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MassHire Metro North Workforce Board Awarded \$765K in City of Somerville ARPA Funds to Drive NewBiz Somerville Initiatives

Somerville, June 31, 2023: The MassHire Metro North Workforce Board (MNWB) has been selected as one of the recipients of the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds by the City of Somerville, joining over 35 esteemed local nonprofits. The City of Somerville, having secured \$10 million in ARPA funds, aims to fortify the community, and provide vital support to organizations.

“MNWB and its Work to THRIVE initiative are ecstatic about starting an entrepreneurship program in partnership with The Welcome Project and Somerville Community Corporation. This new program will be an important investment in the local Somerville community, which we hope will also have positive impacts on the entire regional economy. We look forward to working with TWP and SCC, two longstanding, well-respected Somerville community-based organizations, to help nurture the small business community of the future.” -Chris Albrizio-Lee, President & CEO of MNWB

The MNWB, through its Work to Thrive (WtT) initiative, in collaboration with [Somerville Community Corporation](#) (SCC) and [The Welcome Project](#) (TWP), has been granted \$277K to conduct a pilot program called NewBiz Somerville Entrepreneurship 101, aimed at training aspiring immigrant entrepreneurs in Somerville.

Gonzalo Puigbo, Executive Director of SCC, states: *“Somerville Community Corporation is thrilled to be partnering with MassHire and The Welcome Project to support small businesses and new immigrant entrepreneurs in Somerville. These programs will help the City’s economy become even more vibrant, innovative, and dynamic. We are lucky to have a diverse group of people who are nurturing their ideas and creating businesses here and SCC is proud to be a part of these initiatives that will help them do just that.”*

Participants will receive free comprehensive training to build the skills and confidence needed for effective engagement with business incubators, coaches, financiers, landlords, suppliers, and other relevant entities. Both physical storefront and non-storefront business ideas are eligible. The program offers 25 hours of linguistically and culturally appropriate entrepreneurship education in-person, along with financial and digital literacy training. Each participant is assigned a mentor and stipends are provided to alleviate potential obstacles.

“Launching these initiatives is an excellent example of the many positive changes coming to Somerville. Providing essential education and entrepreneurial guidance to our immigrant community will allow them to reap the benefits of the new investments in this city and move our society toward equity and justice. The Welcome Project is excited to work with MassHire and so many other great community partners on these projects and cannot wait to get started.” -Grant Sabean, Director of Development, TWP

Additionally, MNWB has received \$488K from the City of Somerville ARPA funds to support the NewBiz Somerville Skill Building Program, a collaboration among Somerville Community Corporation, The Welcome Project, [East Somerville Main Streets](#) (ESMS), and [Union Square Main Streets](#) (USMS). This program offers courses specifically designed to support low- and moderate-income employees of existing small businesses in Somerville and focuses on ESOL, job readiness, customer service training, and enhancing digital literacy.

Lindsay Allen, Executive Director of ESMS, expresses, *"ESMS is thrilled to partner with MassHire Metro North, SCC, The Welcome Project and USMS on this incredibly important skill building program. Providing ESOL, job readiness, and digital literacy training, equips our local workforce with important tools for success and helps to create vibrant commercial districts. Our small businesses are the heartbeat of the community, and programs like this ensure that those businesses will continue to thrive in Somerville. We are grateful to the City of Somerville for providing this opportunity."*

The primary objectives of this initiative are to foster job retention for small businesses and enable participants to thrive in their careers with improved abilities and self-assurance.

"Union Square Main Streets is proud to be part of this team which will enhance our service to the small business community throughout Union Square. We are honored to work with this group of highly valued community partners who care deeply about equitable economic opportunity in service to Somerville as a whole." -Jessica L. Eshleman, Executive Director, USMS



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