



MassHire Franklin Hampshire Board of Directors Meeting Minutes (draft)

Date: December 4, 2025

Location: Virtual (Zoom)

Time: Meeting called to order at 8:04 AM

Attendees:

Alan Wolf
Alexandra Colonna
Ashley McFarlane
Brian Pearson
Colleen Kucinski
Deborah Christakos
Erin Anhalt
Jessye Deane
Kirstin Cole
Laurie Millman
Libby Hernandez
Mpress Nembhard
Neil Scanlon
Sarah Sargent
Sue Surner
Liz Buxton

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Kristin Cole at approximately 8:04 AM.

2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

The Board reviewed the September 18, 2025 meeting minutes, which had been distributed in advance.

- Motion: Laurie Millman moved to approve the minutes
- Second: Neil Scanlon
- Vote: Approved. No opposition recorded.

3. Board Member Spotlight

Presenter: Sarah Sargent, Program Director, Valley Community Development

Sarah Sargent provided an overview of Valley Community Development, including its mission and programs.

4. MassHire Awards Update

Presenter: Maura Geary

MassHire Franklin Hampshire participated in the statewide MassHire Awards, administered by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

Awards Recognition

- Runner-Up: Job Seeker Collaboration category
 - Recognized the Young Adult Program Team for integrating:
 - WIOA
 - YouthWorks
 - Connecting Activities
- Honorable Mention: Spirit of MassHire category (Front Desk Team)
- Honorable Mention: Modernization and Innovation category for work supporting Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter residents.

The awards ceremony was held at the Massachusetts State House.

5. Grant Funding Updates

Presenter: Maura Geary and Sarah Wilson

Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund (WCTF) Grant

MassHire Franklin Hampshire received its first WCTF grant.

Program focus:

- Training mature workers (55+, including 65+ and 75+)
- Address healthcare employer needs for patient service representatives/medical receptionists

Program structure:

- Work readiness training delivered by Career Center staff
- Healthcare preparation through LifePath
- Six-week program including paid on-the-job training
- Participants hired by employers during the training period

GROW Grant

- Award: \$19,500
- Supports six registered apprenticeships for dental assistants
- Partnership with Community Health Center of Franklin County
- Program currently in early development stages.

6. Advocacy and Policy Updates

Presenter: Maura Geary

Federal and National Context

Key issues affecting workforce funding:

- Potential federal funding cuts
- WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) reauthorization

- Economic cooling with increased layoffs
- Expanded work requirements for SNAP and Medicaid recipients

These policy changes may increase demand for workforce services.

State Budget Advocacy Priorities

MassHire regions are advocating for the following funding levels:

- Career Center Line Item: \$12.5 million (increase from \$9.5 million)
- Connecting Activities: \$8 million (currently \$6.5 million)
- YouthWorks: \$20 million for FY27; \$5 million supplemental funding for the current cycle

Board members may be asked to support advocacy efforts during the state budget process.

7. Regional Funding Formula Advocacy

MassHire Franklin Hampshire has raised concerns about state funding allocation formulas.

Key concerns:

- Funding formulas rely heavily on population density metrics, which disadvantage rural regions.
- Despite serving significant numbers of disadvantaged youth and adults, the region receives comparatively less funding than denser regions.

Actions taken:

- Convened the regional legislative delegation in April
- State leaders including Senator Jo Comerford and Representative Natalie Blais are supporting discussions on possible solutions
- A meeting with state officials was scheduled to discuss formula revisions.

Additionally, Commonwealth Corporation acknowledged discrepancies in YouthWorks allocations and committed to adjusting the funding formula over time to achieve greater equity.

8. Sector Initiatives and Regional Convenings

Presenter: Sarah Wilson

Pioneer Valley Advanced Manufacturing Summit

First summit co-hosted with the Hampden Workforce Board. The event was held at the Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center in Holyoke and attendance reached full capacity.

Included:

- Labor market information presentation
- Employer panels
- Training provider discussions
- Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Lauren Jones delivered opening remarks.

Outdoor Recreation Summit

- Hosted by Greenfield Community College
- Third annual event with full attendance and waiting list
- MassHire presented on:
 - Registered Apprenticeships
 - On-the-Job Training programs
- Insights will be shared with the Western Massachusetts Outdoor Recreation Alliance, which MassHire convenes.

Green Drinks Networking Initiative

- Industry networking event for the environmental and sustainability sector
- Planned launch in February
- Hosted at Incandescent Brewing in Bernardston
- Co-hosted with GCC and the Chamber

9. Monitoring Updates

Fiscal Monitoring

Presenter: Gregg Thompson

The Department of Career Services conducted fiscal monitoring during the week of the meeting.

Preliminary observations:

- No significant findings identified.
- One expected finding related to the City of Greenfield's FY24 audit, which was not yet complete.

Next steps:

- Preliminary report expected within 30 days.
- MassHire will respond with corrective actions or system improvements.
- Final report will be shared at the next board meeting.

Programmatic Monitoring

Presenter: Sarah Wilson

Programmatic monitoring scheduled for May 11 week.

Preparation efforts include:

- Biweekly preparation meetings
- Improvements in MOSES data entry practices
- Staff coaching and internal review processes implemented.

10. Career Services Overview

Presenter: Sarah Hoecker, Director of Career Services

Sarah Hoecker presented updates on improvements to career center service delivery.

New Intake and Retention Role

A new Career Counselor – Intake/Retention position has been created to improve service flow and job seeker triage.

Updated Service Flow

Key elements:

- Immediate JobQuest registration
- Resume, cover letter, and reference creation early in the process
- Clear pathway to workshops, career counseling, or training programs

Training and Service Offerings

Expanded workshop offerings include:

- LinkedIn
- Digital literacy
- Financial literacy
- Professional communication

Resource room hours now include staff-assisted job search support.

Training Pathways

The center is emphasizing:

- Rapid reemployment where possible
- Training opportunities reserved for job seekers with barriers to employment.

Business Services staff are working closely with training cohorts to ensure employer connections prior to graduation.

Board members thanked Sarah Hecker for implementing improvements quickly after joining the organization.

11. Organizational Update: Remote Work Schedule

Presenter: Maura Geary

Beginning December 26, MassHire Franklin Hampshire will implement a new schedule:

- Fridays: Fully remote and virtual service delivery
- Monday–Thursday: In-person staffing

Reasons for the change:

- Fridays historically have the lowest walk-in traffic
- Allows greater staff coverage for outreach locations
- Improves scheduling flexibility across offices and community sites.

12. Board Membership and Nominations

Presenter: Sarah Wilson

Requirement:

- 51% of board members must represent for-profit businesses.

Current status:

- The board needs approximately 5–6 additional for-profit members.

The Nominating Committee will meet the following week and may present candidates soon. Board members were asked to submit nominations, particularly from industries such as clean energy and other regional priority sectors.

13. Open Discussion

Board members discussed the current composition of the board and the need to increase representation from private-sector employers.

Discussion continued regarding potential industries and recruitment strategies for new board members.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:59am