

MAINE ANNUAL REPORT

WIOA Program Year 2021



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INTRODUCTION

In our 10-year [Economic Development Strategy](#), Maine presents a dynamic, nonpartisan roadmap designed to foster collaboration among public, private, nonprofit and education sectors for the purpose of creating a diverse and sustainable economy. The strategy's vision is twofold- that by 2030, Maine will be an international leader with a vibrant, sustainable, environmentally responsible economy; and that across the state, the people of Maine will have access to an unmatched quality of life and good-paying jobs. The State Workforce Board embraced the challenge, setting goals and establishing committees that drive the system to meet workforce growth and attraction goals set forth in the Economic Development Strategy.

In 2021, the [Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan](#) guided the investment of nearly \$1 billion of funding through the federal American Rescue Plan Act to help Maine people, businesses, and communities recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. More than \$300 million of the funds are strategically focused on planned workforce investments that ensure the workforce system is connected to and effectively serving the individuals, families, communities, and businesses most affected by the pandemic. WIOA partners moved beyond planning to actionable steps through the strategies and work identified in the State Plan.

This report show-cases the intersection of comprehensive plans and collaborative strategies to achieve the shared goals, and outcomes of the WIOA State Plan through the State Workforce Board, Local Area Workforce boards, and the services and programs under WIOA. The annual outcomes demonstrate advancements in the use of data-driven program evaluation methods and quality assurance. Maine's commitment to shared goals has given rise to notable best practices, including enhancing virtual service options and outreach strategies for underserved populations and employers representing targeted sectors.

The State of Maine has spearheaded additional efforts to enhance inclusivity including the creation of a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility effort with participation from senior leadership, waivers to extend benefits to additional youth, successful completion of the COVID Dislocated Worker Grant and expansion of supports for people impacted by the opioid crisis. As the Maine Department of Labor continues to expand access for job seekers and employers, in the new year we are looking forward to kicking off the Career Dislocated Worker Grant through a Virtual American Job Center.

PROGRESS ON ACHIEVING STATE PLAN STRATEGIC GOALS

The purpose of the State Workforce Board (SWB) is to ensure that Maine's workforce development system helps Maine people and businesses compete successfully in the global economy by convening state, regional, and local workforce system partners to:

- enhance the capacity and performance of Maine's workforce development system,
- align and improve the outcomes and effectiveness of workforce programs and investments,
- promote economic growth, and
- engage businesses, workers, education providers, economic development professionals, labor representatives and other stakeholders to achieve Maine's strategic and operational workforce vision and goals.

The SWB's vision for Maine's workforce system states:

Maine's residents and businesses will have economic opportunity and contribute to the growth of Maine through a responsive, networked and coordinated workforce development system across public and private sectors. The system will integrate all stakeholders into a seamless continuum resulting in increased educational and employment attainment for residents with a focus on careers, not just jobs, and support Maine's business sectors with skilled and qualified workers.

To achieve that vision, the SWB has three primary goals, which will target the state's workforce resources to achieve three goals outlined in the 10-year economic development plan:

- 1) Maine's untapped labor pool, those with significant barriers to employment, will find jobs and advance into high-demand occupations of their choice through public investment in training, education and supports.
- 2) Current and future workers will be equipped to meet industry talent needs, with the goal that 60% of Maine's workforce will hold a credential of value by 2025.
- 3) Maine will create a connected, aligned and demand-driven workforce system across public and private partners that fosters the growth of the state's economy while supporting equitable, safe, and productive employment opportunities for all residents.

During the past year, the State Workforce Board has established new committees including the Worker Employment, Education, and Training Committee, the Industry Leadership Committee, and the Workforce System Coordination Committee. The committees are intended to align with the state's workforce and economic development goals to support a thriving Maine economy for workers and businesses alike. The new Committees are aligned with the state's priorities and will support alignment and coordination of programs and opportunities across the different agencies and stakeholders that comprise the state's workforce system, with the goal of supporting the state's economic growth through greater economic mobility for workers and a trained workforce for employers.

The Worker Employment, Education, and Training Committee is working to align workforce training and education programs, with a focus on in-demand occupations for priority populations, to ensure workers have the resources needed to increase their skills and education and to access employment.

The Industry Leadership Committee is working to engage employers, regional business groups and industry associations to ensure alignment of education and training services with employer demand, focusing on priority industry sectors.

The Workforce System Coordination Committee is working to create a workforce system that is accessible, data and demand-driven, and accountable to Maine workers and businesses by pursuing initiatives that improve customer navigation, training programs, data sharing, evaluation, accountability, and data-driven decision-making.

Outside of the Committees' work, the Department of Labor and its partners have been carefully implementing projects utilizing funding from the American Rescue Plan Act. Efforts to increase the talent pool have included the hiring and deployment of outreach workers within communities to connect individuals with jobs, training, and resources. Part of this work is focused on building new partnerships with community partners and industry associations to meet individuals where they are at.

Five peer workforce navigators have been hired within five community-based organizations with the goal of connecting 3,000 individuals to jobs and resources.

There are several ongoing projects that are centered around increasing credentials of value. An apprenticeship grant was released selecting 14 grantees to create 3,000 apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships in the trades, healthcare, clean energy, hospitality, and manufacturing. Healthcare career navigators were hired in Lewiston and Bangor areas to provide personalized guidance to individuals seeking first time jobs or next steps in healthcare careers – connecting individuals to training, jobs and resources.

In an effort to increase average wages, work has been done to support the creation of a Maine Industry Partnership grant program, which will help build out career pathways in industries most impacted by Covid-19. There are several pending initiatives that highlight a focus on connecting workers to jobs with the intent of helping them work in in-demand, high-wage positions and clarifying career paths.

During the past year, the State Workforce Board (SWB) worked to establish a new and unified brand for the workforce system in Maine. Staff have begun to rollout the **WorkSource Maine** brand in SWB documents and materials. The work was the result of funding from the NGA-WIN Initiative. To accomplish this, working groups of state and community partners were engaged for input, before contracting with a local marketing company to develop a new marketing plan and a local marketing pilot. The brand changes have been presented to the full SWB as well as its subcommittees.

The SWB will be releasing an RFP soliciting competitive, responsive proposals from experienced and financially sound organizations to host, build and/or integrate a multi-agency education, training, and career planning platform. This multi-agency project will consolidate existing tools, resources, and templates to help Maine workers and employers know about the workforce resources available to them and how to access them. We envision an online platform – www.MyWorkSourceMaine.com - where users can plan for, and navigate through, education, training, and career planning resources.

Our vision is to deliver a sustainable, modern, and personalized web-based service that organizes education, training, and career planning information into a centralized platform. We will enable students, families, job seekers, employers, and other stakeholders to explore and navigate relevant education and training resources, career/job pathway options, and Maine employer resources. We will use career pathways, web-based services, and data integration to holistically support stakeholders in their journey to meaningful employment in valued careers through lifelong education and training.

To ensure individuals and businesses most affected by COVID-19 are able to connect to much-needed social supports, training programs, and job opportunities - and help employers connect more easily with jobseekers - funding will be used to develop a centralized online career portal, focused on the workforce system. Maine's career portal, www.MyWorkSourceMaine.com, will include links to career exploration, training, employment, and support services, and will brand and market Maine's workforce system in a transparent and easily accessible way.

SECTOR and CAREER PATHWAYS

The Maine State Workforce Board announced the Maine Industry Partnerships for Workforce Development in May of 2022. This \$3.7 million initiative, funded through the Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan, will help Maine businesses recruit and retain employees. The program is the Governor's latest

step to help Maine tackle its workforce shortage, which remains one of the largest problems to long-term economic growth.

Through the program, the Maine Department of Labor will adopt a sector-strategies approach to workforce development. They will partner with businesses in certain sectors to identify their most important workforce needs, including the talents and skills they need in prospective employees. They will then work with training and educational organizations to develop skilled workers who can meet those needs. The program aims to create a pipeline of workers through structured career pathways within sectors that can continually provide businesses with employees and Maine people with good-paying job opportunities.

Grants from the partnership program will focus on addressing specific training needs of each targeted industry sector, focusing on putting businesses at the center of a coordinated workforce and economic development system that responds to business-defined opportunities and priorities. Grant funding is being awarded to create industry partnerships within forestry, health care, hospitality, and retail sectors.

This work will complement another major project of the State Workforce Board. With support from a technical assistance grant from the National Governor's Association (NGA), the SWB and workforce system partners will develop the www.WorkSourceMaine.com portal to align public workforce programs into a seamless continuum of programs and supports, with a focus on career pathways for in-demand occupations. The emphasis on career pathways will be highlighted by a dedicated Career Pathway tool on the portal. A user's Career Pathway may include career exploration, job planning, work-based learning opportunities, living assistance, postsecondary pathway selection, academic planning and more based on user characteristics, needs and profile.

WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

To access the Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI) published report titled "A Year of Recovery From the Pandemic" Maine's annual workforce report for 2021 click on this link <https://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/publications/pdf/Maine2022AnnualWorkforceReport.pdf>

PERFORMANCE and ACCOUNTABILITY

Performance Goals and Outcomes

Maine does not have state-specific performance goals. Several issues affected performance outcomes during the program year. High staff turnover at the service provider level presents new staff with a steep learning curve on how to properly enter outcome data. To address this, the service providers employ Quality Assurance Specialists who use a series of participant activity reports to identify outcomes that should be in the numerator and ensure they get entered properly. Another factor affecting outcomes is unsuccessful completion of training. The spike in inflation and lack of available labor force resulted in unusually high wages; jobs that used to pay minimum wage, now pay significantly more than Maine's minimum wage of \$12.75/hour and offer significant sign-on bonuses.

This trend entices participants to quit training programs to go directly to work which negatively affects measurable skill gains and credential attainment. The COVID pandemic continues to negatively impact participants. They increasingly report that they are isolated, stressed, overwhelmed, face uncertain futures, and experience increased rates of physical and mental health challenges. These effects are compounded for the primary population served, low-income individuals who already face systemic

inequities. Staff are witnessing the impact of personal stability challenges and how they disrupt clients' ability to persist in training.

Unadjusted - Negotiated versus actual performance levels for program year 2021

Table 1 State unadjusted negotiated versus actual outcome measures for program year 2021

MEASURE	ADULT Neg.	ADULT Act.	DW Neg.	DW Act.	YOUTH Neg.	YOUTH Act.	WP Neg.	WP Act
Employed 2 nd Quarter after Exit*	73.0%	65.45%	79.5%	73.4%	69.0%	68.07%	68.0%	51.62%
Employed 4 th Quarter after Exit*	71.5%	67.01%	77.0%	80.31%	71.0%	69.68%	66.0%	52.97%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter after Exit	\$5,203	\$6,707	\$6,800	\$8,681	\$3,869	\$4,026	\$5,600	\$6,243
Credential Attainment	63.0%	67.11%	65.0%	61.04%	57.0%	54.76%	N/A	N/A
Measurable Skill Gain	55.0%	54.95%	55.0%	61.84%	40.0%	52.94%	N/A	N/A

Table Key: Act. = Actual, DW = Dislocated Worker, Neg. = Negotiated, * = includes youth placement into postsecondary.

Table 2 Total number and demographics of Adult, DW= Dislocated Worker, Youth, and WP Wagner-Peyser Program Participants

Demographics	Adult	DW	Youth	WP
Total Served	706	223	344	5402
Female	59.3%	57.4%	58%	49.3%
Aged <16	0%	0%	0.9%	0%
Aged 16-18	2.0%	0%	47.0%	0.3%
Aged 19-24	7.4%	2.2%	53%	4.6%
Aged 25-44	68.0%	45.0%	0%	34.5%
Aged 45-54	12.6%	26.5%	0%	22.2%
Aged 55-59	6.8%	18.4%	0%	14.1%
Aged 60+	3.3%	8.1%	0%	24.3%
Caucasian	76.5%	89.0%	81%	87.2%
Black/African American	14.9%	3.1%	13.4%	4.4%
Native American	2.5%	1.8%	2.0%	1.4%
Hispanic/Latino	2.5%	3.6%	5.5%	1.0%
Asian	1.6%	0.9%	2.6%	1.1%
Low Income	82.6%	46.0%	93.0%	40.5%
English Language Learners	30.0%	11.2%	47.4%	3.2%
Single Parents	24.0%	18.8%	10.5%	2.1%
Individuals with Disabilities	16.1%	11.2%	50.0%	8.7%
Ex-Offenders	25.0%	17.0%	8.1%	1.4%
Long Term Unemployed	42.0%	35.4%	43%	9.2%
Homeless Individuals/Runaway Youth	5.5%	1.8%	12.2%	1.9%
Foster Youth	0.14%	0%	4.1%	0%

In addition to the above, 46,711 individuals accessed labor exchange through self-service.

Table 3 Northeastern Workforce Board Negotiated and Actual Measures for Program Years 2020 and 2021

Northeastern WDB	PY 2020 Negotiated	PY20 Actual	PY 2021 Negotiated	PY21 Actual
Adult Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	71.5%	64.1%	73.0%	64.62%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	71.0%	62.9%	71.5%	65.94%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$4,700.00	\$5,777.00	\$4,800.00	\$6,290.23
Credential Attainment Rate	65.0%	69.9%	65.0%	68.63%
Measurable Skills Gain	50.0%	47.4%	55.0%	48.48%
Dislocated Worker Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	80.0%	72.5%	81.0%	69.09%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	82.0%	74.3%	83.0%	72.97%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$6,665.00	\$7,269.00	\$6,745.00	\$7,281.09
Credential Attainment Rate	80.0%	75.0%	81.0%	51.85%
Measurable Skills Gain	50.0%	35.1%	55.0%	57.14%
Youth Program				
Employment or Education 2 nd Qtr. after exit	64.0%	67.0%	65.0%	70.19%
Employment or Education 4 th Qtr. after exit	70.0%	71.6%	71.0%	69.7%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. After exit	\$3,800.00	\$3,033.00	\$3,900.00	\$3,991.89
Credential Attainment Rate	60.0%	56.4%	61.0%	56.41%
Measurable Skills Gain	35.0%	41.8%	40.0%	44.74

Table 4 Central Western Maine Workforce Board Negotiated and Actual Measures for Program Years 2020 and 2021

Central Western Maine WDB	PY 2020 Negotiated	PY20 Actual	PY 2021 Negotiated	PY21 Actual
Adult Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	72.0%	73.6%	73.0%	58.54%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	71.0%	79.7%	71.5%	64.0%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$5,200.00	\$6,303.00	\$5,300.00	\$5,255.78
Credential Attainment Rate	63.0%	75.7%	64.0%	50.75%
Measurable Skills Gain	50.0%	45.1%	55.0%	60.75%
Dislocated Worker Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	79.5%	62.5%	80.0%	77.97%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	75.0%	88.5%	76.0%	75.0%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$6,400.00	\$7,844.00	\$6,500.00	\$8,497.06
Credential Attainment Rate	64.5%	78.9%	65.0%	79.17%
Measurable Skills Gain	50.0%	54.7%	55.0%	66.0%
Youth Program				
Employment or Education 2 nd Qtr. after exit	70.0%	64.7%	71.0%	60.61%
Employment or Education 4 th Qtr. after exit	72.0%	73.2%	73.0%	66.67%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$3,700.00	\$2,931.00	\$3,800.00	\$4,302.47
Credential Attainment Rate	54.0%	64.3%	55.0%	52.94%
Measurable Skills Gain	35.0%	25.9%	40.0%	40.54%

Table 5 Coastal Counties Workforce Board Negotiated and Actual Measures for Program Years 2020 and 2021

Coastal Counties WDB	PY 2020 Negotiated	PY20 Actual	PY 2021 Negotiated	PY21 Actual
Adult Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	72.0%	68.2%	73.0%	71.19%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	71.0%	67.0%	71.5%	71.6%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$5,200.00	\$6,656.00	\$5,200.00	\$7,670.58
Credential Attainment Rate	60.0%	75.0%	60.0%	83.93%
Measurable Skills Gain	50.0%	52.7	55.0%	57.5%
Dislocated Worker Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	80.0%	88.3%	80.0%	73.03%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	78.0%	75.6%	78.0%	87.10%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$6,700.00	\$8,913.00	\$6,700.00	\$10,276.75
Credential Attainment Rate	57.0%	60.9%	57.0%	53.85%
Measurable Skills Gain	50.0%	52.1%	55.0%	63.04%
Youth Program				
Employment or Education 2 nd Qtr. after exit	70.0%	66.0%	70.0%	68.32%
Employment or Education 4 th Qtr. after exit	69.0%	67.4%	69.0%	70.53%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$3,800.00	\$5,043.00	\$3,900.00	\$3,836.98
Credential Attainment Rate	59.0%	61.3%	59.0%	54.29%
Measurable Skills Gain	36.0%	49.0%	40.0%	61.05%

Common Exit

The following programs fall under Maine’s policy on common exit: Title IB Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, Title ID National Dislocated Worker Grants, Title III Employment Services (Wagner-Peyser), Jobs for Veterans State Grant, and Trade Adjustment Act.

Data Element Validation

Maine issued a new Data Element Validation (DEV) manual in 2019 outlining a process which requires service provider quality assurance managers to validate eligibility documentation at the time they approve each Title IB enrollment. Additionally, each service provider conducts data element validation on a small sample of files each quarter and submits a report identifying validation failures and explaining how these will be addressed going forward. Local board directors and lead managers from each of the service provider agencies participated in an information session regarding the new process. Ongoing staff training includes annual module on DEV requirements with a focus on areas that have failed during file validation. Bureau staff will update the manual in accordance with TEGl 23-19, Change 1. During the COVID pandemic Maine shifted to virtual remote services which had an effect on ability to collect documentation and relied heavily on self-attestation.

Effectiveness Serving Employers

All four core partners utilize the Maine JobLink Employer Contact Tracking system to enter services provided to employers. Maine focused on the following two pilot approaches a) employer penetration rate, and b) repeat customer rate. Although, Maine did not formally identify retention with the same employer as a formal approach, the Maine JobLink system tracks these outcomes as well. During program year 2021 the following services were provided:

Table 6 Number of Employer Services by Type of Service

Category of Employer Service Provided	# Establishments
Employer Information and Support Services	3,148
Workforce Recruitment Assistance	2,198
Engagement in Strategic Planning	12
Accessing Untapped Labor Pools	216
Training Services	133
Incumbent Worker Training Services	0
Rapid Response / Business Downsizing Assistance	510
Planning Layoff Response	8

Table 7 Percentage by Type of Pilot Approach for Effectiveness Serving Employer Report

Pilot Approach	Rate
Retention with the same employer	61.14%
Employer Penetration Rate	7.2%
Repeat Business Customers	38.0%

Program Evaluation

The Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI) collaborated with the Maine Bureau of Employment Services (BES) on a study measuring the long-term earnings outcomes of Maine’s WIOA Adult participants who received training in entry-level healthcare occupations to identify if this investment launches them on a career pathway with opportunity for upward mobility over time. Using the Department of Labor Data Warehouse, established by MaineEARNs using the WDQI grant, CWRI was able to match Maine employment records to completer records using a similar [methodology as its Post-Secondary Outcomes Report](#).

Researchers found that although fulltime earnings are below the median wage of all occupations in the state, wages and employment increased considerably after completion of a WIOA Adult Healthcare trainings. The large wage gain demonstrates completers are more attached to their employment, either working more regular or consistent hours or a higher rate than before the program.

This partnership highlighted the value of the warehouse and wage outcome matching. Soon after this report, MDOL staff continued making progress toward establishing a larger connection with the Maine Job Link (MJL) and Maine Department of Labor Data Warehouse (MDOLDW). By the end of Program Year 2021, DOL had already begun building, testing, and deploying queries to extract program, service, participant, and financial data. Once this data transfer is complete, MDOL hopes to be able to obtain more informative data about their programs and outcomes of participants after completion.

In addition, CWRI developed a Local Area Statistical Adjustment Model (LSAM) used to set and evaluate five key performance measures for three Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title 1b programs. This project supported BES in meeting mandated reporting requirements and advanced the use of data-driven program evaluation methods within MDOL. Creation and implementation of this model took place over many months and involved regular meetings with BES to understand program and reporting requirements. Using feedback from BES and guidance from U.S. DOL and other states, two ordinary least squares regression models specific to the state of Maine were

developed using program participant data and local economic condition data. The models were selected after completing diagnostic checks and thorough performance assessment. Once finalized, the LSAM was used to evaluate past performance and predict outcome levels for upcoming program year for local workforce areas. CWRI also worked with BES to communicate with local workforce boards about the implementation and use of the LSAM. In future program years, CWRI will continue maintaining, updating, and advising on the use of the LSAM.

Customer Satisfaction

Title III and Title IB approaches to documenting customer satisfaction are as follows:

Employment Services

CareerCenter consultants are encouraged to develop relationships with customers that extend beyond one visit or service point which sets the stage for follow-up contacts. Offering continued CareerCenter support throughout their service term promotes informal feedback through which staff can gain insight on the effectiveness of services provided.

Metrics:

In addition to LiveChat customers and workshop attendees mentioned below, 134 hiring events were held at which 1,105 employers and 3,283 jobseekers participated, and 2,694 customers accessed in-person services at one of Maine Department of Labor-staffed CareerCenter locations. Unfortunately, glitches in the customer satisfaction system went unnoticed during the period and customer service data is incomplete for job seekers and employers. Although the missing data does not allow us to calculate specific response rates, we do note that staff found that fewer responses were submitted formally, and the best feedback was obtained by conversations and personal contact during and after the engagements. Data as well as anecdotal and informal customer feedback from major users of our recruitment services were used to modify and improve services based on needs. Of the captured data, we found the following job seeker and employer ratings:

796 job seekers responded with the following ratings:

Table 8 Job Seeker Responses to Live Chat Customer Satisfaction Surveys

Job Seeker Satisfaction with Live Chat Services Category	Rating
Staff were organized and courteous	4.85
The hiring event was easy to access	4.85
A good mix of employers and jobs were available	4.55
Facilitators provided adequate time for questions and answers	4.84
Recommend these hiring events to other job seekers	4.55

44 employers whose responses were captured, offered the following ratings:

Table 9 Employer Responses to Live Chat Customer Satisfaction Surveys

Employer Satisfaction with Live Chat Services Category	Rating
Staff were organized and courteous	4.82
The hiring event was easy to access	4.73
Facilitators provided adequate time for questions and answers	4.77
The hiring event was easy to register for	4.75
Recommend these hiring events to other employers	4.64

LiveChat customers were asked to rate the service on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (outstanding). Between 7/1/2021 to 6/30/2022, the LiveChat survey went to 1,273 chat users resulting in a 56% response rate from 712 users. The average rating for this period was 4.5 out of 5.0 and, the CareerCenters were recognized with LiveChat Outstanding Customer Service Award for all 12 months of this report period. Maine’s LiveChat team also received the yearly Best Customer Service Award for the year 2021.

Customers attending virtual workshops were asked to rate workshop quality statements on a scale from 1 (highly disagree) to 5 (highly agree). 505 attendees received surveys and 40% responded.

204 workshop attendees responded with the following ratings:

Table 10 Aspects of Workshops to be Rated and Ratings

Aspects of Workshops Rated by Attendees	Rating
The workshop objectives were clearly stated and met.	4.71
The workshop was well organized and easy to understand.	4.65
The information or skills were relevant and useful.	4.63
The facilitator was knowledgeable of the material presented.	4.80
The facilitator provided relevant examples during the workshop.	4.68
After attending, I would recommend this workshop to someone else.	4.65

The CareerCenter hotline answered 21,211 calls with a 94.04% call answer rate. Satisfaction with calls not measured however, services that resulted from them are.

Customer satisfaction surveys resulted in improved service delivery, revised workshop content, and delivery of customer-suggested topics. Customers who provide low staff ratings are contacted to gather additional information that guide improvements.

The major lessons learned from formal and informal employer and job seeker customer feedback are:

1. It was time to return to more in-person service options, however, also continue with virtual options.
2. Effects of the Great Resignation and changing workforce dynamics require more customized and creative approaches to reaching job seekers and connecting them to employers.

Coastal Counties Workforce Area

In the Coastal Counties region, customer satisfaction is assessed at both the board and service provider level. The Local Board -Coastal Counties Workforce Inc. (CCWI) requires the Title IB Service Provider to administer customer satisfaction surveys to clients of all programs on a regular basis and analyze results and share the results with the board on a quarterly basis. CCWI and the service provider Workforce Solutions collaboratively utilize feedback from clients to strengthen program implementation. In order to promote continuous improvement of programs, we assess customer satisfaction in the following ways:

- CCWI conducts one-on-one interviews with program participants from every program on an annual basis. Results and feedback from those surveys are shared with the service provider as part of the annual monitoring report. The interviews provide insights on how Workforce Solutions the Title IB service provider delivers programs and services. The interview questions

assess levels of awareness, effectiveness, and usage and satisfaction with Workforce Solutions programs.

- Workforce Solutions conducts bi-annual surveys via email (or alternative means at a client request) for every Workforce Solutions program. A standard list of questions across all programs is sent via a basic electronic survey form, as well as a subset of customized questions for each program as appropriate. Questions have a primary focus around client understanding of programs and services, client satisfaction with programs and services, and client satisfaction with communications from the provider staff supporting them. Each question comes with standard numeric rating system as well as an option to expand on feedback in free-form text boxes. Customers are allowed to submit feedback anonymously or be identified and submit requests to speak to a manager as a follow-up (for any reason, including concerns or highlighting happiness with staff or services). Every client that is active in the program during certain quarters receives the survey. The average response rate can vary slightly by program (given unique populations), but a response rate of 15 percent is typical.

Workforce Solutions Quality Assurance Team reviews the data, analyzes any trends, and then presents it to program leadership and frontline staff. This data is also reviewed with the CCWI team on a quarterly basis. Information received from the survey allows the service provider to make changes at the program, staff, or client level. The feedback from PY 21 has been positive and there have been no clear needs to adjust programs or services based on the data received to date – the data supports that the model is working for clients. At the individual level, it has created a mechanism where individual clients can request a follow-up conversation with a manager – so changes within individual client’s services or plans can emerge.

Workforce Solutions also administers additional customer surveys to participants who have received specific services. This includes services that are delivered via cohort (Youth Work Experience and COVID Resource Navigation), that are assessed through an end of service survey. In another survey, employers involved in hosting work experience and on-the-job training are also offered opportunity to provide feedback at points during that service. An example of how this type of survey can impact programming emerged from the Youth Work Experience cohort model, where getting WIOA Youth clients to keep their screens on in a virtual classroom has proved challenging. A client survey to better understand why clients would not turn their video on was able to establish that issues around boundaries, self-confidence, and other similar criteria was behind the client actions. This data helped the provider determine that taking a hardline around expectations to have cameras on (e.g.: keep cameras on during class or you will not be able to continue, won’t get paid, etc.) would not be appropriate; instead, the provider is focused on finding pathways to incent the behavior and talking about how that behavior (keeping video off) might impact future education/training, work, etc.

BEST PRACTICES

Employment Services

Although virtual service options remain, CareerCenters transitioned from their physical in-person pandemic hiatus, redesigned space to safely open their doors to walk-in traffic, increased on-demand in-person service in the centers, and began to host in-person hiring events. The new workforce

dynamics resulted in a shift in participation with more businesses seeking recruitment assistance and fewer job seekers seeking jobs. CareerCenters increased promotion of events, increased their outreach to underserved populations, and planned more creative ways to attract job seekers.

Focused and strategic recruitment events/Job Fairs

- Making Center facilities and staff available beyond the 8 – 5 workweeks to host or assist with recruitments during evening or weekend hours.
- “CareerCenter Take-overs” where a recruiting employer moved into the centers for a day or portion of the day, decorated the centers with their banners, balloons, and displays, brought company swag to give to job seekers, delivered informational sessions, took applications, conducted interviews, and made on-the-spot job offers.
- Recruitment events held at Community Colleges where employers looking for skills taught at the college were introduced to students in matching programs.
- Recruitment events targeted specifically to older adults, youth including high school students, veterans, justice involved, and other under-served populations.
- Follow-up with event participants to advance the relationships and offer additional services.
- Improving event promotion through media, email blasts, community of influencers, and fun signs with balloons along the roadway.

Increased outreach to underserved populations:

- Dedicated outreach workers charged with meeting under-represented populations in the communities where they are at and connecting them with CareerCenter and other workforce services.
- Collaboration and partnerships with peer workforce navigators from several community organizations representing under-served populations.
- Participation in community events such as festivals and resource fairs for general population as well as those targeted toward immigrants, migrant workers, those in recovery.
- Holding regular “office hours” at community locations such as libraries, immigrant welcome centers, schools, town offices, etc.
- Conducting workshops and providing services in partnership with and/or on-site at correctional facilities, high schools, Department of Health and Human Services, senior living complexes, food banks, and other community sites.
- Partnering with the National Digital Equity Center to address digital literacy by offering free classes at our centers.
- Partnering with local communities to tackle worker transportation barriers.

Fresh Ideas in Hiring Events

The Maine Department of Labor launched the **Caring for ME** campaign to recruit people into direct care jobs by increasing awareness of what such positions entail. The capstone project of this marketing campaign included piloting some fresh ideas in hiring events. The events included over 120 employers and 270 job seekers. Twenty-nine job seekers have submitted applications, interviewed for positions, or received conditional offers of employment. Twenty-one job seekers have been referred to healthcare navigators.

The events were sector-specific and one of the fairs involved direct recruitment of TANF recipients through a partnership with FedCAP, the contracted provider for Maine’s ASPIRE program. At the hiring

event FedCAP staff offered interpretation for clients to engage with employers. Employers were equipped with best practices and put on live demonstrations, including engaging members of the Direct Care Advisory Council as speakers. Employer tables were equipped with ribbons that would permit job seekers to easily identify the types of positions they were recruiting for and colored stars that represented unique benefits to attract job seekers like flexible schedules, sign-on bonuses, training opportunities, and other non-traditional supports.

[Title IB Programs Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth](#)

[Successful Participants Share Stories In Person at Board Meetings](#)

When possible, one or two participants voluntarily attend Northeastern WDB meetings to discuss their circumstances prior to receiving services and how the services helped them improve their lives. Putting a human face on the community of participants who are assisted on their path to success and self-sufficiency encourages board members by showing them how their work at the board level affects individual people in the local area.

[Addressing Transportation Supports](#)

In response to increasing gas prices and a request from Eastern Maine Development Corp. to increase the customer travel reimbursement rate from 44 cents per mile to the GSA rate for privately owned vehicle was implemented in the Northeastern local area. An additional provision to allow up to \$400 for the purchase of bicycle for transportation to work or training, with guidelines regarding minimum and maximum commuting distance was also added to the Northeastern WDB supportive services policy. Given the lack of viable public transportation options in the remote and very rural parts of this local area, the changes represent person-centered approaches to alleviating commuting challenges for jobseekers and workers.

[Participation in Prosecutorial Diversion Program](#)

At the behest of the District Attorney, Eastern Maine Development Corp. workforce development staff have been participating in Penobscot County's Prosecutorial Diversion program. In an effort to leverage resources from other grants, the Opioid grant peer connectors were invited to participate in June and speak from their lived experience. The positive reaction from the 50 plus attendees was such that the peer connectors have been assigned to conduct this outreach on a monthly basis.

[Improving Outcomes for Youth Grant](#)

The Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP) received the Improving Outcomes for Youth DHHS Grant and has subcontracted with Penquis CAP and Downeast Community Partners to cover the five counties of the northeastern region. Through the grant, ACAP has created the Breakthrough Youth program, which is geared towards 14 to 24-year-olds, but recruitment efforts are focused on youth ages 14-18. This sixty-hour program may be delivered in a variety of ways depending on the area it is offered, but the curriculum will remain the same across the region. It will be offered virtually and in-person. The goals of the program are to prevent unwed pregnancies and promote two-parent households. The program will support development of employability skills and help build protective factors against substance use disorder while addressing risk factors.

[Coastal Counties Youth Participant of the Year](#) (as featured in the CCWI Annual Report).

Camden came to Title IB service provider Workforce Solutions interested in pursuing a nontraditional occupation as a truck driver. At time of her enrollment, she had recently earned her high school diploma through Adult Education while she was parenting three young children. To help her gain financial stability, she worked with a Life Navigator to access TANF benefits. This allowed her youth Career Advisor to partner with FedCAP to pay for a Class A CDL course through Northeastern Technical Institute. She received support with the cost of childcare while attending training. Camden successfully passed her license exam in August of 2021. Her Career Advisor helped her with job search by creating a work experience with Windham Public Works to help Camden get her foot in the door. Windham Public Works offered a permanent unsubsidized position to Camden before her work experience ended. Camden is currently employed full-time as a CDL driver.

RAPID RESPONSE and STATE SET-ASIDE

Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion Activities

The Rapid Response team provided Rapid Response information to 222 companies and WorkShare information to 439 companies during PY21. Of the companies contacted, 46 employers laid off 983 employees for which we provided Rapid Response information.

In addition to Bureau of Employment Services and CareerCenter staff, Maine's Rapid Response team includes Title IB service providers, staff from the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation, Consumers for Affordable Healthcare, and other one-stop partners. Rapid Response services were offered virtually and in person throughout PY21 to ensure laid-off workers were made aware of available resources and assistance. Rapid Response handouts have been expanded to include a WIOA training partner one page information sheets to explain their services in more detail.

Trade coordination occurs at the first notification of a layoff. The Rapid Response staff inquire whether the layoff is trade-related and if determined to be a possibility, the company is encouraged to submit a trade petition. If the company is unwilling to submit a petition, the Rapid Response team encourages affected employees to do so. Rapid Response staff may also submit a petition on behalf of affected workers.

The Maine JobLink (MJL) system houses data collected from affected workers and companies and used to identify and track layoff events. Rapid Response team members also use the employer contact tracking in Maine JobLink to capture the level of Rapid Response and WorkShare information provided to MJL employers. Services provided to employers not registered in MJL or who are not experiencing layoffs are recorded, tabulated, and reported separately and not included in the formal Maine JobLink Rapid response reports.

Over the past year, Maine's Rapid Response team has expanded outreach to employers and business organizations by providing WorkShare and Rapid Response information. Initial contact w/ an employer now includes the additional information in hopes to avert layoffs. The Rapid Response team initiated a marketing campaign to increase the number of businesses and workers enrolled in WorkShare. Outreach efforts are made to contact business groups and industry associations, and direct follow-up to individual businesses of interest is made. Rapid Response staff are trained to assist employers in the completion of the WorkShare application.

As of May 2022, statewide team members and CareerCenter managers are invited to attend a monthly statewide Rapid Response meeting which includes speakers from various business service groups. This

practice has expanded the business knowledge of this group and improves services to businesses in their areas.

Use of Title IB State Set-Aside Funding

Set aside funds in Maine are used to pay for required activities related to grant and financial administration, monitoring and oversight, reporting, and disseminating and updating Eligible Training Provider data, providing technical assistance to local areas, and staffing the State Workforce Board and performance accountability team. Additionally, set-aside funds support maintenance of the management information system for WIOA also known as Maine JobLink.

Use of Wagner-Peyser Set-Aside Funding

In addition to past practice of utilizing Wagner-Peyser ten percent to support CareerCenter access for speakers of languages other than English, funds are used to support staff development. An assessment of skill needs was conducted through worker and supervisor questionnaires. Digital training recordings were made by workforce program experts and are housed in a newly developed video library. The program overviews are used to train new staff and refresh existing staff on workforce system programs and services. It also houses other training opportunities that are beneficial to system staff. The library is accessed through a new portal where staff can access training, policies, and other resources as well as where they can document and track their staff development accomplishments.

In addition, as part of the State of Maine's commitment to apprenticeship, the MDOL will become an apprenticeship sponsor itself and launch a CareerCenter professional program for Bureau of Employment Services staff. Work is currently being done to develop the standards of work and related instruction requirements.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, and ACCESSIBILITY

The Maine Department of Labor launched a formal DEIA effort in January of 2022. As the Department leadership works with its fellow state agencies on broad common elements, four cross- MDOL bureau employee-led committee workgroups were created. The committees recently gained support of senior leadership to move forward on their initial plans/products listed below:

- **Accessibility:** Outline recommendations to build staff capacity across MDOL on accessibility best practices including accessibility advisors, onboarding training, and a resource library.
 - Future plans: Scope out accessibility advisor role; finalize accessibility resource page for MDOL site; purchase and roll out three modules on accessibility training
- **Outreach:** Create broader awareness and understanding of the MDOL's breadth of services among priority communities and key partners via social media campaign & concise overview of MDOL services page to use w/ community partners.
 - Future plans: Finalize social media message and intro to MDOL letter and select small group of community partners to test with and get feedback
- **Staff recruitment & retention:** Enhance existing recruitment processes by creating more approachable, inclusive job descriptions & interviewing questions.
 - Future plans: Finalize job listing and interview tips and convene with Bureau of Human Resources to receive approval to implement
- **Training:** Create a survey to identify staff training needs and outline recommendations to embed DEIA training in onboarding for all staff
 - Future plans: Finalize and distribute survey to MDOL staff

WAIVERS

Maine received the following two waivers on May 5, 2021

Waiver to Allow Individual Training Accounts for In-School Youth

This waiver was approved from May 5, 2021, through June 30, 2022. Unfortunately, very few in-school youth benefitted from this waiver, partly due to the short one-year timeframe during which time sixteen in-school youth received occupational training, five of which are still in training, six did not complete, and five completed training. Payment of ITAs only occurred for four of these participants. The State will not request a renewal of this waiver.

Waiver of Requirement to Spend 75% of Youth Funds on Out-of-School Youth

This waiver was approved for the full period of program years 2020 and 2021 so will end June 30, 2023. Maine is a vast rural state, so one key objective of this waiver is to engage youth with significant barriers to education and employment before they leave high school to ensure they are not lost to the workforce development system. Another essential purpose is to align the workforce development system with Maine Children’s Cabinet’s goal of ensuring all high school students have the opportunity to engage in a paid work experience.

While longitudinal studies, such as the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth on the effects of educational attainment of those who worked during high school, titled “Effects of High School Work Experience a Decade Later,” shows that a moderate number of working youth are less likely to attend or complete four or more years of college, the study identified positive effects on a variety of labor force outcomes, including labor force participation, employment status, and earnings, that resulted in the authors of the study to conclude that those gains offset the educational decrements related to working while in high school.

Positive outcomes of paid work experience include student understanding of the value of money and the importance of budgeting, expanded time management skills, understanding of the relationship between earnings and education, and confidence building. Additionally, reports show a reduction in violence for disadvantaged youth engaged in summer work experience activities.

During program years 2020 and 2021 there were significant gains in secondary level in-school youth enrollments with similar levels continuing during the first five months of program year 2022.

Table 11 Number of In-school Youth Participants by Program Year

School Status	2019	2020	2021	2022 so far
In-School Secondary Alternative Education	1	5	7	0
In-School Secondary Level	16	34	51	25
In-School Postsecondary Level	4	11	10	5
Totals	21	50	68	30

Evidence of successful high school completion rates will not be available until all secondary in-school youth have exited Title IB program services. Maine will continue to monitor for these outcomes going forward and will be submitting a request to extend this waiver to the U.S. Department of Labor.

NATIONAL DISLOCATED WORKER GRANTS

Maine completed work on the COVID disaster relief grant, continued activities on the OPIOID grant also known as National Health Emergency Dislocated Worker Grant and launched the CAREER dislocated worker grant that will fund implementation of a Virtual American Job Center.

COVID Dislocated Worker Grant

This grant served a total of 323 individuals aged 17-83, who received a total of 2,228 referrals to humanitarian assistance programs. Twenty-eight percent of participants identified as individuals with a disability. Nineteen disaster relief workers were hired from specific target populations to provide outreach to their peers and connect them to basic and employment and training resources. The greatest number of referrals were to housing and rental assistance programs, followed closely by referrals to food banks, food stamps (SNAP), MaineCare, other healthcare insurance options, and heat/fuel assistance. Referrals of numerous individuals were also made to financial guidance, career planning, interviewing skills, specialized business services for those who were once self-employed, job search and placement assistance, childcare and transportation assistance, legal assistance, vocational rehabilitation and health and mental health services, referral to Title IB training services, refugee assistance, general assistance, TANF, unemployment insurance, and more.

OPIOID Dislocated Worker Grant

This \$6.2m grant, which Maine titled *Connecting to Opportunities*, serves eligible individuals directly impacted by the opioid crisis or otherwise qualified and interested in substance use disorder/recovery occupations and related fields. Service delivery is embedded through collaboration and core partnership between the Maine Department of Labor, the State Workforce Board, Local Workforce Boards, and WIOA Title 1B service providers. Each local area, collaborating closely with community partners, provides a full spectrum of employment, training, and support services in each region of the State.

Coordination with Rapid Response Activities: The *Connecting to Opportunities* grant is one of many resources shared by the Rapid Response team with impacted workers. This team includes WIOA Title 1B service provider representatives who deliver DWG services at the local level. State Rapid Response representative's follow-up with impacted workers to conduct warm hand-offs to the service providers to ensure all workers are afforded the opportunity to access essential services.

Co-enrollment and Integrated Service Delivery: Co-enrollment and Integrated Service Delivery are natural opportunities to ensure program or funding source service gaps are coordinated and filled with other WIOA program resources such as the dislocated worker program. Maine's DWG and WIOA IB program service providers are one in the same and, as members of the Rapid Response team, work together to ensure that dislocated worker customers access, benefit from, and maximize all available resources.

Disaster Emergency Management Activities: The *Connecting to Opportunities* grant includes disaster relief employment to support the delivery of services. Disaster relief workers, referred to as *Peer Connectors* for this grant, work in each of the three local workforce development areas. These jobs are designed to bridge the workforce and recovery systems to assist all participants in accessing and navigating services. Individuals in these positions work directly with key community partners to coordinate and conduct outreach, expand awareness of the project, and facilitate referral and joint service delivery. They also play a vital role in providing on-going support to enrolled participants as they work toward their employment and training goals. In addition, they also receive services through

the grant. Thus far, twenty-three individuals have been employed in the Disaster Relief Worker role. At the end of this annual reporting period, there were still five individuals actively working in this role.

Lessons learned: Assisting individuals impacted by opioid use disorder has meant recognizing that individuals in this demographic are facing multiple, co-occurring challenges including recovery, re-entry from incarceration, and, in some cases, mental health struggles. The complexity of these multiple barriers to employment means that intensive case management is often needed to support these individuals adequately and successfully on their pathway to employment.

Promising practices: There were numerous best practices initiated throughout the grant period, here are five that are recommended for all disaster relief work going forward:

1. To address the intensive case management needs of this demographic, one region has staff teams of Career Advisors and Life Navigators so that two staff members serve each individual. This has allowed the Career Advisor to focus on employment and training while the Life Navigator assists the individual with all other basic needs related challenges like housing, medical, and other basic stabilization services.
2. Disaster Relief Staff, individuals with lived experience of substance use disorder, are the primary point of contact for new referrals so they can guide individuals through the process from point of inquiry to enrollment.
3. Co-locating grant staff at Recovery Centers as well as other social service hubs, like shelters for unhoused individuals, has been beneficial for connecting to potential grant participants.
4. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of grant participants have justice system involvement. Given the prevalence of incarceration for individuals who have struggled with substance use disorder, the statewide grant team collaborates with a wide variety of service providers working with justice-involved individuals, including the Maine Prisoner Reentry Network, Adult Drug Courts, the Prosecutorial Diversion program, and the PACE program which offers first-time offenders an opportunity to avoid a 48-hour mandatory jail stay by participating in a two-day educational offering regarding resources and supports that may be helpful to them.
5. On-going professional development for workforce system staff in topics relevant to assisting individuals in recovery to attain and retain employment.

OPIOID Grant Success Stories:

- Michael was enrolled in the grant just prior to release from incarceration. Prior to incarceration, he was self-employed selling souvenirs at fairs and as a part-time personal care attendant, a flagger, and a flooring installation helper for which he earned nominal wages. Although Michael had earned his GED, and attained a Serve Safe Certificate, and a Master Gardener Certificate, at time of enrollment he had significant barriers to obtaining full-time employment including lack of marketable skills, minimal natural supports, a fragile housing situation, and a criminal record. Michael is now employed full-time at a local bakery and is being trained to operate industrial size ovens. His starting wage is \$17 per hour, and he received a sign-on bonus of \$1,500 in two installments. Michael worked closely with his Workforce Development Specialist to address supportive services needs which included assistance with car repair, clothing, and a computer.

Michael will continue to work on goals outlined in his service plan, including taking steps to secure stable housing and continue with career exploration.

- The service provider worked with a pregnant, 19-year-old female who was seriously affected by the opioid crisis. At the beginning of her participation, she was staying in a shelter without a permanent place to live, was long-term unemployed, had not completed high school, and did not have a working phone. Staff were able to place her in a paid work experience at a local recovery center, which allowed her to remain active in her personal recovery. Through the work experience, she gained confidence seeing what she was able to accomplish every week. She received assistance with the cost of workplace-appropriate clothing, which added to her confidence and self-esteem. For the first time, she now has her own checking account with her own debit card. She was able to buy herself a working phone with minutes, allowing her to be in touch with distant family. Transitional housing programs have been responsive, and she is actively seeking permanent housing. She plans to complete her HiSet and hopes to enter post-secondary training to increase to marketable skills.

CAREER Dislocated Worker Grant

The resources of this grant are focused on research, and development and implementation of a multi-faceted virtual American Job Center (VAJC) that will expand access to services for job seekers and employers most adversely affected by the COVID pandemic. Emphasis will be on ensuring the platform includes the digital improvements necessary to reach Maine's most vulnerable populations by providing easy to navigate, customer-centric, access to services. Digital improvements will be designed to intentionally expand reach to historically marginalized unemployed populations. The most critical work component to date was defining the requirements for the Virtual AJC, refining the language so that potential vendors would easily understand the objectives identified in an RFP.

A weekly status update continues to inform the full team what we have achieved in the ongoing work plan and next steps. We anticipate a lull in team activity while the USDOL request for approval to procure is being reviewed and the RFP is going through final review.

Project Objectives

- Assess virtual service platforms and other state models
- Research and identify systems and strategies for
- VAJC design and development
- Procure a technology solution with high priority given to accessibility and ease of use
- Engage customers and employers in the solution ease of use assessment; ensure a positive customer experience
- Design and implement the Virtual American Job Center for the State of Maine
- Connect the solution to other programs and platforms to enable the ability to directly connect participants to appropriate virtual rooms and appointments; create a one stop shopping experience.
- Reach agreements to achieve adoption and sustainment of the VAJC
- Support partners through organizational change management
- Plan post-go live support and feedback
- Enhance Maine JobLink for virtual work to maintain current federal reporting process
- Deliver reporting to the US Department of Labor in compliance with the grant.

- Provide a customized VAJC user experience informed by the user's access location so that they are directed to the correct local board

Project Deliverables Completed

Virtual American Job Center (VAJC)

- User personas (written descriptions of the people who will use the service)
- Story mapping/requirements document and collection workshops as needed
- Process mapping for identification of related programs and connections
- RFP/RFQ process documentation

Project Deliverables Ongoing

- VAJC design, testing and deployment documentation/certifications First steps are now being taken to identify staff user/testers, and customer user/testers who will provide input on demos of product responders.
- Promotional campaign to launch
- Solution training for all Maine AJC connected partners
- Recurring and incremental comms as to status and plans for project
- A feedback mechanism for customer feedback and continuous improvement