

The ROADS Partnership

Regional Organizations. Advanced Data Sharing.



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Regional Data Website Launched for the Pioneer Valley

Springfield, MA, March 19, 2014—A new website, www.pioneervalleydata.org, has been launched to provide key regional economic, planning, and workforce data through a publicly accessible portal. This website, known as the Pioneer Valley Data Portal, is a collaborative initiative of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), the Economic Development Council of Western MA (EDC), the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County (REB), and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG). A **brief** press announcement will be held **March 19 at 8:15 a.m.** at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission on the 2nd floor as part of the bi-monthly Plan for Progress meeting agenda. Members of the media are invited to attend this event.

Known as the Regional Organizations Advanced Data Sharing (ROADS) partnership, the executive leadership of the EDC, PVPC, and the REB initially met in March of 2012 to collaborate on the accuracy and collection of regional information that could be utilized by key regional stakeholders. The partnership was expanded a year later to include Franklin County with the addition of the FRCOG. The goal of the working group was to collaborate around data gathering and analysis in new ways that will save time and provide more accurate information. Where previously staff from multiple organizations might be gathering the same data separately in their own offices and storing it in their own files, now one person will gather that piece of data and put it in a database that can be shared by all.

Now that resource is available to the public. The idea is not to duplicate existing sources of easily accessible data such as the Census Bureau or the Bureau of Labor Statistics information, but to be a collective resource of information that is difficult to locate for the inexperienced user, to capture these data sets in a database, and to keep them updated. The development of this cloud-based database system took about 18 months before it was ready for public use and was supported in part by the Western Massachusetts Electric Company as part of their work to encourage regional collaboration and economic development.

“The website was created to provide a database of shared information that is commonly used between our organizations and requested externally, but is not readily accessible,” explained David M. Cruise, President and CEO of the REB. Once the initial database was created, the partnership’s next phase was for the public to have access to this data, since business decisions, grant submissions, media articles, and policy decisions are data-driven, Cruise said.

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“This is a great example of how regional organizations in the Pioneer Valley are collaborating to use our resources in a more efficient and coordinated manner,” noted Timothy W. Brennan, Executive Director of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. “Sharing approaches to data use is just one of many ways that our organizations communicate and strategize with each other on a regular basis.”

“The ROADS initiative makes good sense for both the collaborating partners and for others who will have access,” observed Allan W. Blair, President and CEO for the EDC. “The creation of an accurate and updated central database of key measures for the three-county region and the Knowledge Corridor will help us track important metrics from a trusted source.”

“The data sets available cover geographical regions from Franklin County, Massachusetts to the Central Region in Connecticut,” said Molly Goren-Watts, Principal Planner/Manager for the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

“There are hundreds of data sets available, such as statistics on poverty, health, crime, education, employment, transportation, and housing.”

“As this collaboration continues, it creates an opportunity for us to develop new data sets that are specific to the three-county region, which can then be easily made available to other stakeholders,” stated Jessica Atwood, Senior Economic Development Planner for the FRCOG.