



LIFE SCIENCES CAREER HUB LAUNCHED IN BOSTON

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[link](#)



Attendees at the MassBioEd Life Sciences Career Hub launch Oct. 30 at the ABCD Thelma D. Burns building in Dorchester.

As various programs launch to train Boston residents of color for jobs in the life sciences, nonprofits in the city see a need to raise awareness about opportunities in those fields. For Cambridge-based MassBioEd, that need led to the creation of the Life Sciences Career Hub in Boston, which CEO Sunny Schwartz said is designed to offer a single place with organized access to information to help Boston residents — particularly those from lower-income communities or communities of color — find jobs in the life science industry.

“The industry is working on it, but there’s a persistent lack of diversity, and so out of a sense of fairness, it is more than time to open up these opportunities to new populations,” she said.

Schwartz said she hopes the hub will serve as another step as the region works to diversify a workforce that is still largely white in STEM fields — science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

According to a [2021 report](#) from the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, or MassBio, people of color made up about 32% of the state’s population, but only 15% of the biopharmaceutical workforce and only 8% of the industry’s executive management. “The training programs are a piece of the puzzle, but people need to be able to find them, and there may be some people, also, that do have the (STEM) skills that are just unaware of how to get a job. This Career Hub is really going to help with that,” Schwartz said.

The launch of the hub comes as groups across the city begin various training programs, like [Bioversity](#) in Dorchester or the [NuSq Life Science Training Center](#) in Nubian Square — to help people prepare for and enter STEM jobs.

Schwartz said this new program isn’t meant to train people — though MassBioEd offers its own life sciences apprenticeships — but rather to help people find different training programs and identify which path is right for them.

The hub will offer free in-person and online career information workshops and career fairs. She said the organization is also working on hiring a direct career coach, who will work one-on-one with jobseekers to figure out what the next step is. She said that coaching will be available remotely, and they hope to offer office hours rotating regularly through Boston’s neighborhoods.

Schwartz said there’s interest from within the industry for greater diversity, but sometimes that is stymied by a lack of knowledge of how to attract and recruit a more diverse workforce.

“It’s kind of like, if you’re posting a job, you can only interview the people who apply,” Schwartz said. “They don’t know how to go into the community to find non-traditional candidates. It’s not what they’re used to doing.”

Funding for the hub came from a [life sciences career awareness grant](#) through the city of Boston as well as Lendlease, a construction company developing a life science building in Brighton.

MassBioEd isn't alone in working to bring greater awareness to STEM careers across Boston's communities of color. In Roxbury, The American City Coalition — another recipient of the grant — is tackling the issue with Roxbury Worx, its workforce development initiative aimed at bringing access and opportunity to workers the area, including with its upcoming second annual Roxbury Worx conference Nov. 14.

Rev. Willie Bodrick II, president and CEO of The American City Coalition, said the industry needs to reduce barriers and burdens to help residents in Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan — what the organization calls the “Roxbury Worx zone” — enter jobs in biotech and life sciences, health care and environmentally-focused technology. “We're really trying to shift the burden from those who are residents and to ensure that those who are (workforce development) providers are carrying the heavier load when working with residents,” Bodrick said.

He said those efforts are important in a city like Boston, where biotechnology and STEM fields make up large portions of the economy.

“We believe that this is an opportunity that can have huge impacts on communities like Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan, but also have impacts on future generations of jobseekers and job opportunities for our young people here in BPS,” Bodrick said. “We think this work and this industry — which we are the leaders of the world in life science and biotech — have an opportunity to make sure that this industry is engaging Black and brown residents and other residents of color to ensure that they have access and opportunity into an industry that has historically not been as diverse.”

Bodrick said an important step in this effort is building partnerships. The Roxbury Worx conference will include the MassBioEd Career Hub and Bioversity, the new life sciences workforce training initiative from MassBio.

“We welcome partners to be a part of this work, and we welcome programming that will hopefully create the awareness,” he said. “Hopefully, through the ecosystem alignment work and through the development of healthy pipelines from community all the way to industry, we can see changes in employment and changes in meaningful jobs in the lives of many of the residents of Roxbury and Dorchester and Mattapan.”