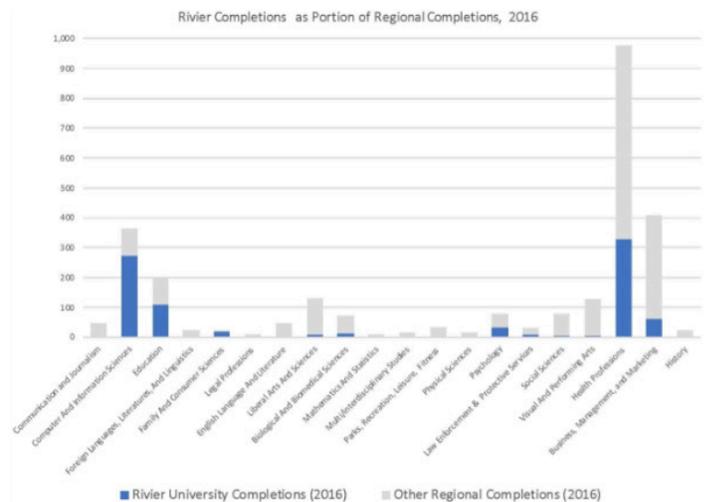


FIGURE 4.b3: Nashua CC completions compared to other completions regionally. Source: ESMI.

3. Supply Side Analysis

Within Nashua, there are currently many organizations focused on training new workforce employees and providing resources to keep their residents up to date with the current and emerging markets. Both non-profit and local government entities have programs available for different sectors - like out-of-work veterans, local high school students, and technology training for older individuals. While programs and resources are present, there is a lack of coordination and awareness about said programs within the broader community.

3.1 Nashua Community College

The local community college, Nashua Community College, is a prime example of this. With over 30 potential certificate and Associate Degrees for students to choose from, there is an abundance of opportunities for residents of Nashua to get connected to education and careers at the local level. NCC focuses their education within 6 umbrella - Art, Humanities, Communication & Design, Business, Social, Educational & Behavioral Sciences, Health Science, STEM and Advanced Manufacturing, and Industry and Transportation. Based on our analysis of Nashua's big industries and employers, NCC and its residents looking to get involved in an emerging industry should focus

on Health Science, Business, and STEM and Advanced Manufacturing

See Appendix 3.1 for list of current offerings from NCC

Manufacturing

Since Nashua has maintained some of its legacy as a manufacturing city, NCC has been able to build on that and offer its educational services to local manufacturing businesses. By continuing these types of partnerships and expanding their relationships with local manufacturing businesses, students and local residents can get involved with innovation occurring at the local level.

Nursing

Since NCC currently offers a Nursing Associates Degree as well as an RN to BSN Pathway Program, there is local opportunities for residents to get involved in nursing without leaving Nashua. Since the nursing and hospital science area is changing, there is opportunity for local development of programs around life science innovation and health related manufacturing. The medical device field would be an interesting area to explore due to the presences of multiple hospitals in Nashua and the proximity to other life science and medical device manufacturing areas in the larger Nashua region.

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Nashua is connected with NCC as well as the local high school to engage young people with entering the medical workforces. Currently Dartmouth-Hitchcock Nashua provides internships for high school students, undergraduate and graduates students. In addition to summer internships, they have workforce training programs in the following areas:

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Nashua Workforce Development Programs

- Nurse Assistant Training Program
- Ophthalmic Assistant Training Program
- Surgical Technology Training Program
- Surgical Technologist Apprenticeship Program

- Certified Pharmacy Technician Apprenticeship Program
- Medical Assistant Apprenticeship Program
- Patient Service Representative Training Program
- Physician Assistant Postgraduate Surgical Residency Program

English as Second Language Program

NCC currently offers non-credit courses, ESOL academic courses, and a monthly conversation group for non-native english speakers. These offerings allow local residents to learn english and practice with native english speakers.

High School Connection

NCC and Nashua High Schools are connected via the Running Start Program. Running Start allows high school students to enroll in NCC courses for both high school and college credit. These types of programs allow students to begin their post-high school education early. They also allow students to explore fields they might join later. There is potential for further development of high school student involvement through open house days and NCC tours. Scholarships are currently available for students enrolled in the Running Start Program to take STEM and STEM related courses.

3.2 Rivier

Rivier University has a large, well-known health-care/nursing program. As healthcare is a growing industry in Nashua, Rivier would be a prime partner for the City to keep graduates within Nashua. Rivier has an Employment Guarantee program that will either pay Federal loans for up to 12 months or prove 6 graduate-level courses for free if the graduate is not employed within 9 months of graduating. Nashua could partner with this program and give additional incentives for the graduate to be employed within the City.

3.3 Nashua Adult Learning Center

The Adult Learning Center would be a great place to further focus workforce development on. The Adult Learning Center current offers GED prepa-

ration and testing, English classes for non-native English speakers, computer, medical, and accounting courses, college preparation courses, and citizenship classes. In addition to offering courses and programs for non-traditional students, they also offer childcare for young children. By offering childcare, parents are able to interact more easily with employers and continue to work.

3.4 High School Job Training Connections

The local high school currently has connections with the Nashua Community College through the Running Start Program. There is also a connection between the high school and YMCA.

YMCA

The Nashua YMCA currently has a Leaders Club and Y-Achievers program. These programs allow students and youth to explore areas of interest in the local region. The programs aim is to show students the variety of careers available and to help prepare them for said career by helping craft a plan for after high school.

3.5 Social Services Related Workforce Development

Nashua currently has many different social services agencies and nonprofits working with low-income residents of Nashua. Many of these social service related agencies are focused exclusively on below-poverty or near-poverty residents of Nashua. Many of these services and programs are meant to be in coordination with the receipt of other services, such as case management, supportive housing, financial services, life skills training, etc. The below list and description of organizations/services is from preliminary research.

People with Disabilities

For people with disabilities, there are many different programs focused on connecting residents with the resources they need to be happy, healthy, and thriving in Nashua. Program providers include the Greater Nashua Mental Health Center and Harbor Homes. Greater Nashua Mental Health Center partners with St. Joseph Hospital, Dart-

mouth-Hitchcock Nashua Clinic, Home Health & Hospice Care to provide Project SEARCH.

Project SEARCH is a school to work project for individuals with cognitive and physical disabilities. This project gives individuals the educational and job training support for them to continue to work after they leave Project SEARCH. While employment is not guaranteed after graduating from the program, the goal is to give students the training to enter the healthcare workforce

Job Assistance for Individuals experiencing homelessness and veterans

For people experiencing homelessness, the most important thing is to get them into housing as a starting point. By taking a “Housing First” approach, it ensures that people do not have to worry about where they and their families are sleeping each night. By working with the individual(s) to provide housing first, some of the burden is lifted and the individual can then move forward and work on life skills, finding/maintaining employment, etc. There are a handful of service providers that focus their wrap-around services on providing individuals experiencing homelessness with employment and life skills training.

3.6 Immigrant Community Involvement

In interviews and meetings with our stakeholders, the topic of the “immigrant community” and “low income community” has come up many times. The theme of many of these interviews is around the perceived lack of involvement from these communities in local programs and their inability to take advantage of existing resources.

Immigrant Nonprofits

There is currently a disconnect between City of Nashua efforts for addressing immigrant unemployment and the on-the-ground work conducted by immigrant and refugee focused non-profits. In addition, there is a lack of online presence from immigrant and refugee groups. While these types of groups may be working in Nashua and creating tangible benefits for those they work with, their work is not appearing in local media or being dis-

tributed to a larger Nashua-wide audience.

One Greater Nashua

Welcoming New Hampshire is focused on bringing foreign born and native New Hampshire residents together. Beginning in 2015, One Greater Nashua began working with foreign born populations in Nashua. Their goal between 2015 and 2018 was to promote social inclusion and cross-cultural interaction for youth/families, create a cultural navigators program to help connect newcomers with skills and locals, diversify local leadership engagement, and to create a space to discuss community issues.

3.7 Nashua Workforce Resources

Nashua has a few local resources that open for all residents to use. The Nashua Public Library provides Job Corps and Employer Connect. Job Corps assists 18 to 24 year olds with job training and educational connections. The goal is to connect young residents of Nashua with local employers and local educational supports to help propel them forward. Employer Connect is a job fair run by the Nashua Public Library where employers come and connect with job seekers.

4. Case Studies

4.1 Project Quest - Economic Opportunities Program

Project Quest arose from the realization that there was a “skills mismatch” between workers and job opportunities in the San Antonio area. San Antonio’s economic base shifted from manufacturing to technology- and service-driven industries. These new jobs had good wages but also requires specialized skills that few workers in the area had.

Project Quest offers two types of services: skills training and Quest Prep. The skills training is provided through partner institutions, including Alamo Colleges, the University of Texas Health Science Center, and the Baptist School of Health Professions. Programming focuses on key skills

such as installation and maintenance, healthcare, and information technology. The training targets in-demand occupations as identified by Workforce Solutions Alamo, the City of San Antonio, and Bexar County Economic Development Departments.

The skills training is comprehensive. Participants have weekly “vision, initiative, and perseverance” meetings and with career counselors. These weekly meetings cover work readiness skills like time management, stress management, goal setting, financial planning, and transition to employment. Project Quest also offers transportation and childcare assistance to participants.

For those skills training applicants whose test scores on intake assessments are below college level, they can access the Quest Prep “academic enhancement” classes. This self-paced educational program aims to elevate the reading and math level of participants to college level. The program is conducted in partnership with the San Antonio School District.

Project Quest is relevant to our work in Nashua for a few reasons. Nashua, too, has a “skills mismatch” as the economic base transitions to one more heavily focused on technology. Quest’s occupational approach and comprehensive services offer a model for how Nashua might respond to this transition. Additionally, Project Quest is successful in part because of its strong network of partners in education and skills training. Nashua may be able to learn from Quest’s fruitful relationship with local colleges and educational institutions in crafting its own workforce development strategy.

4.2: Baltimore: BioSTART

BioSTART, the BioTechnical Institute of Maryland Laboratory Associates Program, offers tuition-free biotechnical training to unemployed and underemployed residents. Many of the participants have graduated from high school, but have not earned an associate’s or bachelor’s degree. This program offers them the opportunity to learn basic labora-

Workforce Development

tory and medical skills. In partnership with John Hopkins Medical Center, the University of Maryland, Baltimore Community College, and private employers, the BTI Laboratory Associates offers a two-component program. First, participants go through a 12-week, 240 hour BioSTART training program that offers them basic math skills, communication and professional development, and bio-lab-specific knowledge. Second, the participants are offered a 100-hour paid internship in a medical facility. Afterwards, those who completed the program either get a job through one of the partners, or receive a semester's-worth of credits to receive their associate's or bachelor's degrees. 265 Baltimore residents have completed the program; 75% of whom work in a bio-related job and 40% of whom received a degree.

5. Recommendations and Steps

Based on stakeholder feedback, anchored by the demand and supply analysis, we believe the healthcare industry has significant opportunity for workforce development. The two hospitals proximate to the Tree Streets neighborhood, the job opportunities for an array of skills, and the growth that is already happening in healthcare in Nashua makes healthcare a good first industry to focus on.

Therefore we recommend the City help:

1. Convene - Healthcare Sector Working Group. This working group, composed of the City of Nashua, educational institutions, healthcare institutions, social services, workforce development programs, and other interested parties, would create an pilot program for residents to provide education and job training to prepare residents for and ultimately be employed with healthcare jobs.

In order to get community participation and to gauge interest in committing the time and resources to make a pilot program work, it is important that leadership from the City (Mayor), institutions (college heads), social services (executive direc-

tors) and healthcare (top executives) understand the benefits for coordination. Gathering a team of local leaders within the major healthcare employers, the group can collaborate on existing resources and develop a joint plan of action for creating a Healthcare Jobs Pilot Program. Potential organizations to be in this working group include the Nashua Community College, Rivier College, St. Joseph's Hospital, Dartmouth-Hitchcock Hospital, Business and Industry Association of Nashua, and local non-profit and community groups (United Way, Adult Learning Center, and other social services non-profits/organizations). A potential agency to champion this group development is the Business and Industry Association – since they are an agency that cuts across program and business type. The BIA has been recommended to us from stakeholders due to it's influence and presence within Nashua.

Having a clear vision and coordination for this first step is vital for developing a successful program. By convening this working group, it is expected that partner agencies will be committed to the mission of creating more employment opportunities and momentum for the people they are trying to serve. It is also important to recognize the work already done in Nashua and connect organizations, educational institutions, and institutions. To assess the interest of these partner organizations, there should be a series of sessions that allow organizations to understand what each other does and create a cohesive program that will help facilitate the educational resources with mentorship and assistances from healthcare agencies.

Next steps for this pilot program include[s] :

1. Connecting with key players – outlined above
 - a. The Mayor should connect with the CEOs and Presidents of the healthcare and educational industries and boards of hospitals.
 - b. Community influencers should be identified and incorporated into the pilot program.
2. Hosting a preliminary brainstorming meeting
 - a. This should be to identify missing groups and brainstorm funding and partner possibilities.

TIMELINE: Short term – 6 months to 1 year. During this time period, stakeholders and potential partners should be identified, key stakeholders should be brought into the working group, and a mission statement and program outline should be created

2. Create Healthcare Jobs Pilot Program. After the working group has been created and a program goal has been identified, the pilot program can be created. Through mapping resources (educational for program enrollees, available job types, etc.), the program can begin to take shape. Agencies are expected to be upfront with their employment needs and educational institutions are expected to evaluate their existing programs for potential partnership and expansion. From a strong mission statement and end goal, as well as continuous conversations at the broader City level to facilitate coordination, a program connecting underemployed, undereducated populations local to healthcare jobs and the necessary training and resources to get them into those jobs.

We believe the City of Nashua, the Nashua Community College, St. Joseph's Hospital, and Southern New Hampshire Medical Center should co-own this pilot program. Stakeholders also identified Business Industry and Association and the Chamber of Commerce as potential partners and recognized the need for service providers to play a prominent role. Through the Healthcare Working Group

-TIMELINE: Medium term. The pilot program should begin to be created 6 months to 1 year after the working group has been convened. This process will take a lot of back and forth and coordination, so leaving room for conversations to happen is important.

3. Connect- Healthcare Jobs Pilot Program. This pilot program would capitalize on existing training resources in Nashua and the surrounding area, while identifying gaps in education that could be filled by the healthcare or educational institutions. Stakeholders pointed to financial difficulty for unemployed and underemployed to take time from their current job(s) as a major inhibitor to the ex-

isting training programs. We call attention to the Biotechnical Institute of Maryland Laboratory Associates Program, which has a two part program: a 240-hour, 12-week bioSTART program focused on math, communication, and professional development, followed by a 100-hour paid internship program. At the end of the program, trainees are either hired by the medical institutions or given a semester's-worth of credits towards an associate's degree at the community college. 265 have gone through the program, with 75% obtaining a healthcare job with salaries above \$25,000 and 40% earning an associates or bachelor degree.

A key part of this program is that it is paid. These programs are most effective when people can commit themselves fully towards a program without having to juggle other priorities, like holding their current jobs or finding childcare while the program runs. Lowering the barrier of entry and committing time and resources to this program and the people within it will be vital to its potential success.

TIMELINE: Medium term – 1 to 2 years. Allow the program to run for 1 to 2 years with multiple check-ins with the healthcare working group. A re-evaluation and assessment of the program at the 1 year mark to find what is and is not working with the program will strengthen the program and outcomes.

4. Grow - If this pilot program is successful, we recommend expanding it to manufacturing or technology sectors. Since the manufacturing and technology sectors exist within Nashua and are expected to grow, the pilot program can grow to include these sectors. By including these sectors, coordination and recruitment of local talent can help foster long-term connections.

-TIMELINE: Long-term – 2+ years. After reassessing the initial healthcare pilot program, the City and community stakeholders can assess which sector to expand to. This will involve a re-commitment from City officials and key stakeholders to the overall mission of providing better employment opportunities for all residents of Nashua

Workforce Development

– and providing a program that will help provide residents with a low-barrier point of entry.

Identifying lead agencies for the expansion of these programs early can make the expansion of these programs easier. Additionally, expanding the program to include these sectors can spark conversation within the community about who the stakeholders and key people are:

-Potential Lead organization for Technology: BAE Systems.

-Potential lead organization for Manufacturing: Nashua Community College, Bagshaw Co.