



Strategic Hub for Innovation,
Exchange and Leadership
in Defense

2026 SHIELD Working Group Report to the Governor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Massachusetts is a defense state, an achievement brought about by a world-leading innovation ecosystem that spans the Commonwealth from Boston to the Berkshires and includes defense industrial base companies including GE Aerospace, RTX, and General Dynamics Mission Systems, and six military installations leading critical missions. This fact should be recognized and promoted loudly both inside and outside the Commonwealth.

Defense and national security contributed **nearly \$50 billion to the statewide economy** in fiscal year 2024.¹ Despite its outsized economic impact, the perception among many stakeholders is that Massachusetts has not yet garnered a broad appreciation or recognition of this strong, vibrant, and dynamic defense and national security ecosystem. This recognition gap stands in clear contrast to the well-known origin story of the state's life sciences sector.

Today, Massachusetts is faced with a critical reality as economic development and national security are converging: economic security is national security. To meet this moment, in October 2025, Governor Maura Healey and Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll convened Massachusetts government, defense and national security sector leaders to sign Executive Order No. 648, establishing the **SHIELD Initiative**. The mandate was simple: **"play offense on defense"** or catalyze opportunities for economic growth, job creation, talent recruitment and retention, and technology-to-capability transition in defense. The SHIELD Working Group, comprised of 40 members and appointees – spanning leaders from the defense sector, small and medium enterprises, FFRDCs, academic institutions, startups, founder support organizations and nonprofits, and state and federal government officials – got to work



Figure 1: Named SHIELD Working Group members

¹ Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) (2025). Defense Spending by State, Fiscal Year 2024.

Moving with speed and at scale, SHIELD reached across the state through **100-plus events** and engagements, all in less than six months. To promote collaboration across the broader Massachusetts Defense and National Security Ecosystem, SHIELD organized and hosted three, large, formative events, dubbed **SHIELD Days**. A fourth SHIELD Day gathered the SHIELD Working Group to summarize findings from all the engagement efforts, prioritize the challenges that had been surfaced, and recommend action items for this report. All told, well over **1000 Massachusetts stakeholders** engaged with SHIELD.

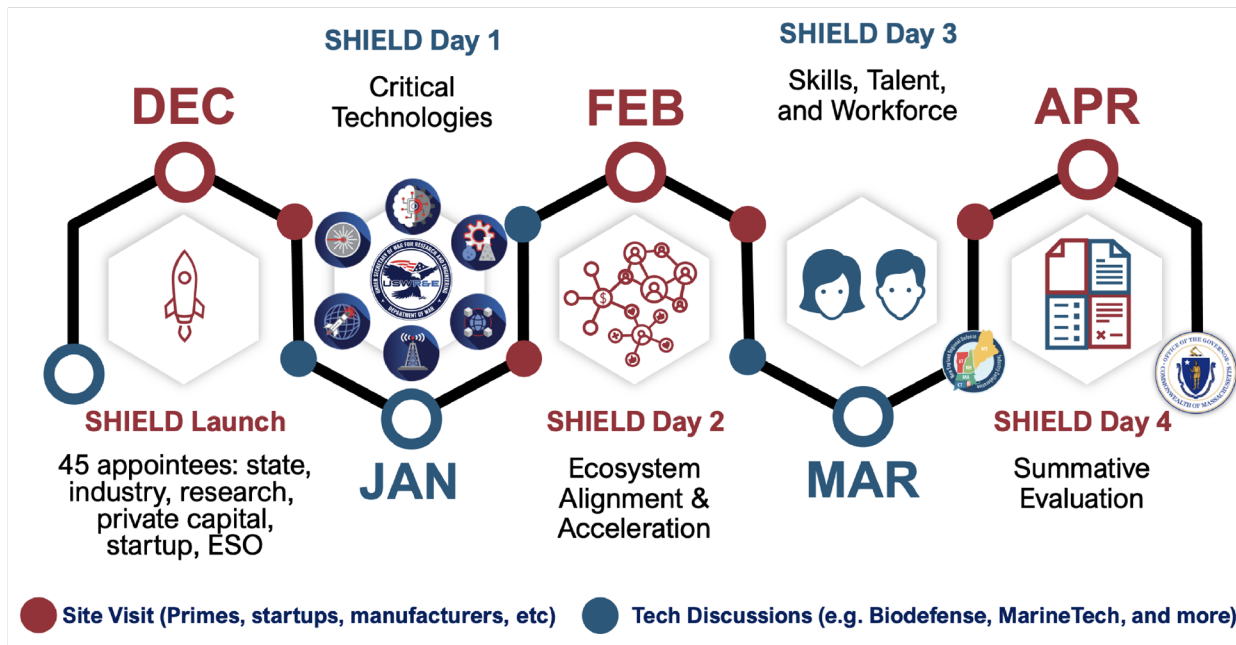


Figure 2: SHIELD Ecosystem Engagement

The report highlights the **SHIELD Findings**, including **Top Challenges**, and a **SHIELD Action Agenda**, which serves as the foundation of a playbook to realize fully **The Massachusetts Opportunity**. The report also identifies a **Critical Path** forward through four immediate actions needed to maintain momentum and enable execution of the full Action Agenda:

- (1) Recognize and promote the Massachusetts Defense and National Security Ecosystem and its contributions to U.S. economic and national security;
- (2) Designate the MassTech Collaborative as the economic development home for the Massachusetts Defense and National Security Ecosystem by unifying the federal technology-to-capability transition mission of NEMC with the state's economic development mission of SHIELD;
- (3) Identify resources to implement the SHIELD Action Agenda with operating and capital budget funding for (i) defense-focused programming, (ii) capital investments, and (iii) ecosystem support;
- (4) Conduct proactive outreach to the Massachusetts Defense and National Security Ecosystem on eligible programs, including ensuring that the Commonwealth's economic development programs prioritize defense technologies and strengthen the engagement with federal defense and security personnel operating in the region

Top Challenges that were identified detail systemic inefficiencies and economic pressures at different technology development stages: (a) addressing the “lab-to-fab” gaps in **Research, Discovery, and Technology Transition**, (b) navigating the “resource maze” in **Commercialization and Defense Transition Support**, (c) modernizing infrastructure of small enterprises in **Scaled Manufacturing**, and (d) streamlining the fragmented demand signal of federal acquisitions for both **Acquisition and Operational Readiness**.

The Massachusetts Opportunity notes our immediate strategic opportunities, including mobilizing and aligning state, federal, and private capital funding, and detailing a new **Mission-Connected Framework**. **The SHIELD Action Agenda** stands as the core of the playbook developed by the Working Group to meet this opportunity with intentional sector support, ecosystem alignment, strategic investments, and deeper federal engagement, as outlined in the following 7 Action Areas:

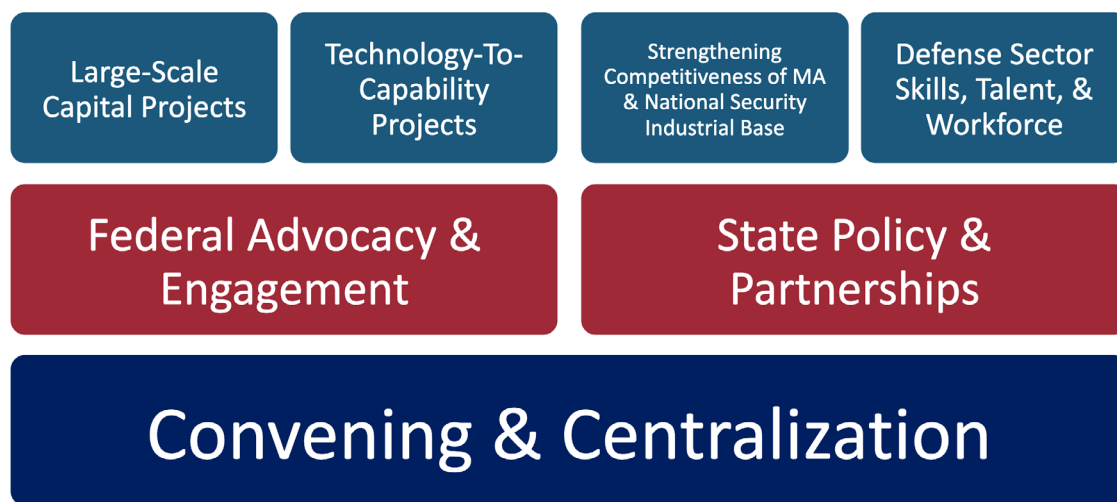


Figure 3: SHIELD Action Agenda Framework

- **Convening and Centralization** includes establishing a home for the Massachusetts defense ecosystem, launching a digital ecosystem backbone, supporting incumbent defense contractors, leveraging leadership and appointed bodies, and designating primary contacts at organizations across ecosystem stakeholders.
- **Federal Advocacy & Engagement** includes creation of a state office for federal defense interface, strengthening partnerships between federal, state and Massachusetts ecosystem decision-makers, identifying and communicating priorities to the federal delegation, organizing and disseminating information about federal opportunities, and establishing a unified voice for Massachusetts defense ecosystem priorities.
- **State Policy & Partnerships** includes establishing defense sector incentives, advancing defense-centric economic zones, creating a Massachusetts biosecurity framework, pursuing Northeast regional partnerships, and supporting international defense partnerships.
- An additional suite of action items are recommended actions across **Large-Scale Capital, Technology-To-Capability, Strengthening Competitiveness of Massachusetts’ Supply Chain and National Security Industrial Base, and Defense Sector Skills, Talent, & Workforce** action areas.

The SHIELD Report constitutes a critical pivot point to establish a ***new era for the Massachusetts Defense and National Security Ecosystem***. The report's Action Agenda outlines the transition from assessment to action, and details initial forward progress enabled by the FY26 NEMC federal matching fund award, Mass Wins Act's \$100M defense authorization, and 100 potential defense-relevant agency resources catalogued in the **Executive Branch Section 1** review.

The Massachusetts Defense & National Security Ecosystem stands at the ready! Moving forward, the intent is to shift from the single primary SHIELD Working group to smaller working groups aligned with the 7 SHIELD Action Agenda areas and broaden participation to additional ecosystem partners. Anticipated milestones and events include: (1) Operationalizing the next phase of SHIELD utilizing a portion of the NEMC state match funds; (2) hosting a series of SHIELD Days and/or Exchanges during Tough Tech Week in October; (3) the Governor and Lt. Governor setting the stage with the state's Congressional Delegation; (4) the Mass Wins Act providing a strong anchor point for new opportunities; (5) continued multi-state and regional discussions; (6) pursuing and developing defense opportunities; (7) working with Massachusetts-based defense primes to strengthen their ecosystem and supply chains; and (8) conducting proactive outreach to ensure coordination and utilization of all applicable state resources for defense sector growth in FY27. Implementing the SHIELD Action Agenda will ensure our legacy of national security and defense manufacturing excellence and sustain the Commonwealth's economic stability and national technological dominance into the future.



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