

Meeting Minutes

Route 24 Tech Hub – Workforce & Manufacturing Pipeline Discussion

Date: March 19, 2026

Time: 1:05 PM – 1:50 PM

Location: South Shore Vocational Technical School (Hybrid: In-Person & Virtual), 476 Webster Street, Hanover MA

Facilitator: Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC)

Participants

Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC)

- Paul Umamo, Senior Grant and Fiscal Compliance Officer
- John Fay, Principal Planner for Special Projects
- Mary Waldron, Executive Director

Workforce Development / Training

- Jason Hunter – MassHire Workforce Board
- Laura Buckley – South Shore Workforce Board
- Matt Bernard (Mass MEP – Manufacturing Extension Partnership)

Education / Vocational Training

- Paul Bello- Director of Career and Community Engagement

Manufacturing / Private Sector

- Michael Tamasi – AccuRounds (Avon)
- Dan Evans Jr. – EMI Evans Machine (Brockton)
- Paul Diamond – Northeastern Machine (Easton)
- Mark Miller – Artisan Industries (Stoughton)
- Andrea Pastisteas- Primo Medical Group (Stoughton)

Municipal Representatives

- Ken Kirkland – Planning Director, Town of Easton
- Dottie Fulginiti – Town of Easton / MassDevelopment

Business / Industry Organizations

- Eric Dykeman – South Shore Chamber of Commerce

Additional Participants

- Malik Williams (Steering Committee)
 - Shane O’Brien (Planning Director, Town of Bridgewater)
-

Meeting Overview

- The session focused on developing a near-term workforce solution for manufacturing, with particular attention to launching a Summer 2026 pilot training program.
 - Discussion aligned employer needs, training capacity, and workforce system resources to create a pipeline of new entrants into manufacturing careers.
-

Opening Remarks and Context

- Mary Waldron opened the meeting by emphasizing the need to transition from planning to implementation, especially given the short timeline before summer.
 - Previous conversations were referenced, including:
 - Gaps in hands-on learning opportunities outside the academic year
 - The importance of sustained exposure to career pathways between school cycles
 - The group reinforced that manufacturing continues to face a perception challenge, with many students and families lacking an accurate understanding of modern facilities and career opportunities.
 - The discussion set the tone for identifying practical actions that can be implemented immediately, rather than deferring to long-term planning alone.
-

South Shore Vocational Technical School – Role and Capacity

- South Shore Vo-Tech described its ability to support workforce training beyond traditional school hours:
 - The facility operates with active evening programming and remains open well beyond the standard school day
 - Summer availability across multiple shops creates an opportunity to host training programs without competing with daytime student use

- The school expressed interest in:
 - Developing customized training programs aligned with employer needs
 - Expanding participation beyond high school students to include:
 - Young adults
 - Career changers
 - Individuals not currently engaged in formal education
 - Leadership emphasized a priority to fully utilize the facility as a workforce training resource, particularly given its public investment and regional reach.
-

Employer Input – Workforce Needs and Challenges

- Manufacturers described ongoing difficulty attracting new entrants into the industry, particularly individuals with little or no prior exposure to manufacturing.
 - Employers clarified that:
 - Immediate needs include entry-level workers, not exclusively highly trained machinists
 - Many roles require foundational skills such as:
 - Inspection and quality control
 - Manual machining
 - General shop familiarity
 - Dan Evans highlighted that existing programs often draw from individuals already in the pipeline (e.g., co-op students), while the greater need is to bring entirely new individuals into manufacturing.
 - Michael Tamasi added that even internal roles, such as manual machining, are difficult to fill due to a lack of incoming talent.
 - Employers consistently stressed that:
 - Exposure drives interest
 - Candidates are more likely to pursue manufacturing after seeing modern facilities firsthand
 - Multiple companies confirmed their willingness to:
 - Host tours
 - Provide job shadowing opportunities
 - Engage directly with prospective participants
-

Pre-Apprenticeship Program – Mass MEP

- Mass MEP outlined its 165-hour pre-apprenticeship program, which is already approved at the state level.
- The curriculum includes:
 - OSHA safety training (10 and 30-hour certifications)
 - Lean manufacturing principles

- GD&T and measurement fundamentals
 - ISO standards
 - Introduction to AI applications in manufacturing
 - The program was developed based on **direct employer input**, ensuring alignment with industry needs.
 - Flexibility was identified as a key strength:
 - Curriculum can be adapted to focus on specific areas such as quality control or clean energy
 - Training modules can be adjusted based on employer demand
 - The program also provides a pathway into registered apprenticeships by allowing a portion of training hours to count toward required totals.
-

Apprenticeship Model – Opportunities and Constraints

- Jason Hunter provided an overview of the registered apprenticeship structure:
 - Programs typically span three to four years
 - Require approximately 6,000 hours of on-the-job training
 - While pre-apprenticeship hours can contribute toward apprenticeship requirements, additional classroom and on-the-job components remain necessary.
 - The discussion highlighted several constraints:
 - Employers may not be positioned to commit to full apprenticeship programs
 - The time horizon of apprenticeships does not address immediate hiring needs
 - MassHire continues to coordinate with the Division of Apprentice Standards (DAS) to explore ways to expand and adapt apprenticeship pathways within the region.
-

Funding Landscape

- Participants reviewed available and anticipated funding sources:
 - Current DAS funding has been fully allocated for this cycle
 - Additional DAS funding is expected later in the year
 - MassTech and SBA programs present potential opportunities
 - OCPC confirmed its role in:
 - Identifying funding sources
 - Preparing and submitting grant applications
 - The group acknowledged that:
 - A pilot program may need to proceed with limited upfront funding
 - Early success could support future funding requests
-

Summer 2026 Pilot Program – Development Discussion

- The group reached general agreement to move forward with a pilot training program for Summer 2026.
 - Key elements discussed included:
 - A small cohort (approximately 10–12 participants) to maintain program quality
 - A hybrid structure, combining in-person and virtual instruction
 - Integration of:
 - Pre-apprenticeship curriculum
 - Employer-led engagement
 - Site visits and job shadowing
 - The target audience was defined as:
 - Individuals not currently enrolled in vocational programs
 - New entrants exploring manufacturing careers
 - Individuals seeking career transitions
 - The program is intended to:
 - Provide introductory exposure to manufacturing
 - Allow participants to evaluate career fit before committing to long-term training
-

Recruitment and Outreach

- Participants discussed the need for a coordinated approach to recruitment, including:
 - Outreach through local high schools
 - Engagement with workforce boards
 - Use of municipal communication channels
 - Municipal representatives offered support through:
 - Town newsletters
 - Local cable programming
 - Connections to school administrators and job fairs
 - Dottie Fulginiti indicated that schools maintain structured schedules, so outreach timing will require coordination with existing academic calendars.
-

Participant Selection Approach

- The group emphasized the importance of screening participants prior to enrollment.
 - A structured interview process was recommended to:
 - Identify individuals with genuine interest in manufacturing
 - Ensure participants are prepared to engage in the program
 - This approach is intended to:
 - Improve program outcomes
 - Provide meaningful data for evaluating program success
-

Industry and Stakeholder Support

- Mark Miller confirmed that manufacturers are fully supportive of the initiative and willing to:
 - Participate in outreach efforts
 - Host students at their facilities
 - Provide direct engagement with industry professionals
 - Eric Dykeman shared that the South Shore Chamber of Commerce is:
 - Conducting industry-specific roundtables
 - Interested in expanding discussions to include manufacturing workforce development
 - Opportunities were identified to:
 - Share existing roundtable discussions
 - Build on current workforce initiatives rather than duplicating efforts
-

Next Steps

- Participants agreed to:
 - Advance development of the Summer 2026 pilot program
 - Coordinate curriculum development between South Shore Vo-Tech and Mass MEP
 - Begin outreach and recruitment efforts immediately
 - Program development and outreach will proceed simultaneously to meet the summer timeline.
 - Follow-up coordination will occur through smaller working groups, with a broader meeting anticipated prior to the end of the school year.
-

Adjournment

- The meeting concluded with appreciation for the strong collaboration among partners.
 - Attendees were invited to participate in a facility tour of South Shore Vocational Technical School following the meeting.
-