

## INSIDE THE JOB MARKET

### Heather Boulger: A new year brings new job training opportunities

- By Heather Boulger Jan 20, 2023



Job seekers crowd into the Berkshire Athenaeum in Pittsfield in 2018 for a career fair designed for people over 50. It may be a little overwhelming to take the next step in your career journey, according to columnist Heather Boulger, but doing so now can get you ahead and help you reach your career goals faster.

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PITTSFIELD — Whether you're looking for a new job this year, making a career change, or planning to grow in your current profession, make a plan for upskilling and reskilling your credentials.

Here are some reasons why now is a great time to train, take a new class or enroll in a degree program. Certificates make you more employable and help you retain your job. Keeping your skills sharp can help you stand out from your peers. You may have more down time to focus on skill development. You may increase your income. Finally, certifications nearly always provide a measurable career boost.

You may be wondering how to start a more secure career or what's the best way to train for a new career. Even though it may be a little overwhelming to take the next

step in your career journey, doing so now can get you ahead and help you reach your career goals faster. The MassHire Berkshire Career Center can help you identify your strengths and opportunities for improvement, formulate a career plan, and outline a variety of education and training programs to help get you started.

For those who are unemployed, looking to make a career change, or working someplace where your skills feel underutilized, several free training programs can help you upskill and enter some pretty amazing companies in the Berkshires. There are thousands of job opportunities in the region.

MassHire and our many collaborative partners are currently recruiting for occupational training that is grant-funded and tuition free in the following areas:

#### Health care

There are certified and modified nursing assistant programs; and training for licensed practical nursing; medical assistant; medical interpreter; community health workers; and phlebotomy technician

#### Manufacturing

Training programs include introduction to advanced manufacturing, welding and MACWIC (Manufacturing Advancement Center Workforce Innovation Collaborative) training. McCann Technical School's HVAC program and the Berkshire Innovation Center's Manufacturing Academy, which are close to opening, will include training programs, too.

#### Hospitality

There is a program for the Culinary Arts certificate and a series of "choke saver" trainings for restaurants, which are being held jointly by 1Berkshire and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. Most of these trainings start in January or February. The choke save program has already begun; the first session took place

Jan. 9. These sessions tend to fill up quickly, so those interested should register soon.

Entrepreneurship for All Berkshire County also offers business accelerator and pitch contests that provide business training, mentorship and access to an extended professional network for people interested in starting their own companies.

Most companies provide training for practical reasons – to keep up with industry standards and to onboard new hires. However, many businesses are not aware of the real importance of training employees and the measurable impact this has. It has always been important to upskill, but the continued economic instability has further hammered that point home.

At MassHire, we've seen firsthand what training employees can do for businesses, and we've helped hundreds of companies set up training strategies and access resources to help businesses thrive.

Training and development helps companies gain and retain top talent, increases job satisfaction and morale, improves productivity, addresses internal weaknesses and leads to better processes and business growth. Additionally, businesses that have actively interested and dedicated employees see 41 percent lower absenteeism rates and 17 percent higher productivity.

The Berkshire Workforce Board can help company access these initiatives:

- Workforce Training Fund resources of up to \$250,000 to help upgrade your current workforce and streamline and simplify access to course training.
- Safety grants to reduce the risk of injury and illness to workers and promote safe and healthy conditions in the workplace

- WCTF (Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund) demand-driven programs by industry sector partnerships that can train and place unemployed and underemployed workers.
- SCALE planning grants to help partnerships determine and apply for workforce training programs funded by the American Rescue Plan Act.
- The Career Technical Initiative, which addresses the persistent need for skilled labor in construction, trades and manufacturing.
- Behavioral health to establish a recruitment pipeline and to promote career advancement in this health care sector.

Upskilling employees is more than a strategic decision in order to maintain your staff's competitive edge. It's a way to offer them a sense of certainty and security, during these highly uncertain times.

If you are currently employed, it's equally as important to continuously upgrade your own skills. Of the employees who remained in their roles in 2022, about 40 percent can expect that the core skills for their position will change while 50 percent will need upskilling. Many Berkshire employers are aware of the value of investing in their employees. On average, employers expect to offer upskilling and reskilling to just over 70 percent of their employees by 2025.

At MassHire, we've develop a pipeline of workers by connecting under employed residents and career changers to training to help fill critical vacancies for Berkshire businesses. We help train and upskill current workers for career advancement which helps to build skills and contribute to business competitiveness. Let us help connect you to training opportunities!

Additional information is available from the following entities:

- Berkshire Community College: [tinyurl.com/3vmbzvhh](http://tinyurl.com/3vmbzvhh).
- Berkshire Workforce Board: [MassHireBerkshire.com](http://MassHireBerkshire.com).
- MassHire Berkshire Career Center: [MassHireBerkshireCC.com](http://MassHireBerkshireCC.com).
- Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts: [tinyurl.com/mumwy585](http://tinyurl.com/mumwy585).
- Northern Berkshire Adult Basic Education program: [tinyurl.com/kwyn5ams](http://tinyurl.com/kwyn5ams).
- Pittsfield Adult Learning Center: [tinyurl.com/4bymmyyk](http://tinyurl.com/4bymmyyk).

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- [BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION](#)
- [BERKSHIRE WORKFORCE BOARD](#)
- [BERKSHIRE INNOVATION CENTER'S MANUFACTURING ACADEMY](#)
- [WORKFORCE COMPETITIVENESS TRUST FUND](#)
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- [BERKSHIRE COUNTY](#)
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