

Geographic Area Definitions

Labor Market Areas

A general definition for a labor market area (LMA) is an economically integrated area within which individuals can reside and find employment within a reasonable distance or can readily change jobs without changing their place of residence. LMAs include both the metropolitan and micropolitan areas defined by the US Office of Management and Budget and the small labor market areas defined by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas

A standardized geographic area classification, Metropolitan Statistical Areas have at least one urbanized area of 50,000 or more population, plus adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties. Micropolitan Statistical Areas have at least one urban cluster of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000 population, plus adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties. If the specified criteria are met, a Metropolitan Statistical Area containing a single core with a population of 2.5 million or more may be subdivided to form smaller groupings of counties referred to as Metropolitan Divisions.

New England City and Town Areas (NECTAs)

In view of the importance of cities and town in New England, standards also provide for a set of geographic areas that are defined using cities and towns in the six New England states. The New England City and Town Areas (NECTAs) are defined using the same criteria as Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas and are identified as either metropolitan or micropolitan, based, respectively, on the presence of either an urbanized area of 50,000 or more population or an urban cluster of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000 population. If the specified criteria are met, a New England City and Town Area containing a single core with a population of at least 2.5 million may be subdivided to form smaller groupings of cities and towns referred to as New England City and Town Area Divisions.

Regional Planning Commissions

Municipalities and counties are enabled by law “to join in the formation of regional planning commissions whose duty it shall be to prepare a coordinated plan for the development of a region, taking into account present and future needs with a view toward encouraging the most appropriate use of land, such as for agriculture, forestry, industry, commerce, and housing; the facilitation of transportation and communication; the proper and economic location of public utilities and services; the development of adequate recreational areas; the promotion of good civic design; and the wise and efficient expenditure of public funds.” (RSA 36:45) The NH Office of Energy and Planning is responsible for delineating regions allowing each municipality to fall within one of the regions.

Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Wage Survey Areas

New Hampshire has sixteen OES wage areas. These wage areas are based on the New Hampshire portions of the labor market areas. Three of these are the New Hampshire portions of Metro NECTAs. Four are the New Hampshire portions of NECTA Divisions. Two are small Labor Market Areas (LMAs) and the remaining seven are built by combining Micro NECTAs, LMAs, and unattached towns. The areas are combined to increase the number of occupations for which employment and wage estimates will meet standards of reliability and to exhaust the geography of the state.