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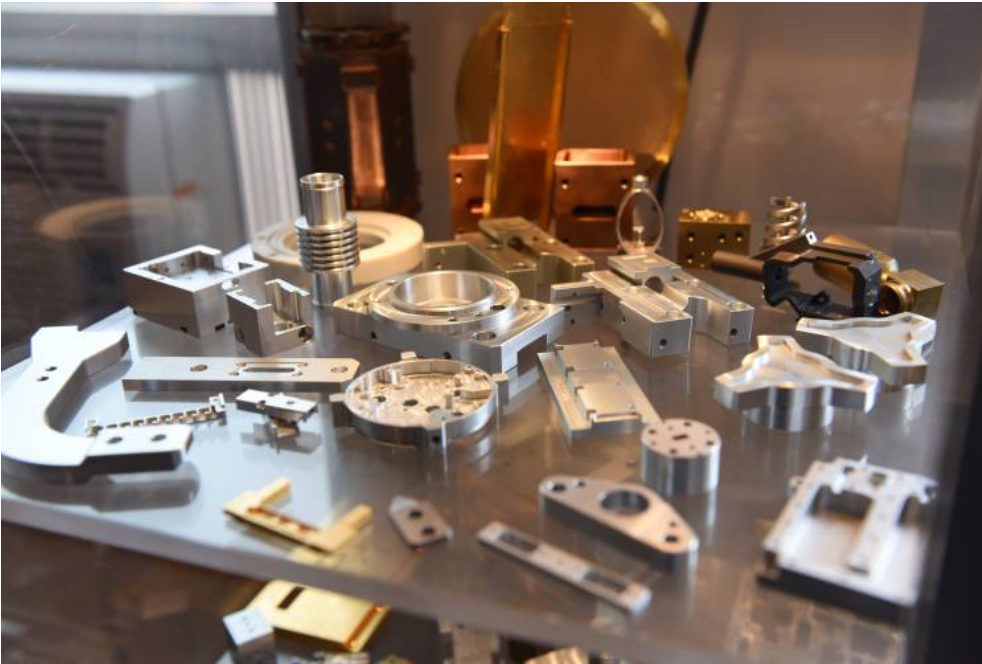
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Job seekers can test out manufacturing careers through new MassHire program



Metal parts for many types of industry, pictured at Poplar Hill Machine Inc. in Conway in 2019. The Greenfield-based MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board has secured a grant for online training to help people exploring manufacturing careers. Staff File Photo/PAUL FRANZ » [Buy this Image](#)

By [CHRIS LARABEE \(/byline?byline=By CHRIS LARABEE\)](#)
Staff Writer

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GREENFIELD — The MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board has secured a grant for online training to help people exploring manufacturing careers.

The organization is launching a Virtual Manufacturing Program as part of an initiative using federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to help people get back to work. Participants will attend 11 self-paced online classes that will take about one to two hours to complete. According to a press release from the MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board, the training is free to any unemployed residents of Franklin or Hampshire counties or the North Quabbin region who are over the age of 18.

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Special Project Coordinator Andrew Baker said the program provides an opportunity for people to see if the industry will be a place for them to start a career. He emphasized the program is free to all unemployed residents, regardless of whether they receive unemployment benefits.

“Virtual Manufacturing is a kind of precursor way for people to explore whether manufacturing will be a good fit for them,” Baker said. “A lot of people who come into our training pipeline are career-shifters. ... In many cases, it’s hitting a feeling in retail or food services that motivates people to look at manufacturing.”

He said this is a unique opportunity because the federal government is funding the virtual program.

“This is the first time we’ve had a special pot of funding ... specifically dedicated to putting together this package. This is a part of a statewide effort,” Baker explained. “That particular pot of money will end Dec. 31.”

Baker added many companies in the industry are struggling to hire new people, which creates a great opportunity for people to find a high-paying job.

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“Manufacturing in Franklin County has the highest-average household income,” Baker said. “There’s more wage-growth opportunities and more learning opportunities to build a new trade and advance in a number of different directions.”

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MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board’s Executive Director Rebecca Bialecki said this is a one-time opportunity for people to learn about manufacturing jobs.

“Our target is to enroll 35 participants in Virtual Manufacturing by Dec. 31,” Bialecki said. “(The program will) help people discover the many career paths in the manufacturing industry and find a niche that fits their skills and interests.”

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Baker said the Virtual Manufacturing Program is also a chance for people to gauge their interest in attending Greenfield Community College's manufacturing program and to "get a running start" before they put their time and money into the curriculum.

"(This program is) helping people figure out if this is a good fit before they invest in a whole semester," Baker said.

Those interested in enrolling only need to call Baker at 413-376-5459 or email him at andrewbaker@masshirefhwb.org.

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"Virtual manufacturing training is literally a phone call away," Baker said.

Chris Larabee can be reached at clarabee@recorder.com or 413-930-4081.



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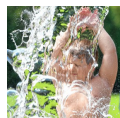


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