

INSIDE THE JOB MARKET

The Berkshire workforce has its own March Madness

- By Heather Boulger Mar 10, 2023



It's hard to keep workers focused once the NCAA men's basketball tournament begins, but if March Madness is managed correctly, it's also a great opportunity for employers to establish an annual ritual that builds office morale and employee engagement.

AP FILE PHOTO

PITTSFIELD — The NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament, also known as March Madness, starts this week.

Last year, over 10 million people tuned in to watch the three-week tournament unfold, a 13 percent increase over 2021. Given the popularity of men's college basketball, it wouldn't be a surprise if even more people tuned in this year.

Many workplaces throughout the country will soon be experiencing those annual seasonal bouts of cheers and groans while employees complete their tournament brackets in hopes of choosing the ultimate winner and securing bragging rights with their coworkers. Cellphones and computers make it easy for employees to “secretly” check scores, pools, and even streaming games online. It's inevitable that March Madness is going to impact office productivity, but if managed correctly, it's also a great opportunity to establish an annual ritual that builds office morale and employee engagement.

While the obsession with college basketball may seem like an unwelcome distraction at work, nearly one in four companies encourages their employees to celebrate the annual NCAA tournament. Fifty-three

percent of employees celebrate sporting events like March Madness with co-workers, 39 percent say it supports a healthy mix of work and play, 27 percent say it fosters teamwork, and 2 percent believe it offers a nice distraction from the daily grind.

It's also March Madness for us at the Berkshire Workforce Board, MassHire Career Center, and our many team partners as we prepare for a frenzy of organized workforce activity during the upcoming months. It's our hope that these initiatives will benefit our companies, job seekers and career changers, and meet your expectations for workforce success.

MassHire takes great pride with the initiatives that are made possible through the efforts of a strong team that includes staff, corporate partners, a board of directors, vendors, committees, and our community partners. Here are some examples that confirm the belief that, as a strong team, we can win.

FutureSkills. Expanding opportunity: Employers have countless job openings due to a growing shortage of job-ready workers. Massachusetts has made a once-in-a-lifetime, \$200 million investment in worker skills training to expand opportunities for employers and jobseekers. Whether you're looking for a better job, an employer who needs workers, or a trainer who can provide the skills that employers and jobseekers need, MassHire can help.

Hall of fame for employers: MassHire understands the challenges facing employers due to changing and uncertain economic conditions. Recruitment, hiring, training and retaining your workers is our specialty and our services are at no cost to companies. Here's how we can help:

- Hire employees now: Our business service representative can post your job opportunities, assist with talent recruitment and retention, and offer money-saving services and resources.
- Building a pipeline of skilled (new) employees: Our market maker meets with companies, identifies your needs, provides labor market data, and connects employers to training providers with access to training funds to build a steady employee pipeline.
- Upskill my current workforce: The Workforce Training Fund can provide training resources to upgrade the skills of your current workforce and help retain your employees.

- Utilize interns: Young people want to learn and work for your organization. MassHire is hosting workshops to understand how to better engage high school interns and looking for summer youth placements and sponsors. Lever Inc., the small business accelerator based in North Adams, also provides opportunities for college interns.
- In transition: Our rapid response team and work share program helps companies throughout their entire business cycle with outsourcing, hiring incentives and tax credits.
- Elite Eight for Youth: Young people are 100 percent of our future, help growth our economy, and enhance the region's workforce. There are dozens of career readiness opportunities for youth to explore and learn about local business. And MassHire has career teams in every Berkshire high school, and provides professional development resources for educators.
- Final Four for Job Seekers: MassHire plays a critical role in helping job seekers, career changers and youth looking for work, a better job and for upskilling opportunities.
- Weekly workshops: Career center staff help connect individuals to training and education opportunities, provide case management to ensure success, and connect those who complete programs to in-demand jobs at local businesses. Critical job seeker services include virtual services, information, tools and individual supports. There are dozens of virtual workshops to help with skill building, resume writing, interviewing, and a variety of career and job fairs. MassHire promotes individualized and flexible training opportunities for unemployed residents and provides job matching opportunities as well.
- Resources: There are re-employment resources to help the long-term unemployed who may have barriers to employment, specialized services for our veterans, and assistance to anyone over the age of 16 find employment opportunities. All services are at no cost to the job seeker.
- Job fair and recruitment events: MassHire has a number of in-person job fairs and recruitment events on a monthly basis at the career center, which is located on the third floor of 160 North St. in Pittsfield.
- Training opportunities: MassHire has partnered with our education and training providers and is providing immediate, short-term, entry-level health care and manufacturing training programs for

residents as well as on-the-job training opportunities. There are also dozens of virtual, hybrid and in-person training opportunities provided by Berkshire Community College, McCann Technical School and many others that will help provide skill building and enhancement.

This spring there are manufacturing trainings for unemployed and underemployed individuals in welding and entry level manufacturing, and ToolingU (virtual) programs available. MassHire is offering CDL training as well. There are also opportunities for healthcare training for nursing assistants. All trainings are at no cost to participants.

So the rally continues. Celebrating, educating, and networking are in store for you. MassHire is your “Final Four” business resource for labor market information, training grants, career readiness programs, and connecting to employment opportunities.

No madness; just MassHire and partnering efforts that help create your winning team. Now more than ever, the MassHire Berkshire workforce system and our partners can deliver critical support to job seekers and businesses in the region at [MassHireBerkshire.com](https://www.masshireberkshire.com). Now, let's get to work.

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