

Route 24 Tech Hub Stakeholder Meeting

Date: February 26, 2026

Location: Virtual

Convened by: Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC)

1. Call to Order & Opening Remarks

Mary Waldron, Executive Director of OCPC, opened the meeting by welcoming participants and thanking stakeholders for their continued engagement. She noted that this initiative remains in its early (“infancy”) stage and emphasized the importance of sustained collaboration among municipalities, industry partners, workforce organizations, and educational institutions. Participants were reminded that prior meeting materials, including recordings and minutes, are available on the OCPC website for reference and broader dissemination.

Mary highlighted the overarching goal of the Tech Hub effort: to develop a coordinated regional strategy that aligns workforce development, education, and industry needs—particularly within advanced manufacturing and related sectors.

2. Participant Coordination & Introductions

Attendees were asked to identify themselves and their organizations to facilitate collaboration. The group included:

- Municipal leadership (Brockton, Easton, Bridgewater)
- OCPC staff
- Workforce development organizations (MassHire Greater Brockton & South Shore)
- Higher education institutions (Massasoit Community College, Stonehill College)
- Private sector manufacturers (e.g., AccuRounds, Evans Machine, Artisan Industries)
- Economic development and community stakeholders

This diverse representation was noted as critical to building a comprehensive regional strategy.

3. Recap of Previous Meeting & Key Themes

Paul Umano (OCPC) provided a recap of the prior meeting, highlighting several consistent themes:

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The success of the initiative depends on active participation from municipalities, businesses, and community partners.
- **Youth Engagement:** A strong emphasis was placed on involving young people earlier in workforce development pathways.
- **Marketing Gap:** There is a significant need to improve how advanced manufacturing and related careers are communicated to the public.
- **Education Alignment:** Ensuring that training programs reflect modern industry needs is essential.

A key takeaway was that advanced manufacturing continues to be misunderstood and requires strategic messaging to reflect its current, technology-driven nature.

4. Workforce Data Development (MassHire Update)

Lorraine (MassHire) provided a detailed update on workforce analysis efforts:

Progress Since January 29 Meeting

- Active coordination between MassHire Greater Brockton and South Shore Workforce Boards
- Engagement with Avenu Insights & Analytics to support regional data analysis
- Identification of approximately **140 advanced manufacturing firms** in the Route 24 corridor (up from an initial estimate of ~55–60)
- Use of multiple data sources including:

- State labor market information (LMI)
- Lightcast (LCAST)
- Avenu (real-time data within ~3 months)

Geographic Focus

- Route 24 corridor communities, including:
 - Brockton, Avon, Bridgewater, West Bridgewater, Easton, and Stoughton

Upcoming Deliverables

- A **comprehensive workforce data report by June 2026**, including:
 - Skills gaps
 - Industry trends
 - Workforce demand projections

Ongoing Coordination

- Meetings with:
 - U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)
 - Southeastern Technical Institute (STI)
 - Apprenticeship and training partners
- Exploration of:
 - Employer focus groups
 - Pipeline development strategies (middle school through postsecondary)

Additional Initiatives

- Re-engagement with the **Southeastern Massachusetts Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (SAMC)** to strengthen regional collaboration and training resources

MassHire emphasized that data will be foundational to shaping the Tech Hub strategy and informing future funding applications.

5. Education & Workforce Pipeline Development

Karen (Massasoit Community College) presented on the **Future of Work Institute**, which serves as a collaborative platform for aligning education with employer needs.

Key Focus Areas

- Identifying workforce needs over the next **5–10 years**
- Designing responsive programming, including:
 - Certificate programs
 - Associate degree pathways
 - Applied workforce training

Program Highlights

- Expansion of:
 - HVAC (including facilities operations)
 - Diesel technology (including electrification)
 - Integration of AI tools in workforce applications
- Emphasis on:
 - Apprenticeships and “earn-and-learn” models
 - Direct-to-work pathways for students

Target Populations

- Returning citizens
- Youth involved in DYS/DCF systems
- Emerging workforce populations

Partnership Opportunities

- Hosting employer roundtables and meetings

- Providing physical space for training and collaboration
- Aligning programs with employer-defined skill needs

Discussion reinforced the importance of:

- Coordinating across K–12, vocational, and higher education systems
 - Leveraging dual enrollment opportunities
 - Building structured career pathways into advanced manufacturing and related sectors
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6. Marketing & Communications Strategy

Marketing was identified as a **central challenge and priority** for the Tech Hub initiative.

Key Issues Identified

- Persistent outdated perceptions of manufacturing (e.g., manual, low-tech work)
- Lack of awareness among youth and the broader public
- Need for targeted, localized outreach within the Route 24 corridor

Proposed Approach

- Establish a **dedicated marketing working group**
- Include:
 - Communications professionals from partner organizations
 - Industry representatives
 - Education partners

Strategic Considerations

- Develop messaging that reflects modern, high-tech manufacturing
- Utilize diverse communication platforms beyond traditional channels
- Engage youth directly in shaping messaging strategies

Mary Waldron emphasized that effective marketing must be **co-developed with the target audience**, particularly younger populations, to ensure relevance and impact.

7. Youth Engagement & Program Development

Significant discussion focused on engaging youth in workforce development:

Proposed Initiatives

- **Co-design lab / design sprint model:**
 - Bring together students and employers to collaboratively design marketing strategies
- Integration with:
 - Summer youth employment programs
 - Vocational and technical education systems

Additional Ideas

- Development of:
 - High school presentations on regional career opportunities
 - Summer manufacturing camps or boot camps utilizing underused vocational facilities
- Leveraging existing programs and identifying gaps in youth engagement infrastructure

Stakeholders emphasized the importance of:

- Starting engagement early (high school and earlier)
- Providing hands-on exposure to advanced manufacturing technologies (e.g., 3D printing)
- Aligning program timing with academic calendars

A key concern raised was the need to act quickly to implement **summer 2026 programming**, given limited lead time.

8. Strategic Development & Infrastructure Concepts

The group discussed broader strategic opportunities, including:

- Development of:
 - Shared training facilities
 - Incubator or co-working spaces
- Conducting a **regional asset inventory** to identify:
 - Existing programs
 - Gaps in services and infrastructure
- Ensuring accessibility of training locations, particularly for populations without reliable transportation

There was consensus that future funding efforts should support both:

- Workforce training programs
 - Physical infrastructure to sustain long-term workforce development
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9. Next Steps & Action Items

Immediate Actions (March 2026)

- Convene a focused meeting on:
 - Education alignment
 - Workforce training
 - Summer programming opportunities
- Distribute a scheduling poll for stakeholder availability
- Initiate marketing working group formation
- Begin regional asset inventory

Short-Term (Spring 2026)

- Continue workforce data analysis
- Develop employer focus groups
- Advance coordination with education and training providers

Long-Term

- Develop a comprehensive regional strategy
- Prepare for future funding opportunities to implement identified initiatives

Next Full Stakeholder Meeting

- Scheduled for **June 4, 2026** (quarterly meeting format)
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10. Key Takeaways

- Workforce data and analysis will serve as the foundation for strategy development.
 - Marketing and perception change are critical barriers that must be addressed.
 - Youth engagement must be embedded across all aspects of the initiative.
 - Strong regional collaboration is underway, with participation from key sectors.
 - Immediate action is required to capitalize on near-term opportunities, particularly summer programming.
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