



# BUILDING MAINE'S COMPREHENSIVE WORKFORCE AND TALENT STRATEGY

*Submitted by the  
State Workforce Board  
Maine Department of Labor*



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## INTRODUCTION

Maine, like the rest of the nation, is experiencing a healthy, thriving economy and historically low unemployment. Maine’s system of education training and employment services plays a critical role in supporting that continued economic growth. This strategy is developed with the intent of continuing the success of the state’s businesses and bolstering the labor force by enabling potential workers to enter good paying jobs through providing the necessary work supports and skills that can sustain their families and allow them to thrive.

In late 2019, Governor Mills published a 10-year economic development plan<sup>1</sup> for the State of Maine. The strategy has two key components, increasing talent and spurring innovation. Maine’s workforce is talented, skilled and needs more participation. There are approximately 100,000 people in Maine who are of working age and not working. Many individuals have barriers to employment that they struggle to overcome. It is the State’s goal to build bridges over these barriers, enabling all who wish to work to do so. We firmly believe that everyone has a place in Maine’s economy.



ALAN LOWBERG, OF HOPE, SANDS A WOODEN CRATE HE MADE. LOWBERG IS THE INVENTOR OF THE YĀSHAV’ SOLAR OUTHOUSE—A WATERLESS AND ODORLESS ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY TOILET.

Maine has numerous resources that contribute to its workforce development system. For that system to meet the needs of employers and workers alike, these resources must be better aligned and integrated across all sectors – public, private, non-profit and philanthropy. A high-quality workforce will enable Maine to better retain existing businesses, draw new ones that bring high quality and good paying jobs, and attract new workers to meet the goal set forth in Governor Janet Mills’ economic development plan to add at least 75,000 people to our workforce over the next ten years.

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<sup>1</sup> [Maine Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029](https://www.maine.gov/decd/strategic-plan) <https://www.maine.gov/decd/strategic-plan>

In September 2019, the State Workforce Board embarked on a process to gather input into a new strategic vision and strategy for Maine’s workforce system. This strategy was created to provide a roadmap to foster collaboration among the public, private, nonprofit and education sectors to help achieve the goals outlined in Maine’s 10-year economic development plan<sup>2</sup>:

- Grow the average annual wage by +10 percent
- Attract 75,000 people to Maine’s talent pool

Maine’s State Workforce Board (SWB) directed the creation of this strategy with the intent that it should reflect the state’s unique workforce and economic development characteristics and challenges, as well as the ideas and solutions of the myriad stakeholders that comprise Maine’s workforce development system. What follows is the culmination of many strategic planning sessions with over 150 workforce system stakeholders, including administrators of the core programs under the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA)<sup>3</sup>, employers, workers, educators, youth, advocates, representatives of state agencies and policy makers.

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs; Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program; Title III Wagner-Peyser Employment Services; Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Program

## **VISION AND GOALS FOR MAINE'S WORKFORCE**

### **The strategy starts with a clear vision:**

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.

### **The strategy focuses on three goals which will target our workforce resources to achieve the 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.

## ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Economic conditions in much of Maine are positive going into 2020. In the last several years, growth has created new jobs and driven unemployment and other measures of a slack labor market to near record lows. These tight labor market conditions, with high numbers of job openings and rising wages, provide a positive environment for individuals, but are a challenge for many employer's seeking to attract and retain the staff they need.

While we are currently in a positive and expansionary environment the business cycle still exists and we need to be prepared for the next downturn. In addition, the age structure of our population presents a significant challenge to maintaining the size of our labor force in the years to come.

### **Recent trends and current conditions**

The size of the economy and the number of jobs continue to reach new heights, driving unemployment and other measures of labor market slack to new lows. These tight labor market conditions offer many job openings and rising wages, positives for those looking for a job and challenges for employers concerned with finding workers to fill their openings.

Total output of the economy increased at accelerating rates in recent years with gross domestic product reaching \$67 billion in 2019, resulting in the creation of new jobs. The average of 633,000 nonfarm payroll jobs was up more than 4,000 from 2018, marking the ninth straight year of job growth. Though the recovery from the very deep recession of 2008 and 2009 was initially quite slow, conditions today are better by nearly every measure than before the decade-ago downturn.

### **Existing demand industry sectors and occupations**

Over the last three decades the industry structure of jobs changed significantly. The most prominent trends were the near doubling of jobs in the health care and social assistance and the professional and business services sectors, as well as the sharp decline in manufacturing jobs. The types of jobs in sectors that are growing have different education, skill, and performance requirements than the types of jobs in sectors that are declining.

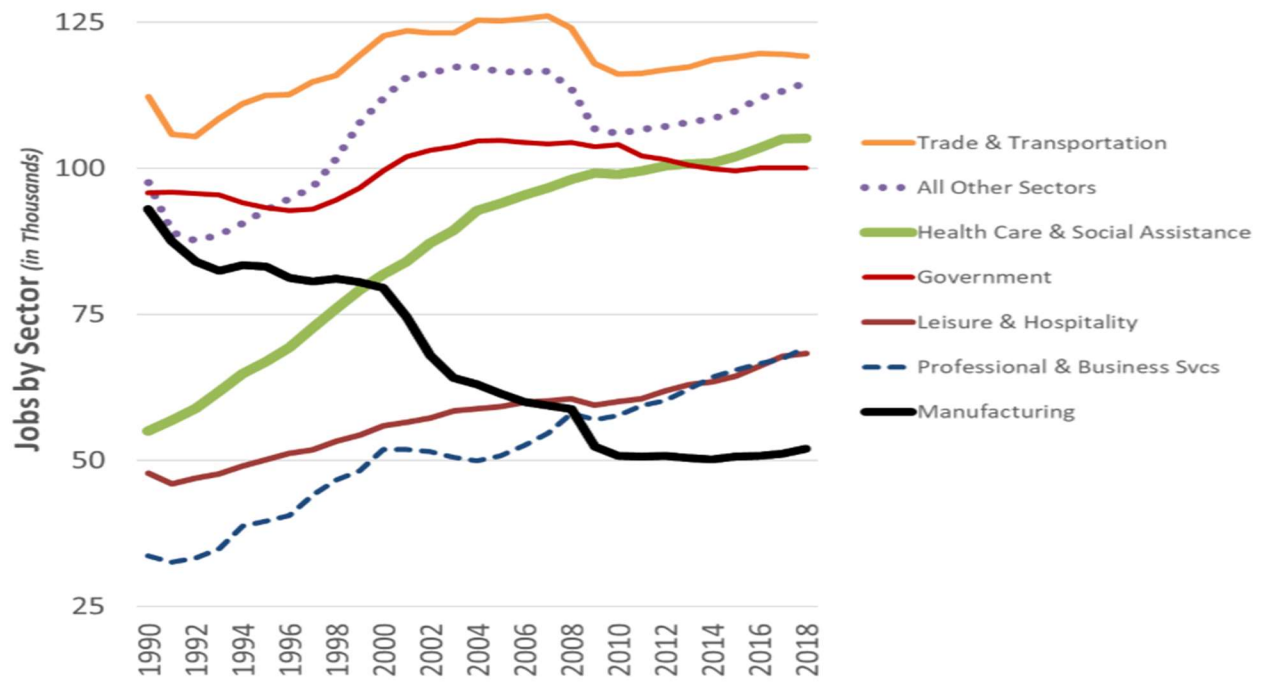


FIGURE 1: JOBS BY SECTOR

TABLE 1: IN DEMAND OCCUPATIONS

Rank	Occupational Major Group	# Employed
1	Office and Administrative Support	92,250
2	Sales and Related	57,760
3	Food Preparation and Serving-Related	56,960
4	Education, Training and Library	41,760
5	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	41,280
6	Transportation and Material Moving	36,360
7	Production	35,900
8	Management	35,630
9	Personal Care and Service	26,850
10	Construction and Extraction	26,140

\*\*THE TEN HIGHEST OCCUPATIONAL GROUPINGS EMPLOY ALMOST THREE-QUARTERS OF THOSE WORKING MAINE. 2018 DATA AVAILABLE THROUGH THE U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS SHOWS THAT THE TOP THREE OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS FOR THE STATE ARE OFFICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT WITH 92,250 EMPLOYEES, SALES AND RELATED OCCUPATIONS WITH 57,760 EMPLOYEES AND FOOD PREPARATION AND SERVING-RELATED OCCUPATIONS WITH 56,960 EMPLOYEES. THESE THREE GROUPS, ALONG WITH THE OTHERS THAT ROUND OUT THE TOP TEN, INCLUDE APPROXIMATELY 451,000 EMPLOYEES AND ABOUT 75 PERCENT OF MAINE WORKERS. THE TOP TEN CATEGORIES AND NUMBER OF WORKERS IN EACH ARE PROVIDED IN THE FOLLOWING TABLE. STANDARD OCCUPATIONAL CODES (SOC) ARE ALSO PROVIDED FOR REFERENCE. THE HIGHEST, OFFICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, IS COMPOSED OF SUCH OCCUPATIONS AS CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS, AND STOCK CLERKS.

## Emerging demand industry sectors and occupations

Job openings and growth in the decade through 2026 are concentrated in two areas: human capital-intensive occupations that generally require postsecondary education and offer above average earnings, and labor-intensive functions that generally do not require high levels of education and offer lower than average earnings. Middle-income jobs that traditionally have had limited education or skill demands are either declining or rapidly changing, requiring increasingly higher levels of technology competency.

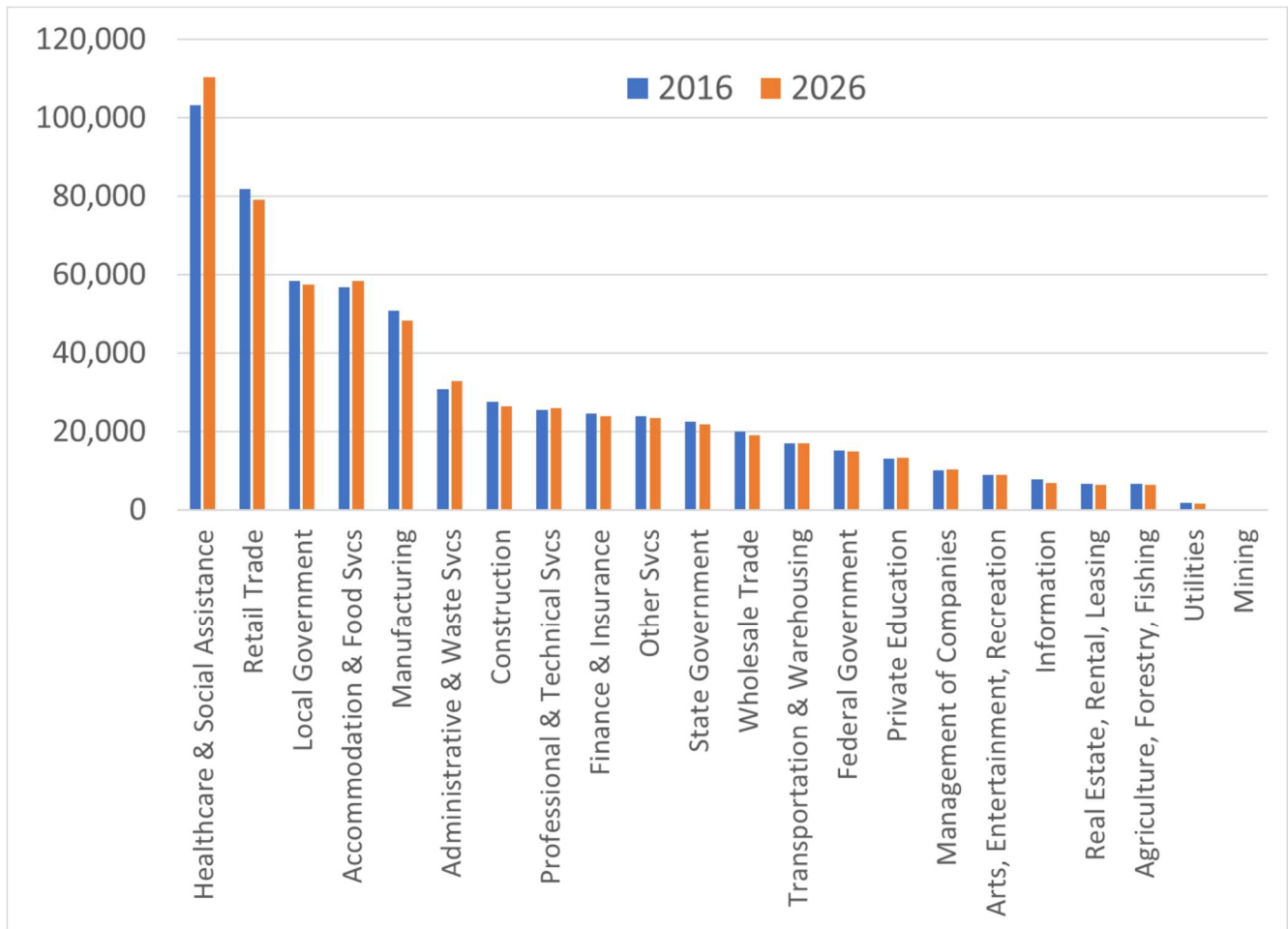


FIGURE 2: THE RATE AND DIRECTION OF JOB CHANGE VARIES BY INDUSTRY BUT IS CONSISTENT WITH LONG-TERM TRENDS. OVERALL, INDUSTRY STRUCTURE WILL BE LITTLE CHANGED OVER THE DECADE.



Health care is the largest sector in Maine, accounting for nearly 17 percent of jobs. As the chart below shows, Maine will see the largest growth in health-care related sectors over the next several years.

From an occupational standpoint, large numbers of physicians, nurses, laboratory, and diagnostic technicians will be required. Healthcare practitioner and technician occupations require postsecondary education ranging from certifications to highly advanced degrees.

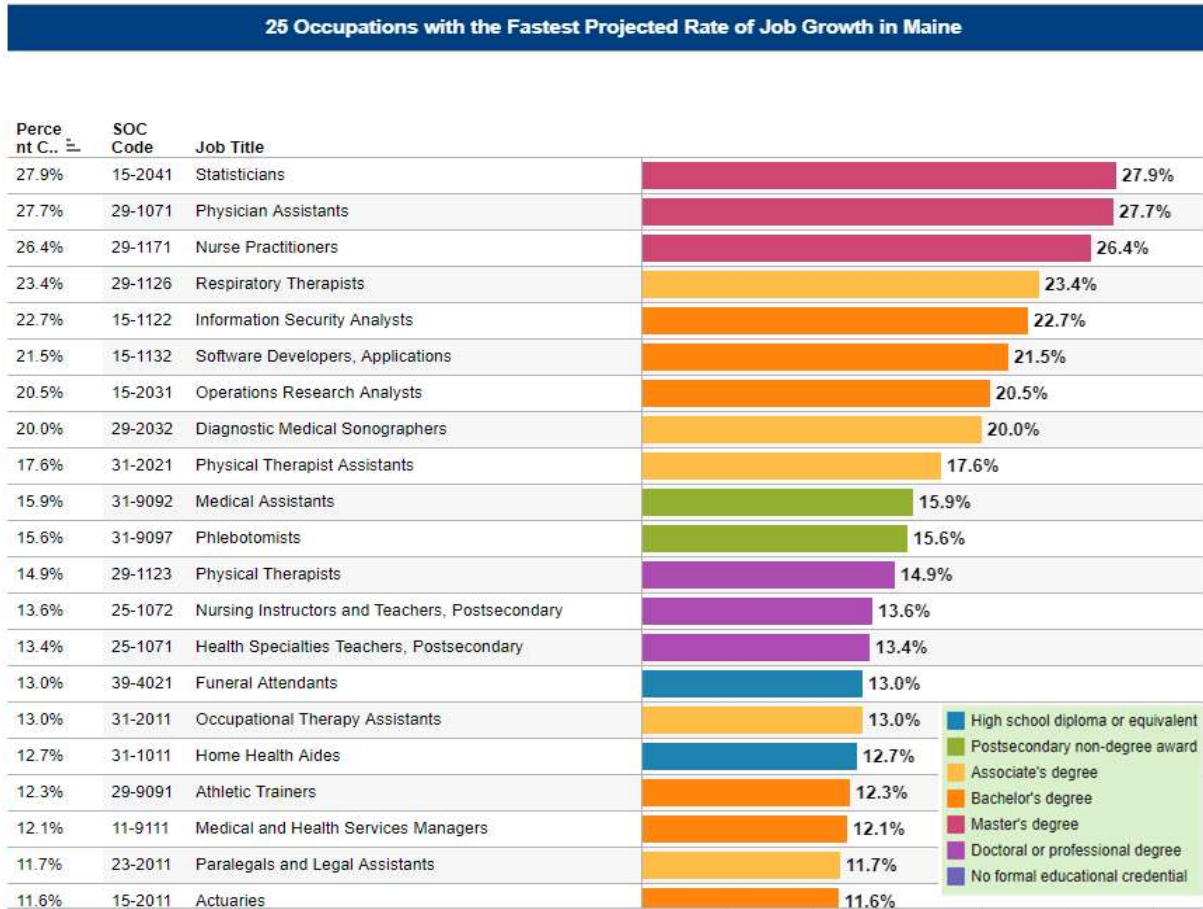


FIGURE 3: 25 OCCUPATIONS WITH THE FASTEST PROJECTED RATE OF JOB GROWTH

Even in occupations expected to have fewer jobs, there will be significant numbers of job openings because the number leaving jobs will be larger than the net reduction

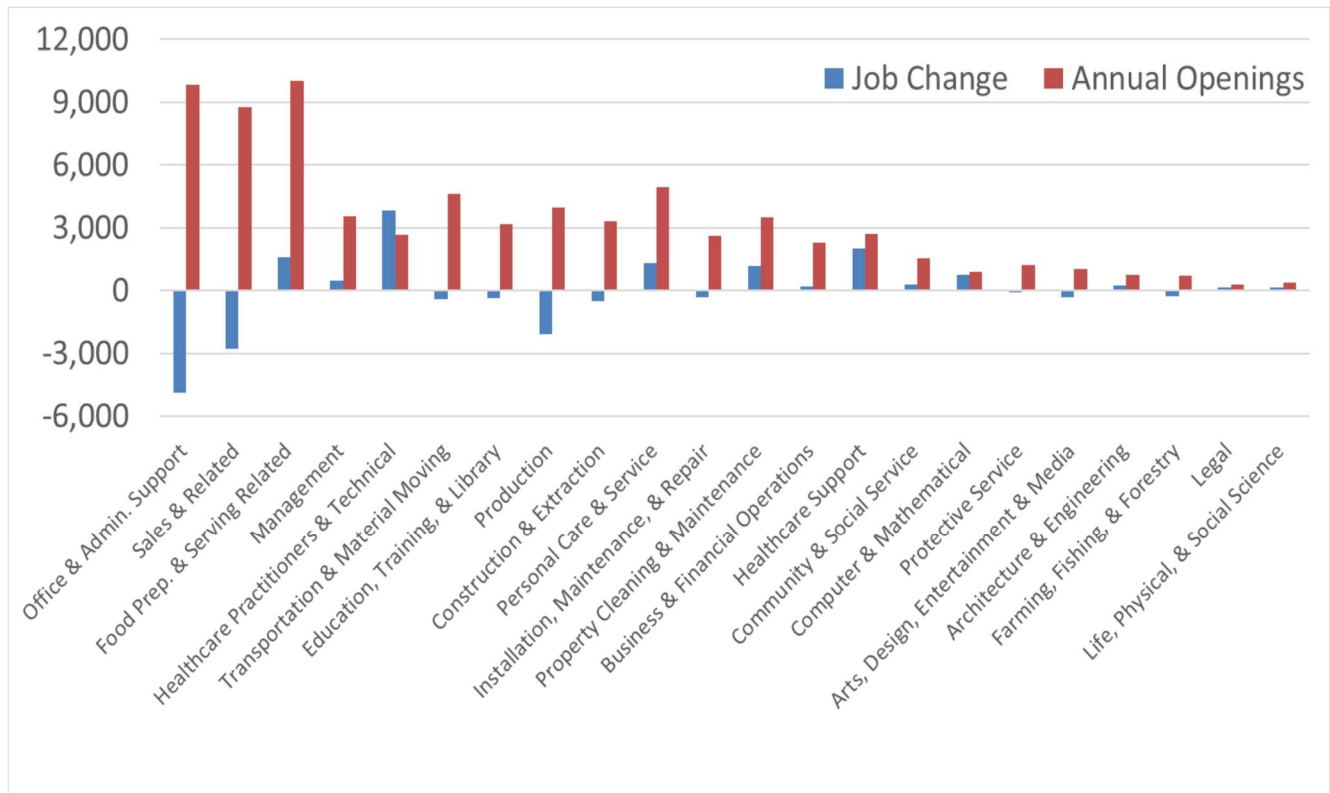


FIGURE 4: OCCUPATION JOB CHANGE VS. ANNUAL OPENINGS

Information technology (IT) is expected to continue to increase in importance across every sector of the economy, with IT-related occupations continuing to be among the fastest growing. Many IT jobs not only require certification in certain applications, but the types of applications, systems and platforms are fast changing requiring a flexible, adaptable workforce that is regularly pursuing continuing education. Additionally, technology competency will increasingly pervade most occupations, often in ways that cannot yet be anticipated.

Other areas of projected job growth include hospitality industries, including food service and other associated occupations with mostly limited education and skill demands.

Manufacturing was the backbone that built many cities in Maine in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Textile mills, shoe shops, paper and sawmills, and others provided middle income jobs for tens of thousands of workers without postsecondary education. The number of manufacturing jobs peaked in the late 1970s but declined sharply until about 2010 before stabilizing.

The forecast through 2026 is for fewer manufacturing jobs as automation continues to be adopted in an even wider range of processes. This will mostly impact the number of jobs in production occupations. This will also continue to be the case for jobs in administrative support occupations as office technology continues to advance, allowing people in professional and technical occupations to perform those functions digitally.

## LABOR FORCE ANALYSIS

### **Employers' labor force needs**

Employment has shifted towards industries with a greater share of educated workers. Over the last two decades, industries recording employment gains had a higher share of workers with a bachelor's degree than industries that shed jobs. The education, health, business and professional services industries have a higher-than-average share of workers with a bachelor's degree. Conversely, manufacturing and construction, which have shed thousands of jobs, have a lower than average share of workers with a bachelor's degree.

To a large degree, the changing educational needs of employers reflect the changing nature of work; that is, the shifting occupational structure of the workplace. Changes that have been taking place and are expected to continue include:

- An increase in higher level jobs and a decline in traditional manual occupations,
- Movement from skills associated with manual dexterity towards skills associated with understanding and monitoring complex systems,
- A shift away from routine processes toward coordination and collaboration,
- An increase of general work skills required in many jobs such as the ability to use computers,
- Expanded need for communication skills, and
- Jobs that include a broader range of responsibilities.

Even among production workers the demand for highly educated workers has grown. Since 1990 the share of production workers with some college or an associate degree and a bachelors' degree rose by 15 percentage points and two percentage points, respectively, even as the number of workers fell by 52 percent.

## Labor Force Participation

Maine has strong, talented, and hard-working people, however, for a range of reasons not enough Mainers have the opportunity to enter the labor force to contribute to the state’s economy. Maine’s workforce strategies will focus on increasing labor force participation by targeting those who are of working age and not currently engaged in the workforce – youth and young adults both in and out of school and work, veterans, individuals with disabilities, residents recovering from opioids and other substance use disorders, those formerly incarcerated, New Mainers, rural Maine residents and older adults. Each of these populations have residents with talent and interest in finding employment, and with tailored strategies that support their entry these potential workers will be tapped to fill vacancies and better support industry skill needs.

Labor Force Participation in 2018		
Population	1,340,000	
Institutionalized or Not Civilian Population	20,000	
Kids Under Age 16	220,000	
Civilian Non-Institutionalized Population Age 16+	1,100,000	100%
Civilian Labor Force	698,000	63%
Employed	675,000	61%
Unemployed	23,000	
Unemployment Rate		3.3%
Not in the Labor Force	402,000	37%
Age 65+	218,000	20%
Age 16 to 24 (most in school)	55,000	5%
Age 25 to 64	129,000	12%
With a Disability, not working	64,600	6%
With a disability that prevents them from working *	Unknown	Unknown
Enrolled in College or Graduate School *	33,600	Unknown
Total age 25 to 64 who are not in the labor force, not in school, and do not have a disability that prevents them from working	Likely less than 50,000	Likely less than 5%

*\*It is not clear how many adults enrolled in college or graduate school are or are not in the labor force. It is not clear how many of those with a disability who are not working are prevented from working by their condition.*

FIGURE 5: LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN 2018

Maine and the nation had a prolonged period of rising labor force participation from the 1960s to around 2000. About 68 percent of the population age 16 and over was in the labor force two decades ago. Since then participation has declined to around 63 percent today.

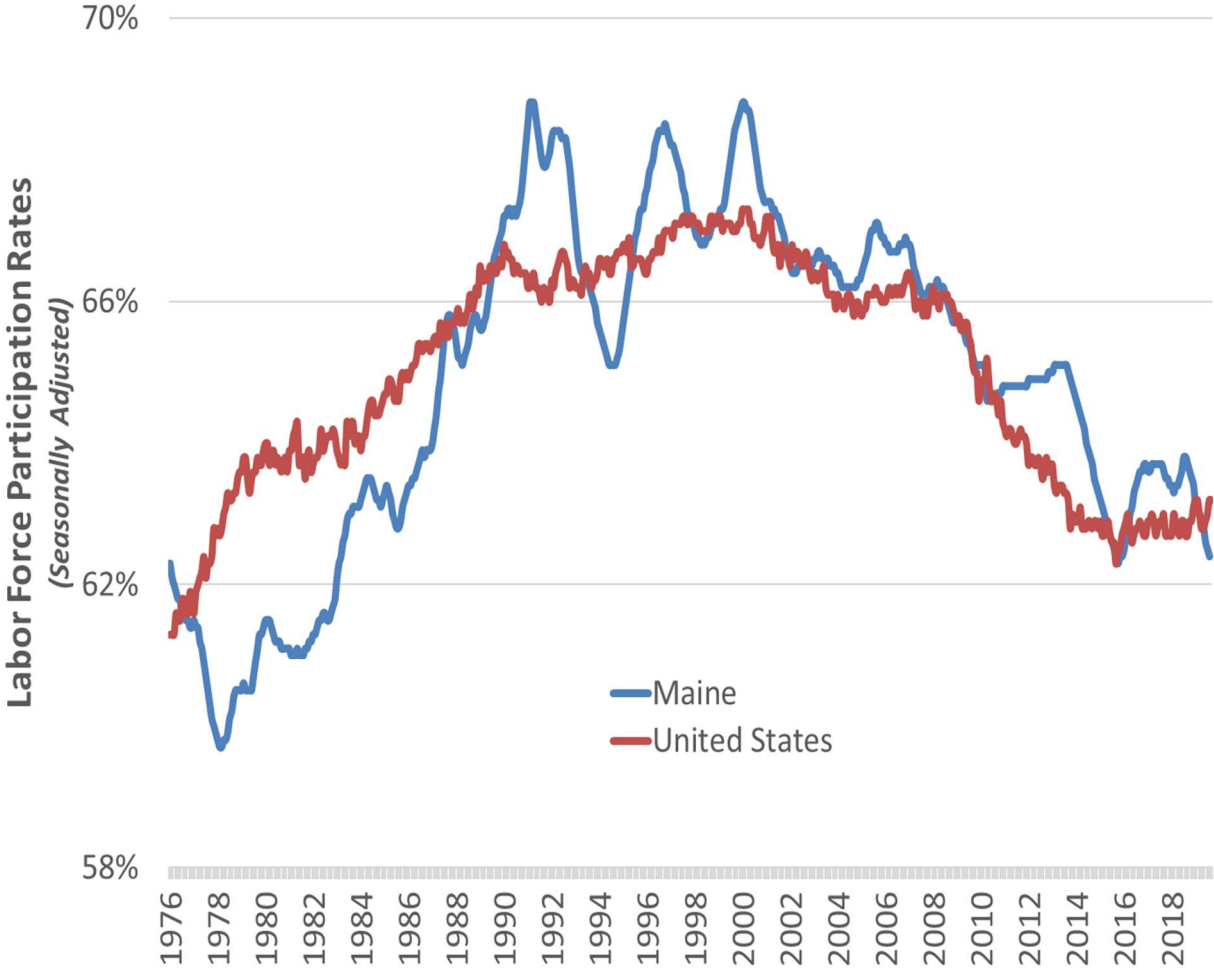


FIGURE 6: LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES

## **PRIORITY ONE**

### **PARTNER AND RESPOND TO BUSINESS TALENT NEEDS**

For Maine's economy to flourish, employers must have a ready supply of qualified workers. This plan lays out strategies for the workforce system which will grow the workforce by 30,000 people by ensuring that all programs and services are constructed to serve actual needs of the state's businesses and workers.

Maine's workforce system will:

- Align and coordinate with Maine's 10-year economic development plan to anticipate and prepare for the next generation of talent requirements by executing a joint business engagement strategy and continual cross-agency communication on business needs and opportunities.
- Work across state agencies to coordinate business marketing, outreach and engagement efforts to streamline business access to workforce services and talent.
- Establish strategies for regular engagement with regional business groups and industry associations to ensure alignment of education and training services with employer demand, focusing on priority industry sectors – health care, clean energy, Life sciences, forest products related to innovation in bio products, manufacturing, aquaculture and hospitality/tourism.
- Identify strategies to leverage private sector investment in training for their workforce, including use of apprenticeships and other work-based learning approaches, advancement strategies and an employer-of-choice designation for businesses offering quality jobs.
- Establish a small business engagement strategy related to employment, with a focus on rural areas.

## **PRIORITY TWO**

# **CREATE A SYSTEM OF LIFELONG LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT FOR MAINE RESIDENTS**

The success of Maine’s economy will ultimately be determined by the strength and quality of its workforce. Maine will build its workforce through a multi-faceted approach to ensure that employers have access to qualified workers, and residents have access to the necessary educational and training opportunities.

Maine’s workforce system will:

- Align public workforce programs and funding that support residents to increase their skills and education into a seamless continuum of programs and supports, with a focus on career pathways for in-demand occupations.
  
- Implement and expand priority industry sector strategies to build worker skills, knowledge and success through long-term support and engagement, including:
  - employer-defined career pathways with clear handoffs and connections throughout the process,
  - work-based learning, apprenticeships, incumbent worker training and other strategies that support simultaneously earning a paycheck and learning job skills, and a concierge service across state agency, non-profit and higher education portals to create a “no wrong door” approach for Maine workers.
  
- Establish coordinated and targeted strategies to engage those with barriers to employment in high-priority populations with plans that include specific goals for each population, including:
  - families, aligning with two-generation approaches that prepare both adults and children for economic success,
  - youth and young adults both in and out of school and work,
  - veterans,
  - individuals with disabilities,
  - residents recovering from opioids and other substance use disorders,
  - formerly incarcerated,

- New Mainers,
  - rural Maine residents, and
  - Older adults.
- Integrate essential work supports with workforce system strategies to advance employment success, including childcare, transportation, mental health, TANF and ASPIRE.



## **PRIORITY THREE**

### **BUILD AN INTEGRATED WORKFORCE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT IS ACCOUNTABLE TO WORKERS AND BUSINESSES**

Creating a workforce system that is accessible, data and demand-driven, and accountable to Maine workers and businesses will require an integrated and streamlined way of doing business. As a large geographic state with unique demographics and limited public funding, our workforce infrastructure must be nimble, efficient, and effective to meet the needs of current and future workers and businesses.

This plan will pursue initiatives that improves customer navigation, training programs, data-sharing, evaluation, accountability, and data driven decision-making.

Maine's workforce system will:

- Coordinate workforce, education and economic development programs focused on responding to changing business and worker needs.
- Align programs and services along career pathways and priority industry sectors, with a focus those with barriers to employment in high-priority populations.
- Re-brand and re-market Maine's workforce system so that it is recognized as transparent and easily accessible.
- Develop a common set of metrics across state agencies and move to an integrated data system.
- Leverage public funding to expand the capacity of the workforce system using private sector investments, philanthropic investments, and competitive federal procurements, and braid those funds to support seamless service provision and seed innovation.

## APPENDIX A – STATE WORKFORCE BOARD

Maine’s Workforce Board serves in an advisory capacity to the Governor. Its purpose is to convene 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, labor representatives and other stakeholders to achieve Maine’s strategic and operational workforce vision and goals.

<b>SWB Members</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Company or Organization</b>
The Honorable Janet Mills		Governor, State of Maine
Guy Langevin, Chair	Employer	Dead River
John Fortier	Employer	State Farm Insurance
Mary Kate Reny	Employer	Renys
Ashley Pringle	Employer	Maine & Company
John Herweh	Employer	MMG Insurance
Jon Mason	Employer	Bath Iron Works
Jim Nimon	Employer	Sanford Regional Economic Growth Council
Greg Sweetser	Employer	Sweetser Orchards
Luanne Ballesteros	Employer	The Jackson Laboratory
Robert Dorko	Employer	Sappi Paper
Scott Good	Employer	Crescendo Consulting
Colleen Hilton	Employer	Northern Lights Healthcare
Ed McKersie	Employer	Pro Search
Jason Shedlock	Employer	Maine Building & Construction Trades Council
Tracey Cooley	Labor or Community Org	Job Corps
Grant Provost	Labor or Community Org	Iron Workers Local 7
John Leavitt	Labor or Community Org	Carpenters Local 1986
Jen Fullmer	Labor or Community Org	Boots 2 Roots
Nathan Pelsma	Labor or Community Org	Jobs for Maine Graduates
Tarlan Ahmadov	Labor or Community Org	Catholic Charities of Maine
The Honorable Peter Baldacci	Chief Local Elected Official	Penobscot County Commissioner
The Honorable Steve Gorden	Chief Local Elected Official	Cumberland County Commissioner
The Honorable Robert Sezak	Chief Local Elected Official	Somerset County Commissioner

<b>SWB Members</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Company or Organization</b>
The Honorable Mike Sylvester	State Legislator	State Representative
The Honorable Ned Claxton	State Legislator	State Senator
Laura Fortman	State Official responsible for WIOA Core Programs	Commissioner, Maine Department of Labor
Gail Senese	State Official responsible for WIOA Core Programs	Maine Department of Education
Karen Fraser	State Official responsible for WIOA Core Programs	Maine Department of Labor
Denise Garland	Commissioner of Economic and Community Development or the commissioner's designee	Maine Department of Economic and Community Development
Dan Belyea	*Non-voting	Maine Community College System
Rosa Redonett	*Non-voting	University of Maine System
Sarah Gagne-Homes	*Non-voting	Department of Health and Human Services
Randy Liberty	*Non-voting	Commissioner, Department of Corrections
Nina Fisher	*Non-voting	Department of Transportation

## APPENDIX B – LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS

Maine has three local workforce boards that:

- serve to coordinate workforce development investment activities in their local areas, and
- administer and oversee Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title IB programs serving adults and youth with barriers to employment and dislocated workers.

Local workforce boards select workforce service providers to administer the WIOA Title IB programs (see providers listed under each local board below).

- The Northeastern Workforce Development Board serves Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Washington counties.
  - Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP)
  - Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC)
- The Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board serves Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, and Somerset counties.
  - Western Maine Community Action (WMCA)
- The Coastal Counties Workforce Development Board serves Cumberland, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo, and York counties.
  - Workforce Solutions - Goodwill Industries NNE

## APPENDIX C –THE MAINE CAREERCENTER SYSTEM



The Maine CareerCenter system, also known as the one-stop workforce system, is made up of multiple programs, providers and partners all working together to bring Maine businesses and workers together.

- Maine State Government
  - Department of Labor
  - Department of Health and Human Services
  - Department of Education
- The Maine Community College System and the University of Maine System
- Local employment, education, and training providers

Whether it's at one of the full-service CareerCenters or at a workforce partner's affiliate site, Maine businesses and workers can access employment and training services free of charge.

Maine CareerCenters assist businesses with:

- recruitment of new employees,
- customized and industry specific training,
- apprenticeship programs,
- labor market information, and
- much more.

Maine businesses can learn more by visiting Maine CareerCenter online - <http://www.mainecareercenter.gov/employers/index.shtml>.

Maine CareerCenters assist workers with:

- finding a first job, a better job, or a whole new career,
- finding the right training, registered apprenticeship program or educational opportunity, and identify the financial resources to make their plan possible,
- housing and childcare information,
- information about unemployment compensation, and much more

Maine workers can learn more by visiting Maine CareerCenter online - <http://www.mainecareercenter.gov/jobseekers/index.shtml>.

## APPENDIX D - MAINE'S WORKFORCE SYSTEM

Maine's workforce system is made up of multiple programs, providers and partners that are funded with federal, state, local, philanthropic, and private resources.

- Maine businesses and workers
- Maine State Government
  - Department of Labor
  - Department of Health and Human Services
  - Department of Education
  - Department of Economic and Community Development
  - Department of Corrections
- The Maine Community College System and the University of Maine System
- State Workforce Board
- Local Workforce Boards
  - The Northeastern Workforce Development Board
  - The Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board
  - The Coastal Counties Workforce Development Board
- Local workforce training providers, labor, and community organizations
- Philanthropic organizations

The State Workforce Board is committed to providing access, equal opportunity and reasonable accommodation to its services, programs, and employment. Please contact us should you require accommodation or alternative format materials.

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