

Community snapshots

The Rennie Center's research about opportunity youth in high school equivalency (HSE)-plus programs included key practices across three Massachusetts communities. Key information about the communities and programs participating in the study are below. (All information in "By the numbers" represents 2012 data.)



<p>Greenfield</p> <p>Rural Greenfield, Massachusetts is home to a tight network of agencies working together to serve its sizeable population of opportunity youth. Greenfield's small size and role as the seat of Franklin County makes collaboration the standard mode of operation, an advantage for providers. There is still a large number of youth who are not reached by this network of services, partially due to a lack of regional transportation services.</p>	<p>BY THE NUMBERS</p> <p>Population: 17,543</p> <p>Median household income: \$48,370</p> <p>67% adults over age 16 employed in labor force</p> <p>16% residents live below the poverty line</p> <p>78% students graduate high school in four years</p> <p>9% adults over 25 do not have a high school diploma</p> <p>26% adults over 25 have a Bachelor's degree or higher</p> <p>5% high school seniors who dropped out earned HSE</p>	<p>PROGRAM PROFILES</p> <p>Pathways to MCAS Success* serves about 100 youth who have not yet earned their high school diploma or HSE and have not passed one or more portions of the MCAS exam. A flexible design allows a staff of one to tailor referrals and select in-house services, including: academic assessment and tutoring; career advising, training and placement assistance; college and financial aid application assistance; service referrals; and minimal financial assistance to overcome barriers to success.</p> <p>WIA Youth Programs serves 70-80 youth ages 14-21 who meet one or more federal Workforce Investment Act eligibility criteria; more than a quarter of participants are high school dropouts. The array of offerings include: HSE preparation; basic skills tutoring; career interest exploration; subsidized summer jobs; job readiness and skills training; job search and application support; counseling to support goal setting and achievement; and peer leadership opportunities.</p> <p><i>*The Pathways to MCAS Success program ceased operations on August 30, 2014 due to loss of funding.</i></p>
<p>Roxbury</p> <p>Located in the heart of Boston, the Roxbury neighborhood has among the highest poverty rates in the city and some of the lowest rates of employment and educational attainment. The community benefits from several HSE providers offering the advantage of proximity and safety with programming located right in the neighborhood. Providers benefit from a citywide network of non-profits that offer alternative education, career exploration, and summer job programs for Boston youth.</p>	<p>BY THE NUMBERS</p> <p>Population: 48,454</p> <p>Median household income: \$27,859</p> <p>59% adults over age 16 employed in labor force</p> <p>35% residents below the poverty line</p> <p>66% students graduate high school in four years (Boston Public Schools total)</p> <p>25% adults over 25 do not have a high school diploma</p> <p>21% adults over 25 have a Bachelor's degree or higher</p> <p>2% high school seniors who dropped out earned HSE (Boston Public Schools total)</p>	<p>PROGRAM PROFILES</p> <p>GED Plus aims to empower up to 50 youth ages 16-24 by providing the academic skills they need to achieve high school equivalency, as well as social competencies and agency needed to navigate systems. GED Plus provides: individualized services with a case manager; employment and career exploration assistance; referrals to legal, medical, housing, mental health, substance abuse, and other services; application assistance for training programs, colleges, and financial aid; and HSE practice tests.</p> <p>X-Cel Education provides customized academic instruction to help about 250 low-income adults ages 18+ achieve high school completion and enter college-level study. Instruction happens in small groups, with youth entering on a rolling basis and advancing at their own pace. The program invests in extensive college preparation and transition support, and the program model provides continued service while students are enrolled in postsecondary.</p> <p>YouthBuild Boston, headquartered in Roxbury, is a member of the national network, serving 30-60 youth per year. The program offers job training and apprenticeship in the building trades, and includes a self-developed academic program that includes HSE preparation, leadership and community service opportunities, and a life skills curriculum. Postsecondary education is not a focus of this YouthBuild site; the vast majority of participants are interested in gaining work-based experience.</p>
<p>New Bedford</p> <p>New Bedford is a small city with one of the highest annual high school dropout rates in the state. The city boasts a large number of community services aimed at alleviating poverty and its effects on families, although there are fewer sustained education-oriented programs. Several local organizations serving opportunity youth are resourced through state and federal funds that are typically earmarked for particular purposes, and community leaders express concern about unmet needs.</p>	<p>BY THE NUMBERS</p> <p>Population: 94,952</p> <p>Median household income: \$36,789</p> <p>63% adults over age 16 employed in labor force</p> <p>22% residents are below the poverty line</p> <p>55% students graduate high school in four years</p> <p>31% adults over 25 do not have a high school diploma</p> <p>15% adults over 25 have a Bachelor's degree or higher</p> <p>2% high school seniors who dropped out earned HSE</p>	<p>PROGRAM PROFILES</p> <p>ACHIEVE! Youth Opportunity Program at the site of Training Resources of America provides an array of education and workforce services for 15-30 out-of-school youth ages of 16-21. Services include: HSE preparation; customer service vocational skills training resulting in a nationally-recognized certification; job readiness training; unpaid work experiences and internships; computer and clerical skills training; leadership development; job placement assistance; and comprehensive guidance and referral services.</p> <p>YouthBuild New Bedford uses the national program model, and each year provides 30 youth ages 16-24 with supports toward earning high school equivalency, carpentry and green skills, community service, and postsecondary education. The goal is to provide young adults with the opportunities to become productive citizens through academic instruction, community service, and life-skills training, leadership, and career development. The program expects all youth to engage in a service partnership with New Bedford agencies that help the community to develop a relationship with—and responsibility for—the benefit of themselves, their families, and their neighbors.</p>