



OVERVIEW



I. What you need to know

The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and the MassHire State Workforce Board are pleased to announce the **2026 MassHire Awards**. MassHire Awards will spotlight the incredible contributions of workforce system staff, partners, and participants.

This is an opportunity to celebrate our MassHire values of *Collaboration, Respect, Reliability, and Ingenuity*, and a chance to convene the MassHire team to recognize individual and system achievements. The sixth annual MassHire Awards will recognize and reward exceptional innovations in workforce service delivery in support of the MassHire Mission and Vision. The 2026 MassHire Awards will carry the theme of **One Commonwealth**—a celebration of the partnerships, innovation, and shared purpose that unite the MassHire system in serving the people and businesses of Massachusetts.

As we enter year two of the MassHire Innovation Project, we recognize a pivotal moment in our collective journey. This year's awards will honor the workforce leaders, teams, and partners whose vision, dedication, and commitment have helped shape the future of the MassHire system. Their leadership has driven meaningful change, strengthened collaboration across regions, and advanced innovative approaches that better connect employers with talent and job seekers with opportunity.

One Commonwealth reflects the belief that our greatest achievements are realized when we work together across agencies, Workforce Boards, Career Centers, state partners, and community organizations. By embracing innovation and a shared commitment to excellence, the MassHire network is building a more agile, equitable, and customer-centered workforce system.

II. Award Categories

Awards will be presented to the top nominee and runner-up in each category. Regional awards may be given for outstanding nominations from each of the seven workforce planning regions. Awards will be given in Collaboration (one for a business partnership and one for a jobseeker partnership), Modernization and Innovation, Mentor and System Steward, MassHire Emerging Leader, and Spirit of MassHire. These categories are described below in this announcement.

III. Award Honors

Regional and statewide award winners will be honored at the **Massachusetts State House Hall of Flags on November 19, 2026**.

Awardees will be recognized at the in-person event with trophy/plaques for the winning individual or team.

IV. Eligible Time Period

Nominated activities must have occurred after June 2025.

V. Eligible Nominees

All nominations must include at least one MassHire staff member (**local board staff, career center staff, or MDCS staff member**) who performed the work being nominated. Team nominations *must* include at least one MassHire staff member. Team nominations *may* also include additional MassHire staff from one or multiple regions, WIOA partner staff, community-based organizations, or other partners. A team is comprised of a minimum of two or a maximum of six individuals, at least one of whom must work at MassHire.

MassHire board and career center staff, employers, program participants, and nonprofit and state partners are encouraged to consider projects and collaborations from across the commonwealth to honor the diversity of innovations happening in each region.

VI. Submitting Nominations

Submission of nomination packages can be made directly to the State Workforce Development Board via the [2026 MassHire Awards nomination page](https://mass.gov/MassHireAwardsNomination). (mass.gov/MassHireAwardsNomination)

Nominations may be submitted by any person or persons with direct knowledge of the MassHire staff member and the work being nominated. **A nominator may include**, a MassHire Board, board member or executive director, Career Center director or staff member, an employer partner, a training provider, a MassHire WIOA partner agency or staff member, jobseeker, or other person with direct knowledge of the work being nominated.

Nominations must be received **no later than September 25, 2026**.

VII. Nomination and Winner Review and Selection Process

All complete nominations will be reviewed and scored by the State Workforce Development Board Recognition Subcommittee, a diverse group of stakeholders from inside and outside of

MassHire, and EOLWD. The highest scoring nominations will advance to Secretary Jones for final review and selection of statewide and regional winners.

VIII. Winner Parameters

A workforce region or area can win a maximum of two statewide awards and nominations are encouraged from each workforce area to all six categories.

Each workforce area will only be eligible for a maximum of one award per category. Each nomination requires a separate nomination package. Areas will be notified if there are more than six submissions and if there is more than one nomination entered for a single category.

A team will be awarded a single award, with recognition of each team member during the award presentation.

IX. 2026 MassHire Awards Timeline

- August 2026: Nomination package released
- September 25, 2026: Nominations due
- October 2026: Statewide and regional winners are notified
- November 19, 2026: MassHire Awards celebration at the State House

Questions? Contact StateWorkforceBoard@mass.gov.

2026 MASSHIRE AWARD NOMINATIONS PACKAGE

This nomination package is comprised of three parts:

- **Part A:** Nominee information form with space for the nominator information
- **Part B:** Award Narrative
- **Part C:** Letters of Recommendation

Complete all three parts to nominate an individual or a team for consideration in the 2026 MassHire Awards.

Part A. Nominee(s) Information

Award:

Nominee's Name:

Nominee's Title:

Nominee's Organization:

Nominee's approximate start date in position (if known):

For nominations from employer partners, community-based organizations, jobseekers, or other group not a part of the MassHire system, please input information you have available.

Nominee's contact email:

If nominee is a group, please attach a separate sheet to list group member names with all required information (as listed above) for each.

To be completed by person or group making the nomination, which may include, a MassHire Board, board member or executive director, Career Center director or staff member, an employer partner, a training provider, a MassHire WIOA partner agency or staff member, jobseeker, or other person with direct knowledge and experience of the work being nominated:

I submit this nomination as someone who has direct knowledge of the activities and work described in this nomination.

Name:

Workforce Planning Region and Area:

Date:

Nominators contact email:

Part B. Award Narrative

- **Nominations to all categories should address the following prompt:** How did the work achieved by this individual or team result in innovative, sustainable change and positive outcomes for our customers, our community, and/or our MassHire colleagues? If the long-term effects of the activities are not yet apparent, consider including plans for sustainability. Consider what outcomes can be discussed and whether the activity can be replicated. Nominations should address how the work being nominated either originated from the MassHire Innovation Project or how the work relates to a specific project goal.
- Each award category has a specific question that should also be addressed in the award narrative. Please see below for a list of these categories, their descriptions, and accompanying questions.

Specific and concise nominations will enhance the strength of the nomination. We encourage nominations that reflect the work of front-line staff that serve employers and jobseekers, along with nominations that reflect the work of administrative and non-front-line staff that indirectly impact jobseekers and employers. There is no page or word limit, but at least one page is recommended. **Please be specific in describing the impacts of the work, including specific data showing where the impact could be measured.**

1. **Collaboration:** MassHire believes in the power of partnership and streamlined integration of services to achieve effective and timely results for those we serve. This award will honor a partnership or partnerships that deliver significant positive impacts for businesses and/or a collaboration that uniquely assists job-seeking customers with career services, including the removal of barriers to employment. Nominations are encouraged to showcase **cross-regional collaborations** to solve complex workforce and employer needs. Awards will be made for the two sub-categories below.
 - a. One award will be given for an innovative business services initiative that addresses the employment/workforce needs of businesses at one or several stages (growth, maintenance, downsizing) and results in significant positive

impacts for businesses; (for this award, nominations must include an employer partner as part of the nomination) and

- b. One award will be given for an innovative workforce project, strategy, or initiative in the delivery of career services for job seekers. Nominations are encouraged to consider innovative collaborations with community colleges, high-schools or vocational schools, Career Technical Initiatives, WCTF, Registered Apprenticeships, or other partners that led to meaningful outcomes for jobseekers.

- i. *Nomination prompt: How did the nominee maintain or create effective partnerships which led to above and beyond results for customers? (Indicate whether it is Employer/Business or Career Services nomination).*

2. **Modernization and Innovation:** MassHire recognizes the change maker, the innovator, and risk-taker who leverages field expertise, relationships, and data to adapt to emerging needs and seizes opportunity through innovative approaches. This award seeks to recognize the person or team who serves as a catalyst for reimagining career and employer service delivery to achieve individual and regional impact. Many leaders have contributed extensive hours, tested new models, and executed innovative programs to move the MassHire Innovation Project forward. This year's award will be focused on direct contributions to the MassHire Innovation Project.

- i. *Nomination prompt: How was the nominee a leader in implementing new strategies, testing innovative approaches, or implementing other elements of the MassHire Innovation Project?*

3. **MassHire Emerging Leaders:** MassHire takes pride in the caliber of people who do the work every day. This award recognizes individuals who are new to MassHire (with less than 5 years of experience providing direct service) and embody the future of career services and customer-focused success.

- i. *Nomination prompt: How did the nominee show leadership, initiative, and embodiment of MassHire values in their first years at the organization?*

4. **Mentor and System Steward:** Mentors gain expertise from years of experience, trial and error, and long-term partnerships, and they strive to imbue these values and lessons in the next generation of leaders at MassHire. Workforce development requires broad appreciation of various systems, their interconnections, and how best to position individuals for collective success. Leaders and managers strive to proactively develop their employees and empower those who will follow them, benefiting from years of accumulated experience. This award honors the leader who embodies shepherding emerging leaders while providing opportunity for groundbreaking ideas. Many long-term leaders have brought years of experience to

the Innovation Project, sharing institutional knowledge for the next generation of workforce leaders.

- i. *Nomination prompt: How has the nominee worked to instill the next generation of leaders with the values of MassHire and worked to mentor employees and emerging leaders? How have they embedded this knowledge and experience into the future of the system through the Innovation Project?*

- 5. **Spirit of MassHire Award:** MassHire envisions a better future for people and businesses of Massachusetts through meaningful work and sustainable growth. Spirit of MassHire awardees value the diverse requirements and professional goals of the businesses and people we serve. We promise to champion prosperity by connecting employers with talent and job seekers with the tools, services, and connections they need to achieve their employment and career goals.

- i. *Nomination prompt: With everything we have to do every day, it's easy to just keep plugging away at a job without seeing the bigger picture. How does this nominee engage in meaningful work with an understanding of the MassHire Vision? How does the nominee's efforts contribute to the long-term goals of the organization and the future state of the system through the MassHire Innovation Project?*

C. Letter of Recommendation

Please submit two letters of recommendation in support of the nominee's work. **A nomination package will not be considered complete unless it includes two letters of recommendation.** The authors of these letters can be jobseekers, businesses, MassHire staff, a training provider, and/or partner organization staff. If a team is nominated, the writer cannot be a member of the team. The letter is limited to one page, single-spaced. The letter should describe the nominee's relationship with the writer and describe the specific ways in which the nominee effected positive and sustainable change.

SAMPLE TEMPLATE LETTER

The letter should be on the writer's organization's letterhead. It can be scanned or soft copy.

MODEL LETTER

Date

MassHire Awards Review Team
Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

1 Ashburton Place, Suite 2112
Boston, MA 02114

Dear MassHire Awards Review Team:

Please accept this letter as verification I have reviewed and approved the nomination for NAME
OF NOMINEE'S consideration for selection for the NAME OF AWARD.

maximum of one page single-spaced

LETTER WRITER'S NAME

LETTER WRITER'S TITLE

LETTER WRITER'S ORGANIZATION



END OF NOMINATION PACKET