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REPORT: MASS. LIFE SCIENCES SECTOR HAS LOTS OF JOBS, BUT NOT ENOUGH WORKERS TO FILL THEM

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[link](#)



People cross at the intersection of Ames and Main streets. Kendall Square is home to dozens of biotech companies. (Jesse Costa/WBUR)

Massachusetts is outpacing the nation in life sciences job growth, according to a new report released Wednesday by the Massachusetts Biotechnology Education Foundation, or MassBioEd.

The state's life sciences sector grew its employment base by 14.6% between 2019 and 2022, compared to just 9.4% nationally, the report found. The three-year job growth in Massachusetts occurred at a time when the state's overall economy declined by 2.6%, the report noted.

And MassBioEd projects more growth is to come: The report estimates that by 2032, the life sciences will grow the 132,000 jobs it had in 2022 by 32%.

However, while jobs are booming in the state's life sciences industry, there may not enough workers to fill these positions. The sector is projected to have an average of more than 6,600 openings over the next decade, according to the report. And the state's colleges and universities are only producing about half that amount of life sciences graduates in life sciences, the report noted.

"While our education institutions are very robust here in Massachusetts, they're just not keeping up with the demand from industry," MassBioEd CEO Sunny Schwartz said. "So we need more production from our higher education institutions, or we need nontraditional paths into the industry."

Schwartz said the industry needs to be open to new ways of training and recruiting in order to reach more workers. As an example, Schwartz cited the apprenticeship program that MassBioEd launched in 2021 that placed talent in 20 companies.

The report calls for greater investment in specialized training programs as well as more outreach efforts in order to target a broader range of potential workers.

"I think there's a perception in the life sciences that everyone has a Ph.D. who works in this industry, and that is simply not true," Schwartz said. She noted that only 19% of jobs in the industry require a Ph.D. while 10% don't require a bachelors degree.

"So there's a lot of opportunity in this industry for people at all levels of education," she said.

The report also found that there is a strong need for a range of skillsets in life sciences. Though the state remains a hub for highly specialized jobs, such as in biopharmaceuticals, other areas within the life sciences industry have experienced rapid growth. Computing and IT roles have increased by 52% since 2019 to about 11,000 jobs in 2022, according to the report. Additionally, production and manufacturing jobs have grown by about 37% since 2019, after years of job declines in these areas.

The report also addresses diversity in the industry, something that its authors say will be crucial as the sector tries to reach more workers to fill its job gaps. Schwartz said the industry has worked to increase the number of women in the field and in leadership roles, but still has more work to do when it comes to bringing more people of color into the field.