



Help Wanted:
**How workforce development providers can partner effectively with
employers to address the “forever-tight labor market”**

**Wednesday, October 7th
9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.**

Agenda

Welcome

Andre Green, *Executive Director, SkillWorks, the Boston Foundation*

Author Presentation: Help Wanted: How to Find and Keep Talent in a Forever-Tight Labor Market

Jerry Rubin, *Author; Foundation Fellow, Eastern Bank Foundation; Senior Advisor, Harvard Project on the
Workforce*

Steven Dawson, *Author*

Panel Discussion and Audience Q&A

Jerry Rubin, *Author; Foundation Fellow, Eastern Bank Foundation; Senior Advisor, Harvard Project on the
Workforce*

Steven Dawson, *Author*

Kira Khazatsky, *President and CEO, JVS Boston*

Aisha Necoechea, *Executive Director, BEST Hospitality Training*

Heidi Ziobro, *Managing Director, Per Scholas Greater Boston*

Closing Remarks

Andre Green, *Executive Director, SkillWorks, the Boston Foundation*



Speaker Biographies

Jerry Rubin is a Senior Advisor at the Harvard Project On The Workforce and a Foundation Fellow at the Eastern Bank Foundation. He served for fifteen years as President and Chief Executive Officer of Jewish Vocational Service, Boston. Prior to joining JVS, Jerry was Vice President of Building Economic Opportunities at Jobs for the Future. Jerry is co-author of numerous articles, book chapters, and the new book, co-authored with Steven L. Dawson, “Help Wanted: How to Find and Keep Talent In A Forever Tight Labor Market”, MIT Press, August 2026.

Steven L. Dawson, now retired, was founder and President of PHI, a national organization that consults on frontline job redesign to a range of private long-term care businesses and public healthcare/employment agencies. Earlier, he was founder and President of The ICA Group, which consults to and finances employee-owned enterprises nationwide. Dawson worked in the field of low-income community and cooperative economic development for 45 years. He helped create and lead a range of for-profit and nonprofit social enterprises, and consulted extensively on frontline job quality workforce issues. Dawson is the co-author with Jerry Rubin of the 2026 MIT Press book *Help Wanted: How to find and Keep Talent in a Forever-Tight Labor Market*. Earlier, he authored *The Pinkerton Papers*, a series of opinion briefs for workforce professionals; co-authored with Maureen Conway the Aspen Institute’s *Raise the Floor and Build Ladders*; and co-authored with Peggy Clark the Aspen Institute’s, *Jobs and the Urban Poor*—one of the earliest proponents of sectoral workforce strategies.

Kira Khazatsky is President and Chief Executive Officer of JVS Boston, one of the nation’s leading workforce development organizations. She leads a \$24 million agency that serves more than 14,000 job seekers annually and works with employers across Massachusetts to build strong, lasting talent pipelines. Known for tying training to real labor market demand, she helps individuals achieve measurable economic mobility while delivering value to employers. Kira’s connection to JVS is personal. When her family arrived in Boston as immigrants from the former Soviet Union, they turned to JVS for English classes and help finding work. That experience continues to shape her leadership and commitment to opening doors for people building new lives and careers. Kira joined JVS in 2006 and held a series of senior leadership roles before being named CEO in 2023. As CEO, she has strengthened the agency’s financial sustainability, deepened strategic partnerships, and advanced innovative workforce training initiatives, including English2Employment and ArLab. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Clark University and a Master of Science in Adult and Organizational Learning from Suffolk University.

Aisha Necoechea is Executive Director of Boston Education, Skills & Training (BEST) Corp., a Boston-based nonprofit dedicated to helping people build skills and access good jobs in the hospitality industry through pathways to good union careers. An immigrant herself and a native Spanish speaker, she brings more than 20 years of experience in workforce development, adult education, immigrant services, and



nonprofit leadership. Before becoming Executive Director in 2022, Aisha served as Vice President of Programs at the MassHire Metro North Workforce Board, overseeing career centers, youth programs, and regional workforce and employer initiatives. Earlier, she spent more than 13 years at the International Institute of New England, ultimately serving as Boston Site Director and leading workforce development, education, resettlement, and community services programs. At BEST, Aisha works closely with UNITE HERE Local 26, employers, government partners, funders, and community organizations to expand access to training and good union jobs. She serves on the Massachusetts Apprenticeship Council, the Massachusetts Workforce Trust Fund Advisory Board, and the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston's Community Development Advisory Council.

Heidi Ziobro is Managing Director of Per Scholas Greater Boston, where she leads efforts to connect talented, often overlooked individuals with tuition-free technology training and careers with leading employers. A seasoned nonprofit executive, Heidi holds an MBA from Babson College and an MS in Psychology from American International College. For 30 years, Per Scholas has advanced economic equity through rigorous, tuition-free training for technology careers, connecting skilled, diverse talent with businesses nationwide. The Greater Boston campus, based in Kendall Square since 2019, has served more than 1,400 Massachusetts residents through training in IT Support, Cybersecurity, and Salesforce Administration. Heidi's work sits at the intersection of workforce development and employer engagement. She builds partnerships that bring corporate partners directly into the learner experience, positioning employers as co-designers of talent development rather than simply end-of-line recipients. Through these partnerships, she helps companies identify, hire, and retain skilled professionals while expanding pathways to economic mobility for Massachusetts residents.