

MeHI
MASSACHUSETTS eHEALTH INSTITUTE
at the MassTech Collaborative

Access & Affordability Challenge Information Session

October 28, 2026

MASSACHUSETTS TECHNOLOGY COLLABORATIVE

Mission:
To strengthen the competitiveness of the tech and innovation economy by driving strategic investments, partnerships and insights, that harness the talent of Massachusetts.

Divisions:

- THE INNOVATION INSTITUTE
- MA-AI Massachusetts AI Hub
- MBI MASSACHUSETTS BROADBAND INSTITUTE
- CAM MASSACHUSETTS CENTER for ADVANCED MANUFACTURING
- MeHI MASSACHUSETTS eHEALTH INSTITUTE
- MassCyberCenter
- NEMC Northeast Microelectronics Coalition

The Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MassTech) was established in 1982 by legislative statute.

Massachusetts eHealth Institute

MeHI is the designated state agency for growing the digital health ecosystem in Massachusetts

Purpose

We catalyze healthcare innovation, technology, and competitiveness, and accelerate the adoption and utilization of health technologies across provider settings to improve the safety, quality and efficiency of healthcare in Massachusetts.



Supporting Innovations in Digital Health

Digital Health Sandbox Program

Accelerates digital health companies on their growth path by leveraging the knowledge base of MA R&D organizations

- Healthcare Challenge & Rolling Grant Funding Opportunities
- Digital Health Events to bring stakeholders together

Stronger & Healthier Communities through the Integration of Emerging Health Tech (SHINE-HT)

Supports federally qualified health centers with implementation of AI and other health tech solutions to improve operational efficiencies and patient care

Trusted Partner to EOHHS through Mass HIway Contract

Under agreement with HHS, MeHI provides subject matter expertise, policy guidance, project management and operational support to EOHHS for several state-sponsored health technologies.

Workforce Development

- Monthly Cybersecurity Info Sessions for Healthcare Community in partnership with MassCyberCenter
- Jobs Boards focused on Digital Health and Health IT career opportunities
- Hack the Health Gap Hackathon

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Health Care Affordability Working Group (HCAWG) Overview

The Commonwealth's **current health care system is unaffordable** for individuals and families, businesses, the state, our cities and towns, and the health care community itself. The Governor created this working group as a forum for serious dialogue among stakeholders invested in the health care system. This group seeks to **address the affordability crisis through shared responsibility**. The administration released 12 recommendations in August 2026, which are now in various stages of implementation, with work on additional recommendations to continue over the coming months.

Key Participants and Stakeholders

HCAWG KEY PARTICIPANTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

1. **State Officials**
   Legislators, state agencies focused on health, data, IT, and workforce issues, insurance regulators, and budget and finance leads

2. **Health Care Providers**
   Hospitals, community health centers, physicians, long-term care providers, and others as needed

3. **Industry Leads**
   Health insurance plans, pharmaceutical representatives, and business associations

4. **Advocates and Experts**
   Consumer advocates, labor unions, academics, and actuaries

Initial Round of HCAWG Recommendations



1 GETTING PEOPLE THE RIGHT CARE AT THE RIGHT TIME, IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Innovative Health Care Models: Adopt innovative care delivery models to reduce avoidable hospital visits, improve patient experience and lower health care costs.

Transitions of Care: Help patients who are ready for discharge move out of the hospital as soon as medically appropriate.

"Low-Value" Care: Identify a list of health care services that are expensive and do not improve patient care so that health care dollars are used wisely.

2 MAKING TARGETED NURSING AND WORKFORCE INVESTMENTS

Nursing Faculty: Fund programs to support recruitment and retention of faculty to train more nurses.

Educational Investments: Increase investments to train health care workers to make health care more accessible and affordable.

Primary Care: Partner with the legislature to enact strong primary care legislation that reduces health care costs.

3 STATE TAKING THE LEADERSHIP TO PILOT

Prescription Drug Costs: Direct state agencies to come together to leverage their purchasing power to reduce the costs of medications.

Group Insurance Commission (GIC): Give GIC, which provides insurance for city, town, and state employees, the tools to better manage hospital prices.

4 HELPING PEOPLE AND SMALL BUSINESSES

Out-of-Network: Limit how much patients pay for care from out-of-network providers.

Insurance Market: Implement policies to stabilize the health insurance market for small businesses and individuals to reduce premium costs.

5 HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY

Data Exchange: Reduce administrative costs through data sharing among providers and insurance companies.

AI: Execute a set of coordinated actions to ensure the responsible and innovative use of technology to reduce costs over time.

Recommendations: Harnessing Technology – Artificial Intelligence

OVERVIEW

- Massachusetts wants **clear rules and transparency around how AI is used by health care entities** so that outcomes are fair and accountable.
- Safely tested new technologies, including AI, could help improve affordability. The state is interested in **enabling promising AI tools to be piloted under oversight,** so innovation moves forward without putting patients at risk.

UPDATES

- Working with subject matter experts from Manatt Health, **HCAWG leads have met with over 20 different entities** to date, including payers, providers, and health and technology companies, to better under the current landscape and what is needed going forward.
- The team is now working to solicit formal feedback from the public on how the state can **support AI deployment to advance affordability, protect patients, promote transparency, and maintain high-quality care.**

NEXT STEPS

- Determine how best to obtain feedback, with the **goal of receiving input from a broad range of interested parties,** including AI developers, providers, payers, patients and consumer advocates, and academic and industry experts.
- Continue meeting with experts to inform upcoming work and future policy proposals and **support ongoing efforts, such as the MeHI Sandbox Challenge.**



HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY RESPONSIBLY

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Execute a set of coordinated actions to ensure the responsible and innovative use of technology to reduce costs over time.

DATA EXCHANGE

Reduce administrative costs through data sharing among providers and insurance companies.

Digital Health Sandbox Program

The Digital Health Sandbox Program accelerates digital health companies on their growth path and expands the knowledge base of MA R&D organizations by:

- Establishing a vetted network of Sandboxes
- Engaging with and matching digital health companies to the Sandboxes
- Funding promising validation projects
- Promoting best practice sharing among Sandbox partners to optimize the value of the Network and promote the strength of the digital health ecosystem













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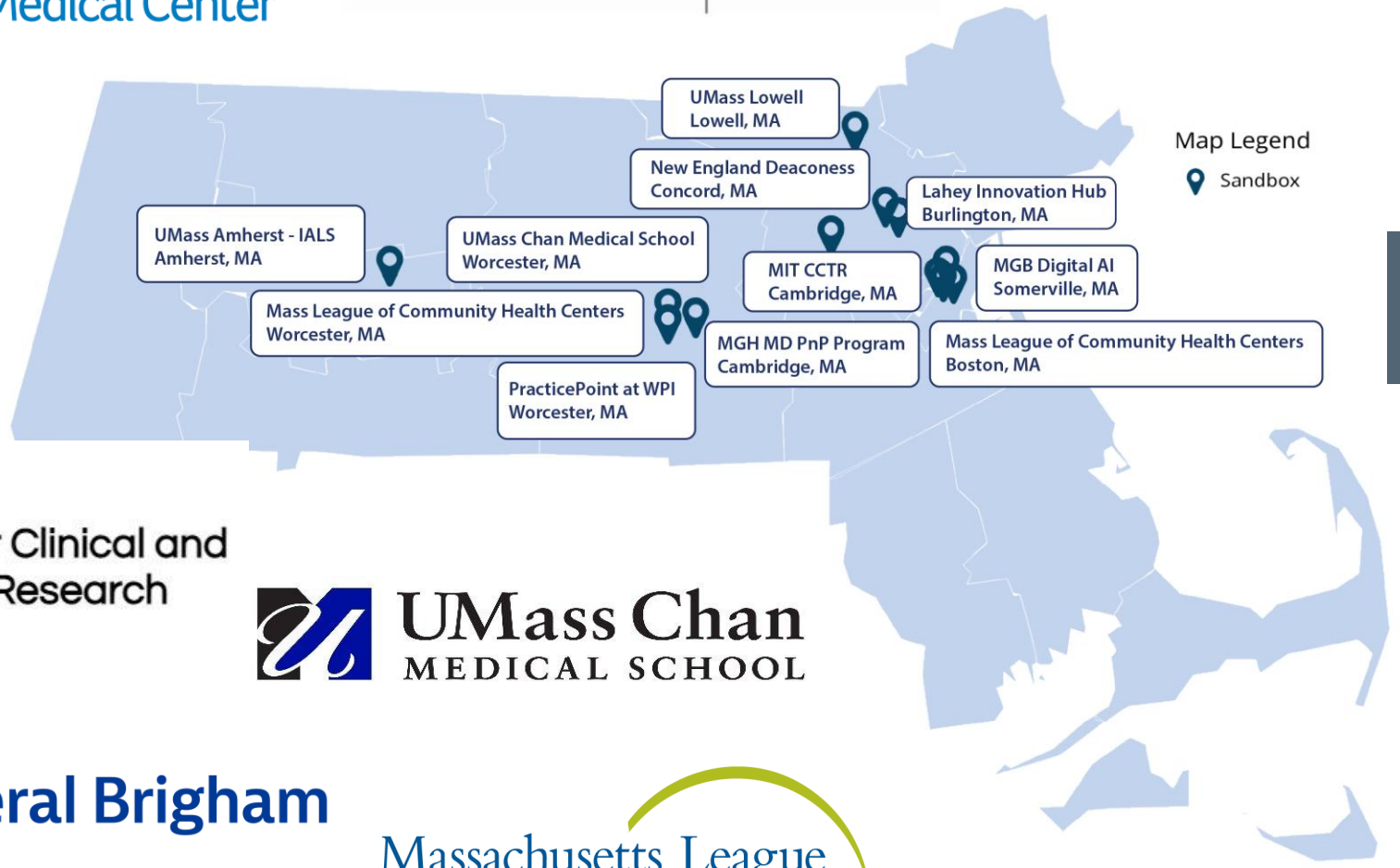
Digital Health Sandbox Network of Partners

Beth Israel Lahey Health
Lahey Hospital & Medical Center

UMassAmherst | Core Facilities

DEACONESS Abundant Life COMMUNITIES

UMASS M2D2
Massachusetts Medical DEVICE DEVELOPMENT CENTER



WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
PRACTICEPOINT
ADVANCING HEALTHCARE THROUGH CYBER-PHYSICAL SYSTEMS

MIT Center for Clinical and Translational Research

MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL

MD PnP
"Getting Connected for Patient Safety"™

UMass Chan MEDICAL SCHOOL

Mass General Brigham

Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers

Sandbox Challenge Program



Opportunity

- Mass Digital Health Connects
- Sandbox Matchmaking
- Sandbox Mentorship Program
- Live Final Pitch Event with Expert Judges
- **$150,00 - $400,000** Sandbox projects awarded to winners

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Program Goal:

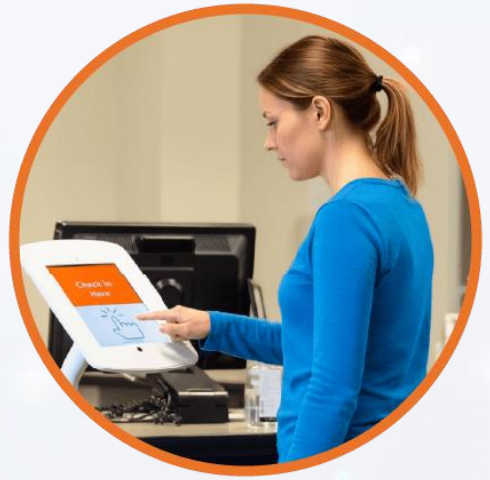
Identify and support digital health companies with solutions that address key healthcare challenges in Massachusetts

Benefits to Participating

- Connect with key partners in the Massachusetts digital health ecosystem
- Hear from experts about how to navigate and work with health systems and payers
- Accelerate time from R&D to production
- Match with Sandboxes to understand the research and testing opportunities
- Benefit from cohort learning
- 1:1 expert pitch prep services

Access & Affordability Challenge

The Access & Affordability Challenge aligns with goals of the Healey-Driscoll Administration's Health Care Affordability Working Group to identify actionable strategies that reduce unnecessary health care costs, improve system efficiency and ensure Massachusetts residents continue to have access to affordable, high-quality care. Digital health innovations can support this work by supporting innovative healthcare models, strengthening data exchange, and safely applying AI to create efficiencies across the healthcare system



Safely Applying AI to Create Efficiencies

- AI-enabled solutions that automate or streamline administrative processes
- AI tools that improve care coordination, workflow efficiency, resource allocation, and other operations

Supporting Innovative Healthcare Models

- Solutions that enable care to be delivered in more appropriate, accessible, lower-cost settings
- Tools to strengthen care coordination and patient navigation
- Solutions to support the prevention and management of chronic conditions
- Technologies to expand access to services experiencing cost or capacity pressures

Strengthening Health Information Exchange (HIE) and Data Exchange

- Solutions that leverage existing HIE infrastructure to improve the secure exchange of health information
- Technologies that improve interoperability
- Tools that improve communication and coordination between health systems, providers, payers, CBOs, and other organizations

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Timeline

RFA & Application Released	10/15/2026
Final Application Deadline	12/4/2026
Semi-finalists selected	1/5/2027
Meetings with sandbox matches	February 2027
Finalists selected	3/19/2027
Kick-Off Meeting	4/16/2027
Mass Digital Health Connects Workshops	April – May 2027
Final Pitch Event	June 2027

Selection Process

MeHI will review applications and select up to 20 companies as semi-finalists.

Semi-finalists will be matched with members of the Digital Health Sandbox Network. Sandboxes and semi-finalists will meet to discuss potential projects and identify research partners.

MeHI will select 8 – 10 companies with matched sandbox partners as finalists. Up to 5 companies will be invited to participate in the Rural Sandbox Track and up to 5 companies will be invited to participate in the General Sandbox Track.

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Mass Digital Health Connects

- Two-month virtual workshop program for Sandbox Challenge finalists
- Interactive sessions with presentations and Q&A with key Massachusetts ecosystem stakeholders
- Example sessions:
  - Mitigating Bias and Responsibly Adopting AI
  - Secure Clinical Data Exchange
  - Introduction to Ecosystem Partners
  - Raising Funding
  - Cybersecurity and Legal Considerations
  - Navigating Health Systems
  - Working with Private Payers
  - Understanding MassHealth



Examples of past participating organizations:

- MassHealth
- MA DPH
- MA EOHHS
- CHIA
- ONC
- AHRQ
- NIH-NIMHD
- ARPA-H
- MLSC
- .406 Ventures
- MassMEDIC
- CyberTrust MA

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Sandbox Mentorship Program

- Light-touch mentorship program that supports startups participating in the Challenge Program and alumni of MeHI's Sandbox Program
- Program Structure:
  - Primary Strategic Mentors are assigned to companies receiving MeHI awards to support them as they work on their Sandbox Project
  - A Mentorship Directory with a growing group of SMEs from across the Massachusetts digital health ecosystem is shared with all Sandbox Program alumni. MeHI facilitates introductions between alumni and SME mentors.
- MeHI will host optional mentor and founder peer sessions to strengthen relationships



https://mehi.masstech.org/sandbox-mentorship-program

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Q & A

Enter your questions in the Questions box in Zoom

Submit additional questions to Emma Powers: powers@masstech.org before November 6th

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