

2020 MASSHIRE PLAYBOOK

CONNECTING TALENT & BUSINESSES



WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MASSHIRE STAFF AND WIOA PARTNER STAFF



INTRODUCTION

What is MassHire?

The MassHire network of Workforce Boards and Career Centers creates and sustains powerful connections between businesses and jobseekers through a statewide network of employment professionals. We work every day to champion prosperity, connecting employers with talent and job seekers with tools, services, and connections to achieve meaningful and sustained employment.

What is the purpose of the 2020 MassHire Playbook?

The intent of this document is to help MassHire staff develop and replicate models, strategies, and behaviors which yielded positive outcomes for jobseekers, businesses, MassHire staff, and partner organizations.

Where did the material in the 2020 MassHire Playbook originate?

The MassHire State Workforce Board, in partnership with the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and MassHire Department of Career Services, invited MassHire Workforce Boards to nominate MassHire staff for recognition at the 2019 MassHire Awards. Finalists were asked to present their work and respond to questions from colleagues at the MassHire Day workshops. The innovative approaches captured in those presentations are outlined here.

How can I use this document?

We suggest using this as a *digital* resource. Type “Ctrl + F” to search for keywords and phrases in document, which will take you directly to relevant information. It is organized according to three themes: (1) Creating Sustainable Change, (2) Opportunities for All Jobseekers, and (3) Connecting Businesses With Talent.

How do we know what works in our system?

Elevating best practices in such a large, complex, and dispersed network of workforce professionals is a persistent challenge. This document collects many proven models for replication across the system.



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COLLABORATION • RESPECT • RELIABILITY • INGENUITY



A NOTE FROM THE SECRETARY

Dear MassHire Colleagues,

COVID-19 pandemic has tested the strength and resiliency of the MassHire community, but MassHire has risen to the challenge, and is thriving, even in these difficult times. Now, more than ever, we are living the MassHire brand, and we are finding new dimensions of our values: **Collaboration, reliability, respect and ingenuity.** These values are critical to accomplishing our mission of **creating and sustaining powerful connections between businesses and jobseekers through a statewide network of employment professionals**, all in order to see our vision become a reality: **A better future for the people and businesses in Massachusetts through meaningful work and sustainable growth.**

At our second annual MassHire Day, we showcased and honored staff and partnerships across our MassHire system that truly went above and beyond to live our values and achieve our mission. Representatives from all of our regions attended virtually to hear from the exceptional staff that treated all customers with the respect and dignity they deserve; collaborated with our WIOA partners; devised creative solutions to intricate problems; and ensured that our customers could always return to us, in times of success and in times of trouble.

It is my pleasure to share these best practices with you in our **MassHire Playbook.** This document contains a summary of just some of the incredible work done across the Commonwealth in the last year, some of which we will work to scale in the coming months. It is my hope that this Playbook will be a resource to you as you continue the amazing work you do every day.

Onwards!

Secretary Rosalin Acosta



CREATING & SUSTAINING CHANGE

Creating and sustaining transformative processes to support a dynamic & responsive system

A Transformative Partnership with The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

“What helped us collaborate so well is the fact we all demonstrate adaptability, respect, communication, and flexibility. Our working relationship was so natural and effortless and I feel our customers felt that energy which as a result made them more engaged and successful through their journey.” - Stephanie Smith, Job Specialist, MassHire Greater New Bedford Career Center.

MassHire Greater New Bedford and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission shared resources and created a reliable referral process for shared customers and ensured that both youth and adult job seekers had access to supports they needed to find and keep jobs.

What did you learn through your work? We learned that our customers’ experiences with the process of helping them reach their educational and occupational goals was much more positive because they were getting support from not just one agency, but two. They were more successful on their journey in reaching their goals because of these collaborative efforts between MassHire and Mass Rehab.

What steps did you take to make this work sustainable? Mass Rehab Counselor, Kelly Tavares, would work out of the MassHire office once a week to ensure this collaboration and team efforts continued.

What professional skills were necessary to complete this work successfully? Communication was the most essential piece to working successfully together. We were communicating constantly about our shared customers and on days Kelly was not in the MassHire building, we’d still share updates via email or phone. We also had a deep appreciation and respect for each other, and we had respect for what our respective agencies represented.

What was the greatest obstacle to implementation and how did you overcome it? The greatest obstacle was getting our customers to follow through with the process and utilizing our services. We shared Youth customers and as most know, that population can sometimes have challenges with follow-through due to the many barriers they face at home and in their personal lives. We were able to build trust with these youth customers and they felt supported by us which in turn resulted in more successfully follow through.

How would you implement this differently given the current COVID environment? Our customers can still benefit from Virtual Services and fortunately, our youth population have the computer and technology skills to participate in this “new norm.” I foresee MassHire and Mass Rehab still being able to work collaboratively and collectively on a virtual platform such as Zoom or Webex to continue that communication and support for our customers.

Adapting to Change

Iliana Caez, Career Specialist & Assistant Director, MassHire Springfield Career Center

MassHire Springfield faced challenges when confronted with staff layoffs, and persevered by building up the staff knowledge base and developing new processes to ameliorate the administrative burden on the remaining staff.

What did you learn through your work? What we learned that, although this WIOA team was under extreme pressure coming from various directions, it was able to forge a path forward with the tasks at hand, while all team members exuded respect for their peers and customers.

What steps did you take to make this work sustainable? We were flexible with individual schedules by allowing staff to come in before regular operating hours and dedicating that time for catch up work, follow-ups, and case notes discussions.

What professional skills were necessary to complete this work successfully? Teamwork, communication, structured guidance, and respect towards one another and what each of our agencies represented.

What was the greatest obstacle to implementation and how did you overcome it? The loss of experienced staff combined with the still-developing knowledge of new staff made it difficult for us to get work done quickly. We paired up each new staff person with a seasoned staff person for mentoring and guidance.

How would you implement this differently given the current COVID environment? We would still ensure that new staff members receive mentoring sessions. We would ensure that they have access to experienced staff so that they can ask questions and receive guidance on these questions. It would also be important to allow for creativity while devising solutions to serve job seekers, stream-line processes, and utilize technology for virtual services in this COVID environment. These tech solutions could also be utilized post-COVID.

To learn more, contact: icaez@masshirespringfield.org

Delivering Job Seeker Services to Incarcerated Women

Odessa DeJesus, Career Advisor, MassHire Metro South/West

By forging a relationship with the Massachusetts Correctional Institute in Framingham, MassHire Metro South/West accessed incarcerated job seekers and supplied them with customized job training to get them started off on the right foot after release.

What did you learn through your work? Everyone deserves a second chance, and everyone needs guidance when integrating back into the workforce. We were pleasantly surprised with how engaged the group was with each activity. To work successfully with the justice-involved population, you must have the passion for the work. You need to have integrity, be consistent, and be reliable.

What steps did you take to make this work sustainable? First, we drafted curriculum based on what we thought would be more beneficial for this population. Then, we reached out to MCI-Framingham to educate them about the services MassHire provides. We continued to engage with them to form a strong partnership. Next, we adjusted our curriculum based on our assessment of the incarcerated job seekers.

What professional skills were necessary to complete this work successfully? The professional skills that were necessary were gaining an understanding of the audience. I used my previous experience I learned while working with the justice involved population. Another skill that was important was to understand their past trauma and how it can impact their abilities and understanding their CORI limitations.

What was the greatest obstacle to implementation and how did you overcome it? Developing curriculum that met the needs of the population within a short timeline was very difficult. Another obstacle was figuring out the logistics and coordinating with the institution to permit the job seekers to leave the facility and come to the career center.

How would you implement this differently given the current COVID environment? We would run the workshops virtually, which could be challenging because internet access within the institution requires some work and permissions from the administrators there.

To learn more, contact: odejesus@masshiremsw.com

Supporting Young People with Intensive Career Development Programming

Kelly Higgins, LCSW & Youth Career Advisor, MassHire Lowell Career Center

MassHire Lowell transformed its youth services model by embedding programming directly into high school curriculum and by creating a new education to career development pipeline for young people seeking to upskill and train for key industry occupations.

What did you learn through your work? Honor others. Each person has a unique story to tell and a lesson to teach. There is great importance to connecting youth to people and institutions in their community. These connections result in an enhanced sense of belonging, sizeable social network, and exposure to positive role models.

What steps did you take to make this work sustainable? Students are more likely to do well when they know someone is interested in their success. Build trust through reliability and meaningful connections with the young person.

What professional skills were necessary to complete this work successfully? Empathy, flexibility, authenticity, and active listening are critical.

What was the greatest obstacle to implementation and how did you overcome it? The Career Pathways Program was new to the [Career Academy High School](#). It was difficult to get the student's buy-in because the program was unfamiliar to them. To overcome this, I developed rapport and trust with each student, created a safe environment where they felt free to express themselves. We offered them many opportunities to make choices about their lives and goals, which helps empower them further.

How would you implement this differently given the current COVID environment? The Young Adult Department is continuing to offer high quality career advising to students virtually. We have embraced new technology, accepted different modes of career advising, and encouraged students to collaborate with each other and choose a mode which works best for them. Our career advising practices are taking many forms. These include answering questions by email and having in depth-interaction via video calls. We embraced online assessments and questionnaires, and we implemented programing to prepare students for virtual interviews. Most importantly, we are ensuring that the students have access to career development and personal development assistance. We support students as they discover their resilience, adaptability, and perseverance.

To learn more, contact: kelly.higgins@masshirelowellcc.com



BUILDING CAREER PATHWAYS

Enhance job matching, vetting job candidates, and develop sector strategies to meet the needs of businesses

Career Pathways to Previously Incarcerated Job Seekers

Michael Paglia, Senior Program Manager, MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board

MassHire Merrimack Valley combined career development and compassionate personal development training to support the job search for incarcerated and previously incarcerated individuals. As a result of this program, many individuals with criminal records were able to find work at a sustainable wage.

What did you learn through your work? We supported returning citizens as they developed self-sufficiency through a unique occupational skills training program. This program led to middle-skill jobs that offer a living wage.

What steps did you take to make this work sustainable? We identified ongoing funding to maintain outstanding programs.

What professional skills were necessary to complete this work successfully? We role modeled positive behaviors for returning citizens.

What was the greatest obstacle to implementation and how did you overcome it? We worked with participants to overcome behaviors they developed to cope while incarcerated. These individuals faced significant trauma and deprivation before and after being institutionalized. There was a lack of trust between participants and facilitators at first. We worked to establish a support network of career counselors, mentors, and instructors who believed in the ideals of the program. We put effort into building a strong network to make things stick together.

How would you implement this differently given the current COVID environment? We would be cognizant of the COVID risk factors for incarcerated individuals. Rates of infection are higher in jails, prisons, and other correctional settings. We would also rethink access to potential participants due to closure of jails, prisons, and courts.



The Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC)

Amy Veillette, WIOA/Special Programs Supervisor, MassHire Lowell Career Center

[NAMC](#) executed successful apprenticeship programs that enrolled young people in the area and helped them access training and job interviews at partner companies.

What did you learn through your work? Keeping students motivated is key to their success in a manufacturing training program.

What steps did you take to make this work sustainable? We are always willing to change things up. Accepting change is necessary for anything to be sustainable.

What professional skills were necessary to complete this work successfully? Organization, negotiation, multi-tasking, understanding, and kindness are critical to success.

What was the greatest obstacle to implementation and how did you overcome it? Recruiting candidates for the apprenticeship program required brainstorming sessions with co-workers to decide which recruitment strategies worked best. We ended up testing everything we came up with. Our strategies included outreach over social media, email, and snail mail. We also relied on partners to get the word out during their programming and interactions with customers and students. Businesses also helped talk about it to other businesses to get more companies involved.

How would you implement this differently given the current COVID environment? Training could not be hands-on in the classroom. We would need to develop a transition plan to get the students into the classroom, if and when it became safe. We would also look at hybrid virtual/in-person models.

To learn more, contact: amy.veillette@masshirelowellcc.com

Technology Career Pipelines for Youth in Partnership with Apprenti

"Apprenti was an incredible partner. They communicated frequently with our team, were candid about the areas where candidates could use support, open about the feedback from employers, and receptive to recommendations for making the delivery of services even more efficient and impactful." - Susan Buckey, Director of Employer Engagement, MassHire Downtown Boston Career Center

In a revolutionary partnership with Apprenti, MassHire Downtown Boston provided access to high-quality career training for young people interested in the tech industry.

What did you learn through your work? By listening to Apprenti and learning where its candidates were having troubles during the selection process, we were able to create a cadre of services to address those areas. Even the most confident and accomplished candidates were able to learn some tips to carry into their interviews with employers. Every candidate benefitted in one way or another from our interview workshops and mock interviews.

What steps did you take to make this work sustainable? Apprenti and MassHire Downtown Boston have explored different funding streams to continue the work. After each cohort, MHDB wrote a report that highlighted the positive outcomes of our collaboration so that it could be used in different grant proposals as proof of concept.

What professional skills were necessary to complete this work successfully? Listening, assessing, and creating a comprehensive plan that addressed the needs of customers was an important first step. We paid particular attention to the feedback provided by the apprenticeship sites and using that information to inform the content of the workshops. Being receptive to feedback so that the program could improve with each cohort is crucial.

What was the greatest obstacle to implementation and how did you overcome it? Communicating with the candidates to encourage 100% participation in our services was difficult. We ended up using a Google Doc to coordinate mock interview appointments. Coordinating messaging about the next steps of the Apprenti selection process was tricky, especially because so many MHDB staff members were conducting the mock interviews. This required getting instructions on holding mock interviews from Apprenti and communicating those instructions with our team.

How would you implement this differently given the current COVID environment? We have already run this program during COVID and it has meant that workshops and mock interviews are all conducted using Zoom webinars and Zoom meetings. The switch to virtual worked well.