

HEATHER BOULGER | INSIDE THE JOB MARKET

A slam dunk for the Berkshires: March Madness and workforce success

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UPS representative Susan Slattery talks with a potential employee during a MassHire job fair at the Berkshire Hills Country Club in November 2018. MassHire will host its annual Spring Job & Resource Fair from 10 a.m. to noon March 26 at the Holiday Inn in Pittsfield.

BEN GARVER — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

It's that time of year again. Valentine's candy has been replaced with Easter treats, the groundhog has weighed in on winter, and conversations about brackets are everywhere. March Madness has officially arrived.

Across the country, workplaces are buzzing with cheers, groans and friendly competition as employees fill out their brackets in hopes of picking the ultimate champion — and earning bragging rights. While March Madness may temporarily distract from the workday, it also presents a unique opportunity to boost morale and strengthen employee engagement when embraced the right way.

In fact, nearly one in four companies encourage employees to celebrate the NCAA tournament. More than half of workers say they enjoy celebrating sporting events with co-workers, citing benefits such as a healthy balance between work and play, stronger teamwork, and a welcome break from the daily grind.

And here at MassHire Berkshire, it's March Madness for us too.

At the Berkshire Workforce Board, MassHire Career Center, and among our many partners, the coming months bring a fast-paced lineup of workforce initiatives designed to support employers, job seekers, and career changers throughout the region. Our goal is simple: deliver meaningful results that help our community thrive.

MassHire's success is powered by teamwork — staff, employers, educators, board members, vendors, committees and community partners working together toward a shared goal. Below are just a few examples of how, together, we're building winning teams.

Expanding Opportunity for Employers and Job Seekers

Employers across Massachusetts continue to face labor shortages, while job seekers seek meaningful, sustainable careers. The commonwealth has invested in workforce training to bridge this gap, and MassHire Berkshire is here to connect the dots. Whether you're hiring, training or exploring new career pathways, MassHire Berkshire provides the tools and connections to move forward.

Employer 'Hall of Fame' Support

Recruiting, hiring, training and retaining talent is more complex than ever — but MassHire Berkshire services are available to employers at no cost.

- **Hire now:** Business service representatives assist with job postings, recruitment strategies, retention support, and access to cost-saving resources.
- **Build your talent pipeline:** Our team works with employers to assess workforce needs, share labor market data, and connect you with training providers and funding opportunities.
- **Upskill your workforce:** The Workforce Training Fund offers up to \$250,000 to help employers upgrade employee skills and retain top talent.
- **Leverage internships:** From high school to college interns, MassHire Berkshire partners with local schools and colleges to connect employers with eager learners and future employees.
- **Support during transition:** Rapid response and work share programs assist businesses through layoffs, restructuring and recovery with incentives and tax credits.

Elite Eight for Youth

Young people are the future of our workforce. MassHire supports career readiness programs in every Berkshire County high school, provides professional development for educators, and connects students to local employers through hands-on experiences that spark career exploration and skill development.

Final Four for Job Seekers

MassHire Berkshire Career Center plays a vital role in helping individuals find work, advance their careers, or gain new skills.

- **Weekly workshops:** From resume writing and interviewing to career exploration and training opportunities.
- **Job fairs and recruitment events:** In-person events are held regularly at the Pittsfield Career Center and the North Adams Public Library. The annual Spring Job & Resource Fair will be from 10 a.m. to noon March 26 at the Holiday Inn in Pittsfield.
- **Training opportunities:** Free short-term training programs in health care, manufacturing and other in-demand fields are available through partnerships with local education and training providers.
- **Specialized services:** Support is available for veterans, long-term unemployed individuals, youth ages 16+, and those facing barriers to employment.

MassTalent: Connecting Opportunity

Massachusetts has launched MassTalent at [Mass.gov/MassTalent](https://www.mass.gov/masstalent), a revamped job-matching platform designed to connect job seekers with employers faster and more effectively. Berkshire County is home to exceptional employers and untapped talent – MassTalent helps bring them together. Talent pipelines are happening in advanced manufacturing, clean energy, health and human services, technology and life sciences.

The Rally Continues

March Madness brings excitement, competition, and community – and so does MassHire Berkshire! From labor market insights and training grants to career readiness programs and employment connections, MassHire is your workforce “Final Four.”

No madness – just momentum. Together with our partners, MassHire Berkshire continues to deliver the support businesses and job seekers need to build strong, successful teams. Visit [MassHireBerkshire.com](https://www.masshireberkshire.com).

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