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MassHire Metro North Workforce Board Leads Digital Equity Initiative with \$4.12 Million Grant from Massachusetts Broadband Institute

Somerville, February 5, 2024 – The MassHire Metro North Workforce Board (MNWB) and its Work to THRIVE Initiative (WtT), along with valuable community partners, are proud to announce the launch of the Digital Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Consortium. This groundbreaking initiative aims to address digital inequities in the Metro North and North Shore regions of Massachusetts.

Since its launch in 2021, MNWB's equity-focused initiative, Work to THRIVE, has actively addressed gaps in the public workforce development system, particularly in priority cities such as Chelsea, Everett, Revere, and Malden. As digital literacy and access have become indispensable to finding employment and advancing careers in today's job market, WtT has increasingly prioritized digital equity initiatives. This funding will amplify WtT's impact by leveraging existing networks in the Metro North and North Shore regions, including a partnership with MassHire North Shore.

The Digital JEDI Consortium will address the digital equity needs of Metro North and North Shore residents through comprehensive digital literacy training, device refurbishment and distribution, education, outreach, and adoption programs. The Digital JEDI program offers a comprehensive suite of services, including recruiting, hiring, training, and supporting a cohort of 32 Digital Navigators (DNs) dedicated to priority communities. It includes tiered digital literacy classes at Career Centers and community-based organizations, as well as the distribution of high-quality refurbished laptops, peripherals, Internet access, and IT support for residents. The structure in each community is specifically tailored to meet its unique needs, ensuring a targeted and effective approach to addressing digital equity challenges.

“The Digital JEDI Consortium, supported by this grant from Mass Broadband Institute, is a critical investment in the communities of Metro North and North Shore,” said MNWB President and CEO Chris Albrazio-Lee. “The work of this Consortium will be invaluable to closing the digital gap in our regions’ most disproportionately affected communities. We’re thankful to MBI and look forward to working with nearly two dozen partners to address the digital equity needs of Metro North and North Shore.”

The partners listed below (the “JEDI Partners”) have committed to ensuring this initiative is a success:

- ***MassHire Metro North Career Centers/ABCD:*** Host DNs, deliver digital literacy training, outreach, recruitment
- ***MassHire North Shore Workforce Board and Career Centers:*** Host DNs, deliver digital literacy training, outreach, recruitment
- ***City of Cambridge, Cambridge Public Schools, Cambridge Public Library:*** Project support, outreach, recruitment
- ***Cambridge Community Television (Cambridge):*** Host DNs, deliver digital literacy training, outreach, recruitment

- **Just-A-Start Corporation (Cambridge):** Host DNs, outreach, and recruitment
- **City of Chelsea:** Provide in-kind funds to support curriculum development, project support, outreach
- **La Colaborativa (Chelsea):** Host DNs, deliver digital literacy training, outreach, recruitment
- **The Neighborhood Developers/CONNECT:** Host site for digital literacy training, outreach, and recruitment
- **City of Everett:** host DNs, project support, outreach, recruitment
- **La Comunidad, Inc. (Everett):** Deliver digital literacy training, outreach, recruitment
- **Action Inc (Gloucester):** Host DNs, deliver digital literacy training, outreach, recruitment
- **Wellspring House (Gloucester):** Host DNs, deliver digital literacy training, outreach, recruitment
- **New American Center (Lynn):** Host DNs, deliver digital literacy training, outreach, recruitment
- **Pathways Inc. (Lynn):** Host DNs, deliver digital literacy training, outreach, recruitment
- **City of Malden:** Project support, outreach
- **City of Revere:** Host DNs, Project support, outreach, recruitment
- **Revere Community Schools (Revere):** Deliver digital literacy training
- **Women Encouraging Empowerment (Revere):** Deliver digital literacy training, outreach, recruitment
- **City of Somerville:** Project support, outreach
- **Somerville Community Corporation (Somerville):** Host DNs, deliver digital literacy training, outreach, recruitment
- **MACIR, Inc.:** IT and ACP registration training for DNs, IT Support system, call center system with interpreting services through Lionbridge, reporting system for JEDI partners, train device technicians
- **Computers For People, Inc:** Procure used laptops and device peripherals, hire personnel to refurbish laptops, distribute laptops to partners

About the MassHire Metro North Workforce Board

The MassHire Metro North Workforce Board (MNWB), incorporated in 1995 as the Metro North Regional Employment Board (REB), is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to develop partnerships, generate resources, and advocate for workforce solutions that result in a skilled workforce, prospering businesses, and equitable access to meaningful career pathways and quality employment for residents. MNWB serves as the Workforce Development Board (WDB) for the Metro North region of Massachusetts. As one of sixteen local Workforce Development Boards established in Massachusetts by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, MNWB was formed to set local workforce policy, determine how state and federal funds are best used for workforce development, align the needs of employers to the needs of area residents, leverage partnerships to meet the region's workforce needs, and oversee the MassHire Metro North Career Centers (MNCC) where both job search and employer services are provided. Additional information is available at www.masshiremetronorth.org.

About Massachusetts Broadband Institute

Established by the Commonwealth in 2008, the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) collaborates with the Administration, state legislature, municipalities, and broadband providers to address the digital divide. MBI focuses on enhancing the economy, education, healthcare, public safety, and government services. Investments, centered around the MassBroadband 123 network, extend statewide, connecting over 120 communities. MBI supports Last Mile network projects through grants and technical assistance. Additional information is available at www.broadband.masstech.org.

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