

2025 MassCEC Workforce Grantee Convening Speaker Bios



Jose Abreu is a business management professional with 15+ years of experience across Latin America and the U.S. He holds a business management degree with highest honors and a certificate in innovation management. Since joining Eastern Bank in 2017, he has progressed from consumer banking to the business banking team, where he supports small businesses in Northern MA and NH. At Eastern Bank he leads the Equity Alliance for Business, expanding access to resources and loans for entrepreneurs of color and women-owned businesses, and is active in multiple employee resource groups.

He mentors small business owners and serves on boards including EforAll, the Daydreaming Organization, and ALPFA Boston—where he helped drive 15% annual membership growth and now co-leads Rising Latino Leaders & Executive programming.

His recognitions include ALPFA Boston Rising Star, ALX100 Honoree, Eastern Bank's Core Values Award, and the Office of the President Award. In 2025, he was appointed to Chelsea's Master Plan steering committee. He continues to support small businesses through financial literacy and access-to-capital coaching.



Chima Anidobe has been with National Grid for over 11yrs, starting out as a union-represented, customer-facing representative on our Connection team. Over the years, he has grown through and taken on diverse roles from Process Improvement, Project Management, and IT, where he was a Product Owner.

Today, he is the Principal Program Manager National Grid's Workforce Development, where he manages National Grid's Clean Energy Careers Academy (CECA). He gets to help shape the next generation of clean-energy operators and leaders who will help navigate the future of clean energy in the utility space.



Olivia Antonelli is the Supply Chain and Solutions Manager at MassMEP, where she has worked for three years. She developed and continues to lead MassMEP's Supply Chain Program, bringing on expert training resources and building the Supplier Scouting Program to connect manufacturers with sourcing opportunities. She also helped lead an AI-driven project to map manufacturing capabilities across Massachusetts. In addition to her supply chain work, Olivia oversees grants focused on strengthening the maritime and defense industrial base, advancing clean energy, and supporting women- and minority-owned businesses in the Commonwealth.

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Jennifer Applebaum is the Managing Director of Workforce Development at the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center. A former teacher and entrepreneur with a broad range of curriculum, training, and program innovation experience, Jennifer oversees a portfolio of workforce programs that support clean energy career exploration, new entrant and upskilling training in climate-critical occupations, and clean energy entrepreneurship/ small business development among underrepresented populations. Prior to her work at the MassCEC, Jennifer led a statewide youth employment program centered on progressive skill-building and a career readiness initiative that reached over 100,000 participants across multiple states.



Ben Christensen is a Training and Small Business Support Program Manager at the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC), the state's economic development agency dedicated to accelerating the growth of the clean energy sector across the Commonwealth to promote job creation, deliver statewide environmental benefits, and secure long-term economic growth for the people of Massachusetts. Benjamin joined MassCEC in 2023. Prior to joining MassCEC, he managed the Commonwealth Corporation's Workforce Training Fund, which provides grants to Massachusetts businesses to help them train current and newly hired employees. The fund is financed entirely by employer contributions to the state's unemployment insurance system.



Alexandra Bullen Coutts, Executive Director of ACE MV, believes in lifelong learning and that "career paths" are not always linear. A published author of five novels for young adults, she has worked as a program director, community organizer, social media manager, high school teacher, grant writer, magazine editor, freelance journalist, waitress, barista and yoga instructor.

Through writing and telling stories for and about young adults, she discovered a passion for working directly with young people to help them make connections to futures in education and meaningful employment. At Martha's Vineyard Community Services she created a social network and programming for young adults aged 18-30, called Oyster MV. Through a weekly newsletter, social media and in-person programming she built a space for young adults to engage with the island community and consider new directions and possibilities.

She joined ACE MV as Executive Director in May 2023 and is eager to support learners of all ages in the process of building secure, fulfilling, and evolving Island lives. Alex holds a BA/MFA from New York University.

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Katie Crowder is the Deputy Director at MassHire North Shore Workforce Board, where she is dedicated to advancing workforce development initiatives across the North Shore region. In her current role, she provides strategic leadership and oversight for programs that connect job seekers with employment opportunities and support regional economic growth.

Katie's career in workforce development spans two decades, much of which has focused on youth jobs and career pathway development, and later on training programs for unemployed and underemployed adults. Prior to her role as Deputy Director, Katie developed and managed programs designed to prepare young people for successful careers. Her expertise in youth workforce development has been instrumental in creating pathways to employment for underserved populations in the area. Katie is focused on reaching underserved individuals and creating opportunities to build a stronger, more inclusive workforce throughout the North Shore region.

Katie is a graduate of Endicott College and lives in Groveland, MA with her husband, two children, two cats, and a dog. Dedicated to children and animals, Katie spends her time outside of work involved with her kids' sports and volunteering with Sweet Paws Rescue



Courtney Daly is the Director of Programming at ACE MV (Adult & Community Education of Martha's Vineyard), where she leads the development, implementation, and evaluation of adult education and workforce training programs for the island community. Her work includes designing career pathway programs that support adults facing significant access barriers, testing and improving new approaches to program design and participant support, and building the operational infrastructure needed for effective service delivery. A dedicated public servant, Courtney is committed to creating equitable training opportunities that equip residents with the tools they need to enter stable, long-term careers.



Christina Dellaventura is a Program Manager at MassCEC, where she specializes in adult training and upskilling in climate-critical sectors. In 2025, she spearheaded the launch of MassCEC's Heat Pump and HVAC Training Network, which supports community colleges to establish or upgrade HVAC training centers. She has been actively involved in the design of MassCEC's technical assistance, ensuring that all roundtables, best practice briefings, and individualized support are high-impact.

With more than ten years of experience in the nonprofit, government, and philanthropic sectors, Christina brings a multi-faceted perspective to workforce development. She previously served as Senior Community Development Officer for the nation's largest CDFI, as a grant maker at the world's largest human rights and civil liberties foundation, and as a case manager and development associate at local nonprofits and city government agencies throughout the Northeast.

An advocate for informed program planning and iterative design, she is facilitating today's concurrent session, *Building the Plane Before You Fly It: Unlocking the Power of Pilots*—which she says would be the title of her podcast if she had one—emphasizing the need to design, build, and test...*before* we fly!

She holds a Master of Science in Social Policy from The University of Pennsylvania and a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and Sociology/Anthropology from The Macaulay Honors College at The City University of New York.

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Carlos Galvez is a professional with nearly 20 years of experience in community-based organizations and human and social development initiatives in both Mexico and the United States. He has developed and implemented several projects focused on social and economic mobility, poverty reduction, youth empowerment, and improving access to employment and training opportunities. His collaborative approach fosters synergy among public agencies, the private sector, academia, and nonprofit organizations.

Currently, he serves as the Director of Economic Sustainability and Mobility at La Colaborativa, where he works with residents from the Boston Metro North area, particularly those from underserved households. In this role, he oversees job readiness and career exploration, workforce development in the clean energy and healthcare industries, as well as adult education programs for contextualized ESOL and digital access and education at basic, intermediate, and advanced levels.

Carlos is also a board member of Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) and participates in the Action for Equity Steering Committee.



Janel Granum is the Program Director of the Student and Young Adult team at MassCEC Workforce Development. Janel brings over fifteen years in youth development, program design and implementation. She currently oversees the youth-facing programming supporting pathways into clean energy careers for high school, training, and college students. Janel oversees the MassCEC Internship program, the Powering the Future Curriculum, Climate Service Corps program, and the young adult equity-focused programming. Her work reflects a deep commitment to community voice and long-term impact.



Charla Hixon has 28 years' experience in the human services field, holds a Bachelor's degree from the University of New Hampshire and a Master's degree from the University of Tennessee, both in Social Work, and is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW) by the State of Massachusetts. She completed an AmeriCorps service year in Aspen, Colorado, inspiring a career-long commitment to service learning followed by leading AmeriCorps programs both in Colorado and Massachusetts. Ms. Hixon has worked for the Worcester Community Action Council for the past 21 years, serving in management and senior roles within community action and antipoverty work. She currently serves as the Agency's Chief Impact Officer.

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Edward Hsieh is the Program Director of the Adult Training & MWBE Support Team, under the MassCEC Workforce Team, overseeing the Equity Workforce Training funding opportunities, as well as other training and underrepresented business support programs. Prior to MassCEC, he served as the COO of a workforce development CBO where he designed, improved, and implemented several training programs, including training for returning citizens and immigrants leading to employment as medium- and heavy-duty fleet technicians, building automation technicians, and hoisting and operating engineers; he also collaborated with several other partners to launch the Mass Save Clean Energy Pathways internship program. Before his pivot into workforce, he spent 14 years as executive director of several high-impact sustainability nonprofits.



Samalid Hogan is a Latina entrepreneur and has served in key roles building partnerships across public, private, and civic sectors. She was the Regional Director for the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center (MSBDC) Network Western Regional Office and during her tenure, she co-founded the Western Mass Means Business collaboration, an alliance of small business technical assistance providers. Samalid is committed to serving her community and serves on several boards of directors including the Governor's Latino Empowerment Council for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Board of Trustees of Springfield Technical Community College, the Springfield Regional Chamber of Commerce, TechFoundry, and the Rotary Club of Springfield. Samalid received a BA in Economics from UMass Amherst and an MBA from Bay Path University.



Hydie Hudson is a Vice President, Impact Investments at Social Finance, where she leads a portfolio of economic mobility initiatives that leverage innovative financing models, including revolving workforce funds designed in partnership with philanthropic and state and local government partners. Examples include the Massachusetts Climate Careers Fund, the New Jersey Pay It Forward Program, and the San Diego Pay It Forward Loan Program. Prior to Social Finance, Hydie worked in impact finance internationally with organizations such as One Acre Fund and Acumen. Hydie began her career as a strategy and management consultant, advising Fortune 500 clients in various industries, including financial services. Hydie holds an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, where she was named a Youn Impact Scholar, and a BA in Literature from Yale University.

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David Hutchinson is Executive Director at Tremco Rising Stars, where he founded and developed a youth focused workforce program that introduces and places young people 16-24 into the construction industry, with a focus on sustainable futures. David brings 15 years of experience in the construction industry in various roles to his current position, which led him to launch Rising stars in 2020. David has built Rising Stars into a national program, which is active in six cities and has 100+ graduates. He has a proven record of building pathway programs like the MASSCEC funded Achieve Green and diversifying outcomes for graduates with 15 different careers within the industry. Previously, David's experience focused on building solutions to retrofit existing buildings to reach energy goals. He leveraged his industry knowledge and connection to build the Rising Stars workforce program. David has leveraged his industry knowledge and connections to impact young men and women from disadvantaged communities and help them gain access successful futures. David is committed to working with his fellow workforce partners to ensure there is an open exchange of best practices and raising the level of all programming.



Kristen Joyce is the Bridge to Prosperity Program Director. The Bridge to Prosperity Cliff Effect Pilot is a three-year initiative designed to address the benefits cliff—a barrier that penalizes income growth by abruptly reducing public assistance. The program offers direct financial support and coaching to empower families to transition off public benefits and into living-wage careers. Previously, Kristen was a Senior Researcher at Mathematica, building the evidence about what works to help families achieve economic success. She led studies of innovative employment and training programs for public assistance recipients for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Food and Nutrition Service, and the U.S. Department of Labor. She has also held positions at the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, DC. Kristen holds a master's degree in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School and a bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.



Dan Kirwin is the Training Coordinator and Lead Instructor for the Heat & Frost Insulators Local #6, out of Boston, MA where he oversees curriculum development, manages the training center budget, and provides instruction to apprentices, journey persons, and apprentice instructors. With 14 years in the mechanical insulation trade, including 11 years as a Local #6 member and two years in his current role, Daniel is committed to strengthening the union's training standards and workforce development.

He serves on the IIAATF Steering Committee, is a member of the Building Trades Training Directors Association (BTTDA), and is a trustee on both the Local 6 Building Committee and the Local 6 Help a Member Fund. Prior to his career in the trade, Daniel served 12 years in the Air National Guard as a 3E0X1 Electrical Systems specialist.

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Heather Marciniac is a Program Manager on MassCEC's Workforce Development-Training and Small Business Support Team, supporting equity-centered workforce and small business development through the CUBS program. Her background spans workforce pathways, community development, and rights-based approaches to environmental and economic equity, including the diversification of the community development workforce through LISC AmeriCorps, supporting Native Alaskan youth environmental career readiness, advancing civil society movement-building at the Open Society Foundations, and contributing to policy work at UNESCO and the Massachusetts State House. She studied regional planning to better understand how regional structures can shape equitable economic development.



Matt Morano Building on his strong track record of service since joining VOAMASS in 2012, Matthew assumed the role of Vice President of Strategic Partnerships in 2021. He serves as the organization's liaison with major funders and program partners, including the Department of Labor, Department of Veterans Affairs, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Essex and Plymouth County Sheriff's Departments, and various state and local agencies. Matthew plays a critical role in both securing grant funding and ensuring compliance with guidelines and regulations. He is responsible for securing new partnerships that will spur growth and allow VOAMASS to serve more people. Matthew also manages project staff; ensures integration of program participants into other VOAMASS services; and verifies financial and program reports.

Prior to his current role, Matthew was the division director for Veteran and Re-Entry Services at VOAMASS. He holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Bridgewater State University.



Chris Morin is a self-employed HVAC system design trainer, consultant, and coach serving distributors and contractors across New England. His HVAC journey began early—carrying tools at age 16 and graduating from Minuteman Regional Vocational High School in Lexington, MA. From there, Chris entered the U.S. Marine Corps as a Refrigeration Mechanic, serving two tours in Iraq and emerging as a young leader.

In 2012, while working as a Tech Instructor, Chris realized he had more to share about his experiences in the HVAC Industry than just what those classes were providing an outlet for. From that point, he authored the successful HVAC Prog Blog. At first, the readers were mostly Technicians, so he began writing about the Heating and Cooling service topics Chris was known for locally. As his role in the industry changed, and he met with more Salespeople and Business Owners while in sales for Mitsubishi Electric Trane HVAC, he expanded his content to include System Design and Business topics.

Today, Chris is an ACCA EPIC Residential System Design Instructor, known for delivering practical, field-tested insights to building officials, distributors, and contractors alike. His work includes classroom teaching, field consultations, and deep dives into system design, quality installation, and diagnostic strategy.

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Silvana Bastante Muñoz is the Program Officer for Green Jobs and Income and Wealth Building initiatives at LISC Massachusetts. In this role, Silvana leads the strategic direction for statewide Green Workforce ecosystem building through the Bridges to Green Jobs program, and Financial Opportunity Centers.



Kira Nolan is a Program Administrator on MassCEC's Workforce Development-Training and Small Business Support Team, supporting equity-centered workforce and small business development through the CUBS program. Prior to joining MassCEC, Kira worked with the Center for Impact Finance, supporting research on how CDFIs and impact investors can leverage the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund to deliver community-development benefits for low-income and disadvantaged communities. She holds a Master's degree in Public Policy from the University of New Hampshire.



Chiderah Okoye Chiderah Okoye is the Managing Director of Transform Power Systems (TPS), a Boston-based electrical engineering firm advancing clean energy through building electrification, solar, and storage solutions. She is a passionate advocate for equitable economic growth, serving in leadership roles with organizations like the Black Economic Council of Massachusetts and Resilient Coders. Chiderah lives in Boston, with her family and is committed to empowering communities to innovate for sustainable and inclusive development.

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Dr. Jose Perez Jose Perez is a seasoned business leader and the President and Founder of Roads Consulting Group, bringing over 20 years of experience and a proven record of securing more than \$300 million in municipal and corporate contract awards. As an expert in transportation, logistics, procurement, operations, and entrepreneurship, Jose has built a strong reputation for his strategic leadership and innovative approach to driving growth and operational excellence.

He holds a Doctorate in Humanities and an MBA with a concentration in Conflict Resolution and Negotiation, blending academic depth with extensive hands-on experience. This unique combination allows him to navigate complex business environments and foster collaboration across public and private sectors.

Beyond his corporate work, Jose is also the founder of a non-profit organization dedicated to workforce development, helping individuals from underserved communities gain access to employment and training opportunities in cybersecurity, construction management, commercial driving (CDL), entrepreneurship, and technology.



Kat Quigley Kat Quigley is the Senior Manager of Training at All In Energy, a Massachusetts-based nonprofit organization with a mission to advance an inclusive clean energy economy. She leads the curriculum development and training for All In Energy's workforce development program, bringing experience as a previous residential energy auditor within the Mass Save program. Kat is passionate about building equitable workforce opportunities in the clean energy industry while incorporating learning science methodologies to break down complex topics, enhance learning retention and build psychological safety.



Dr. Sarah Cherry Rice is a creative systems thinker with a delicate balance of bold visioning and intelligent execution. Sarah has the ability to lead innovative projects from concept to pilot to launch and served on the founding teams of Teach For America - Boston and The Achievement Network. She founded Digital Ready to blur the lines between high school, higher education, and industry, so that all students could reach their full potential without barriers. As a former teacher and district administrator, she brings both fresh thinking and a nuanced understanding of public school districts. From her time at Eduventures advising higher education institutions across the country, she codified best practices that would better serve non-traditional learners. And finally as a social entrepreneur, she has had the privilege to work with some of the most innovative companies and start-ups in the world through her time at IDEO, The Harvard Innovation Lab, LearnLaunch, and MassChallenge. She holds a doctorate from Harvard, a master's from the University of Pennsylvania, and dual bachelor's degrees from the University of Georgia. Nationally recognized for her work on Parachute Teachers, she is a recipient of the Harvard Public Sector Innovation Award.

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Mario Rodriguez has transcended the challenges of his upbringing in the violent neighborhood of Dorchester, Massachusetts. Once caught in the cycle of violence and incarcerated from ages 16 to 18, he used that turning point to rebuild his life and commit to helping his community. He began volunteering at the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute, supporting families impacted by homicide, and later studied Human Services with a Criminal Justice minor at Springfield College.

Mario has become a sought-after speaker, sharing his story of resilience at middle and high schools as well as Harvard, UMass Boston, Wheaton College, and Boston College. His work has earned recognition from city leaders, including citations from Governor Charlie Baker and Senator Liz Miranda, and his journey is featured in the documentary *Street Soldiers* on Amazon.

He co-founded the youth mentorship nonprofit MBK617 and is also a homeowner and part-owner of a co-op construction company. Mario's story reflects transformation, leadership, and a deep commitment to breaking cycles of violence and inspiring others to do the same.



Alex Schwartz is a Senior Program Manager on the Student and Young Adult Workforce Development Team, focusing on expanding clean energy career awareness and pathway development for students and young adults throughout Massachusetts. Alex has a Master's of Education from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and began his career as a public school teacher before spending the last decade building and managing Career Education programs in various technical career paths.



David Sprague David Sprague is the Owner and Operator of Nelson Mechanical Design, Inc, an HVAC and plumbing business on Martha's Vineyard. He has over 20 years of experience in building science and construction, including high performance and energy efficient homes and systems. David holds licenses in several construction trades and his business is a Mass Save Heat Pump Network Installer. David is committed to ensuring the trades workforce continues to learn and adapt to new building science technology so we can all perform at our best.

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Raija Vaisanen is the Deputy Managing Director for Workforce Development at MassCEC. She has more than eighteen years of experience in workforce and economic development policy implementation and applied social science research. Previously, Raija was Executive Director of the Massachusetts Workforce Association and Director of Research at Commonwealth Corporation, Massachusetts' quasi-public workforce development agency.



Jay Villar Jay Vilar is the Boston Site Director for The Fountain Fund. He is a seasoned professional dedicated to advancing racial and social justice through community empowerment and program development. With over two decades of experience in leadership roles, Jay brings a wealth of expertise in strategic planning, stakeholder management, and team leadership.

Having served as Programs Director at Haley House in Boston, Jay successfully led initiatives that positively impacted the lives of returning citizens, providing them with resources, employment opportunities, and community support.

Jay's passion for equity advocacy stems from his personal experiences, including growing up with family members who are returning citizens. Jay also serves on the steering committee for Clean Slate Massachusetts . Which is focused on passing and implementing a law that would automate the sealing of criminal offender record information (CORI).

Jay has a Bachelor of Arts in Communications from George Mason University and certifications in event management, marketing, and nonprofit leadership from Tufts University, and is certified as a Financial Counselor through the Association for Financial Counseling & Planning Education.



Tony Volpone is a Talent Acquisition Partner for Casella Waste Management Inc, specializing in the recruitment of young professionals recently graduated or still attending high school to create a connective tissue to the company's need for frontline operational needs. Prior to joining Casella, Tony served for 10 years as Head Football Coach at Vermont State University. Tony earned his MBA at Nichols College.

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Weezy Waldstein, now Action's Intrim Jobs Director, spent a decade as a shipyard welder before returning to school after the Quincy Shipyard closed. She led strategic planning and operations consulting with national unions and global non-profits including Bakery Workers, Carpenters, Partners in Health and Amnesty USA, serving clients seeking to shape a high skill, high wage economy and connect workers to good jobs through multi-stakeholder partnerships. At CommCorp, she served as the Director of the Workplace Learning Group, with responsibilities for its initial incumbent worker training demonstration projects and development of incumbent worker training programming for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. She helped start the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute as the Director of Labor Market Participation, documenting high road partnerships. In 2002, she founded and then led until 2017 the program that became SEIU 615/32BJ's SEIU Property Services New England Training Fund. She has a master's degree from MIT's Sloan School of Management.

Jenna Wills Jenna Wills is a Senior Program Manager at the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, where she leads workforce development efforts within the Training and Business Support team. Her work advances clean energy career pathways, supports climate-critical underrepresented businesses, and strengthens statewide initiatives aimed at building a diverse, well-prepared clean energy workforce. She specializes in program design, employer engagement, and cross-sector partnerships that connect residents with inclusive, high-quality training and employment opportunities.

Jenna's career spans more than a decade across the nonprofit and public sectors. Previously, she served as Director of the Job & Education Center at the Worcester Community Action Council, where she oversaw youth career pathways programs and cultivated employer and education partnerships throughout Central Massachusetts. She has also held roles with the City of Worcester and the Worcester County Food Bank, supporting community development, advocacy, and systems-level coordination.

Jenna holds a Master's in Community Development and Planning and a Bachelor's in Geography/Urban Development from Clark University in Worcester, MA. She is passionate about the intersection of workforce, equity, and climate, and has been active in local volunteer efforts focused on environmental sustainability and community engagement. Jenna lives in Central Massachusetts with her husband and two tabby cats. She enjoys watching sports, reading, and arranging flowers in her spare time.

Brock Yordy Brock Yordy is a drilling Subject Matter Expert for geothermal, water, and construction with over 20 years of experience spearheading complex projects worldwide. He is the co-founder of the Geothermal Drillers Association. Brock actively collaborates with federal and state energy agencies and grassroots energy organizations to scale the adoption of geothermal energy. Yordy is also dedicated to industry growth, developing workforce programs for the Department of Labor, Department of Defense, the International Operators Union, and trade schools. He further serves as a leading educator in the field, sharing technical insights through lectures, webinars, and podcasts at TheDriller.com.