

# The Future of Boston's Workforce:

The path forward  
from COVID-19

FINDINGS  
FROM THE  
GREATER BOSTON  
WORKING  
GROUP



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SkillWorks is a nationally recognized workforce funder collaborative and public/private partnership between the Boston Foundation and the City of Boston, launched in 2003 to improve workforce development in Boston and across the Commonwealth. SkillWorks brings together philanthropy, government, community organizations and employers to address the twin goals of helping low income individuals attain family supporting jobs and businesses find skilled workers.

## ABOUT THE PROJECT ON WORKFORCE AT HARVARD

The Project on Workforce is an interdisciplinary, collaborative project between the Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School, the Harvard Business School Managing the Future of Work Project, and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The Project's mission is to chart the course for a post-secondary system of the future that creates more & better pathways to economic mobility; and, to catalyze action across leaders in business, education and policy to collectively address America's shared skills & employment needs.

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## The path forward from COVID-19

FINDINGS FROM THE GREATER BOSTON WORKING GROUP

Prepared on behalf of the  
Project on Workforce at Harvard and the Boston Foundation  
by  
Will Dorsey Eden, Joseph Fuller, and Rachel Lipson



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THE PROJECT ON  
**WORKFORCE**

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The views expressed in this publication are those of the editors and individuals quoted and do not represent those of the organizations they represent or any of their officers or employees.

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# Preface

**A time of skyrocketing unemployment** claims, growing human suffering, and a once-in-a-generation crisis was and remains a unique opportunity to contribute collectively to the recovery of the labor market in our city over the short, medium, and long term. Equipped with a set of world-class public, private, and not-for-profit institutions that call Greater Boston home, the region is better placed than many to emerge from this crisis stronger than it started it. Our current moment provides a unique impetus and opportunity for the public, private, and nonprofit ecosystem in the region to tackle big, enduring problems together and build durable partnerships that would not have been possible during normal times.

In this moment of crisis, we simply can't afford to be duplicating efforts or leaving any resources to the wayside. For these reasons, the Boston Foundation and Harvard launched last spring a collective effort to respond across institutional lines. With the help of leaders across the city, our joint aspiration was to:

- 1) identify areas of greatest need for the city's workers,
- 2) work to ensure that existing resources and initiatives across sectors are deployed to address those areas, and;
- 3) encourage successful initiatives to scale and to marshal new resources to address both the effects of the crisis and existing inequities that COVID-19 has exacerbated.

To advance our purposes, we solicited views from a diverse range of stakeholders across the city and region. We sought their help in identifying priority areas for inter-institutional collaboration. We found their reflections so insightful that we thought they were worth sharing with the public at large.

We hope the release of this report will help others to understand the landscape of existing initiatives in the city, ongoing challenges in the labor market, and opportunities for collaboration in the service of systems change. This is only the start of the work to come—it will be up to all of us to ensure collective success. In the process, we believe there is the potential for Boston to emerge from the current crisis as a model for the rest of the country.

*Joseph Fuller, Harvard Business School*  
*Paul Grogan, The Boston Foundation*



# Executive Summary

## **Prior to the arrival of the novel**

**coronavirus**, an economic boom had propelled unemployment rates nationally to a 50-year low. However, in Greater Boston, like much of the country, prosperity was not broadly shared: Wages remained stagnant for workers without four-year degrees and racial gaps persisted across education levels. The arrival of COVID-19 in March 2020 abruptly ended this boom, and exacerbated Greater Boston's growing economic divide. As the region recovers, inequities persist, with disproportionate economic effects on Greater Boston's low-wage earners, Black and Latinx workers, workers without college degrees, women, and immigrants.

In response to the unprecedented disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic on Greater Boston's economy and workforce, the Boston Foundation, Skillworks, and the Project on Workforce at Harvard partnered to convene workforce leaders from across the region to address how might Greater Boston's organizations work across institutional lines to address the labor market challenges that the pandemic had laid bare. In an effort to answer the medium- and long-run implications for the workforce, leaders sought to understand

the region's response to the crisis, as well as remaining needs, challenges, and opportunities. Through interviews and surveys with these leaders during the summer and fall of 2020, the Project on Workforce at Harvard collated and analyzed responses from a diverse group of stakeholders. Our intention in this work is to identify and frame areas of consensus for a cross-sector agenda for collective action.

This report serves to summarize the findings from that effort. It proceeds in four sections. In Section 1, we provide context on Greater Boston's labor market and economy before and during the current crisis.

In Section 2, we discuss how organizations have responded to the COVID-19 crisis, including changes to their operations, priorities, and strategies. In Section 3, we share key findings on how Greater Boston's institutions are planning for the future, including both their hopes and their worries for the long-term implications on the workforce. Finally, in Section 4, we share reflections from the stakeholders engaged in this process about opportunities for a shared strategy and collective response to the crisis in Greater Boston.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### SECTION 1

#### CONTEXT: THE GREATER BOSTON LABOR FORCE PRE-PANDEMIC AND NOW

**Pre-COVID:** Wages were not growing for non-college educated workers and racial gaps existed across education levels.

**Now:** Greater Boston and low-income workers remain disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

## WHAT ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT NEEDS OF GREATER BOSTON'S LABOR FORCE AND HOW CAN THEY BE ADDRESSED?

### SECTION 2

#### HOW HAVE ORGANIZATIONS RESPONDED AND WHAT ISSUES REMAIN?

**Changes** in operations, job losses, the growing need for wraparound services, and accelerating inequality were the most referenced changes.

**The pressing issues** of growing job opportunities, scaling training, closing equity gaps, and providing wraparound services were the most referenced.

**The most underserved** workers are people of color, followed by low-income and undocumented workers.

### SECTION 3

#### HOW ARE ORGANIZATIONS PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE?

With some exceptions, stakeholders believe **Boston will recover**, but fear its inequities are unlikely to be addressed.

Organizations are **scenario planning** for revenue shortfalls, in-person or remote operations, and a new economy.

In an **ideal world**, stakeholders would address employment inequities, orient the system towards outcomes, and provide adequate funding.

### SECTION 4

#### HOW CAN GREATER BOSTON'S ECOSYSTEM COLLECTIVELY RESPOND TO THE CRISIS?

**Initiatives** stakeholders are watching include local and national platforms, skills-based hiring initiatives, wraparound services, and capacity-building initiatives.

**Stakeholder organizations need funding** to support operations, expanded teaching capacity, and investments in technology.

**Partners** are diverse and many, but rarely executing a shared strategy.



# Background

**In early March 2020**, the Boston Foundation and Harvard's Project on Workforce convened a small group of regional leaders to identify opportunities for inter-institutional collaboration on workforce development and the future of work in the Greater Boston region. Just a few days later, with the onset of the COVID-19 crisis and the declaration of a global pandemic, the world changed dramatically. In response to the economic disruption and human suffering induced by COVID-19, the two institutions reconvened an expanded set of stakeholders from throughout the region to help define and shape what the future for the region's workforce strategy should look like. Jointly, we defined three primary objectives for convening this group and soliciting participants' views.

## Key Objectives:

Collectively identify areas of greatest need for the city's labor force

Ensure that existing resources and initiatives across sectors and institutions are deployed strategically to address these areas

Scale efforts and marshal new resources to address both the effects of the crisis and existing inequities that have been exacerbated by it

47

**Greater Boston leaders consulted across the public, private, nonprofit, and research sectors**

## Process

To gather information to inform these objectives, we needed to learn from the experiences of those leading on the ground. In the ensuing months, The Project on Workforce at Harvard collected the views of 47 key stakeholders across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Through interviews and surveys, we sought to understand how Greater Boston responded to the labor market changes brought on by the pandemic, and identify what opportunities existed to collectively shape and improve the employment ecosystem for the future.

## Project Background and Process

**Context:** How might Greater Boston's organizations work across institutional lines to address the needs of the region's workforce?

<b>March 2020</b>	<b>Convene Stakeholders</b> Harvard and the Boston Foundation convene an initial group of stakeholders to identify areas for inter-institutional collaboration in Greater Boston's Skills Ecosystem
<b>Summer-Fall 2020</b>	<b>Interview &amp; Survey</b> Interviewed and surveyed Boston leaders across sectors to understand how the crisis had shifted or affected priority workforce needs
<b>Fall-Winter 2020</b>	<b>Collate Findings &amp; Distill Report</b> Identified themes and synthesized findings within the region's changes, challenges, and opportunities
<b>Summer 2021</b>	<b>Share Report &amp; Discuss Next Steps</b> Distribute report to stakeholders for collective action planning

## Stakeholder Map



Boston has a unique and rich set of institutional assets, and the group gathered perspectives from a diverse set of stakeholders spanning institutions engaged in research, training, and policy. For a complete list of stakeholders interviewed and surveyed, see Appendix.

## Key Questions

This report is a summary of the key learnings we distilled from this process. Our interviews and surveys were aimed at deepening the diagnosis of the current crisis and its impact on Greater Boston’s workers and identifying high leverage solutions. We organized our research questions in four broad buckets.

In an introductory set of questions, we gave participants the opportunity to share overarching observations on the impact of the pandemic in their sphere of work. We asked them what were the biggest changes they had observed as a result of the pandemic—to their organizations, to workers or those entering the labor force, and to the economy. We also solicited their stories on how their organizational and day-to-day work priorities had changed as a result of the pandemic.

In the subsequent section, we sought to collect information that would help identify areas of greatest need for the region's workers. To do so, our questions aimed to better understand perceptions of how Boston's economy will evolve, and the areas of currently unmet need. We asked participants what they believed to be the three most urgent or most concerning issues related to Boston's workforce, and what they perceived as the most overlooked opportunities relating to Boston's workforce. In a follow-up question, we asked them to imagine what Boston's economy might look like over the next five to 10 years, in three cases: pessimistic case (if Boston were to utterly fail in its economic recovery efforts); base case (if existing efforts continued in their current form); and optimistic case (if the right

resources, initiatives, and partnerships were deployed). We also solicited their views about high-needs populations perceived to be underserved in the current environment.

In the next section of questions, we sought to understand how existing resources and initiatives across sectors could be deployed strategically to address priority needs. We asked questions that would help us map how resources are currently allocated across partners in Greater Boston. We wanted to understand current needs and priorities at the organizational and societal levels, as well as for research. For researchers, we sought out their diagnosis of needs and problems in Boston's workforce at a macro level. All of these questions focused on partnerships, data sources, and strategy. We asked leaders about their existing partnerships as well as the initiatives both inside and outside Greater Boston that they were monitoring closely. We also asked about scenario planning and what types of additional support would be helpful to organizations in meeting their goals. We were particularly interested in any initiatives that could be impactful but might have stalled (whether because of a lack of staff resources, funding, and/or partners).

In the final section, we sought to solicit ideas about how to scale efforts in Greater Boston and marshal new resources to address both the effects of the crisis and existing inequities that have been exacerbated. The aim for these questions was to better define goals for the future, and understand what barriers exist in scaling the work already underway, whether they be regulatory, funding, partnerships, or user engagement. In this section, we asked the participants what they would do if they could wave a "magic wand" and direct any of Boston's institutions (whether public, private, or not-for-profit) to do anything they wanted. We specifically asked for both short-term and longer-run recommendations, and also cued what new partnerships would be helpful in achieving this.

# I.

## Economic Context

In this section, we share select economic and labor market data points to provide context on Greater Boston's labor market and economy both before and during the pandemic. For pre-pandemic insights, we revisit key findings from *Boston's Booming... But for Whom?* published by Boston Indicators,

the research arm of the Boston Foundation. For data from the onset of the pandemic onwards, we draw heavily on Opportunity Insights' Economic Tracker, which monitors the economic impacts of COVID-19 on people, businesses, and communities across the United States in real time.

**Key Takeaway:** The pandemic accelerated existing inequities. These disparities persist even as the region prepares for recovery.

**Pre-COVID:** Workers without a four-year degree saw wages stagnate and racial disparities remained across all education levels.

**Prosperity unevenly shared:** Even though Boston's economy was growing pre-crisis, most workers without a college degree were not benefitting.

**Middle class hollowing out:** Inequality was increasing as household growth in Boston mostly concentrated in high-wage and low-wage brackets, rather than in the middle. Large racial gaps persisted, even among college-educated workers.

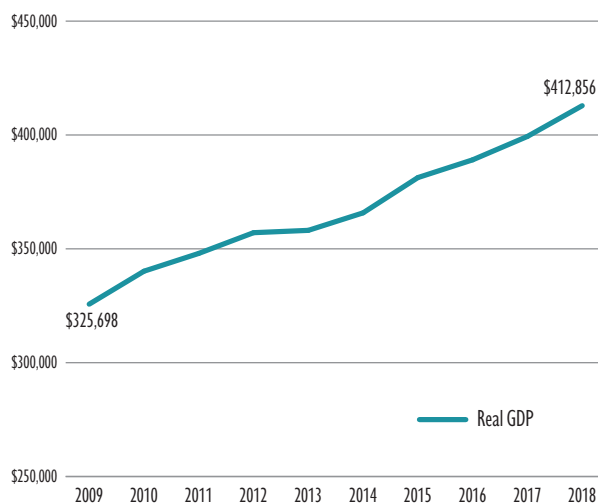
**Now:** Urban, service industry, women, immigrants, and workers of color remain disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

**Disproportionately impacted:** Greater Boston and low-income workers remain disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Decreases in job openings across the board; but most stark in leisure and hospitality sectors. Higher wage workers are recovering, but low wage workers face persistently high unemployment. The greatest decreases in job openings are for workers with lower levels of education; with one of the starkest declines of all metro areas in the US. Existing racial inequities have been exacerbated.

## Greater Boston's Pre-COVID Economy and Workforce

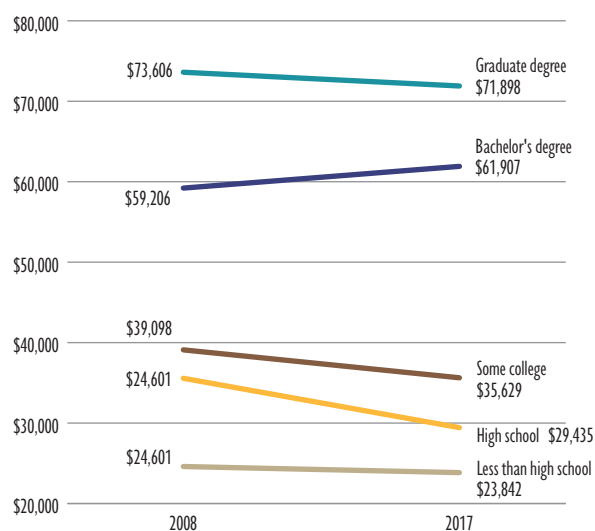
Even though Boston's economy was growing pre-crisis, most workers without a college degree were not benefiting.

FIGURE 2  
Gross Domestic Product



Source: Boston Indicators: *Boston's Booming... But For Whom?*

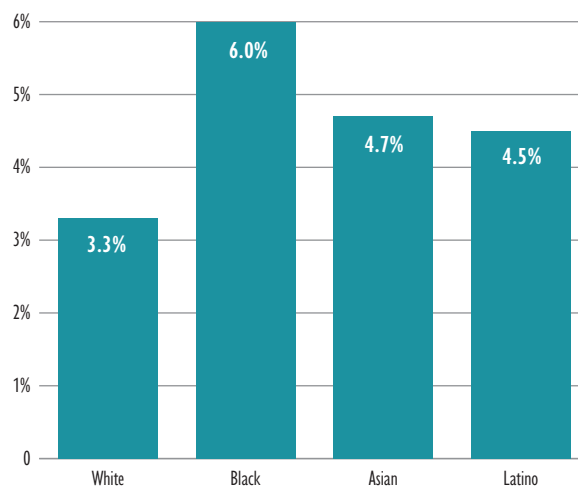
FIGURE 3  
Average Income by Level of Education



Source: Boston Indicators: *Boston's Booming... But For Whom?*

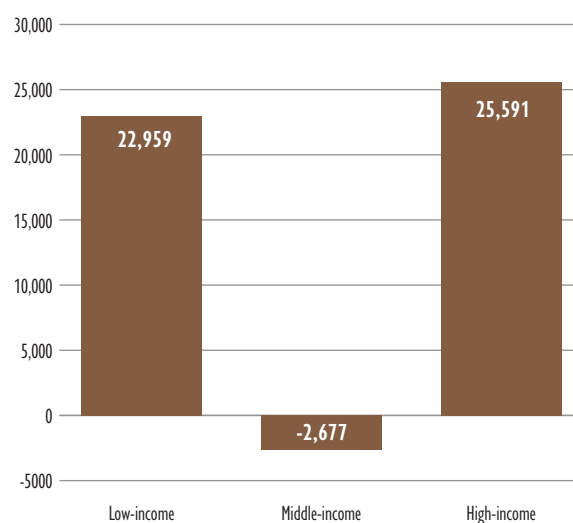
Racial disparities in job access persisted, even for workers of color with college degrees. Black workers holding bachelor's degrees were nearly twice as likely as White workers holding bachelor's degrees to be unemployed.

FIGURE 4  
Unemployment Rate for Workers with a Bachelor's Degree or More 2013–2018



Source: Boston Indicators: *Boston's Booming... But For Whom?*

FIGURE 5  
Change in Number of Households by Household Income Bucket 1980–2017



Source: Chetty, Friedman, Hendren, Stepner, and the OI Team (2020) [tracktherecovery.org](https://tracktherecovery.org)

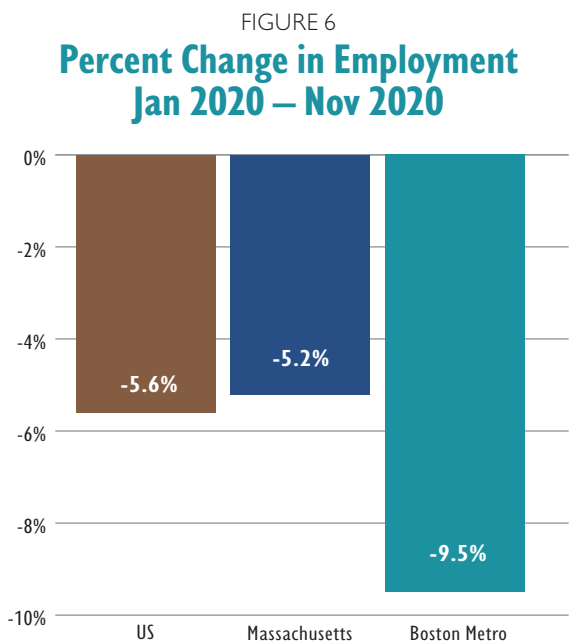


These disparities continued to hollow out the region's middle class, which saw a decline as workers split between low- and high-income sectors.

These trends illuminate the inequities ingrained in the region's economy and workforce prior to the pandemic, and underscore the need not to rebuild, but to build a more equitable future of work.

## Present

At the outset of the pandemic in the spring and summer of 2020, Greater Boston, particularly its low-wage labor force, was disproportionately impacted by the virus relative to other regions. Nearly a year on, **Figure 6** shows that the employment declines in the Boston metro area were larger than the declines in the state and the nation at large.

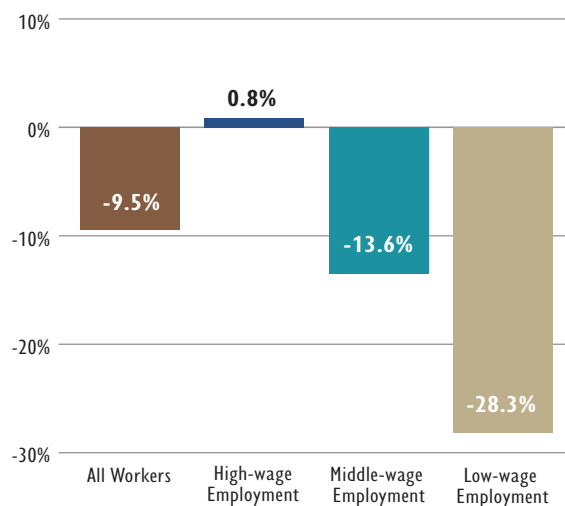


Source: Chetty, Friedman, Hendren, Stepner, and the OI Team (2020) [tracktherecovery.org](https://tracktherecovery.org)

The decline in employment in the Boston metro area, however, has not been equally distributed across wage levels. Low-wage workers in the region have been most affected by job losses, as shown in **Figure 7**.

FIGURE 7

### Percent Change in Employment, Boston Metro Jan 2020 – Nov 2020

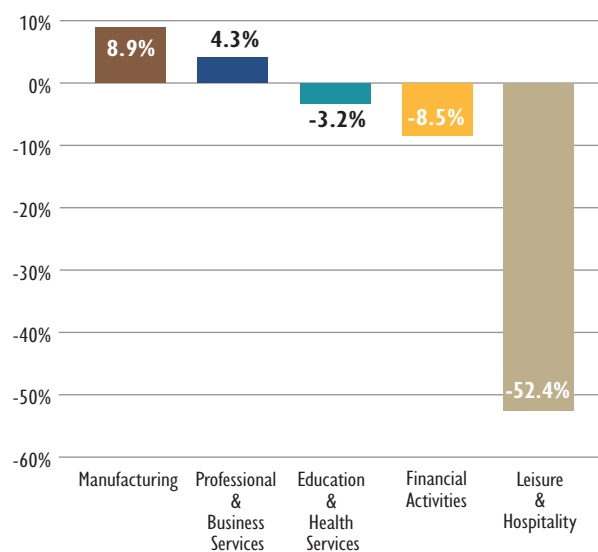


Source: Chetty, Friedman, Hendren, Stepner, and the OI Team (2020) [tracktherecovery.org](https://tracktherecovery.org)

While employment opportunities in some industries have rebounded to levels near or above pre-pandemic levels, employment opportunities in Greater Boston's leisure and hospitality industry remain deeply depressed both relative to other industries in the region

FIGURE 8

### Percent Change in Job Postings by Sector Boston Metro Jan 2020 – Jan 2021



Source: Chetty, Friedman, Hendren, Stepner, and the OI Team (2020) [tracktherecovery.org](https://tracktherecovery.org)

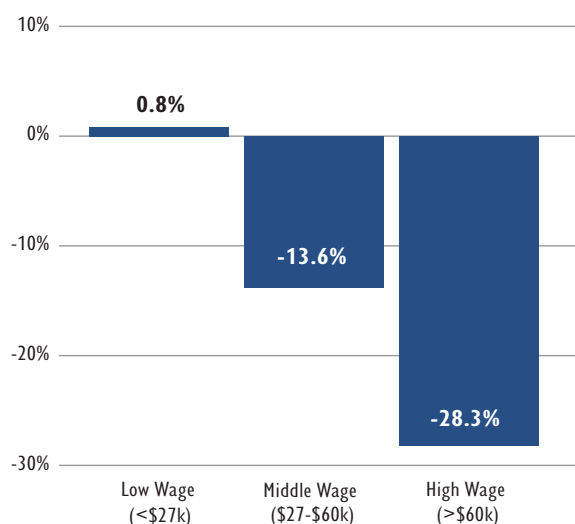
and compared to the industry in other parts of the country.

Low-wage workers in Boston have faced by far the most dramatic declines in employment rates. In fact, employment rates for high-wage workers have returned to pre-pandemic levels. But workers in low-wage jobs witnessed a 28 percent decline in employment rates between January and November 2020 (see **Figure 9**).

Education levels are heavily correlated with employment opportunities in Greater Boston in the post-pandemic era. Since the onset of COVID-19, job postings for Boston residents with lower levels of education were dramatically lower in Boston than in other parts of the country (see **Figure 10**).

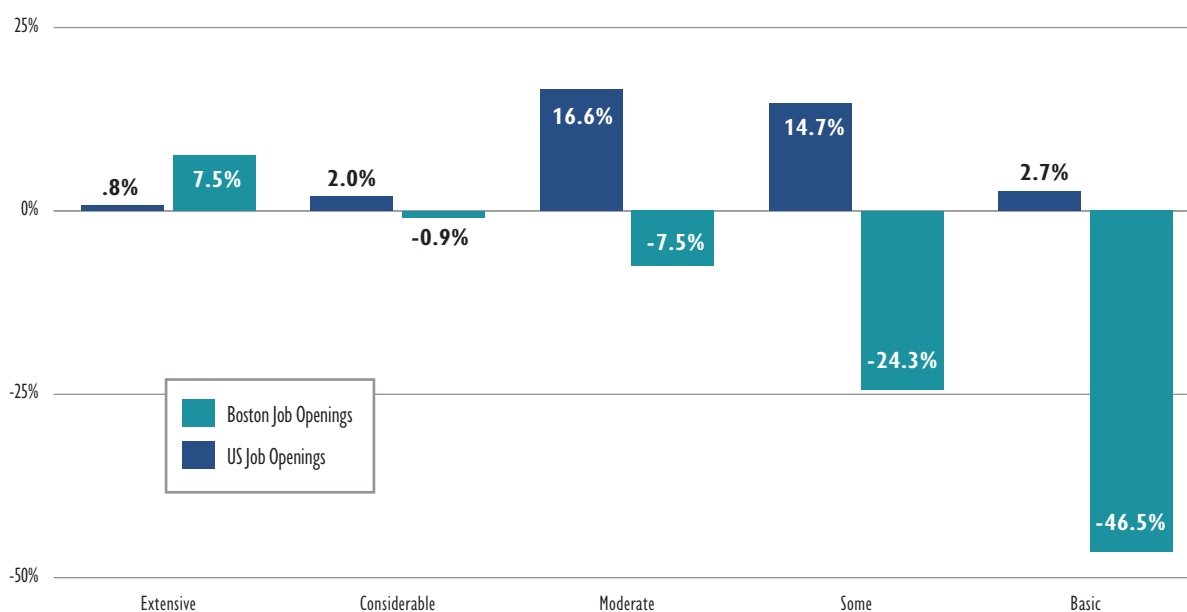
Job losses during the crisis affected different genders unevenly. Unemployment claims for women in Boston and in Massachusetts rose much more rapidly than for men, especially as many females had to leave the work-

FIGURE 9  
**Percent Change in Employment by Wage Level, Boston Metro Jan 2020 – Nov 2020**



Source: Chetty, Friedman, Hendren, Stepner, and the OI Team (2020) [tracktherecovery.org](https://tracktherecovery.org)

FIGURE 10  
**Percent Change in Job Postings by Education Level, Boston Metro, Jan 2020 – Jan 2021**

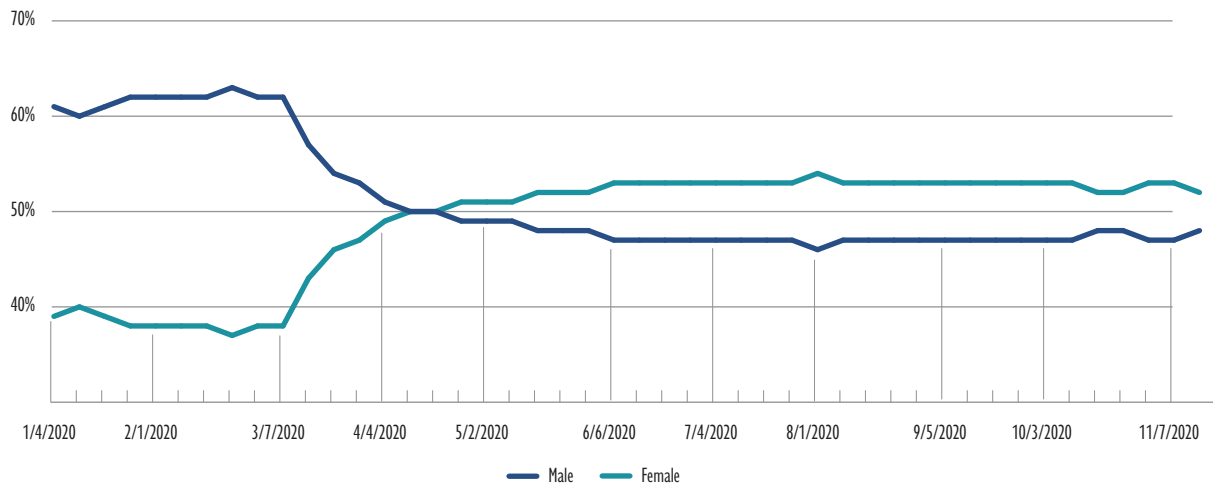


Source: MA Department of Unemployment Assistance

force to handle child care given school and daycare closures. Before the crisis, men made up the plurality of unemployment insurance claimants in the city of Boston; after the pandemic, the numbers flipped (see **Figure 11**).

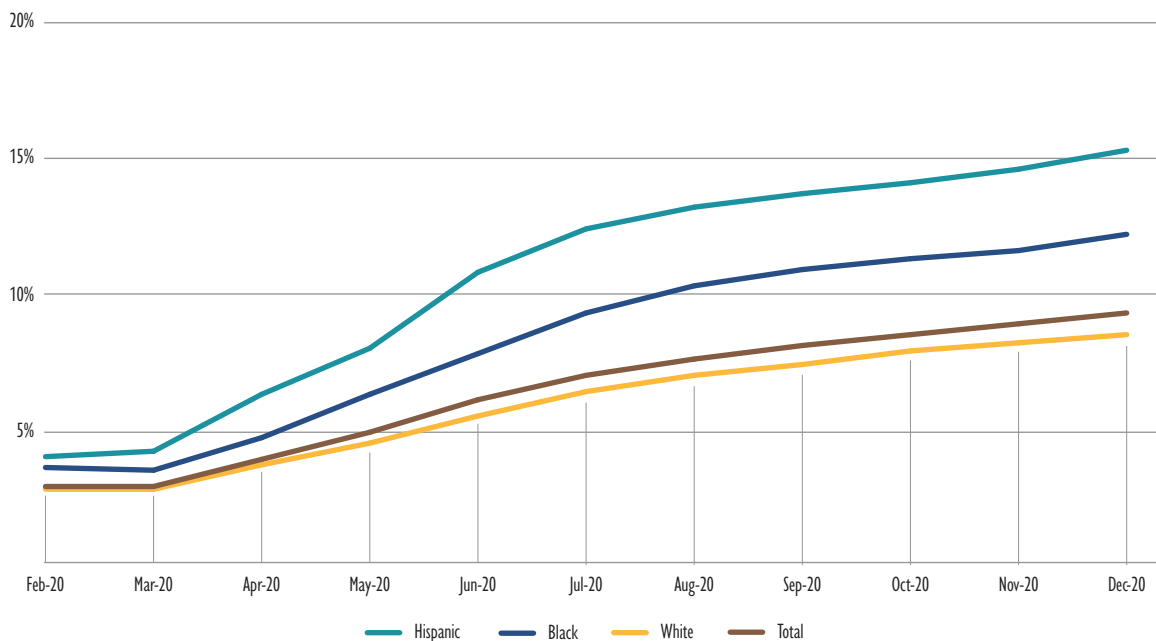
Unfortunately, the crisis exacerbated existing racial disparities. In Massachusetts, Black and Latinx workers suffered from the highest unemployment rates of any racial or ethnic group (see **Figure 12**).

FIGURE 11  
**Continuing Unemployment Claims by Gender: Boston**



\*\*This figure does not include the Pandemic Unemployment Insurance assistance (PUA) program created during the crisis to support independent contractors.

FIGURE 12  
**Massachusetts Unemployment Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 12-Month Moving Averages**

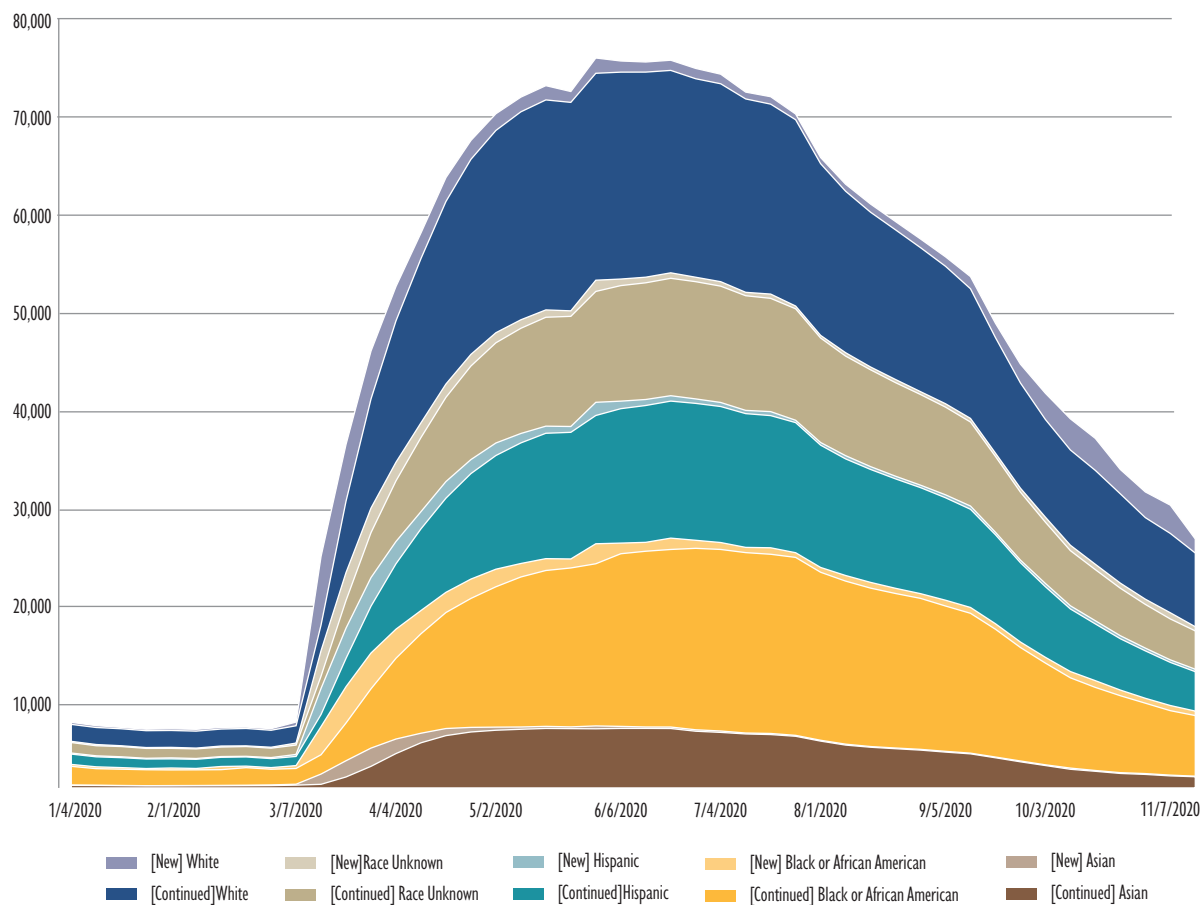


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Current Population Survey (CPS), 12 Month Moving Averages, Compiled by MA Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA)

Boston residents of color comprised disproportionate shares of the city's unemployment claims in 2020, as shown in **Figure 13**. During the summer and fall, Black and Hispanic/Latinx workers consistently made up around 60 percent of all

continuing unemployment claimants in the city. This is consistent with business closures and slowdowns affecting service industries where Black, Latinx, and Asian workers in Boston are over-represented, including food service, hospitality, and retail trades.

FIGURE 13  
**New and Continued Unemployment Claims by Race/Ethnicity, City of Boston**



\*\*This figure does not include the Pandemic Unemployment Insurance assistance (PUA) program created during the crisis to support independent contractors.

Source: MA Department of Unemployment Assistance

## II. Response to the Pandemic

To understand how actors within Greater Boston's workforce development and support ecosystem responded to the crisis, we asked stakeholders to describe how the pandemic

changed their work, the most pressing issues they still face, and which communities in the region were underserved.

**Key Takeaway:** Provider organizations shifted online. They worked to scale their reach and close equity gaps, but struggled to provide all of the services their students needed during an unprecedented crisis.

### **CHANGES in operations, job losses, the growing need for wraparound services, and accelerating inequality were the most referenced changes.**

- **Operations:** Organizations rapidly transitioned both service delivery and work online. This has brought many challenges and some benefits.
- **Job loss:** Historic levels of job loss are overwhelming public safety nets and hitting the hospitality sector especially hard.
- **Wraparound services:** Organizations expanded their wraparound services, but an acute need for childcare remains. A lack of access to childcare is slowing the region's recovery.
- **Inequality:** The pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing inequities related to race, citizenship, and work.

### **THE PRESSING ISSUES of creating new job opportunities, scaling training, closing equity gaps, and providing wraparound services were the most referenced.**

- **Work:** The crisis displaced a significant number of hospitality workers, who need reskilling opportunities and pathways. Even as the economy re-opens, employment may not return.
- **Inequality:** Racial inequities continue to plague Boston's workforce, but there may be new opportunities to advance equity. The thinning middle of Boston's economy threatens its future.
- **Training & reskilling:** There is a need to accelerate and fund worker training.
- **Wraparound services:** Without a stable income and benefits, workers remain insecure. Many workers are dependent on school reopenings for childcare.

*continued next page*

**Stakeholders cite people of color, low-income, and undocumented workers as the MOST UNDERSERVED during the crisis.**

- **Workers of color and low-income workers** have been most affected by both the public health and economic effects of the crisis. Wraparound supports cited as critical to meet their needs.
- **Undocumented workers** are not eligible for many of the services and supports afforded to other residents and will require new solutions.

## Adapting in the Pandemic

The pandemic brought not just disruption and dislocation, but a heavy fog of uncertainty that made organizations' responses more difficult. Still, many programs and employers adapted overnight to address urgent needs

unprecedented in volume and scope. Through this work, Greater Boston organizations demonstrated resilience: shifting their work online, expanding wraparound services, and continually making adjustments to survive through the pandemic's uncertainty.

## Adapting in the Pandemic

Responses	Moving Online	Providing Wraparound Services	Navigating Uncertainty
<b>Adaptations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Transitioning in-person instruction online</li> <li>● Closing technology access gaps</li> <li>● Codifying digital learning best practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Helping students &amp; workers access childcare, transportation, stable income, lifeboat jobs, healthcare services, and abuse prevention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Adjusting budgets</li> <li>● Leveraging data to identify resilient jobs and skills</li> <li>● Testing new revenue streams</li> </ul>
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>BFIT:</b> Moved online in three weeks with no increase in student dropout rate</li> <li>● <b>JVS:</b> Transitioned all services online, including 70 classes</li> <li>● <b>LearnLaunch:</b> Synthesizing remote learning best practices for districts</li> <li>● <b>Commonwealth Corp:</b> Youthworks pivoted 4,300 students online</li> <li>● <b>IBM:</b> Accelerated the expansion of Skillsbuild to additional nonprofit partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Roxbury Community College:</b> Defining mental health as an essential service for students</li> <li>● <b>Bunker Hill Community College:</b> On-campus Food Pantry now offering delivery to students who live within a 10-mile radius of the Bunker Hill Campus</li> <li>● <b>Northern Essex Community College:</b> Converted parking lots into Wifi hotspots for students to use internet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Postsecondary educational institutions:</b> Scenario planning; looking at business environment for guidance; assessing capacity in buildings</li> <li>● <b>Burning Glass:</b> Creating dashboards for policymakers and educators</li> <li>● <b>More Than Words:</b> After 50% of revenue lost, pivoted to scaling a pilot sourcing textiles and selling them wholesale online.</li> <li>● <b>JFF:</b> Developed an Equitable Recovery Hub with federal, state, and local recommendations</li> </ul>



## Summary: Changes

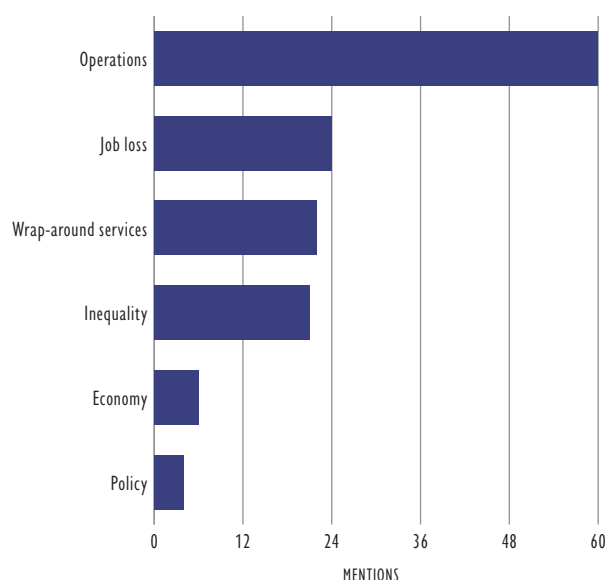
The disruption of the pandemic dramatically changed both the type of services educational organizations and employers needed to provide and how they provided those services. The four most referenced changes illustrate the interconnected relationship between employment disruption and service provision.

### Changes: Operations

Organizations made fundamental changes to all elements of their operations. They rapidly transitioned both their work models and service delivery provision online, necessitating many challenges, though some respondents noted unanticipated benefits. Financially, organizations made immediate changes to

FIGURE 14

**What are the biggest changes you have observed as a result of the pandemic? Have priorities changed? In what ways?**



## Most Cited Change

Category	Specific Challenges Top Mentions	Summary
<b>Operations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Moving online</li> <li>2. Working from home</li> <li>3. Budget changes</li> <li>4. Uncertainty</li> </ol>	Organizations rapidly transitioned both service delivery and work online. This produced some benefits, such as increased reach and reduced commuting times, as well as challenges, such as service quality and mental health concerns. Many organizations see substantial shares of these changes as permanent.
<b>Job loss</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Job &amp; income loss</li> <li>2. Disproportionate sector impact</li> </ol>	Historic levels of job loss are overwhelming public safety nets, such as UI. Large job losses are concentrated in hospitality, retail, leisure, food service, and transportation. Many fear that small businesses may not survive and certain jobs may never return.
<b>Wraparound services</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Childcare</li> <li>2. Tech barriers</li> <li>3. Mental health</li> </ol>	There is an acute need for childcare. Its absence has driven job losses and impaired the ability of the economy to recover. Digital access - both devices and Wifi - remains a challenge for students, and the demand for mental health services is growing.
<b>Growing inequality</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Racial inequality</li> <li>2. Citizenship</li> <li>3. Essential workers</li> </ol>	The pandemic has elevated pre-existing inequities related to race, citizenship, and employment. There is a growing appreciation for the contributions of essential workers, however, many fear that the recovery will leave them behind.

their budgets to support new operational demands, while also preparing their balance sheets for a prolonged recession. Uncertainty permeated all aspects of the workforce system,

complicating organizations' planning efforts and decreasing student interest in training programs with uncertain employment outcomes.

## Changes: Operations

Specific Challenges Top Mentions	Stakeholder Reflections
<b>Moving online</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "JVS has completely changed our service delivery model online temporarily and permanently." –<i>Jerry Rubin, JVS</i></li> <li>● "We are bringing all of our programming online, including teacher training... One change is that we can now market our programs nationally since they are online." –<i>Sunny Schwartz, MassBioEd</i></li> </ul>
<b>Working from home</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "We anticipate employees will continue to work remotely until early 2021... phasing in a more hybrid approach where teams mix working from home, office or both, with flexibility to take care of personal issues, is on the table. Some of our employees need to collaborate in person or support essential location-based work for clients on-site. However, during and post-COVID, even when our people or teams return to our offices over time, they won't come in every day." –<i>Ray Johnson, IBM</i></li> <li>● "The pandemic has provided an expanded understanding of how remote work can be effective. With the right tools in place, distributed teams can be just as productive and growing headcount outside of a traditional headquarters site can provide strategic advantages." –<i>Liz Schwab, Google</i></li> </ul>
<b>Budget changes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "The pandemic changed the whole nature of work and education fundamentally... we've had to renegotiate with our unions..." –<i>Valerie Roberson, RCC</i></li> <li>● "The precipitous decline in travel coupled with a proportionate decline in revenue has resulted in the organization's focus shifting to three priorities: preserving health, preserving cash, and preserving jobs." –<i>Kenn Turner, Massport</i></li> </ul>
<b>Uncertainty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "One big challenge has been the uncertainty felt among applicants to our program and the students we serve. Applicants and students... have communicated some reluctance to pursue ongoing training and education because of the opportunity cost incurred by turning attention to a full-time program (even one that can lead to tremendous long-term earnings gains in the future) versus earning what money they can earn now during a time when they or their families' income might have been hit hard by job loss or the economic downturn." –<i>Garrett Warfield, Year Up</i></li> <li>● "Institutions that may not have the strongest balance sheets may go under for good. With that the community will lose a lot of social capital and pathway opportunities." –<i>JB Schramm, New Profit</i></li> </ul>

### Changes: Job Losses

Historic levels of job loss sent a 50-year low unemployment rate to heights unseen since the Great Depression. The hospitality and retail industries absorbed a disproportionate number of job losses in Greater Boston. The sheer

volume of unemployed workers frayed public safety nets: Unemployment offices processed more than five times as many unemployment claims in four weeks than they previously processed annually.

### Changes: Job Losses

Specific Challenges Top Mentions	Stakeholder Reflections
<b>Job &amp; income loss</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● “2.8% to 11.3% unemployment, this blew the cracks off a system that was already devastating for the workers and the populations that need us the most. MA projects to have over 400,000 long term unemployed, and the majority are low income, low education, and have complex problems.” —<i>Christine Abrams, Commonwealth Corporation</i></li><li>● “The sheer tsunami of unemployment claim volume. Typically, the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) receives around 200,000 unemployment claimants a year. During the early start of the pandemic, DUA received 1.5 million claims in a little over 4 weeks in Massachusetts.” —<i>Secretary Rosalin Acosta, Massachusetts Labor and Workforce Development</i></li></ul>
<b>Disproportionate sector impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● “Extreme short-term, and potential long-term, dislocation for certain at-risk sectors such as hospitality and retail.” —<i>Secretary Michael Kennealy, Massachusetts Economic Development</i></li><li>● “Before the pandemic, we were concerned about jobs that would be eliminated because of automation and new technologies. Now, we’re seeing new industries at risk of not returning like travel, tourism and restaurant jobs.” —<i>Angela Jackson, New Profit</i></li><li>● “The hospitality industry was most impacted. It was the first to shut down, and it didn’t shut down due to a government order but rather consumer demand. Occupancy dropped dramatically well before [Governor] Baker’s orders were issued.” — <i>Chief John Barros, Economic Development, City of Boston</i></li></ul>

### Changes: Wraparound Services

Rapid spikes in unemployment necessitated that organizations expand their existing wraparound supports and create new services to alleviate the burdens the pandemic imposed on their students, employees, and residents. The closing of schools and childcare providers disproportionately impacted Boston's female

workers. Technology created new barriers for students pivoting to remote learning, who in many cases were also experiencing food and housing insecurity. The demand for mental health services was remarkable not only in volume, but in how widely this demand was distributed across different segments of the population.

### Changes: Wraparound Services

Specific Challenges Top Mentions	Stakeholder Reflections
<b>Childcare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● "The most critical industry to re-opening the economy is childcare. Only 25% of childcare providers got a PPP loan and projections indicate that we may lose as many as 450,000 childcare slots nationwide due to daycare closures which will directly affect the productivity of parents. Our national survey of 2,500 working parents shows that 13% of parents have lost their job or reduced hours due to childcare. And the burden is falling disproportionately on women: among women who became unemployed during COVID, 25% reported that the reason was due to childcare." —<i>Alicia Modestino, Northeastern</i></li><li>● "[One of the most significant changes was] learning new protocols for teaching hands-on work while juggling family and personal life." —<i>Sarah Turner, North Bennet Street School</i></li></ul>
<b>Tech barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● "10% of students reported significant technological barriers to shifting learning online." —<i>Anthony Benoit, BFIT</i></li></ul>
<b>Food access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● "When students were sent them home to learn remotely, the college had to ask how do we offer students their basic needs, such as food, technology, and upward social and economic mobility?" —<i>Pam Eddinger, Bunker Hill</i></li></ul>
<b>Mental health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● "There is confusion, fear, and uncertainty: 100-200 calls per month to the AIM hotline normally, in March and April there were 600-700 calls per month that were lengthy and painful." —<i>John Regan, AIM</i></li><li>● "Employer-employee relationship will change. Prior to COVID, support to employees was a cafeteria, gym, and transportation subsidy, for example. Now, in a work-from-home environment, these supports are less valuable than, say providing greater flexibility, subsidizing childcare and offering mental health support." —<i>JD Chesloff, Mass Business Roundtable</i></li></ul>

### Changes: Inequality Accelerates

Stakeholders consistently framed the effects of the pandemic as a pressing equity issue, but not a new one. They emphasized that the pandemic worsened longstanding inequities in the workforce and elevated the perilous insecurity many workers of color and undocumented

workers have long faced in Greater Boston. The pandemic demonstrated the vulnerability of the industries where these workers are concentrated to both macroeconomic shocks and longer-run automation, and the inadequacy of wage levels and public safety nets to support them through an economic crisis.

### Changes: Inequality Accelerates

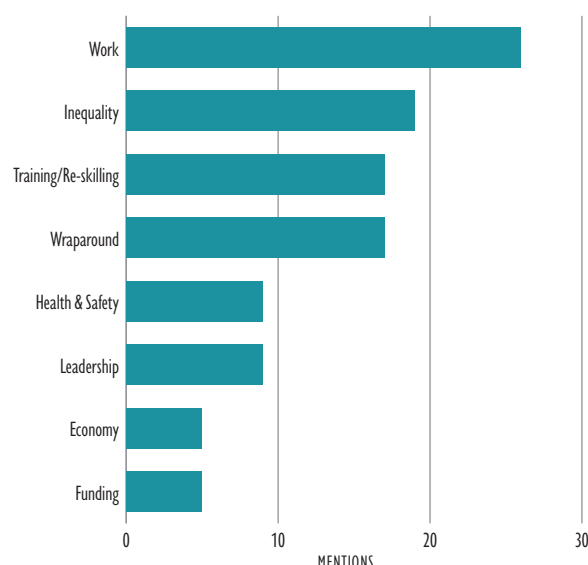
Specific Challenges Top Mentions	Stakeholder Reflections
<b>Racial inequality &amp; citizenship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● “The pandemic rips the bandage off the racial and class inequities that we tolerate as a society.” —Neil Sullivan, Boston PIC</li><li>● “Race, gender, and ethnicity all are important factors in explaining disparate outcomes for individuals.” —Paul Osterman, MIT</li><li>● “There has been a differential impact on African Americans and immigrants: They are in the jobs hit hardest and will take the longest to recover.” —Matt Sigelman &amp; Dan Restuccia, Burning Glass</li></ul>
<b>Essential workers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● “[The most significant change is the] acknowledgment of how important essential workers are to our economy. Drilling down into who they are: people of color and undocumented immigrants. Prior narrative was that immigrants were a drain on our resources – this has now emerged to the greater public as not being true.” —Chief John Barros, Economic Development, City of Boston</li><li>● “Biggest positive change is a recognition of the role essential workers play.” —Prabal Chakrabati, Federal Reserve of Boston</li></ul>

## Summary: Pressing Issues

Driven by the changes that stakeholders named above, stakeholders identified the availability of work, inequality, and pathways to accessing work as the most pressing issues Greater Boston needs to address.

FIGURE 15

**What do you believe are the three most urgent / most concerning issues related to Boston's workforce?**



## Most Urgent Challenges Cited

Category	Specific Challenges Top Mentions	Summary
<b>Work</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Disproportionately impacted sectors</li> <li>2. Re-employment</li> <li>3. Unemployment</li> </ol>	The crisis displaced a significant number of hospitality workers, who need reskilling opportunities and pathways. Even as the economy re-opens, employment may not return.
<b>Inequality</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Racial inequality</li> <li>2. Income inequality</li> <li>3. Essential workers</li> </ol>	Racial inequities continue to plague Boston's workforce. However, the summer of George Floyd and the country's racial reckoning may create new opportunities to advance equity. The structure of Boston's economy –a thinning middle–threatens Boston's future.
<b>Training &amp; reskilling</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accelerated training</li> <li>2. Funding</li> <li>3. Employer-aligned pathways</li> <li>4. Career ladders</li> <li>5. Safe &amp; accessible training</li> </ol>	There is a need to rethink training pathways, including funding for more streamlined and stackable pathways.
<b>Wraparound services</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Worker security</li> <li>2. Schools &amp; childcare</li> </ol>	Without a stable income and benefits, workers remain insecure. Many workers are dependent on school reopenings for childcare.



## Pressing Issues: Work

Stakeholders repeatedly referenced the disproportionate concentration of job losses in the hospitality and retail industries, and the

need for reskilling opportunities and pathways. Even as the economy recovers, it is not clear how quickly or whether many of these jobs will return.

## Pressing Issues: Work

Specific Challenges Top Mentions	Stakeholder Reflections
<b>Disproportionately impacted sectors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Hospitality has been crushed and individuals that worked in hospitality roles have skills that are readily transferable into frontline healthcare roles. However, there are also pay issues. It is my hope that essential workers, so crucial to our success and the success if many industries can be recognized as such with commensurate salary rates. Pay equity is a large and complicated issue, including challenging reimbursement rates, but it must be solved.” —MJ Ryan, <i>Mass General Brigham</i></li> <li>● “Massachusetts went from having one of the lowest unemployment rates to one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. Many employees in our retail, hospitality and food services industries will need to shift to jobs in other industries in order to find work in the months ahead.” —Joanne Pokaski, <i>Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center</i></li> </ul>
<b>Re-employment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “There is a misguided assumption that just because a business opens, people will get their jobs back... a 25% capacity restaurant may lose more money than if it stayed closed.” —Rafael Carbonell, <i>Harvard Kennedy School, Taubman Center for State &amp; Local Government</i></li> <li>● “Burning Glass [has compelling] analytical work around lifeboat jobs... How do we make that real in Boston?” —Maria Flynn, <i>JFF</i></li> <li>● “How many of these jobs won't come back? We have regained about 50% of our jobs, but there's still about 20% to 30% that we feel are not going to come back very quickly. They are disproportionately in our communities of color, and women.” —Secretary Rosalin Acosta, <i>Massachusetts Labor and Workforce Development</i></li> </ul>
<b>Unemployment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Unbelievably high unemployment. This, by itself, impacts families, state tax revenue, and the Commonwealth's ability to support institutions. Our understanding of how the recovery will unfold is still very new... it's not looking like a 'V' shape anymore.” —Katherine Newman, <i>UMass</i></li> </ul>

## Pressing Issues: Inequality

Stakeholders emphasized concerns over the region's increasing racial and income inequality, especially for low-income workers

of color and essential workers. However, in the growing awareness of these inequities, stakeholders also see new opportunities to advance equity in the region.

## Pressing Issues: Inequality

Specific Challenges Top Mentions	Stakeholder Reflections
<b>Racial inequality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "Jobs need to be reassessed from an equity perspective... if that happens then there will be an immediate need for training that is huge." —Valerie Roberson, RCC</li> <li>● I would encourage more private corporations to commit to cultivating diversity by supporting youth in their teenage years, into college, and on into employment. —Courtney Ford, Artists for Humanity</li> <li>● "The summer of George Floyd has opened a side door. Our coalition of allies abruptly expanded. What this has done in part has been to collectively shift the reasons for which companies approach us. We can be more open about our mission being fundamentally rooted in social justice, not the business case for diversity." —David Delmar Senties, Resilient Coders</li> </ul>
<b>Income inequality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "A lot of people, particularly low-income people and communities of color, are out of work in sectors whose recovery is unclear, such as restaurants and hotels. Expanded UI is likely to end." - Jerry Rubin, JVS</li> <li>● "The fundamental problem and strategic issue is wealth inequality with a racial component, or vice versa. It's unjust and threatens to derail the progress of the city. Boston cannot remain world class with this disparity." —Anthony Benoit, BFIT</li> <li>● "Unemployment, low wages, and health risks. Like many other cities, Boston has a lot of people who are stuck in low-paying, bad jobs or have recently lost their jobs due to the pandemic. Our focus should be on creating good jobs for these workers who have been left behind for decades. Upskilling and education, which seem to be the focus for many, is not sufficient." —Zeynep Ton, MIT Sloan School of Management</li> </ul>
<b>Essential workers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "The structure of employment in Boston: We have an economy that has high paid and low paid jobs, the middle is thinning, and the low paid is growing. It is the "uberization" of work happening all over the world. The low paid jobs are growing maliciously... undocumented workers can't collect unemployment, but became essential workers." —Alvaro Lima, Planning and Development Agency, City of Boston</li> <li>● "There some roles and jobs we don't treat with respect but are essential for human society. Some of those are based on deliberate choices we've made as a society and we need to re-think." —David Deming, Harvard Kennedy School</li> </ul>

## Pressing Issues: Training & Reskilling

Stakeholders consistently named the availability of training pathways, the speed with which displaced workers could move through those pathways en route to employment in the economy, and the need for financial support to build these pathways as

issues critical to the region's recovery. To ensure Greater Boston builds a more equitable future of work, stakeholders emphasized not only access to new employment opportunities, but also the need to create better ladders to advancement from entry-level and low-wage roles.

## Pressing Issues: Training and Reskilling

Specific Challenges Top Mentions	Stakeholder Reflections
<b>Accelerated training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● “Given the degree of uncertainty in the Boston economy and more broadly, we see a great need for shorter-term, more flexible training and education options that lead to career pathways with upward mobility. Students are increasingly interested in career-based programs but the upfront cost and time out of paying work is often too risky. In response, Social Finance has developed the Career Impact Bond, both as an impact investing tool as well as a public policy vehicle, that offers student-friendly terms and downside protection, along with wraparound support services to provide students with equitable access to education and training.” —Tracy Palandjian, Social Finance</li><li>● “Are there truncated educational pathways that have signaling power? It's hard for major institutions to move towards more precise educational pathways.” —Michelle Weise, Imaginable Futures</li><li>● “As a culture, we don't do a good job making resources available to people for skills development and training: People don't know of alternatives to four-year programs.” —Sarah Turner, North Bennett Street School</li></ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● “Periods of high unemployment are good times for people to increase their skills, but we don't really know what the recovery will look like. I'm concerned whether there will be funding and support for reemployment and skill development.” —Jerry Rubin, JVS</li><li>● “COVID-19 has severely impacted Massachusetts and our economy. In a matter of months, we went from a 3% unemployment rate to one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. Going forward we need massive public investments in workforce training. In addition to critical public health concerns, getting people back to work and restarting our economy must be a priority for policymakers. Without additional federal and state funding to help people reskill and upskill, too many individuals will be unable to re-enter the labor force which will impact our Commonwealth's economy for months and years to come.” —Tonja Mettlach, Massachusetts Workforce Association</li></ul>

*continued next page*

<b>Employer aligned pathways</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “What would it look like if employers and other essential stakeholders come together to identify credentials that help workers?” –<i>Sean Gallagher, Northeastern</i></li> </ul>
<b>Career ladders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “A downside of knowledge economy is that it leaves few steps up the ladder. You can’t become a cybersecurity engineer if you work an essential job. Boston lacks jobs in the middle and mobility ladders.” –<i>Matt Sigelman &amp; Dan Restuccia, Burning Glass</i></li> </ul>
<b>Safe &amp; accessible training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “The most important issue facing the labor force are supporting and investing in those who have lost their jobs and working to ensure they do not fall into the long-term unemployed, which creates longer term challenges. In terms of an urgent opportunity, how can we take advantage of hybrid learning that combines online and hands-on (safely)? What can institutions do from an online learning perspective to be more impactful, affordable and accessible?” –<i>Liz Reynolds, MIT</i></li> </ul>

### Pressing Issues: Wraparound Services

Stakeholders noted a wide range of issues affecting worker security, including evictions and food insecurity. The availability of

childcare, in the form of childcare providers and schools, was the most consistently cited service needed to restart the economy.

### Pressing Issues: Wraparound Services

<b>Specific Challenges Top Mentions</b>	<b>Stakeholder Reflections</b>
<b>Worker security</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Extend benefits to undocumented workers. Focus on short term compensation, paid sick leave, and minimum wage. Many workers who are affected are not receiving the benefits.” –<i>Liz Reynolds, MIT</i></li> <li>● “Close to 50% of students are food insecure; 14% of students are homeless. If the \$600 dollars that unemployed students are now receiving is decreased to \$300 or \$200, there will certainly be higher evictions and higher homelessness. Many jobs require an address, and hotels and shelters don’t count.” –<i>Pam Eddinger, Bunker Hill</i></li> <li>● “Childcare needs are essential. During the COVID pandemic, childcare was initially almost completely nonexistent, and as it begins to come back, affordability and scheduling flexibility continue to be barriers to employment for many.” –<i>MJ Ryan, Mass General Brigham</i></li> </ul>
<b>Schools &amp; childcare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “You can’t send adults back to work if schools aren’t in session. If childcare institutions are no longer sustainable or affordable we have a huge problem. Need new structure for childcare and we are going to need to figure out how we bring the public schools back safely...” –<i>Katherine Newman, UMass</i></li> <li>● “Huge unknown with schools this fall... Massive implications for individual workers, if they can have or keep a job.” –<i>Rafael Carbonell, Harvard Taubman Center for State &amp; Local Government</i></li> </ul>

## Real-Time Data Monitoring

Stakeholders have needed to reorient to a new set of metrics to track the region's economic recovery, including the state's reopening policies, consumer confidence, and business closures within specific industries. Going

forward, stakeholders indicated that they will use a variety of new public health, economic, and employment indicators to understand continued change in the economy and to inform their response.

### Metrics

**Public Health:** Case rates, hospitalization rates, death rates, and infection rates

**Economy:** Policy changes, small business closures, bankruptcies, consumer sentiment, and education demand

**Work:** Job openings, occupational health jobs, job transitions within/between industries, UI claimants, and unemployment (U-6)

**Other:** Geographic mobility, commercial real estate and housing, and social service delivery

### Commonly Cited Sources

- Burning Glass
- Opportunity Insights/Track the Recovery
- Emsi
- Google's Data for Opportunity initiative
- Strada Consumer Insights surveys
- Employer surveys through industry associations

- "Traditional labor market sources don't show how people acquire new skills."

—Paul Osterman, MIT

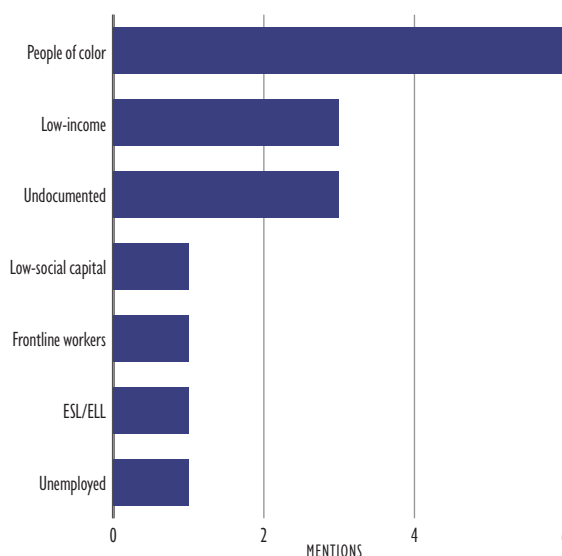
- "Time series matter a lot. Week to week matters now. Leading indicators are policy changes: Are firms allowed to be open?" —Matt Sigelman & Dan Restuccia, Burning Glass

## Summary: Underserved Stakeholders

Stakeholders named a variety of groups still being underserved in Greater Boston's recovery efforts. People of color, followed by low-income and undocumented workers, were the most referenced.

FIGURE 16

**What high needs population(s) have you seen to be the most underserved in this current environment?**



# III. Planning for the Future

**Key Takeaway:** Stakeholders fear a recovery that worsens inequities instead of addressing them. They argue that investments from government, philanthropy, and employers will be critical to build for a stronger future.

**With some exceptions, stakeholders believe Boston will recover, but fear its inequities are unlikely to be addressed.**

- **Exacerbating inequities:** Stakeholders fear the pandemic will lock in pre-existing inequities in the workforce, including racial disparities and those created by technology.
- **Addressing inequities:** Stakeholders cited improving job quality, defining pathways, and investing in worker training as critical to addressing the region's inequities.

**Organizations are scenario planning for revenue shortfalls, in-person or remote operations, and a new economy.**

- **Budgets shortfalls:** Organizations, especially postsecondary institutions, are planning for significant budget shortfalls.
- **Persistence of a virtual world:** Organizations are planning and hiring for virtual operations, not just in the short-term but for the indefinite future.
- **The “new economy”:** Stakeholders do not think the economy will “go back to normal”; organizations are preparing for different employment scenarios and changing job roles and openings.

**In an ideal world, stakeholders would address employment inequities, orient the system towards outcomes and provide adequate funding.**

- **Shared Strategy & Collaboration:** Stakeholders see a need for greater strategic alignment and collaboration to advance specific initiatives.
- **Inequality:** Stakeholders believe the government and employers are critical to creating higher quality jobs and implementing equitable hiring practices.
- **Resources:** Stakeholders call for additional resources to invest in workers and learners, distributed equitably.
- **Operations:** Many stakeholders recognize a need to better track and use outcomes data to improve learners' training options and scale effective programs.



## Recovery Scenarios

Citing the region's technology and life sciences industries as examples, a majority of stakeholders expressed optimism about Greater Boston's economic recovery. However, while these industries were a source of overall optimism, they also inspired pessimism from

many who feared these industries may continue to accelerate inequality in the region. Stakeholders expressed uncertainty about the speed of the region's recovery, but greater certainty about the need for well-funded pathways to support displaced workers both during and after the crisis.

## Recovery Scenarios

	Pessimistic Case	Optimistic Case
<b>COVID</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "The tail of COVID may be a lot longer than what people think." —JD Chesloff, <i>Massachusetts Business Roundtable</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Boston becomes a more appealing space than even NYC – People are looking for cities that handled COVID responsibly. On the global stage, our world-class medical community and healthcare workers are leading the way both on care and treatment, but also on vaccine development. The COVID-19 vaccine candidates out of Boston, or conducted in partnership with Boston's medical institutions, are leading the field and giving hope to people around the world." —John Barros, <i>Economic Development, City of Boston</i></li> </ul>
<b>Insecurity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "The pessimistic outcome is no health insurance, no childcare, or transportation access. Workforce development is all about skills, who's hiring, and community colleges, but the basics are real barriers to showing up to a job." —Kathryn Carlson, <i>Harvard Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston</i></li> <li>• "Families with children remain hard pressed to maintain work and balance childcare at home. Unemployment and prolonged financial hardship leads to a rental crisis, evictions, or even foreclosures on homes. Loss of affordable house could lead to the migration, for those who are able to move, of families and communities further away from city centers towards parts of the state with relatively lower costs of living, but that are often removed from a greater number of job opportunities in the city." —Garrett Warfield, <i>Year Up</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Leverage these moments to solve those challenges around density, transit, housing, and also have a statewide and regional economic recovery that spreads more evenly and is not detrimental to Boston." —Jane Swift, <i>LearnLaunch</i></li> <li>• "We see this as a wake-up call and invest in community resiliency policies and programs. Boston will have to identify major policy levers in Boston that together improve workforce stability, all levels of education, basic needs, and employer commitments." —Pam Eddinger, <i>Bunker Hill Community College</i></li> </ul>

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	Pessimistic Case	Optimistic Case
<b>Inequality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “The pessimistic view is that all the pre-COVID trends accelerate and get locked-in... A highly thriving tech space that exacerbates inequality.” —<i>David Deming, Harvard Kennedy School of Government</i></li> <li>● “Black and Latinx folx are impacted first and worst. Too many of those who are lucky enough to be employed are in dead-end jobs, immediately at risk of automation. Colleges rally and make a profit-driven resurgence, further calcifying Boston’s white-collar talent pipeline from predominantly White suburbs into high-growth careers, spiking the cost of city living. The economic divide in Boston deepens even further.” —<i>David Delmar Senties, Resilient Coders</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “A thriving and robust economy that provides jobs and a sustainable income for all families would transform Boston in more ways than are imaginable. Housing, health, community cohesion, education, and poverty would all be impacted in a full-employment environment.” —<i>Dr. Charles Desmond, Inversant</i></li> <li>● “As our focus shifts to creating solutions for closing businesses and lost jobs, my hope is that Boston will see a clear incentive in investing in entry-level workers and their career advancement.” —<i>Angela Jackson, New Profit</i></li> <li>● “An optimistic future would include both enhanced skills and greater racial inclusion in the economy, addressing a long-standing challenge for the region.” —<i>Kevin McGovern, Deloitte</i></li> </ul>
<b>Childcare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “We continue remote learning for 18 months and we don’t know what grade kids are in.” —<i>Prabal Chakrabati, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston</i></li> <li>● “When kids aren’t in school, childcare, or doctors’ offices...our capacity to understand how families are faring, whether children are properly cared for, whether the mental health toll of the pandemic is being addressed, is much harder to assess. But we have good reason to think that damage is ongoing as the stress of parental unemployment and housing insecurity take their toll.” —<i>Katherine Newman, UMass</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “This offers opportunity for Boston to innovate and address longstanding issues like childcare and education, and to be a leader.” —<i>Jay Ash, Mass Competitive Partnership</i></li> </ul>

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	Pessimistic Case	Base Case	Optimistic Case
<b>Economic recovery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “The market power of big tech firms and the embrace of technology accelerates – and in the new mobile/digital era, people move away from cities, offices are left empty, the commercial real estate market declines. This has a major impact on tax receipts and government budgets for education.” – <i>Sean Gallagher, Northeastern</i></li> <li>● “We foresee enduring challenges for highly impacted industry sectors, such as hotels, restaurants, personal services, tourism, entertainment, retail, transportation, meetings and events.” – <i>Kevin McGovern, Deloitte</i></li> <li>● “Institutions that don’t have the strongest balance sheets may go under for good. With that the community will lose a lot of long-term social capital and pathway opportunities.” – <i>JB Schramm, New Profit</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Small and medium-sized businesses may be weathering this storm differently due to being more agile.” – <i>Sarah Turner, North Bennett Street School</i></li> <li>● “We continue to see strength in the biotech sector. We continue to rely on health care tech and financial services. We have a higher rate of unemployment and a shift to re-employing people in the labor market. We address reforms in housing, education, and income inequality in the near term.” – <i>Liz Reynolds, MIT</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Great manufacturing opportunities may arise if companies rethink supply chains. Our region stands to benefit as we are a world leader in life sciences and advanced manufacturing.” – <i>Secretary Michael Kennealy, Massachusetts Economic Development</i></li> <li>● “Companies are going to want to be around Boston’s talent. Reason why companies like Boston is because there is a collision of ideas that happens when people meet each other. This does not really happen over Zoom.” – <i>Jay Ash, Massachusetts Competitive Partnership</i></li> <li>● “We start rebuilding jobs and businesses with state and federal assistance and business loans. As a result, job growth accelerates.” – <i>Tom Kochan, MIT Sloan School of Management</i></li> </ul>

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	Pessimistic Case	Optimistic Case
<b>Defining pathways</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Skills Mismatch: Companies that require skilled workers to grow and expand in Boston can’t find them, and we then must absorb the social and human cost of unemployed and underemployed youth and adults.” – <i>Bob Schwartz, Harvard Graduate School of Education</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “We redefine how we define success – including on the talent side. We [achieve] a regional approach, not city-by-city, and coordination on short, medium, and long-term goals. Expertise already exists, so we can go for the practical and not the perfect, understanding it will evolve over time.” – <i>Rafael Carbonell, Taubman Center</i></li> <li>● “We bring employers together to develop commitments and accountability to create real pathways for young people to secure jobs and advance, especially if they have completed a training program.” – <i>Jodi Rosenbaum, More Than Words</i></li> </ul>
<b>Funding training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Exacerbating existing inequalities. This is the biggest challenge we face if the investments and targeted interventions are not strategic.” – <i>Tonja Mettlach, Massachusetts Workforce Association</i></li> <li>● “There is a risk that we inadequately enact policies and develop solutions that enable people to train, get back to work, and access paid leave, childcare, and other supportive services. Even before the pandemic, we saw years of federal disinvestment in workforce training and a growing disconnection between postsecondary education and the needs of employers in a rapidly changing economy. The pandemic has created an opportunity to break down silos and bring together partners to rewire incentives and scale effective workforce development solutions. We cannot return to the pre-pandemic status quo. We must rebuild in a way that creates more opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed to join the economy of the future.” – <i>Tracy Palandjian, Social Finance</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “Career-pathways are funded, supported, and training is created to ensure that Bostonians can get a living wage and long-term upward pathways that create generational wealth. This can be achieved especially within our health care and education industries, but those industries will need to shift their priorities away from short-term temporary work and low wages.” – <i>Eric Leslie, Union Capital Boston</i></li> </ul>

## Scenario Planning

Stakeholders cited many examples of new ways their organizations have had to conduct scenario planning. They are preparing for budget shortfalls driven by increasing costs

and decreasing revenues, lack of in-person activities, newly-required remote capabilities, and decreasing demand for certain occupations and sectors.

- **If there are budget shortfalls:** “For public higher education, the levers of adjustment that were in play after the last recession are no longer viable. Significant Increases in enrollment in a period of demographic decline is not automatic. In response to declining state support per capita, public institutions reluctantly raised tuition, but this is not an option when families are experiencing income losses. COVID19 itself is creating costs as universities implement testing regimes and increase their health care outreach and revenue losses as they lose normal sources like housing and dining services. This is one of the toughest climates for public higher ed in recorded memory.” —*Katherine Newman, UMass*
- **If in-person activities resume during pandemic:** “We will need more office space to accommodate social distancing so that you have people 6 feet apart. Class A can pay for retrofitting. Classes B or C may not. They can't tear things apart because some of them are in small old buildings or in historic buildings.” —*Alvaro Lima, Planning and Development, City of Boston*
- **If virtual world persists:** “We changed our tech plan and hired our first CTO.” —*Jerry Rubin, JVS*
- **If the “new economy” emerges:** “In spite of unemployment there is still a skills gap in the workforce. We are listening to employers to see what needs can be addressed in 3, 6, 9, or 12 month programs. We are trying to adjust offerings to provide what is needed.” —*Anthony Benoit, BFIT*

## IV.

# Boston's Opportunity: Rebuilding for a Stronger Future

**Key Takeaway:** Greater Boston already has a foundation of promising initiatives to build upon in the future. While challenges to collaboration remain, stakeholders believe the current moment provides opportunity and incentive for change.

**Initiatives stakeholders are watching include local and national platforms, skills-based hiring initiatives, wraparound services, and capacity-building initiatives.**

- **Promising initiatives to build upon:** Greater Boston's existing efforts provide building blocks to be a national leader in the recovery.
- **Promising initiatives to learn from:** Stakeholders are closely watching pathways and retraining initiatives across the country that could inform the region's recovery.

**Stakeholder organizations require new investments to support operations, expand capacity, and better utilize technology for the long-run.**

- **Resource advocacy:** Stakeholders expressed a desire to use their collective voice to advocate for the resources necessary to support their current learners and workers, and also, to expand to meet the larger needs of the region.
- **Addressing challenges:** Partners cited collaboration as central to the region's advancement, but cited previous struggles to invest a coalition of partners in a shared agenda.
- **An emerging vision:** Stakeholders expressed an aligned and ambitious vision of an equitable future in the region achieved through policy advocacy and collaboration.

**Partners are diverse and many, but rarely executing a shared strategy.**

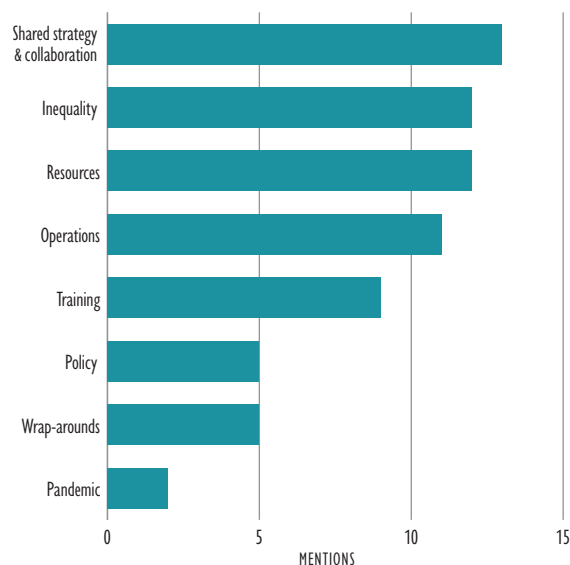
- **Opportunities:** Stakeholders see prime opportunities for collaboration in new modes of training, creating new transitional pathways, and advocacy.
- **Key institutions:** Greater Boston's employers and public higher education system were identified for their critical and unique roles to play in the region's recovery.
- **Strategic choices for the region:** To effectively address the long-standing structural challenges, stakeholders will have to choose a shared focus and strategy.

## Collective Response

Stakeholders expressed repeated demand for a shared regional strategy to collectively address inequities facing the region. They also advocated for the need for greater resources invested in Boston's workers, and shared recommendations for areas for collaboration.

FIGURE 17

**If you could direct any of Boston's institutions (public, private, or not-for-profit) in any way, what would you do?**



## Most Cited Change

Category	Specific Challenges Top Mentions	Summary
<b>Operations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Moving online</li> <li>2. Working from home</li> <li>3. Budget changes</li> <li>4. Uncertainty</li> </ol>	Organizations rapidly transitioned both service delivery and work online. This produced some benefits, such as increased reach and reduced commuting times, as well as challenges, such as service quality and mental health concerns. Many organizations see substantial shares of these changes as permanent.
<b>Job loss</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Job &amp; income loss</li> <li>2. Disproportionate sector impact</li> </ol>	Historic levels of job loss are overwhelming public safety nets, such as UI. Large job losses are concentrated in hospitality, retail, leisure, food service, and transportation. Many fear that small businesses may not survive and certain jobs may never return.
<b>Wraparound services</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Childcare</li> <li>2. Tech barriers</li> <li>3. Mental health</li> </ol>	There is an acute need for childcare. Its absence has driven job losses and impaired the ability of the economy to recover. Digital access—both devices and Wifi—remains a challenge for students, and the demand for mental health services is growing.
<b>Growing inequality</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Racial inequality</li> <li>2. Citizenship</li> <li>3. Essential workers</li> </ol>	The pandemic has elevated pre-existing inequities related to race, citizenship, and employment. There is a growing appreciation for the contributions of essential workers, however, many fear that the recovery will leave them behind.



## Collective Response: Shared Strategy & Collaboration

Most stakeholders endorsed a need for a regional response that includes greater strategic alignment and cross-sector collaboration to advance specific initiatives.

## Collective Response: Shared Strategy & Collaboration

Specific Challenges <i>Top Mentions</i>	Stakeholder Reflections
<b>Aligning the workforce ecosystem</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● “Working with other training providers, coordinate the talent trained by these providers to available open roles. Do this as one large talent ecosystem, not separate operating programs.”</li><li>● “In the long-term, collaboration between all aspects of the workforce ecosystem will be important. For government, shifting funding from generalized job-training programs to efforts designed to teach specific skills needed by businesses could create greater impact—and that means closer linkages to business. For higher ed, especially community colleges, a focus on non-degree credentials and skills they can use at work could be more beneficial for individuals and the economy than degree programs, especially for diverse, non-traditional learners. For business, a shift away from requiring degrees in roles that don’t really require them could allow access to a broader pool of capable applicants, and more partnerships with workforce development programs and education partners.”</li><li>● “We need a regional approach, not city-by-city: Coordination on short, medium, and long- term goals... Coordinated understanding of general direction, leverage resources, and identify gaps. This should not be another lengthy academic exercise.”</li><li>● “Aligning the work that everyone is doing together and making sure that everyone is working towards the same goal. When government does the coordination it doesn’t always work. Money and incentives bring people together better. Organizations that have money to spend and fund programs can drive alignments better than government.”</li></ul>

### Collective Response: Inequality

Stakeholders believe a combination of federal and state policy and changing employers' practices are critical to creating higher quality jobs and achieving more equitable hiring and advancement.

### Collective Response: Shared Strategy & Collaboration

Specific Challenges <i>Top Mentions</i>	Stakeholder Reflections
<b>Low-wage job quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● "I want the state to extend benefits to independent contractors. I want them to be recognized as employees and give extended benefits to all vulnerable workers."</li><li>● "In Massachusetts, we incentivize connecting people with jobs, but we should incentivize connecting people with jobs that pay a living wage, that have opportunities for career advancement and to employers that support employees' progress."</li></ul>
<b>Equitable hiring practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● "...transform the behavior of employers so they are more radically engaged in re-training and recruitment."</li><li>● "Employers should be open to being providers that are not accredited, and tuition reimbursements should be provided to regionally accredited institutions."</li><li>● "First, we need to draft a body of equitable employment principles. Think of it as LEED certification, but for equitable hiring."</li><li>● "Direct the Greater Boston ecosystem to embrace employer-led workforce development practices akin to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) program."</li></ul>

### Collective Response: Resources

The sustained disinvestment in education institutions following the Great Recession remained prominent in stakeholders' minds. During the recovery, few public higher education institutions saw their pre-recession funding levels restored. The public workforce system and the social safety net also experi-

enced declining levels of resources after the initial stimulus response. For this recovery to be an equitable one, stakeholders emphasized a need for increased and consistent financial resources to support human capital development in the region, and a more equitable distribution of those resources.

### Collective Response: Resources

Specific Challenges Top Mentions	Stakeholder Reflections
<b>Increase workforce &amp; education funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Equalize educational funding and declare it insufficient at the same time.”</li><li>• “Retraining for workers – a fund for businesses to tap into to address retraining needs, attaching an incentive for them to work with community colleges would be great.”</li><li>• “Many community colleges have not recovered budgetarily. Community colleges’ funding is in competition with healthcare industry and infrastructure... It is always easy to fund healthcare first because it is urgent and immediate and hence workforce development is more of a long-term investment and easy to discard or delay.”</li><li>• “We need to talk about the financial sustainability of the entire workforce development field. We have an education system, paid for through taxes. We need a workforce development system, liberated from its current overdependence on philanthropy. We must confront an uncomfortable fact: This entire field...is supported at the discretion of those who’ve benefited from the harmful and structurally racist effects of capitalism...We do have some real allies among our philanthropists...But we will continue to drive, with the pedal to the medal, in second gear, until we can talk about alternate means of payment. We need to think bigger.”</li><li>• “Increase UMass higher education budget by 10 percent and get them to match Michigan, Cal Tech, or Texas. We have lots of universities, but we have kids from Massachusetts that depend on a small underfunded system and we are creating an underclass that you don’t have in the large systems of state universities.”</li></ul>
<b>Create funding clarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “The state needs to issue a budget. Without it we are deprived of the logic we need to make the hard decisions.”</li></ul>

## Collective Response: Defining Success

Stakeholders emphasized the need to standardize outcomes data and to use that data to support and scale effective models.

## Collective Response: Defining Success

Specific Challenges <i>Top Mentions</i>	Stakeholder Reflections
<b>Outcomes orientation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● “Facilitate the standardization of outcome reporting metrics among training providers. The lack of standardization makes underwriting and public funding allocation much harder.”</li><li>● “[Become] more open to outcomes orientation and measuring the value of training and development dollars.”</li><li>● “We need new, better, additional ways to encourage and reward achievement... A message that says we will reward performance.”</li></ul>
<b>Scaling successful models</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● “Invest in a few [Greater Boston] institutions and focus efforts on making them amazing... Put pressure on few places instead of spreading wealth around too much.”</li><li>● “There is room for transparency on costs, jobs, and graduation rates.”</li><li>● “Increase credential-based work and reskilling in a rapid way online. Move apprenticeship model beyond trades.”</li></ul>

## Promising Boston Initiatives to Build Upon

By early fall 2020, Greater Boston had already spun out some promising new initiatives to respond to the crisis' most acute pain points.

Wraparound Supports	Economic Justice	Platforms
<p>CHILDCARE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Early Education and Care Public-Private Trust Fund:</b> The fund is inviting business and philanthropy to partner with government to provide creative technical assistance to early childhood programs navigating their way out of the COVID-19 crisis. Additionally, the fund will support programs seeking to create a strong, sustainable long-term business models. This could include money directly appropriated by the Legislature and gifts, grants and donations; providing statewide and regional training; making available opportunities for providers and stakeholders to assess and share best business practices relative to early education and care reopening efforts.</li> </ul> <p>TECHNOLOGY ACCESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Roxbury CC:</b> Laptops are available through library on loan, and if students complete degree they get to keep the laptop upon graduation.</li> <li>● <b>JVS:</b> Has made a multi-million dollar investment to upgrade technology, and is making a longer-term transition to hybrid instruction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Racial Equity Fund:</b> Launched by Mayor Walsh, the fund seeks to initially raise \$10 million, and a total of \$50 million to support local nonprofits providing economic development, education, and public health to communities of color.</li> <li>● <b>New Commonwealth Racial Equity and Social Justice Fund:</b> Aiming to provide “essential support, resources and thought leadership” for uncovering and dismantling systemic racism within institutions in Boston and Massachusetts. Nascent stages, but seeded with \$20 million in individual and corporate commitments.</li> <li>● <b>Open-Opportunity MA:</b> Cross-sector network of 40 local organizations focused on expanding access to essential services (e.g., housing, child and elder care); “educating the whole child”; empowering educators by focusing on increasing teacher diversity and promoting culturally and linguistically sustaining practices; and racial equity. Group’s first initiative is Campus Without Walls, where students have access to high-quality instruction that goes beyond the limits of a traditional school building or school day.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>MassHire Downtown Boston Talent Match Portal:</b> New portal that enables jobseekers in the public workforce system and employers to connect directly. The platform allows jobseekers to receive notifications about jobs that they qualify for directly in their inbox. It also allows job seekers to remotely access coaching to navigate benefits and re-employment.</li> <li>● <b>New Profit, MIT Solve, XPRIZE, JFF:</b> Future of Work Grand Challenge: Catalyzing start-up and early-stage enterprises to rapidly reskill workers, including deployment partnerships with workforce boards.</li> <li>● <b>Harvard Skillbase:</b> Pro bono effort from Harvard to aggregate and curate free learning resources on foundational skills. The MassHire system and other Boston-based organizations have been key learning and research partners to help understand jobseekers’ areas of training interest and which supports are most helpful in persisting in online learning.</li> </ul>

## Initiatives to Watch Beyond Boston

Stakeholders are informing their local efforts by watching and learning from retraining initiatives across the country. Select examples of national efforts and initiatives from other regions noted by the respondents are highlighted below.

Guidance & Pathways for Dislocated Workers	Place-Based Rapid Retraining	Expanded Access to Corporate IT Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Skill Up:</b> A national coalition that aims to help workers pursue career paths aligned with the future economy by providing workers access to career navigation, training programs, and job opportunities.</li> <li>● <b>OnwardUS:</b> Onward built a one-stop website that aims to connect workers to their state's wraparound services, retraining opportunities, and open job postings.</li> <li>● <b>Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative:</b> Coursera offering free licenses and certificates in 2020 to 3,800 online courses for collaborating government partners around the world to help impacted workers develop knowledge and skills for re-employment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Birmingham Strong:</b> The city's public-private partnership is responding to the pandemic by connecting people, projects, and resources to employ residents in paid pandemic response service work.</li> <li>● <b>SkillUp Connecticut:</b> The state is providing free 180-day licenses to provide job training and industry-recognized credentialing online to all unemployment insurance claimants.</li> <li>● <b>The Virginia Ready Initiative:</b> Launched in partnership with twenty of the state's leading employers, the newly established nonprofit is offering graduates of one of twenty-nine training programs a \$1,000 Credential Achievement Award and the opportunity to interview with the state's best companies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Grow with Google:</b> Google is following the successful launch of their IT credential with an additional three credentials, including Data Analytics, Project Management, and User Experience Design. The credentials will be accessible on Coursera. MA Community Colleges have been early partners.</li> <li>● <b>IBM SkillsBuild:</b> IBM's reskilling platform helps displaced workers pivot into IT jobs or identify where their skills fit best. IBM is actively looking for nonprofit partners to scale within Boston.</li> <li>● <b>Microsoft Global Skills Initiative:</b> The company is leveraging its resources and partnerships, including LinkedIn Learning and GitHub to provide free training online. They have identified 10 initial job categories for targeting free training as well as significant discounts for give Microsoft fundamentals certifications and eight role-based certifications.</li> </ul>

## Addressing Challenges

Partners cited collaboration as central to the region's advancement. The lack of traction of previous efforts to unite the region's diverse entities behind a shared strategy were cited as an obstacle. However, stakeholders indicated that this moment might be different and shared potential tactics that could address this challenge.

<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● "I can't think of any ongoing initiative that is standing out... A lot of coalition efforts have initial excitement in galvanizing different groups. But over time, it's hard to have a collective agenda."</li><li>● "It is a very fragmented system. Lots of good organizations and initiatives, but I feel like you are playing poker: You have all of the cards but don't know how to make a hand."</li></ul>
<b>Tactics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● "How do you get them to the table in a cohesive way and bringing in more nationally focused resources where appropriate? It is probably a blend of those... SkillWorks has been running a funder collaborative for decades now. Thinking about how to bring in bigger, more powerful voices in new ways."</li><li>● "Mapping the ecosystem to understand who has influence. Try to figure out where is the white space and use philanthropy to address it. Trying to understand the ecosystem and points of connection and collaboration, and incentivizing that via capital."</li></ul>

## An Emerging Vision

Despite outstanding challenges, leaders in Greater Boston are optimistic about their ability and energy to work across sectoral lines and build a more equitable future of work. Stakeholders expressed enthusiasm about Boston's ability to set an example for the nation.

- “This group could help convene something like the Massachusetts Life Sciences Council that would focus on the state's system of education and training, which we know is critical to the future of the Commonwealth. We could leverage the assets of the people around the room to focus on the hurdles that just haven't been able to be pushed over the line and marshal the political will to do it.”

—Liz Reynolds, MIT

- “Some jobs, such as care work, are essential to the functioning of society but are not treated with respect. This is often a consequence of deliberate policy choices we've made in the US, such as a low minimum wage and a lack of attention to working conditions. Since we now know that this work is truly essential, we need to rethink those choices.”

—David Deming, Harvard Kennedy School

- “The question for the Greater Boston community is this: How can we use this moment of crisis to not only restore employment but to go deeper in creating a more equitable job-market and overall economy?

—Kevin McGovern, Deloitte

- “Start with something specific. Do we start with a sector? Find a way to show some early momentum and be able to track some outcomes around that and build out from there.”

—Maria Flynn, JFF

- “We're not trying to 'go back' to normal, we are building forward into a new, bolder, stronger model.”

—Jodi Rosenbaum, More Than Words

- “It will take all of us working together to address the significant issues of our post COVID economy. These are exactly the kinds of conversations we need to be having.”

—Christine Abrams, Commonwealth Corporation



## High-Impact Areas for Action

New modes of training, creating new transitional pathways, and advocacy were commonly cited as prime opportunities for collaboration in the region.

Training	Transition Pathways	Advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Short-term programs:</b> Momentum amongst Boston stakeholders around creating additional flexible, short-term credentialing programming for displaced workers that allows them to reskill and return to the workforce quickly. Stakeholders noted desire for stackable, competency-based, aligned to industry needs, and funding options beyond Pell and financial aid. </li> <li> <b>Remote &amp; hybrid learning:</b> Stakeholders emphasized a need to design and improve existing training to be take place in remote or hybrid environments given social distancing. </li> <li> <b>Outcomes reorientation:</b> Historic levels of need and shrinking financial resources have increased demand for training with measurable outcomes and returns for workers. Massachusetts Pathways to Economic Advancement Project and JVS English for Advancement Program cited by multiple stakeholders as an example of a promising outcomes-oriented pay for success model that could be scaled. </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Connections across industries:</b> Recognition that workers in the hardest hit industries in Boston, such as hospitality and retail, need pathways into growing industries, such as health care and IT. Stakeholders are interested in city-wide or regional efforts to support sectoral transitions. </li> <li> <b>Navigation:</b> With enrollments declining in some programs, outreach and navigation support for workers will be essential. Boston's workers will need support finding the right training, persisting (including access to wraparounds), and connecting to job opportunities once they reskill. </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Government:</b> There is a growing sentiment among stakeholders to engage in direct advocacy on behalf of workers to strengthen both the workforce system and the state's social safety net. </li> <li> <b>Employment practices:</b> Similarly, many stakeholders also expressed a desire to demand equitable hiring practices and higher job quality for low wage jobs, including through collective action campaigns or standards aligned on in collaboration with employers. </li> </ul>

## Key Institutions and Roles

Stakeholders view a set of key institutions as filling unique roles and responsibilities in the recovery in Greater Boston.

In addition to these institutions, stakeholders also noted the important role of the four-year public higher education sector in Massachusetts for driving equity, especially UMass Boston.

Navigation	Training	Work
<p>WORKFORCE BOARDS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Focus on supporting affected adults in addition to youth</li> <li>● Identify the labor needs of the new economy, and direct public funding to high-quality programs</li> <li>● Ensure connections with other institutions given boards' ability for impact at scale and linkages to other public programs</li> </ul> <p>CAREER CENTERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create greater awareness of the many resources centers provide</li> <li>● Serve at the frontlines of supporting displaced workers</li> <li>● Connect and refer workers to training, jobs, and other resources; even in virtual environment</li> <li>● Can drive impact at scale</li> </ul>	<p>TRAINING PROVIDERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify and create the non-credit pathways needed to gain employment</li> <li>● Leverage online learning to reach more workers, with digital equity and access a necessary component</li> <li>● Positioned to track and share outcomes</li> </ul> <p>COMMUNITY COLLEGES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Labs and other applied learning settings must reopen, so students can complete required in-person training</li> <li>● Uniquely positioned to train, track, and place students in career pathways</li> <li>● Cited as the provider with the most potential to scale</li> <li>● Possess the nimbleness to provide more short-term, targeted training</li> </ul>	<p>EMPLOYERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implement equitable hiring practices</li> <li>● Improve the quality of low wage jobs and benefits</li> <li>● Build pathways for young and displaced workers to secure jobs and advancement</li> <li>● Create more (often remote) opportunities for work-based experiences, on-the-job learning, and transitional employment for those looking to build resumes and experience in a difficult job market</li> <li>● Partner in state and federal advocacy to support funding for reskilling and re-employment</li> </ul>

## Strategic Choices for Collaboration

A cross-sector and cross-institutional response to the crisis will require Boston's leaders to make tradeoffs and choices regarding their focus and strategy.

Objective(s)
<b>Broad:</b> Pursue multiple objectives and/or a large objective vs. <b>Specific:</b> Pursue a narrower set of high leverage objectives
Strategy
<b>High leverage opportunities:</b> What work has the greatest impact on economic mobility? <b>Power analysis:</b> Who can advance this work? <b>Incentives:</b> What incentives drive the system's actors?
Locus of Control
<b>Internal:</b> Prioritizing work directly within the control of the group vs. <b>External:</b> Prioritizing work indirectly within the control of the group through influence
Collaborative
<b>Large group:</b> A broad coalition of collaborators vs. <b>Small group:</b> A smaller group that invests greater resources
Commitment
<b>Formal collaborative:</b> Commitment of time and resources to the collaborative's work vs. <b>Informal collaborative:</b> Commitment of support in various forms to the collaborative's work

# Conclusion

**Over the past year**, Greater Boston's workforce ecosystem has undertaken herculean efforts to respond to an unprecedented crisis. It is hard to imagine how circumstances could have been more dire than what we have witnessed over the past months. But without such effective and adaptable institutions in the region, the implications for workers and learners would have been even more devastating. The interviews and surveys reflected in this report provide just a small preview of the valiant work of these leaders and their organizations during such difficult times.

However, the events of 2020/21 have served to remind Boston and its neighbors how much work remains to be done. As this report reflects, the pandemic has brought much-needed attention to longstanding structural problems that perpetuate pervasive racial and economic inequality in the region. While society and the economy begin, however slowly, to recover from these months of trauma, there appears a unique opportunity to build together a future for the region's workers that is better than where we started.

Seizing the moment will mean breaking down some of the traditional silos that have hindered progress in the past. Creating equitable access to quality jobs will not happen magically; it will require sustained

and intentional efforts from Greater Boston's private, public, and nonprofit communities. Our work surveying and interviewing a diverse set of leaders in the region indicates that there is a coalition of the willing that could come together for change. These stakeholders recognize that while the challenges appear large in this moment, with continued structural change in the economy and rising automation, they will only persist and grow larger without action and dedicated resources.

If Greater Boston can effectively leverage the collective might of its institutional assets, it can become a national leader in the recovery and show the country what a truly equitable future of work looks like. Doing so, however, will require resisting the urge to "go back to normal." Instead, we must define and execute on a new vision for how government, education and training, and employers jointly create pathways into quality jobs. Creating prosperity that is more broadly shared cannot be the task of any one institution alone. It will require all hands on deck. From our conversations over the past six months, we see strong reasons to believe that Boston is ready to meet this challenge.

*Rachel Lipson  
Will Dorsey Eden*

## Appendix

# Stakeholders Interviewed or Surveyed

### INTERVIEWED

**Associated Industries of Massachusetts:** John Regan, President & CEO

**Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center:** Joanne Pokaski, Senior Director of Workforce Development and Community Relations

**Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology:** Anthony Benoit, President

**Boston Planning & Development Agency:** Alvaro Lima, Director of Research

**Boston Private Industry Council:** Neil Sullivan, Executive Director

**Bunker Hill Community College:** Pam Eddinger, President

**Burning Glass Technologies:** Matt Sigelman, CEO; Dan Restuccia, Chief Product & Analytics Officer

**City of Boston:** John Barros, Chief of Economic Development

**Commonwealth Corporation:** Christine Abrams, CEO

**Imaginable Futures:** Michelle Weise, EIR & Senior Advisor

**Federal Reserve Bank of Boston:** Prabal Chakrabati, Senior Vice President

**Google:** Liz Schwab, New England Head of External Affairs

**Harvard Graduate School of Education:** Bob Schwartz, Professor Emeritus

**Harvard Kennedy School, Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy:** David Deming, Professor of Public Policy

**Harvard Rappaport Institute of Greater Boston:** Kathryn Carlson, Executive Director

**Harvard Kennedy School, Taubman Center for State & Local Government:** Rafael Carbonell, Executive Director

**IBM:** Ray Johnson, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager

**JFF:** Maria Flynn, President & CEO; Kerry McKittrick, Strategic Partnerships Manager

**JVS:** Jerry Rubin, President & CEO

**LearnLaunch:** Jane Swift, President & Executive Director

**Massachusetts Business Roundtable:** JD Chesloff, Executive Director

**Massachusetts Competitive Partnership:** Jay Ash, CEO

**Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development:** Michael Kennealy, Secretary

**Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development:** Rosalin Acosta, Secretary

**MIT Sloan Institute for Work and Employment Research:** Paul Osterman, Professor of Human Resources & Management

**MIT Task Force on the Work of the Future:** Liz Reynolds, Executive Director

**New Profit:** Angela Jackson, Managing Partner; JB Schramm, (fmr.) Managing Partner

**North Bennett Street School:** Sarah Turner, President

**Northeastern Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy:** Alicia Modestino, Director; Associate Professor of Public Policy, Urban Affairs, & Economics

**Northeastern Center for Future of Higher Education and Talent Strategy:** Sean Gallagher, Executive Professor of Educational Policy

**Partners HealthCare:** MJ Ryan, Senior Director Workforce Development & Economic Opportunity

**Roxbury Community College:** Valerie Roberson, President

**UMass:** Katherine Newman, Chancellor of Academic Programs

## SURVEYED

**Artists for Humanity:** Courtney Ford, Manager of Development Operations

**Deloitte:** Kevin McGovern, New England Managing Partner

**Inversant:** Dr. Charles Desmond, CEO

**Massachusetts Life Sciences Center:** Beth Nicklas, General Counsel and VP, Academic and Workforce Programs

**Massachusetts Workforce Association:** Tonja Mettlach, Executive Director

**MassBioEd:** Sunny Schwartz, Executive Director

**Massport:** Kenn Turner, Director of Diversity & Inclusion

**MIT Sloan Good Companies, Good Jobs Initiative:** Tom Kochan, Bunker Professor of Management

**MIT Sloan; Good Jobs Institute:** Zeynep Ton, Professor of Operations Management

**More Than Words:** Jodi Rosenbaum, Executive Director

**Resilient Coders:** David Delmar Senties, Founder & Executive Director

**Social Finance Inc:** Tracy Palandjian, Co-Founder & CEO

**Union Capital Boston:** Eric Leslie, Founder & Lead Organizer

**Year Up:** Garrett Warfield, Chief Research Officer