ROAD QUICK GUIDE

Using ROAD to Assess Regional Occupational Opportunities

A companion to the live ROAD demonstration for WCTF applicants

Use this guide during the demonstration and as a quick reference afterward. ROAD helps applicants compare regional demand, wages, and estimated training pipeline information.

What ROAD helps you examine

Occupational demand: Review projected annual openings, employment growth, and other indicators that opportunities exist in the selected region.

Wages and opportunity: Examine earnings and advancement potential to consider whether an occupation can support economic mobility.

Regional context: Select the workforce geography that reflects where participants will live, train, and work.

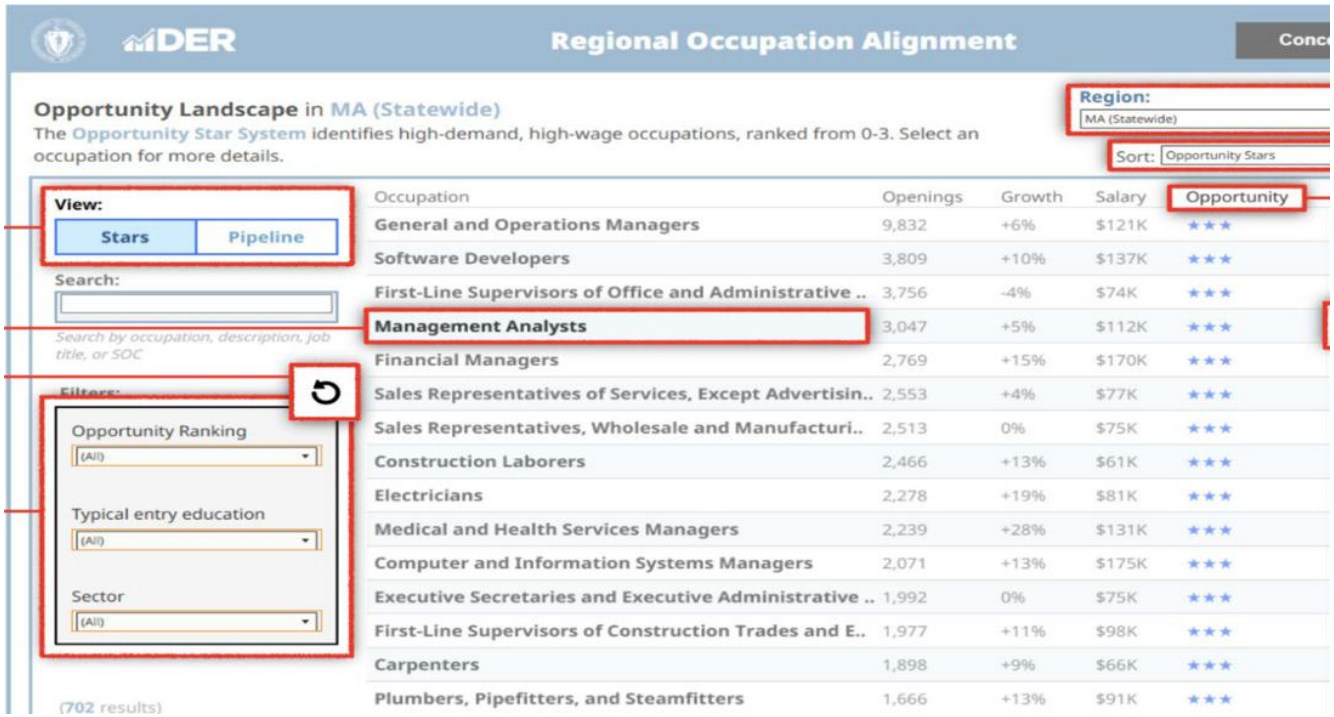
Before you open the dashboard

- Define the workforce geography you want to examine.
- Bring a short list of occupations and any initial employer input.

STEPS 1 THROUGH 3

Opportunity Landscape

Use this view to choose a region, narrow the occupation list, and compare occupations using the indicators most relevant to your program.



ROAD screen shown during the webinar. The interface and data may change.

1 Open the landscape

ROAD opens in the Stars view. Choose the region where participants are most likely to work.

2 Narrow the list

Search by occupation or filter by Opportunity Stars, typical entry education, and sector.

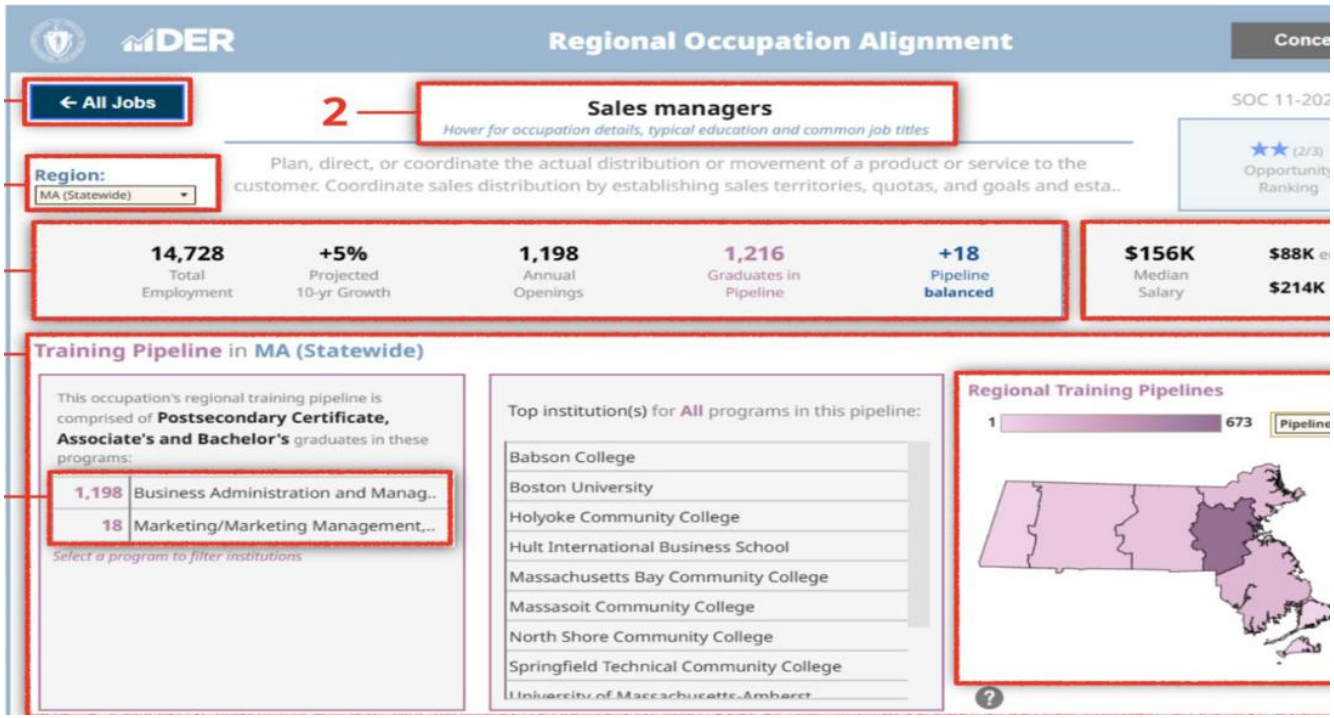
3 Sort and compare

Sort by stars, projected openings, growth, or salary. Three stars indicate the strongest combination of demand and wages.

STEP 4

Occupation Detail

Select an occupation title to review the indicators behind its ranking and identify what you still need to validate locally.



ROAD screen shown during the webinar. The interface and data may change.

4 Review the details

Compare the occupation description, common job titles, employment, growth, annual openings, and wages.

Also note

- Typical entry education and required credentials
- Related programs and institutions
- Whether the occupation appears accessible to the target population

Questions for employer conversations

- Does the occupation offer viable wages, stable employment, and a realistic path for advancement?
- Do entry requirements align with the proposed training model and the starting points of the target population?
- Which employers hire for these roles, and what do they report about demand, schedules, and required skills?

STEPS 5 AND 6

Training Pipeline



ROAD screen shown during the webinar. The interface and data may change.

5 Switch views

Select Pipeline to compare projected annual openings with estimated annual graduates.

Data note Pipeline data are available statewide and for Workforce Skills Cabinet regions, but estimates are not available for every occupation.

Important A gap is a signal to investigate. It does not, by itself, prove that employers face a labor shortage.

6 Read pipeline alignment

Alignment	How ROAD defines it
Gap	Estimated graduates are at least 15 percent below projected annual openings.
Balanced	Estimated graduates are within 15 percent of projected annual openings.
Overflow	Estimated graduates are at least 15 percent above projected annual openings.

STEPS 7 AND 8

Interpreting the Pipeline

7 Explore programs and institutions

Open the occupation detail page and select a training program to filter the institution list. Review which institutions produce graduates, then compare pipeline and alignment across regions.

8 Ask what the pipeline signal means

Pair the ROAD result with employer feedback. The same pipeline rating can point to different regional conditions.

ROAD and employer signal	What to investigate
Gap and employers report hiring difficulty	The region may have a training shortage. Confirm the scale and persistence of employer demand.
Gap and employers fill vacancies	Employers may draw workers from outside the region or from pathways not captured in the pipeline data.
Balanced or overflow and employers report hiring difficulty	Investigate skill mismatch, completion and placement, access barriers, scheduling, or retention.
Overflow and employers report no shortage	The region may function as a talent hub. Determine whether additional training capacity is needed.

Remember Treat the dashboard as a prompt for investigation. Do not use a single indicator as the full rationale for an occupational focus.

STEP 9

Validating the Findings

9 Validate the ROAD findings

Use conversations with employers and regional workforce partners to test the story suggested by the data. Document what you learn and explain how it influenced the proposed program design.

Employer validation	Regional system check
Current hiring volume, locations, shifts, schedules, and wages	Existing training providers and the number of participants they can serve
Credentials and skills expected at entry	Whether current programs meet employer needs
Recruitment, retention, and advancement barriers	Whether current programs reach the proposed target population
Specific commitments to training, hiring, and retention	Unmet access needs and referral or support resources

What to document

- Which employers provided input and how their feedback confirmed or complicated the ROAD findings
- Specific employer commitments to training, hiring, retention, or program improvement
- What training already exists, who it serves, and why the proposed program fills a remaining need
- Any limitations in the available data and how the partnership addressed them

STEP 10

Application Rationale and Checklist

10 Translate the findings into the application rationale

Connect the ROAD data, employer validation, training capacity, and participant fit into one clear explanation for the proposed occupational focus.

Application question	Evidence to include
Why this region?	Define the geography for participants and employers.
Why this occupation?	Cite the most relevant ROAD indicators and explain what they mean.
Why this program?	Connect employer validation to the regional training gap or access need.
Why these participants?	Explain accessibility, needed supports, and the path to advancement.

Applicant checklist

- ☐ The region and target occupation are clearly defined.
- ☐ The application interprets ROAD evidence accurately and in context.
- ☐ Employer demand and partnership commitments are documented.
- ☐ Training capacity and accessibility have been assessed.
- ☐ The application explains job quality and advancement potential.

Resources

ROAD dashboard mass.gov/info-details/regional-occupation-alignment-dashboard-road

WCTF questions wctf@commcorp.org

Questions about specific RFP requirements should follow the bidder question and clarification process described in the RFP.