

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 2, 2026**

**MassEcon and the University of Massachusetts Lowell Launch New Massachusetts Economic Development Academy**

**Watertown, Lexington, and Lowell, MA** — A new statewide initiative aimed at strengthening local economies and enhancing professional capacity across Massachusetts will officially launch on June 4.

The Massachusetts Economic Development Academy will bring together a diverse cohort of 27 participants representing 25 municipalities and organizations from across the Commonwealth. The program is designed to support economic development professionals by providing targeted training, resources, and opportunities for collaboration. Through this initiative, participants will gain practical tools and insights to help drive sustainable growth in their communities, foster regional partnerships, and address evolving economic challenges.

Developed through a strategic partnership between [MassEcon](#) and University of Massachusetts Lowell, the Academy offers a first-of-its-kind, interdisciplinary training program for professionals helping to shape the future of their communities. The Academy provides a practical, hands-on introduction to modern economic development, covering strategy, finance, partnerships, and implementation. Designed for municipal leaders, planners, state agency staff, and community stakeholders, the program fosters collaboration across sectors while equipping participants with real-world tools to drive sustainable growth.

“The Academy will strengthen our economic development competitiveness by enhancing the capabilities of professionals working in economic development roles across Massachusetts,” said **Peter Abair, CEO & Executive Director of MassEcon**. “Partnership is central to MassEcon’s success as a statewide economic development non-profit. We are proud to partner with UMass Lowell in creating this new economic asset for Massachusetts.”

“Supporting our Commonwealth and its communities are an important part of our mission at UMass Lowell, and we’re excited to work in partnership with MassEcon to use UMass Lowell resources to develop leaders of cities, towns and other organizations while helping them to better understand the complexity of modern economic systems,” said **Sue Kim, Dean, College of Fine Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, UMass Lowell**. “The ED Academy will integrate academic rigor with applied, interdisciplinary training — an essential model for leadership development that equips professionals with the analytical frameworks, collaborative skills and strategic perspective needed to sustain and grow local economies.”

The Massachusetts Municipal Association supported the launch of the Academy with marketing to its membership. “Municipalities are being asked to do more than ever — drive growth, support businesses, address workforce challenges often with limited resources,” said **Adam Chapdelaine, Executive Director & CEO, Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA)**. “The ED Academy delivers what local leaders need most: practical tools, strategic insight, and a strong network of peers. This program is a meaningful step toward ensuring every community, regardless of size, has the capacity to plan, compete, and succeed.”

“Massachusetts succeeds when every region and community has the capacity to compete, grow and attract opportunity,” said *Secretary of Economic Development Eric Paley*. “This Academy will help equip municipal and regional leaders with the practical tools, partnerships, and strategic perspective needed to support business growth and strengthen communities across the Commonwealth. We’re proud to support this first-of-its-kind program alongside MassEcon and UMass Lowell.”

“The Massachusetts Economic Development Academy was built to prepare leaders to think holistically about how communities’ function and how strategic collaboration can create vibrant, resilient, and economically competitive growth across the Commonwealths,” said Sandhya Iyer, Director of Economic Development and Tourism for the Town of Lexington and a lead architect of the program. “Working closely with faculty and leadership at University of Massachusetts Lowell, we designed a curriculum that bridges academic rigor with real-world municipal practice.”

MassEcon will host the Academy at its Watertown headquarters and is providing financial support for the Academy through funding included in a Fiscal Year 2026 budget measure adopted by the Massachusetts Legislature. These funds are administered by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED). EOED Assistant Secretary Naomi Berlin will participate in the Academy as a featured speaker.

### **About the ED Academy**

The Economic Development Academy is a collaborative initiative designed to build capacity across Massachusetts by equipping professionals with the knowledge, tools, and networks needed to drive sustainable economic growth. Through a partnership between MassEcon and UMass Lowell, the Academy provides interdisciplinary training grounded in real-world applications for the Commonwealth.

### **About MassEcon**

MassEcon’s mission is to promote and champion Massachusetts as the best place to start, grow and locate a business. Built upon a robust network of corporate and civic members, MassEcon convenes public and private sector leaders of industry to create an inclusive business ecosystem that enhances job growth across a diverse talent pool; promotes investment in all communities; expands equitable opportunities throughout the Commonwealth. [www.massecon.com](http://www.massecon.com).

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