

Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board



Preparing Youth for Work and Learning in the 21st Century Economy

2010



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Deval L. Patrick, Governor
Timothy P. Murray, Lt. Governor
Joanne F. Goldstein, Secretary
Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development
Tamika N. Correia, Executive Director
Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board



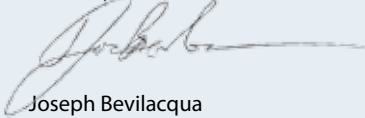
A Message From Joseph Bevilacqua

On behalf of its 65 members, The Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board (MWIB) is pleased to issue the report entitled, "Preparing Youth for Work and Learning in the 21st Century Economy". The report is intended to be used as a guidebook for expanding year round work and learning opportunities for all youth in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The report was composed through the exploration of the Youth Committee of the Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board, led by Gerard Burke, CEO of Hillcrest Educational Centers.

It is my sincere hope that this report will be used to provide the Commonwealth with a channel to begin the foundation of providing work and learning opportunities for all youth across the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



Joseph Bevilacqua
Chair – Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board
President – Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce

A Message From Gerard Burke

Over the past two years, Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board – Youth Committee has worked on one of the Governor's three workforce development priorities; enhance the youth pipeline to meet the labor demand for a 21st Century economy. The committee surveyed local workforce investment boards regarding capacity and gathered feedback from business leaders on their practices and experiences in offering youth employment and internship opportunities. The data collected from these activities informed the committee's recommendations and as such, they are provided in this report. It is our goal that these recommendations become the foundation to craft a plan of action that will help expand work and learning opportunities for all youth across the Commonwealth.

I applaud the Committee members who took part in creating this report and look forward to working with the Governor Deval L. Patrick and Secretary Joanne F. Goldstein as we put these recommendations into practice.

Sincerely,



Gerard Burke,
Chair - Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board – Youth Committee
President/CEO – Hillcrest Educational Centers, Inc.



Overview



In response to a gubernatorial directive in 2007, the Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board (MWIB) Youth Committee enlisted a team of youth workforce development experts, employers, educators, and representatives of intermediary organizations to assess the existing youth employment system and recommend improvements. The committee outlined a vision that all youth develop 21st century academic and professional skills critical to career success in our evolving economy. The committee then made three recommendations to promote achieving this vision through increased coordination to help young people gain both work experience and secondary and post-secondary credentials.

- 1. Increase the number and quality of work experiences and career exploration activities for both in-school and out-of-school youth.**
- 2. Organize and strengthen collaboration among education, workforce, and human service agencies at both the state and regional levels.**
- 3. Pilot a “multiple pathways” approach in selected regions that combines the education, workforce development, and human service support necessary to address the state’s dropout crisis by creating new avenues to educational attainment, economic security, and upward mobility for all youth.**

Increase the number and quality of work experiences and career exploration activities for both in-school and out-of-school youth.

Background



In April of 2007, Governor Patrick challenged the Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board (MWIB) to focus on three major workforce priorities for the Massachusetts public workforce development system. (1) Increase the workforce system's overall capacity to respond to labor market needs; (2) Close the existing gap between available workers' skills and business needs through a strategic use of resources and full engagement of the business sector; (3) Develop and align youth education, training, and employment programs to create a pipeline of new workers with the skills necessary to succeed in our evolving economy.

Youth Committee Chair, Gerard Burke, CEO of Hillcrest Educational Centers in Lenox, convened a group of experienced professionals already familiar with the youth workforce development system. These included representatives from business, education, workforce development, and intermediary organizations. Over the course of the year, best practices were shared, focus groups convened, and surveys disseminated to capture perspectives on the youth employment system's strengths and weaknesses as they currently exist.

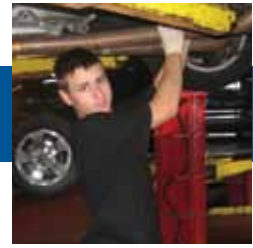
In the midst of the process, the summer of 2009 unfolded. From a youth employment perspective, it was the best of summers and the worst of summers. A substantial infusion of funding to support youth employment significantly boosted the number of opportunities available to young people in the state. However, despite this funding, there was still a huge gap in terms of youth employed compared to those who would have liked to have worked this past summer. State officials mobilized local workforce investment boards and their community partners to organize employment and workplace learning for over 15,400 young men and women of which 11,800 were from subsidized employment and 3,500 were from unsubsidized employment. Federal stimulus dollars made it possible to provide employment positions and an expanded state YouthWorks¹ program.

The workforce system proved that it can mobilize quickly and effectively to take advantage of a surge in federal and state spending for the benefit of the Commonwealth's youth. At the same time, the rest of the youth employment market was in freefall. Nationally, the summer employment rate for 16 to 19-year olds fell to 33%, a 4.5 percentage point decline from the previous summer and a shocking 19 percentage point drop from a 52% youth employment rate in the summer of 2000².

¹ YouthWorks is a state-funded youth jobs program, which provides funds that communities use to pay wages to low-income youth for summer jobs in the public, non-profit, and private sectors. www.commcorp.org

² *The Depression in the Nation's Teen Job Market: Who Worked and Who Didn't Work in the Summer of 2009?*. (Sept. 2009). Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University.

Key Findings



Not surprisingly, the Youth Committee decided to focus on youth employment and workplace learning as vital to the success of an enhanced youth pipeline strategy, as well as a specific responsibility of the public workforce system. The need for organized efforts to promote youth employment and workplace learning has never been greater.

Early employment experiences shape youth's future earning potential significantly. Youth who have intensive summer and senior year work experiences are 36 percent more likely to be working one year after graduation than their peers who did not work in high school.³ In previous decades, the private youth employment market supplied the overwhelming majority of opportunities. The public workforce system now must assume a greater share of responsibility for youth employment, either funded or brokered. If we fail to acknowledge the enormous impact of the shift of the labor market away from youth, we will fail in our mission to foster the skills necessary for a future productive workforce for the Commonwealth.

The committee recognized further that work experience, while critical, may not be available to all youth in the short run. In fact, the summer of 2010 looms before us with unprecedented challenges. In many regions, federal stimulus funds are all but exhausted. State YouthWorks funding, though remarkably spared in the latest round of 9C cuts⁴, will provide half as much money for youth jobs in the summer of 2010. These recessionary realities led the committee in two directions. First, we must imagine and implement a broad-based appeal to employers to hire youth in unsubsidized positions as the primary vehicle for increasing youth employment experiences. Second, we must ensure that all youth participate in career exploration activities such as job shadows, workplace tours, resume preparation, and mock interviews. Even if youth are not able to earn a paycheck at the workplace, short-term investigation of industries and occupations is a valuable way to connect education with future career opportunities, to create a context for learning, and to help them formulate opinions that will eventually inform choices regarding careers and training.

Develop and align youth education, training, and employment programs to create a pipeline of new workers with the skills necessary to succeed in our evolving economy.

³ *The Impacts of In-school Summer and Senior Year Work Experience on the Early Post-High School Employment Experiences of Class of 2007 Boston Public Schools Graduates.* (July 2009). Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University.

⁴ Section 9C of Chapter 29 of the Massachusetts General Laws requires that when projected revenue is less than projected spending, the Governor must act to ensure that the budget is brought into balance.

Key Findings Continued



The second major area of concern for the committee was the **lack of alignment between workforce activities and the other systems that serve youth, particularly the education and human service systems**. As workforce professionals, we know that educational success and attainment of credentials are critical to career success. And yet, the barriers for young people go beyond the walls of classrooms. Inter-agency and community collaboration, along with family engagement, is a necessary condition to ensure that all youth get access to education, employment, and wrap-around supports that will enable them to develop the skills and confidence to participate in a 21st century economy. With its network of sixteen workforce investment boards, the workforce system is uniquely positioned to join, and even facilitate, the necessary collaboration.

Finally, there is a dire demand for **increased capacity and innovative program models that will address the needs of youth who have fallen behind academically and those who have left school altogether**. The Commonwealth cannot afford to stand by while students drop out of high school or college, and remain disconnected and disengaged. For all youth to succeed, there must be multiple pathways to a secondary credential and post-secondary program that are aligned with career opportunities and labor market demand.

Vision and Recommendations



Our aspirations and objectives for education and youth workforce development in the Commonwealth fall under a single, unifying vision: **All youth develop the 21st century academic and professional skills critical to career success in our evolving economy. Secondary and postsecondary credentials** are an important part of this vision which applies to both **in-school and out-of-school youth**. Regardless of where they are in their education and development today, all youth must acquire the sophisticated professional skills that will enable them to play a role in the Commonwealth's economic future, achieve financial independence for themselves and their families, and create a solid foundation for life-long learning and fulfilling work.

Integrated work and learning is a powerful strategy for engaging all youth and for developing the full range of 21st century skills⁵. Career exploration activities and early work experience foster the aspiration, motivation, and persistence necessary to succeed in the classroom and at the workplace. Excellent college and career guidance, readily available labor market information, service alignment, and collaboration among youth-serving systems are critical to this vision as well. In pursuit of this unifying vision, the committee offers three recommendations.

Recommendation # 1: Increase the number and quality of work experiences and career exploration activities for both in-school and out-of-school youth.

Recommendation # 2: Organize collaboration among education, workforce, and human service agencies at both the state and regional levels.

Recommendation # 3: Pilot a "multiple pathways" approach in selected regions that combines the education, workforce development and human service support necessary to address the state's dropout crisis by creating new avenues to educational attainment, economic security and upward mobility for all youth.

Organize collaboration among workforce, education, and human service agencies at both the state and regional levels to expand and strengthen services for youth and young adults.

⁵ The Commonwealth is a leadership state in the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. The Partnership, a national network of states backed by 30 leading businesses and organizations, is working to ensure that every child masters content standards as well as the skills and competencies needed to be engaged and productive citizens and employees in an increasingly competitive global society. For more information visit www.21stcenturyskills.org

Recommendation # 1



Recommendation # 1:

Increase the number and quality of work experiences and career exploration activities for both in-school and out-of-school youth.

Despite the scale of the youth employment crisis and the loss of public funding, the Commonwealth must focus on youth jobs and workplace learning as top priorities. The challenge can appear daunting. For example, for Massachusetts to return to the youth employment levels of the late 1990's, when 66.6% of teens were working, we would need to create opportunities for 89,600 teens⁶.

The Commonwealth must engage youth early so that they can develop the workplace skills necessary to be productive and the motivation necessary to stay in school and earn both secondary and postsecondary credentials. Youth should perceive Massachusetts as a place of opportunity so that they will remain in the state once they earn these credentials. The challenge of generating employment opportunities cannot rest exclusively with the public sector. Finding employment for teens in the business community is the only way that we will begin to return to the scale of past years. In order to do this, we need recognized intermediaries to broker and connect youth and employers.

Employers value the work of intermediaries that reach out and engage them in working with youth. Worksites benefit from the outside support in designing a youth employment program and preparing the supervisors for the experience of supervising youth. While youth have much to contribute to the workplace, they do need strong support, good supervision, and a professional development plan so they can flourish and acquire the skills necessary to be successful in a 21st century economy. Finally, employers are more likely to participate in a youth program when an adult will vouch for the young person's preparedness for the experience and his/her level of commitment to gaining employment.

Recommendation # 1 Continued



Employers are more likely to participate in youth career exploration activities or provide jobs when the youth are prepared and do not come to the experience cold. Young people who have benefited from life skills preparation, work readiness or pre-employment instruction are better positioned for success in their experience. Staff from community-based or intermediary organizations that act as brokers are a key component in offering support and coaching to youth while they are immersed in their work experience. Youth benefit from having an adult resource, not directly connected to the work site, to trouble-shoot and problem-solve around work-related challenges off-line and not during work hours. The resource of adult intermediaries is just as important for employers as well. These brokers play an important role by providing support, information, and a safety net for youth as they help employers think through challenging situations that may arise with young people on the worksite.

A consistent message with alignment of marketing tools, and a coordinated effort to engage multiple stakeholders are critical elements in our campaign to successfully increase the number of and quality of work experiences and career exploration activities for both in-school and out-of-school youth. As more employers include youth in their workforce development strategy, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that we share best practices, build on the successes that have emerged over the past 15 years, and offer resources to those who are willing to participate in the youth workforce development system.

Employers are more likely to participate in youth career exploration activities or provide jobs when the youth are prepared and do not come to the experience cold.

Recommendation # 1 Continued



Action Steps

- **Prioritize the budget items that make work experience possible for youth through subsidized opportunities and the staff who prepare youth and broker unsubsidized employment opportunities – YouthWorks and School-to-Career Connecting Activities.**
Plan to expand these youth employment and workplace learning programs when public revenues return to pre-recession levels.
- **Mobilize a statewide and regional appeal to private-sector employers and large nonprofit organizations to create employer-paid jobs and internships.**
 - Identify leading public figures and officials to challenge employers to get involved.
 - Identify employer champions across the state to recognize as models.
 - Engage employer champions in the recruiting effort through their professional networks.
 - Report back to employers on how their participation has an impact on youth.
- **Develop a public awareness campaign to support the statewide and regional appeal.**
 - Develop high quality marketing materials to support a public information campaign for multiple audiences - youth and young adults ages 14-24, families, workforce professionals, and educators - so that all understand the direct connection between the youth's career exploration and employment experience and success in the labor force as an adult.
 - Develop an outreach and engagement strategy to employers about making an investment in the emerging youth workforce. Include resource sharing strategies across regions.
- **Develop a clearinghouse of program implementation resources to support employers and intermediaries in their work with youth that will:**
 - Identify how to access the youth employment system.
 - Offer scaffolded experiences for employers to commit at various levels of intensity from, providing career speakers, job shadows, worksite tours to employment opportunities, internships, and work-based learning.
 - Provide tools to assist with the tasks of administering a program or hiring individual youth.

Work-Based Learning Plans



A Profile of Summer 2009 Work-Based Learning Plans

This is a tool used to guide learning at the worksite. Employers use this tool to guide the conversations and the learning that happens on the job. It is a clear evaluative measure to demonstrate learning gain.

There were 3,300 Work-Based Learning Plans entered into the online database for Summer 2009. Work-Based Learning Plans include a job description, list of career and workplace skills and tasks, and a first and second review. In some cases, the reviews were done with pen-and-paper, and sometimes entered later or simply kept as paper documents. There are 1,873 WBLPs in the online database with all of the elements including the job description, skills/tasks and two reviews. Analysis of these WBLPs helps to provide a glimpse of the summer 2009 youth employment experiences.

In each Work-Based Learning Plan, (WBLP) up to seven career and workplace-specific skills are identified. These may be selected from a list of suggested skills or written in. In some cases, skills from the list of "Foundation Skills" are reiterated and expanded on.

The most-commonly identified skills (with the number of WBLPs in parentheses) included:

- Time Management (901)
- Interacting With Others (556)
- Project Management (554)
- Equipment Operation (471)
- Collecting And Organizing Information (328)
- Leadership (271)
- Teaching And Instructing (223)
- Workplace Safety (195)
- Computer Technology (184)
- Mathematics And Numeric Analysis (119)
- Groundskeeping / Landscaping (117)
- Workplace Appearance (116)
- Problem Solving (112)

Many WBLPs identify skills specific to the workplace such as:

- Classroom Management
- HTML Programming
- Pruning
- Design and Layout
- Sales and Customer Service
- Animal Care

**There were 3,300
Work-Based
Learning Plans
entered into the
online database
for Summer 2009.**

Recommendation # 2



Recommendation # 2: Organize collaboration among workforce, education, and human services agencies at both the state and regional levels to expand and strengthen services for youth and young adults.

Effectively connecting all youth to the labor market requires the efforts of multiple youth-serving institutions and agencies. The public workforce system alone cannot engage youth in the development of self- and family-sustaining career paths. Marginalized youth who experience family poverty, low educational attainment, and other barriers are particularly in need of a comprehensive, coordinated system of service delivery.

Collaboration among youth serving agencies with focus on clear, tangible outcomes such as completion of secondary education, the development of employability skills, and post-secondary success is a prerequisite for a pipeline of future workers with the skills necessary to succeed in the 21st century economy. Close alliance with education and human service agencies will broaden the workforce development system's capacity to enable youth to enter the workforce and maintain a consistent connection to the labor market. All young people will benefit from a clearly articulated framework for work and learning and a common vocabulary and systematic coordination across government and community agencies.

Today, capacity to deliver integrated youth workforce development varies greatly across the 16 Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs). In a survey conducted by the Youth Committee, LWIBs reported significant variation in work and learning opportunities for youth, youth staffing structures, community partnerships, and employer engagement capability. The existing state and regional youth workforce system needs increased capacity to more consistently implement youth employment as a strategy to motivate and support young people at risk of not earning a secondary or post-secondary credential or degree.

Recommendation # 2 Continued



Action Steps

- Support initiatives such as regional planning teams that focus on integrating the programs of the agencies within Labor and Workforce Development, Education, and Health and Human Services in support of youth employment, career exploration, dropout prevention and recovery, and college completion. Include employer and non-profit leaders as part of this process.
- Align data systems across all youth-serving agencies to promote information sharing and coordination. Set clear expectations around measurement and data collection.
- Promote the dissemination of information and resources to assist all stakeholders in the youth-serving system including employers, LWIBs, youth, parents, educators, community agencies, and other partners. Include data on the connection between post-secondary programs and labor market opportunities.
- Invest in the capacity of local workforce investment boards (LWIBs), so that they are well positioned to take on the challenge of leading a collaborative of youth stakeholders to fulfill the vision of secondary graduation and post-secondary success for all. Establish baseline standards for youth preparation and employment experiences to support a tiered system of career exploration and employment for in-school and out-of-school youth:
 - **Tier 1:** Job shadows, workplace tours, mock interviews, career speaker panels, and resume and professional skills workshops so that youth workers can begin to see local industries and occupations from a new perspective.
 - **Tier 2:** Jobs and internships in a variety of settings that allow youth to develop foundational workplace skills such as communication, collaboration, punctuality, appropriate dress and time management.
 - **Tier 3:** Structured workplace learning on the job with goal setting and performance evaluation so that youth workers and their supervisors can focus on skill development.
 - **Tier 4:** Connected workplace learning to academic expectations and industry-specific skill demands so that youth workers can learn in context and understand the pathways to career opportunities in a knowledge-based economy.
- Encourage regions to reach out aggressively to disconnected youth, particularly high school dropouts and truants, to re-engage them in multiple systems – education, workforce development, and human services.

**Report back
to employers
on how their
participation has
an impact
on youth.**

Recommendation # 3



Recommendation # 3:

Pilot a “multiple pathways” approach in selected regions that combines the education, workforce development, and human services support necessary to address the state’s dropout crisis by creating new avenues to educational attainment, economic security, and upward mobility for all youth.

Research has documented the benefits of serving all young people through a multiple pathways approach, particularly youth and young adults who have not fared well in traditional academic settings⁷. The majority of youth are educated through the public system which provides a college-prep curriculum of segmented topic areas. While this approach benefits many youth, it fails to meet the needs of all youth, especially those already involved with other public systems such as juvenile justice or social services. Varied pedagogic approaches, curricula, and settings for learning already exist in communities through charter, pilot, parochial, and private schools. Many community-based organizations provide GED, career exploration, and diploma programs that are funded through the Workforce Investment Act and local resources. However, these schools and programs do not meet the full range of community needs, and they are financed by a range of funders, each with its own set of expectations and guidelines, as well as specific eligibility requirements.

A coordinated multiple pathway system would create diverse options, varied entry points, and youth-centered focus on learning. This would require a shift from youth adapting to the systems that they are in, to one where youth select the learning program best suited to meet their needs, especially those young people who have a number of challenges and are disconnected from school and work. The goal of this coordinated service delivery approach is to support all young people, especially those placed most at-risk⁸, towards successful completion of secondary and post-secondary education, training, and employment.

This recommendation builds on work already begun through the statewide Pathways to Success by 21 (P21) Initiative, which has piloted innovative approaches to state level collaboration, regional coordination, and service delivery options for youth and young adults placed most at risk. In some regions of the state, the P21 pathway development work was further galvanized by their ability to access additional federal (US Department Of Labor Multiple Pathways Blueprint dollars in Brockton and Fall River) or foundation (Youth Transitions Funders Group and Mott in Boston) resources to support pathway design and/or implementation.

⁷ For more information about Multiple Education Pathways, visit the Department of Labor’s web site, http://www.doleta.gov/youth_services/Learning_Exchange_Materials.cfm.

⁸ At-risk is used to describe a range of vulnerable youth populations such as those who are not connected to school and/or employment, those who are connected to foster care or juvenile justice systems, etc.

Recommendation # 3 Continued



Additionally, this recommendation supports goals outlined in several Commonwealth focused reports, such as the *Governor's Readiness Report*, the *Massachusetts Graduation and Dropout Prevention and Recovery Commission Report*, and the *United Way's Ready for Lifelong Success Report*, which collectively outline the need for interagency collaboration around pathway development that addresses the dropout crisis in our state and leads to educational attainment, economic security, and upward mobility for all youth, especially those placed most at-risk.

Given the various calls for statewide action outlined in the above referenced reports and the solid work undertaken in some areas of the state via the P21 regional initiatives, Massachusetts is ripe to take the following steps to galvanize its work towards pathway development in the years ahead:

Action Steps

- Based on best practice research, locally and nationally, pilot approaches to multiple pathway development and implementation in a few Massachusetts communities with significant needs because of their high high school dropout rates and low youth employment rates. These innovative alternative education pathways should meet the needs of specific populations currently not being served by the existing system, such as out-of-school, out-of-work high school graduates ages 18 to 24 years old and returning high school dropouts.
- Identify measurable outcomes for, and evaluate the impact of, pathway options focused on the combined goals of dropout prevention, secondary and post-secondary completion, and youth employment.
- Disseminate best practices focused on multiple-pathway development and implementation across the state.
- Support interagency collaboration and shared funding of proven strategies by realigning existing resources and creating additional resources targeted towards the needs of youth most at-risk.



PHOTOS:

Governor Patrick speaks to Student Interns during the Summer Jobs for Youth Event at the Hurley Building

Front cover, Inside Front covers, Page 1, Page 8, Page 9, Page 12, and Page 15.

Francis Marty, Kaitlin St.Denis, and Kelly Marston at Battleship Cove.

Photo credit: Florrie Reddish/CommCorp

Front cover and Page 2.

Governor Patrick joined Congressman Michael Capuano in Cambridge to announce that Just-A-Start Corporation will receive \$160,000 in stimulus funding to help connect youth to green jobs training at the organization's YouthBuild program.

Photo credit: Eugena Ossi/Governor's Office

Front Cover, Page 5, and Page 10.

Fidal Salem, a summer intern working at the Auto Shop - South Costal Youth Works.

Photo credit: Florrie Reddish/CommCorp

Front Cover and Page 3.

Summer Youth Program Graduation

Page 5, Page 11, and Back Cover

Governor Patrick listens to Dietrick Whitfield, a former YouthBuild student who is now the foreman on the construction project at Prospect Street in Cambridge.

Photo Credit: Eugena Ossi/Governor's Office

Page 6 and Back Cover

Governor Patrick and Dietrick Whitfield discuss the construction being done on site at the construction project at Prospect Street in Cambridge.

Photo Credit: Eugena Ossi/Governor's Office

Page 8, and page 9.

The Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board Youth Committee would like to express its thanks to the following individuals who participated in the process of developing and writing this document.

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*Heidi Brooks (Co-Chair) - Citizens Financial Group

*Keith Westrich – Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Lorraine Barra – Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Josh Bruno – Boston Private Industry Council

Anne Berrigan – Commonwealth Corporation

Robert Bower – Massachusetts AFL-CIO

Elaine Fox – Massachusetts AFL-CIO

*Jack Healey – Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Jennifer James – Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development

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*Alan Macdonald – MA Business Roundtable

RJ McGrail – Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development

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Leslie Parady – Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Khita Pottinger – Commonwealth Corporation

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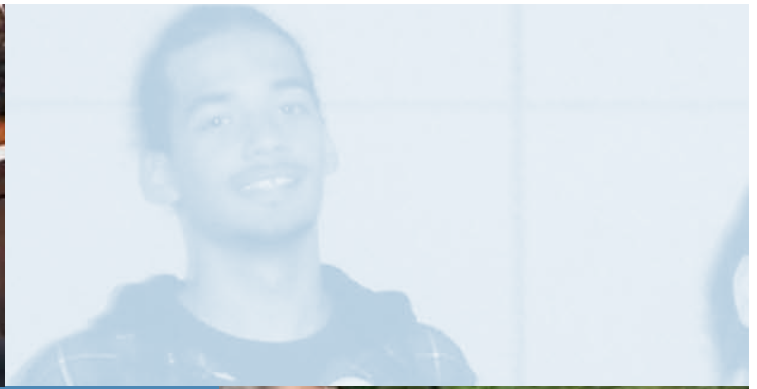
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