



Introduction to Skill-First Hiring Practices

MassSkills Coalition 2025 Learning Community – Session One

February



Welcome and Opening Remarks



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Arc of Topics



Session One

**Introduction to Skills-First
Hiring Practices**

Session 1: Feb 26, 2025

Session Two

**Recredentialing
Jobs**

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**Skills-First Approach
to Onboarding**

Session 4: September 10th, 2025

Norms for Today's Session

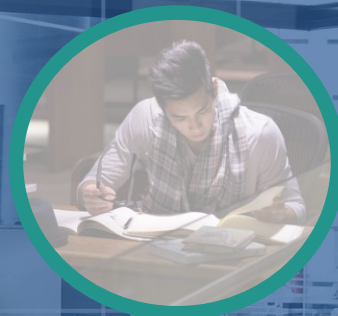
- 1. Be an active contributor to the session**
- 2. Practice both/and thinking during the session**
- 3. Safeguard stories, take the learnings with you**
- 4. Name your needs throughout the session**



Our Learning Objectives



1. **Establish** community and exchange insights



2. **Explore** key practices in skills-first talent management



3. **Emphasize** opportunities for recruiting and sourcing with a skills-first lens

Today's Agenda



- Welcome and Introductions
- **Community Building**
- The Skills-First Talent Journey
- **Peer Learning and Reflections I**
- Recruiting and Sourcing Talent
- **Peer Learning and Reflections II**
- Closing and Next Steps

Community Building: Peer Introductions

Instructions:

- **Name and Role:** Start by introducing yourself with your name and your current role or position.
- **Skills-First Experience:** Share a brief overview of your experience related to skills-first hiring.
- **Ambitions:** Provide insight into what you hope to gain from this learning community.



The Skills-First Talent Journey

What is the Skills-First Talent Journey?

*The skill-first talent journey is a modern approach to talent management that **prioritizes skills and competencies over traditional metrics like degrees, job histories, or job titles.***

*This strategy focuses on recognizing and **leveraging an individual's actual abilities at every stage of the talent lifecycle, from hiring to development and redeployment.***

Skills-First Practices Span the Entire Talent Journey



Skills-First Practices Span the Entire Talent Journey



Our focus for today

Overview of Best Practices: Skills-First Recruiting

Building sourcing partnerships

Work-based experiences and other training pipeline models

Revising technology (ATS, etc.)

Recredentialing job descriptions



Overview of Best Practices: Skills-First Hiring



Interviewing **best practices**

Skills-based **assessment tools**

Leveraging **rubrics and interview panels**

Fostering an **inclusive** environment

Practicing **skills-based onboarding**

Let's Take a Zoom Poll

Where is your organization in the adoption of Skills-First Practices?

Milestone 1: Just getting started (Learning phase)

Milestone 2: Implementing practices in recruiting talent

Milestone 3: Implementing practices in hiring of talent

Milestone 4: Leveraging skills-first practices for Retention and Mobility

Milestone 5: Actively scaling our efforts in all areas of Skills-First

Peer Learning Reflections

Instructions:

- You identified where you are. **Where do you want to be?**
- What **opportunities and challenges** do you foresee in your short-term and mid-term outlooks?
- What **insight have you gained** from the journey so far that would be helpful for your peers to know?

Milestones:

- **Milestone 1:** Just getting started (*Learning phase*)
- **Milestone 2:** Implementing practices in recruiting talent
- **Milestone 3:** Implementing practices in hiring of talent
- **Milestone 4:** Leveraging skills-first Practices for Retention and Mobility
- **Milestone 5:** Actively scaling our efforts in all areas of Skills-First





Recruiting and Sourcing Talent

Recruiting and Sourcing Talent



In Massachusetts

- Mass Bio's Bioversity workforce training program allow students to see an **average 2x change** in their salary
- Specifically, the average pre-enrollment income of \$28,000 **soars to \$56,000+ after job placement** for students

Recruiting and Sourcing Talent



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Training and Talent Development

- **38% of employers express difficulty with finding candidates with the right skills**
- **86% of employers said entry-level talent requires extra training to be successful**

Recruiting and Sourcing Talent



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Training and Talent Development

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Work Based Experiences

- Employers report that **65% of apprentices accepted full-time offers**
- Apprenticeship programs are shown to **decrease turnover by more than 50%** compared to traditional hires

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Work-based experiences and other training pipeline models

Revising technology (ATS, etc.)

Recredentialing job descriptions



Our Focus for Today

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Work-based experiences and other training pipeline models

Revising technology (ATS, etc.)



Develop Talent Partnerships

1 Identify Talent Needs: Assess the existing workforce, identify skill gaps, and articulate your talent needs in alignment with business objectives.

2 Leverage Technology: Utilize technology and data analytics to identify potential partners, track talent trends, and manage the talent pipeline effectively.

3 Establish Clear Objectives: Define clear and measurable objectives for the talent partnership. Set goals for recruitment, development, and retention of skilled talent, as well as metrics to track progress.

4 Require Inclusivity: You are building an innovative and resilient workforce, ensure that the talent partnership strategy promotes the inclusivity and diversity needed to achieve that aim.

Support Work-Based Experiences



Build Relationships with Educational Institutions:
Partner with colleges, vocational schools, and community organizations to create internships, co-op programs, and collaborative projects with real world application.



Develop Training and Development Programs:
Explore apprenticeship as a path for training the talent you would like to use to build your workforce. Invest in training and development programs to upskill current employees and prepare them for future roles.

Leverage Updates to Job Postings and ATS

Job Descriptions

- **Helps potential candidates understand the specific skills and qualifications required**, ensuring that the right individuals apply for the role
- **Reduces the time and resources spent** on screening unqualified applicants

Applicant Tracking System (ATS)

- **Efficiently manages and organizes candidate information**
- **Automates repetitive tasks**
- **Ensures compliance with hiring regulations**
- **Enhances hiring efficiency**, improves candidate experience, and inform skills-based and data-driven hiring decisions



Getting Started: Training Provider Members

AMPLIFY
LATINX



Franklin
Cummings
Tech



PER
SCHOLAS

CENGAGE
GROUP

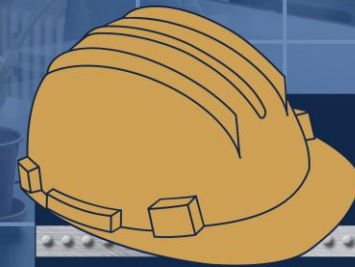


Bunker Hill
Community College

imagine the possibilities



Year Up
United



MBTU

MASSACHUSETTS BUILDING TRADES UNIONS

Northeastern
University

Getting Started: Work-Based Experiences

Adopt the 70/20/10 Learning Model

This model suggests that 70% of learning comes from hands-on, experiential practice, 20% from social learning or mentorship, and 10% from formal instruction

Incorporate Peer-to-Peer Learning

Peer-to-peer learning involves gaining knowledge, practicing by applying that knowledge, getting feedback, and reflecting on what has been learned

Implement Skills-Based Hiring and Development

Skills-based hiring focuses on candidates' capabilities rather than their educational background

Create Inclusive and Personalized Learning Programs

A holistic learning and development strategy should be inclusive and personalized to benefit as many workers as possible

Getting Started: Updating Job Descriptions and ATS

Focus on Skills and Competencies rather than proxies

Update job descriptions to emphasize 10 or fewer specific skills and competencies required for the role rather than proxies such as degrees or years of experience

Use Inclusive Language and Specific Criteria

Ensure job descriptions are inclusive and invite skilled applicants to apply

Clearly distinguish required skills from preferred skills

Clarify your hiring criteria by narrowing the skills list to focus on day one skills needed (required) and skills that are gained on the job (preferred)

Responsibly leverage AI/Machine learning within the ATS

Implement or update your ATS to screen for skills and competencies rather than credentials and years of experience

Peer Learning Reflections

Instructions:

- Briefly introduce yourselves.
- Share your current role and any experience with talent partnerships, internships, or skills-first recruitment.

Guiding Questions:

- **What are the key benefits of forming talent partnerships with educational institutions for your organizations?**
- **How can organizations effectively implement internships and apprenticeships to meet their talent needs?**
- **What challenges might we face in adopting a skills-first approach to recruitment and sourcing, and how can the challenges be mitigated?**





Closing and Next Steps

Session Summary and Resources



Overview of Skills-First Talent Journey

- Recruiting and Hiring
- Retention and Upward Mobility

Seize opportunities to recruit and source with a Skills-First Lens

- Partner with training and sourcing providers
- Build effective skills and work-based learning experiences
- Update job postings and ATS

Post-Session Resources

- Skills-First hiring one-pager
- Talent partnership guide

Session Series



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A woman with short blonde hair is smiling and looking towards a man whose back is to the camera. They are in a meeting room with a laptop and a coffee cup on the table. The background is a window with a view of a city.

Thank You!!!

Contact Us

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