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NEW REPORT: LARGEST PORTION OF JOB OPENINGS PROJECTED FOR MASSACHUSETTS BY 2016 ARE “MIDDLE SKILL”

Massachusetts' Economic Recovery Tied to Preparing Workers for Jobs Requiring More than High School Diploma, Less Than a Four-Year Degree; Massachusetts Must Invest in Training Time Now To Meet Future Demand

Business, Labor, Education Leaders Launch New Skills2Compete-Massachusetts Campaign

BOSTON—More than 396,000 “middle-skill” job openings—those that require more than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree—are projected for the state by 2016, concludes a new study released today by National Skills Coalition in partnership with SkillWorks and The Workforce Solutions Group. But to unleash the full economic benefits of these openings, Massachusetts will need to continue to invest in proper training and education for its workforce to make sure it has people ready for those jobs.

Though the recession has halted current employment growth, the report projects that middle-skill jobs (including new jobs and replacement) would account for 38 percent of all openings between 2006 and 2016.

“The biotech sector is growing rapidly, and finding qualified employees remains a challenge,” said Suzanne Bruhn, Senior Vice President of Strategic Planning and Program Management for Shire Pharmaceutical. “As part of our manufacturing facility expansion here in Massachusetts, we plan to hire around 600 employees, many for positions that do not require four-year degrees. These include jobs such as Manufacturing Operator, Quality Control Technician, and Maintenance Mechanic; entry-level positions with benefits that offer potential for job growth and provide self-sufficient wages.”

Despite Massachusetts’ strong investments in post-secondary education and workforce training, preparation for middle-skill jobs has not kept up with demand. Prior to the national recession, Massachusetts was already experiencing shortages of middle-skill workers in crucial industries. About 45 percent of all jobs are classified as middle-skill, but only 32 percent of Massachusetts workers likely have the credentials to fill them. As Massachusetts, along with the rest of the country, moves from recession into recovery, employers will likely once again face the challenge of finding quality middle- and high-skill workers – slowing the pace of economic growth.

The report, which tracks Massachusetts’ jobs at the middle-skill level, notes that as the economy picks up, the Commonwealth will see growth in these kinds of jobs.

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“If Massachusetts seeks timely economic recovery and long-term prosperity, the state must ensure that its workforce has the necessary education and training to meet the labor demands of the future,” urges Jessie Hogg Leslie of National Skills Coalition, the convening organization for the national Skills2Compete campaign. “The national recession provides a time frame for businesses and the state to be strategic, evaluate labor and skill needs, and train and prepare for the jobs that are expected to grow.”

Massachusetts’ Forgotten Middle-Skills Jobs also assesses the current and future middle-skill employment and education patterns in the state:

- **Massachusetts’ health services and information technology industries show robust demand for middle-skill workers.** The health care and social services industry posted more jobs in 2009 than any other industry in the Commonwealth. In addition, twelve out of the thirteen information technology occupations are expected to see job growth between 2006 and 2016.
- Middle-skill jobs expected to grow by 2016 in Massachusetts include **licensed practical nurses with a median annual earning of \$49,490; and computer support specialists with a median annual earning of \$54,810.** The report includes a list of 30 high-demand middle-skill jobs in Massachusetts.
- **Massachusetts faces challenges when it comes to basic skill attainment.** More than 400,000 Massachusetts residents do not have a high school diploma; and with much of the population growth occurring via foreign-born residents, more than 150,000 have limited or no English speaking ability. Only 5 percent of Massachusetts adults with less than a high school diploma are enrolled in basic education, and only 6 percent of residents with limited English proficiency are enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

The report also finds that close to two-thirds of the people who will be in Massachusetts’ workforce in the year 2020 were already working adults in 2005—long past the traditional high school-to-college pipeline. National Skills Coalition says this finding underscores the need for Massachusetts to continue to target training and education to people who are working or who could be working today.

The analysis for the study was performed by National Skills Coalition using data from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, American Community Survey and state labor market data from the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development. The analysis is based on the methodology developed for the national Skills2Compete report – *America’s Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs* – by labor economists Harry Holzer and Robert Lerman.

Echoing a vision put forward by the national Skills2Compete campaign, President Obama first challenged every American to commit to at least one year of postsecondary education or training in February 2009, and has continued to signal that investing in a range of skills for America’s workforce—“be it at a technical college or a four-year school; vocational training or an apprenticeship”—will be a priority for his Administration.

Kicking off this week with a broad coalition of business, labor and education leaders, the Skills2Compete-Massachusetts campaign is calling on state leaders to embrace a strong vision to guide an economic and education strategy that would allow residents to meet or exceed the President’s challenge: Every Massachusetts resident should have access to the equivalent of at least two years of education or training past high school—leading to a vocational credential, industry certification, or one’s first two years of college—to be pursued at whatever point and pace makes sense for individual workers and industries. Every person must also have access to the basic skills and support needed to pursue such education.

“An education and training strategy guided by the Skills2Compete vision would give Massachusetts a competitive edge for recovery and long-term growth,” says Loh-Sze Leung, SkillWorks Director. “As Massachusetts looks to remain a strong competitor in the global economy, it’s critical that we prepare workers for the jobs of the future. We look forward to developing and implementing this economic and education strategy that would better help Massachusetts residents to obtain higher skills and higher wages in middle- and high-skill jobs and careers, encouraging family economic success,” added Alan Macdonald, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable.

"The City of Boston has been and continues to be committed to creating opportunities for all of its residents," said Mayor Thomas M. Menino. "We know Boston's most important asset is our workforce and we are proud to be a founding partner of SkillWorks and a number of other initiatives that are aimed at helping more youth and adults gain the kinds of middle-skill credentials that will position the city for growth in the years to come."

The state and national efforts of the Skills2Compete campaign are made possible, in part, by general support from National Skills Coalition's national funders including the Ford Foundation, Joyce Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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About Skills2Compete

Skills2Compete is a non-partisan campaign to ensure the U.S. workforce has the skills needed to meet business demand, foster innovation, and grow broadly shared prosperity. The campaign's diverse and growing list of endorsers include national and local leaders from business, labor, education and training, community and civil rights groups, and the public sector. The Skills2Compete Vision: Every U.S. worker should have access to the equivalent of at least two years of education or training past high school—leading to a vocational credential, industry certification, or one's first two years of college—to be pursued at whatever point and pace makes sense for individual workers and industries. Every person must also have the opportunity to obtain the basic skills needed to pursue such education. For more information and to download the full report, *Massachusetts' Forgotten Middle Skills Jobs*, visit www.nationalskillscoalition.org/Skills2Compete and www.nationalskillscoalition.org/Massachusetts.

National Skills Coalition organizes broad-based coalitions seeking to raise the skills of America's workers across a range of industries. We advocate for public policies that invest in what works, as informed by our members' real-world expertise. And we communicate these goals to an American public seeking a vision for a strong U.S. economy that allows everyone to be part of its success. For more information, visit www.nationalskillscoalition.org.

About Skill Works

Skill Works is a ten-year \$25 million investment partnership, housed at the Boston Foundation and jointly supported by 14 funders, to improve workforce development in Boston and Massachusetts; bringing 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. Through SkillWorks partnerships, over 3,000 workers have received skills training thus far, with over 500 workers placed in jobs, and more than 250 workers receiving promotions. SkillWorks continues to invest in workforce partnerships, public policy advocacy and capacity building. SkillWorks has become a model for cities across the country and for the [National Fund for Workforce Solutions](#). In 2010, SkillWorks launched the Green Jobs Initiative to ensure access to green collar career pathways by lower skilled, low-income adults. For more information please contact SkillWorks Director [Loh-Sze Leung](#) at 617-338-4377 or visit www.skill-works.org.

About the Workforce Solutions Group

The Workforce Solutions Group is a statewide coalition led by the MA Workforce Board Association, the MA AFL-CIO, the Crittenton Women's Union, and the MA Communities Action Network, MA Business Roundtable, the Center for Labor Market Studies and the Workforce Investment Association of MA. This broad coalition brings together a diverse range of employers, unions, education and training providers, community colleges, immigrant advocates, workforce investment boards, and interfaith organizations to advocate for a strong and effective workforce development system. WSG efforts have lead to more than \$50M in additional funding for skills training for workers in Massachusetts. The Workforce Solutions Group hosts the annual [MA Jobs and Workforce Summit](#), issues research reports on the labor economy, and advocates for post secondary training and education in high demand industries. For more information about the Workforce Solutions Group please contact [Sue Parsons](#) at 617-259-2960 or visit www.workforcesolutionsgrp.org.