



**Business Solutions Professional
Training and Certification Program
Handbook**

About the Michigan Works! Association

The Michigan Works! Association is a 501(c)(3) non-profit membership organization that provides services and support to Michigan's talent development system: Michigan Works! We deliver results through vigorous public education and advocacy, partnership opportunities, policy leadership, up-to-the-minute news and information and learning/training events.

The Association empowers our members with the essential tools they need to strengthen and champion the state's talent eco-system. Our work helps ensure top quality services and support for Michigan employers and job seekers.

The Association members and associate members consist of:

- Michigan Works! Agencies
- Michigan Works! Agency Board Chairs
- Chief Local-Elected Officials
- Associate Members
- Service Providers

Michigan Works! Association provides the following services to its members:

- **Advocacy:** speaking as the voice of Michigan Works! acting as a portal of information for stakeholders on talent issues, and participation in the legislative process by advancing and defending interests on behalf of the Michigan Works! system.
- **Connection:** Providing a forum for information exchange and uniting our members to turn great practices into common practices.
- **Education:** Delivering essential, timely training and technical assistance to workforce development professionals and key partners and engaging and developing today's workforce professionals.

About the Michigan Works! System

The Michigan Works! System is the first unified workforce development system in the country and an instrumental partner for developing Michigan's economic future. This system is comprised of 16 regional Michigan Works! Agencies. These agencies are on the front lines, meeting the talent demands of employers, responding to the unique needs of each community and developing talent for the 21st century economy.

Michigan Works! Agencies are resilient, flexible and inventive. Each agency develops demand-driven strategies, connected to regional economies and labor markets. Each is unique, but they share several fundamental qualities:

- Locally responsive and demand-driven



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- Governed by a Workforce Development Board comprised of private sector representatives and Local Elected Officials
- Provide access to a full range of core employment-related services to assist businesses find the skilled workers they need and help job seekers find satisfying careers and employment opportunities.

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What is the Business Solutions Professional Training and Certification Program?

The Business Solutions Professional Training and Certification program is a training program designed to train staff in the fields of workforce development, economic development, education, business development services and government that interface directly with employers and/or are part of Michigan's demand-driven, employer-focused ecosystem that exists to support job creation and economic prosperity. Trainees are exposed to the BSP Philosophy, which stresses comprehensive service to Michigan businesses through access to their own organization's assets and the assets of their partners. A Business Solutions Professional (BSP) learns a process to discover a business's needs and challenges, and provide all-encompassing solutions, being sure to avoid duplicative contact with companies, provide coordinated solutions and establish long-lasting and fruitful business relationships.

Key Tenets of the BSP Philosophy

- The workforce development, economic development and education/training ecosystem in Michigan is demand-driven, business-focused, flexible and responsive.
- Education/training and workforce development *are* economic development.
- Understanding business demand better informs our system for the sake of developing talent with the key skills needed to drive Michigan's economy forward, and to employing Michigan residents with sustainable jobs with good wages.
- There is no wrong door in our talent and economic development systems to accessing programs and services. If a partner is working with an employer with whom they have a relationship, it is their responsibility to understand the business needs and provide them with opportunities and referrals to key partners that can help their business.
- The BSP mantra is "Let no encounter with a business go to waste." BSPs take very seriously every opportunity to learn about a company's challenges and provide comprehensive, coordinated solutions.

Why is the BSP Philosophy Important? Why Become a BSP?

The BSP philosophy and training and certification program supports community-led efforts to effectively link economic development, workforce development and education/training efforts in Michigan to support its economy. The program promotes collaborative solutions to address business challenges, without overwhelming the business customer with duplicative or uncoordinated contact. It also creates and promotes regionalism as a means to implement strategies to support businesses in growth, attraction and retention situations.

By becoming a Business Solutions Professional, you will join a network of over 1,000 individuals that have been trained through over 30 cohorts of BSP instruction. BSPs are community leaders who are trained to make use of the vast array of business and economic assets, drive business customer satisfaction and have a profound impact on Michigan's economy through economic prosperity that puts Michigan citizens to work. BSPs develop a strong knowledge of local, state and federal supports and maintain the relationships to make them work as strong forces for economic growth. As a BSP trainee,

you will better understand how to connect your customers (whether business or otherwise) with the assets and resources available through community, regional, state and national programs and partners.

Methods of Instruction

The BSP program follows a 6-day cohort model (further discussed below). This model ensures great partnership and network-building opportunities and considers adult learning practices and different learning styles.

The program consists of:

- Course lecture on the BSP Philosophy and processes
- Discussion of current methods and topics of relevance
- Group discussion and projects to promote understanding and best-practice sharing
- Subject matter expert presentations, panels and instruction
- Significant asset mapping of current resources in the fields of workforce development, economic development and education
- Case studies, projects and role-playing exercises for practical application of the philosophy and structured process

Key Learning Objectives

Upon completion of the BSP cohort, each trainee will be able to:

- Describe a demand-driven workforce development system
- Effectively collaborate with partners in the domains of workforce development, economic development, education, business development services and government to deliver coordinated solutions
- Develop strong resource networks – both regionally and statewide
- Collaborate with businesses, relevant partners and other customers to deliver solutions through a structured BSP process that includes:
 - Entry
 - Fact-finding
 - Solutions design
 - Implementation
 - Follow-up
- Better understand the goals and roles of key partners
- Develop sustainable business relationships
- Develop an asset map of key programs and resources within their region
- Effectively ask a business the right questions to understand their business challenges and propose all-encompassing solutions
- Learn key objectives and tactics of negotiation and consensus building
- Better understand labor market information/data and resources to guide business services activities

History/Background of the Program

The BSP Program was originally funded as part of the “Creating the 21st Century Workforce: Developing Coordinated Regional Strategies” initiative, which aimed to transform Michigan into a 21st century global economy at a time when Michigan’s economy had begun to struggle. This initiative was a partnership between the State of Michigan’s Department of Economic Growth and the Michigan State University School of Labor and Industrial Relations and included significant influence from practices happening in Michigan Works! Agencies that were at the forefront of Michigan’s demand-driven philosophy.

In 2013, the Michigan Works! Association inherited this program and has continued to enhance and update its curriculum to reflect the changing economy, programs, resources and partnerships that exist in Michigan. Through strong partnerships with state and local service providers across the BSP domains, the Association had been able to enhance the program through frequent guest speakers and trainers, bringing their subject matter expertise to the table.

In establishing this program, the State of Michigan had distinct goals to:

- Respond to the changing economy
- Build a workforce that supports industry and skill diversification
- Adopt a surviving to thriving strategy
- Develop strategies to link economic development and workforce development
- Create regional workforce development teams
- Foster productive relationships with Michigan employers
- Build partnerships with other resource providers and shatter silos across the domains of workforce development, economic development and education
- Assist Michigan business and attract new companies to Michigan that are experiencing:
 - Growth
 - Layoffs/reduced production
 - Attraction/a move to Michigan
 - Closure

Getting Started

Registering for a BSP Cohort

Registration for BSP cohorts is accessible from the Michigan Works! Association website (www.michiganworks.org). Registration is added to the website as cohorts are scheduled, and the announcement of future cohorts is accomplished through the Association’s training e-blasts. You can sign up to receive these e-blasts at <http://bit.ly/2moxql4>.

Current registration costs can be found on the Association website. Registration will remain open until the maximum registration (40) is achieved. Please obtain the approval of your management before registering for BSP training. All registrations are subject to the Association’s cancellation policy:

<http://www.michiganworks.org/events/cancellation-policy>

Preparing to Take the Solutions Professional Course: Completion of Virtual Prerequisites

BSP trainees enter the training at varying levels of experience, knowledge, competency and exposure to the concepts discussed through the course. Virtual prerequisite materials have been created as a means to assess each trainee's level of experience and familiarity with the topics and tactics discussed in the course. A prerequisite quiz was created to help instructors gauge these experiences and familiarity levels and is required before a trainee begins the course.

Prerequisite materials are released to registered participants at least 2 weeks before a cohort begins (or upon registration for last-minute registrants within 2 weeks of the course start date).

The pre-requisite quiz asks questions about:

- Trainee domain, job duties, level/years of experience.
- Familiarity with BSP concepts and a demand-driven system.
- Partnerships and agency structure.
- Familiarity with the goals of economic development, workforce development and education.
- How services are delivered within these domains.
- Appropriate ways to approach a business in various scenarios.
- Various business expansion scenarios.
- Staying in your lane while providing effective, all-encompassing services.
- Which domains/partners are involved in specific business services/business development activities.

BSP Cohort Training Format and Curriculum

Cohort Format

BSP training consists of three 2-day sessions, for a total of 6 days. Each session is spaced out to include time to apply the concepts learned to the trainee's everyday work tasks and significant work projects, and to allow for reflection on the content learned. Time is reserved at the beginning of each session to discuss any reflections or lessons learned between sessions.

The cohort model is designed to accomplish several things:

- Provide a co-learning experience between students and instructors
- Provide an opportunity to learn from others in the cohort (about programs, available assets, etc.)
- Provides an opportunity for networking/network-building. Many BSP graduates still reach out to their fellow cohort-mates to seek advice, share best practices, expand their network in key areas, partner to serve business needs, etc.
- Provide the opportunity to hear guest speakers present relevant information in their areas of expertise

Topic Areas

Each 6-day cohort includes the following content topic areas:

- Introductions – getting to know your fellow cohort trainees
- Review of materials/resources provided and course format
- Brief recap of the pre-requisites covered
- Creating a challenge census – What are employer customers struggling with today?
- Review of demand-driven system and in-depth discussion of the demand-driven, employer-centered approach
- Introduction to the BSP Philosophy
 - 5 Elements: assets, business relationships, networks, partnerships, and the 5-step structured process
 - 5-Step Structured Process: entry, fact-finding, solutions design, implementation, follow-up
- Value of the approach and process
- The role of a BSP and practical application of the philosophy
- The BSP Mantra: “Let no encounter with a business go to waste.”
- The most important question a BSP can ask: “Why?”
 - Important to the discovery process
 - Identifying pain points/challenges
- Formulating effective business relationships
- BSP partnership panel (certified BSPs relating experience, how they have operationalized this)
- Building and maintaining effective partnerships
 - Staying in your lane
 - The challenges of partnership
 - Bringing your strengths to the table and knowing the strengths of others
 - Knowing when to bring a partner to the table
- Knowing your assets
 - Regional asset mapping exercise and review of programs, services, tools available to serve business needs
- No wrong door approach to providing solutions
- Knowing how to sell your value to employers and partners
- Filling the talent gap – challenges, resources and opportunities
- Negotiating and consensus-building techniques
- Business solutions tools and resources
- Talent development proposals and plans
- How to access and effectively use labor market information
- Basics of selling your value and services to employers through a consultative sales approach/speaking the language of business
- Multiple case studies, role-playing exercises and group discussion activities
- In-class group project/capstone to apply all concepts learned

Homework Assignments

Between cohort sessions, participants will be asked to complete three homework assignments that supplement the course content and help to establish and expand their network of partners and

knowledge of available assets. Homework assignments are due one week before session 2 and session 3 begin.

Homework assignments include:

1. Short paragraph on a possible field work project.
2. An extensive group asset mapping of the assets provided through the trainee's agency.
3. Recognition and documenting of the 5 Domain Contacts.
4. An LMI-focused assignment to identify questions and uses of LMI information.
5. A demand-driven self-assessment aimed at creating an elevator pitch for services in the language of business and reinforcing an understanding of the demand-driven system and the trainee's role within it.

BSP Graduation and Certified BSP Candidacy

To graduate from the BSP cohort training, trainees must attend all 6 days of the session. If an emergency occurs, and class time is missed, you will be asked either to complete a make-up assignment or to make up time in a future cohort, depending on the content missed. Graduates from the program receive a certificate of graduation upon completion of the course but are not yet considered Certified Business Solutions Professionals (CBSPs).

All trainees must graduate from the program before they are considered a Certified BSP candidate and allowed to submit fieldwork projects for certification consideration.

Certification Candidacy: Becoming a Certified Business Solutions Professional

Fieldwork Projects

Upon graduation, submission of two fieldwork projects is required to be considered for certification. The goal of these projects is to demonstrate practical application of the BSP Philosophy, including the 5 Elements and the 5-Stage Structured Process. Projects are to be submitted to the Michigan Works! Association Director of Programs at programs@michiganworks.org. The forms to be completed will be provided to the attendee in Session 3 materials.

Projects submitted for review must have begun after the trainee's cohort began, but do not have to have been initiated after completion of the course. Projects submitted are reviewed in a timely manner by two CBSPs and will either result in immediate certification, or further inquiry and request for clarification.

Certification



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Once projects are completed and to standard, candidate will become certified. Their name will be added to the Current Certified Business Solutions Professionals list, they will receive a BSP pin and certificate of certification and will be allowed to use the CBSP logo in their email signatures and on their business cards.