

Maine Blue Economy Task Force 2.0

Meeting
November 7, 2025
9:00 AM

Reminder: Our Two Legislative Mandates

Develop recommendations for the establishment of a **Center for the Blue Economy**.

Recommend improvements and expansions of **blue economy workforce** and training.

Objectives for Today

Seek agreement on workforce recommendations - reflect input from the Workforce Subcommittee.

Reflect on near-final recommendations on the Blue Economy Center's purpose, structure, and priorities.

Discuss initial thinking on potential host options for the Center.

Provide feedback on the draft report outline to the Legislature.

Agenda

- 9:00 **Welcome** – *Nick Battista, Island Institute, Co-Chair*
- 9:05 **Overview and Agenda** – *Laura Singer*
- 9:10 **Maine’s Blue Economy Workforce** – *Blaine Grimes*
- 9:40 **Version 1: Blue Economy Center Recommendations** – *Mike Conathan and Dana O’Brien*
- 10:45 **Next Steps to Final Report** – *Mike Conathan*
- 11:00 **Adjourn**

Guidelines

Seeking consensus - can you support? what needs to change to move to yes?

Jump in, participate, engage - use chat

Stay on task

Share the floor

Be respectful - disagree all you need to; don't be disagreeable

Blue Economy Workforce Subcommittee

- *Recommend improvements and expansions of the blue economy workforce education and training to encompass the elementary and secondary school system and public and private institutions of higher education.*
- 4 meetings over last two months
- Data collection from all participants
- Initial review and agreement on assessment and recommendations

Blue Economy Workforce Subcommittee Findings

Recruitment and Retention

Workforce Programs (Across all Sectors)

- Basics
- Specialization
- Connections
- Innovation

Gaps in Strategy/Roadmaps for Shipbuilding and Marine Propulsion and Coastal Resilience and Infrastructure

Emerging work in Marine Biotechnology

Blue Economy Workforce Subcommittee Recommendations

In sum, the Center would support workforce development for the blue economy by:

- *Developing more detailed **data on use of current programs***
- *Assisting in **identifying and filling gaps at each stage (recruitment to innovation)** of workforce development*
- ***Spurring cooperative efforts to create cross-specialization opportunities** to enhance the understanding of the links between economic uses and natural resource conditions.*
- ***Developing and maintaining data on funding** of the current system and possible funding to support the expansion and evolution of workforce development.*
- ***Securing funding to support programming and outreach***

Findings from BETF Breakouts on Center Structure

What We Heard from You:

- Start within a trusted quasi-state organization; spin out later
- Keep it lean, neutral, and results-driven
- Structure should follow purpose
- Attract new funding and federal investment
- Governance should be inclusive

Bottom line: *A **phased, pragmatic approach** - starting within a trusted host and maturing into a stand-alone, enduring organization - offers Maine the best balance of independence, flexibility, and stability.*

Version 1: Blue Economy Center Recommendations

Discussions and Temperature Checks on the Following:

- Guiding Principles
- Desired Functions
- Specific Projects
- Structure
- Recommendations

Guiding Principles

- Stability and Nonpartisanship
- Neutrality and Trust
- Inclusive Participation and Representation
- Equitable Growth and Community Benefit
- Agility and Efficiency
- Coherence and Integration
- Accountability and Transparency

Desired Functions

- Coordination and Convening
- Data Synthesis, Information Sharing, and Raising Awareness
- Advocacy, Policy, and Attracting Funding
- Workforce Development

Bottom line: *Contingent on the availability of funding and resources, the Center should serve as a central information hub, coordinate among stakeholders, and connect to other states and regions.*

Specific Projects

- Ecosystem mapping
- Partnership development
- Gathering economic data
- Defining and highlighting sector opportunities
- Developing a clear, credible, and cohesive brand
- Serve as the go-to organization for the blue economy
- Develop a business plan for the Center

Structure

- Virtual organization
- Established within a quasi-state agency
- Initial funding for 1 to 2 FTEs with subject matter expertise
- Programmatic seed funding for at least two years of operations
- Ability to raise and manage external funds
- Operate independently of political influence and with ability to fundraise

Maine Life Sciences Innovation Center

Established by Executive Order after Strong Legislative Support

Location & Establishment

- Located within MTI
- MTI provides staffing, administrative support
- May seek assistance from other agencies, private sector
- Authorized to spin-out

Purpose & Function

- Support innovation, entrepreneurship, & workforce development
- Expand the sector via collaboration & investment
- Coordination & one stop shop
- Pursue funding opportunities
- Support launch of shared lab space

Governance

- 10-member Advisory Board
- Appointed by the Governor
- Experiential and geographic diversity required
- Chair designated by the Governor
- Center may create subcommittees

Recommendations

- Launch a Maine Blue Economy Center as defined
- Initially house the Center within quasi-state org; spin out later
- Funding for 1 to 2 FTEs + at least 2 years of programs
- Establish an 8-12 member Advisory Board
- Drive integration with other affiliated initiatives
- Implement the recommendations related to workforce development

Next Steps

- Overview of the report outline
- Call for visuals for possible inclusion in the report
- Incorporate comments from today and draft report for BETF review
- Next meeting: November 18, 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!