



REACH: The Maine Employer Summit

May 23, 2023, Augusta Civic Center, Augusta, Maine

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Reach: The Maine Employer Summit was a one-day event for employers looking for resources and solutions to workforce challenges hosted by the State of Maine in partnership with the Maine State Workforce Board.

The following post-event evaluation is compiled from attendee responses in the onsite utilization of the Slido app (353 participants, 78% engagement) and the attendee survey (169 participants, 83% completion rate).

SURVEY SUMMARY

I. Registrants

- Total registrants: 507 (368 in-person, 139 virtual)
- Attended registrants: Estimated 363 (308 in-person, 55 virtual)
- Pre-registered industries:
 - 32% Education, healthcare, social assistance
 - 18% Nonprofit, government
 - 13% Professional and business services
 - 15% Infrastructure, trades, construction
 - 10% Hospitality, leisure, retail
 - 6% Manufacturing
 - 3% Financial activities
 - 3% Other
- Pre-registered staff size:
 - 47% 100+
 - 40% 1-50
 - 13% 51-100
- Attended industries:
 - 36% Education, healthcare, social assistance
 - 21% Nonprofit, government
 - 11% Infrastructure, trades, construction
 - 9% Hospitality, leisure, retail
 - 8% Manufacturing
 - 7% Professional & business services
 - 2% Financial activities
 - 6% Other
- Attended staff size:
 - 12% 1-10
 - 20% 11-49
 - 35% 50-249
 - 11% 250-499
 - 22% 500+

2. Objectives

Pre-Summit Poll: Why did you decide to attend the Summit?

Improve my understanding of the unique workforce situation in Maine



Network and learn tangible and effective best practices from other employers



Learn about state resources and/or programs and initiatives that could support our workforce challenges



Learn about populations that we have not tapped into yet



Post-Summit Poll: What was the most valuable aspect of today's Summit?

Improved my understanding of the unique workforce situation in Maine



Networked and learned tangible and effective best practices from other employers



Learned about state resources and/or programs and initiatives that could support our workforce challenges



Learned about populations that we have not tapped into yet



3. Key Take-Aways

- a. Attendees want the conversation to continue. They appreciated the event, found it worthwhile and would like to engage in the conversation more often and in more depth.
- b. Networking continues to provide the greatest value and opportunity for learning from peers.
- c. Attendees are looking for more solutions and actionable take-aways.
- d. Recruitment, housing and childcare are the biggest workforce challenges.
- e. Engaging with the immigrant and refugee community was among the most thought-provoking topics.
- f. Small businesses felt content was not actionable to their size/capabilities/limitations.
- g. Attendees gained awareness of the various resources and initiatives and supports available to them, but still remain unsure of their breadth, how to access them, and additional resources that might exist but

were not represented at the Summit. There is an interest for these to somehow be easier to find/consolidated to one location (like a general website), and to be better marketed to organizations.

4. Final Thoughts:

As event consultants, we know many factors are considered when assessing whether an event is successful – revenue goals, reaching certain constituents, satisfaction levels, etc. But perhaps most of all is attendee engagement and impact.

Maine's workforce challenges have no easy answer.

Based on the level of attendee engagement, the Summit was a success. Attendees were clearly hungry for the event, selling out well before the initial February event date, and continuing to grow in registrants through the rescheduled event in May. The number of thoughtful open-ended responses in the post-event survey indicates that attendees are still deeply invested in what they took away from the event, and are motivated to continue the conversation. Attendees were appreciative of the efforts to pull different sectors together to engage in conversation and try to find solutions. It is clear to attendees that Maine's workforce departments, boards and partners are working to help Maine's employers. Congratulations!

TALK TO US' QUESTIONS: (in Slido and onsite whiteboard/post-it feedback)

To ensure your business can thrive, what skills do you need developed within your workforce?

- We are having a very hard time filling roles for specialized trades such as chefs, equipment operators, electricians, welders. Wages are an issue for us in recruiting, however an increased connection with schools and organizations that teach these skills would possibly help increase our candidate pool.
- Leadership & soft skills working with public
- Computer skills. Adding boat building/commercial fishing element to trade school/ vocational programs
- Particularly soft skills (communication, initiative, planning, adaptability)
- Stress management, work/life balance, general human resources to help our employees thrive
- Please invite small businesses to speak. Thanks!
- Incentives to employers to create more remote roles. Draws more out of state and folks with disabilities

How can the State support efforts in attracting talent nationwide?

- Supporting local efforts to create more affordable housing opportunities for families and individuals.
- Small business supports for livable wages, health insurance and other benefits. Many are cost prohibitive for business to remain competitive.
- Affordable housing, public transportation for Rural areas, childcare for weekends or evenings.
- Somehow stabilize childcare opportunities so workers can consistently attend to their work responsibilities
- Encourage STEAM education from an early age
- Openly support healthcare for women, trans people and the LGBTQ+ community
- Showcase benefits of living full time in Maine to tourists while they're here
- Offer unique benefits
 - State Park pass
 - Onsite childcare
 - Elder care
- All starts with career planning
 - Communications skills
 - Management
- Make going to state funded education organizations less restrictive. Let's keep our kids here to work.

What key messages or components should be included in a State-led workforce attraction campaign?

- Promote the four-season playground that Maine is!
- Breaking down barriers to build Maine's workforce
- Quality of life
- Live in vacationland!
- Available housing – if there was any
- Apprenticeship programs for direct service professionals and case managers
- Promote in-state tourism – lots of kids want to leave Maine because they don't know what Maine has to offer outside their towns. Promote moving to other parts of Maine rather than moving away entirely.

The most valuable best practice(s) my organization has employed to support our workforce needs is...

- Professional development and career tracks within the organization. Mission based work that fulfills employees outside of competitive factors like wage, benefit, hours, etc.
- Creating flexible, remote positions to retain employees that have specific skills that are hard to come by in our business.
- Ongoing training- not just orientation but onboarding to the fullest degree
- Provide snacks and hydration throughout the workday, encourage mental health breaks; just acquired dental and vision offerings for our full-time employees; understanding and reasonable flexibility.

The most significant challenge(s) we face in recruiting and retaining workers is...

- affordable local housing.
- Childcare, transportation and wage competitiveness
- Applicants want higher wages than we can offer. We also have no public transportation for potential applicants that don't drive or have their license. (Searsport/Stockton Springs)
- What we can offer for salary- as a non-profit, we only have so much money to go around
- Finding candidates with STEAM focus
- The most significant challenges in recruiting and retaining workers include talent shortages, competition for talent, changing worker expectations, compensation and benefits, employee engagement and satisfaction, generational differences, workforce diversity and inclusion, employee development and advancement, and effective workforce planning. To overcome these challenges, organizations need to create positive work environments, offer competitive compensation and benefits, provide growth opportunities, embrace diversity and inclusion, and adapt to changing expectations.
- No affordable housing
- Wages and/or wage expectations
- Timely work authorizations for asylum seekers
- Childcare
- Career paths
- Immigrant transportation
- Low wages vs inflation
- More flexible benefits to allow employees to make them work for them
- We need to provide tools and resources to retain them
- Where to advertise successfully

What supports do you need to advance your attraction, recruitment, and retention efforts?

- Subsidies for childcare, low-cost workforce training options (Alfond training grant is awesome!), better healthcare options for groups.
- We need the commercial fishing industry to be able to thrive. The price of diesel keeps people from using their boats. We need a mode of public transportation in Rural areas. We need more options for childcare.
- Better incentives to offer a full health package to my employees so they would not lose their tax credit for ACA.
- Positive social media voices to counteract the one or two loud negative voices

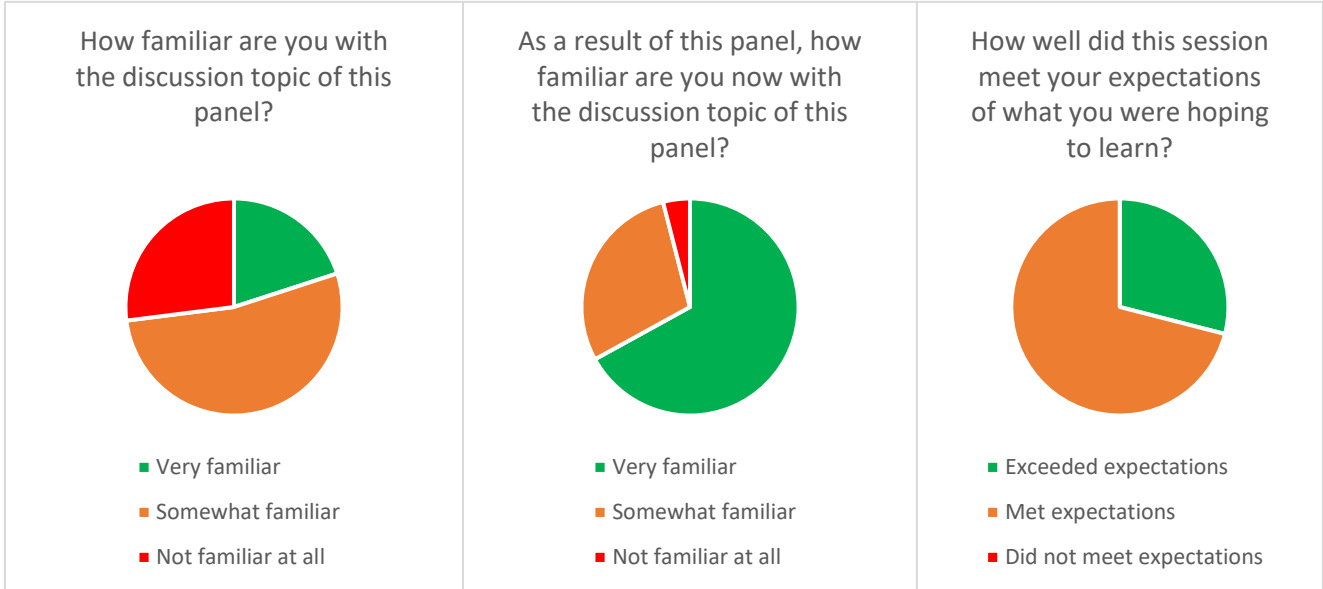
- Simplified eligibility and researching processes

Housing plays a key role in Maine's workforce strategy. What would you like to see come out of housing-focused efforts over the next few years?

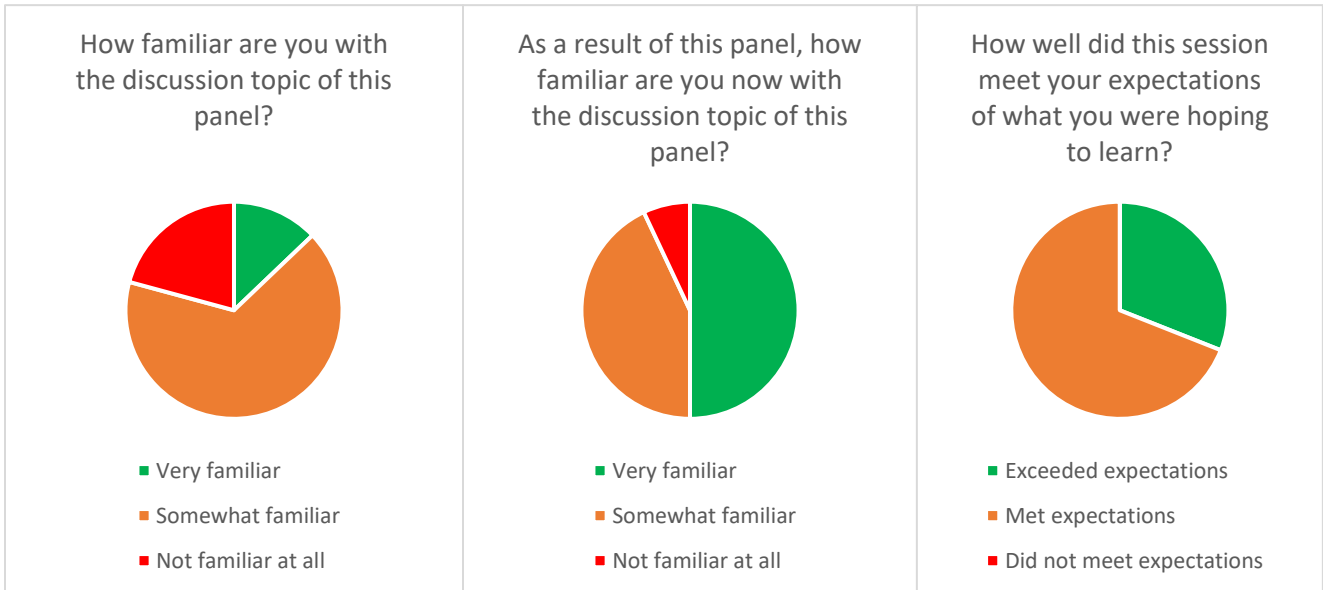
- More affordable housing
- Better incentives to buy a house
- Statewide strategy that addresses whole state and local
- Housing for new families in the \$175-\$225K range. Young families are moving away because they can't afford to buy a decent house.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS: (from Slido)

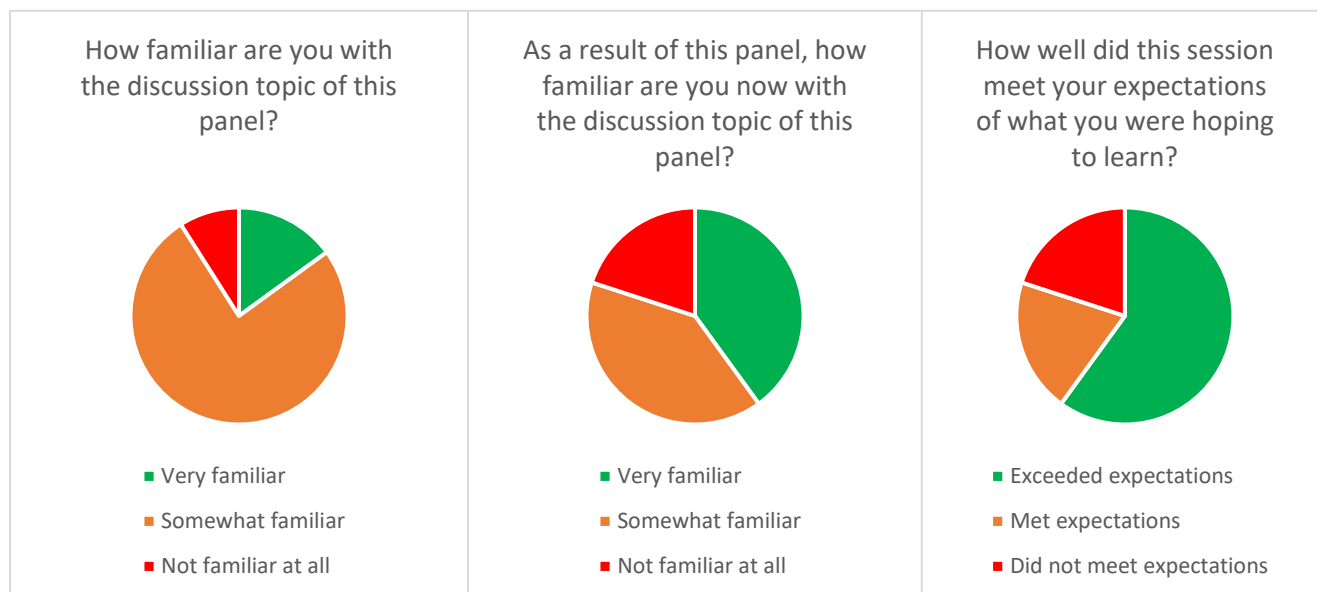
Partnering with Employers to Address Childcare Challenges



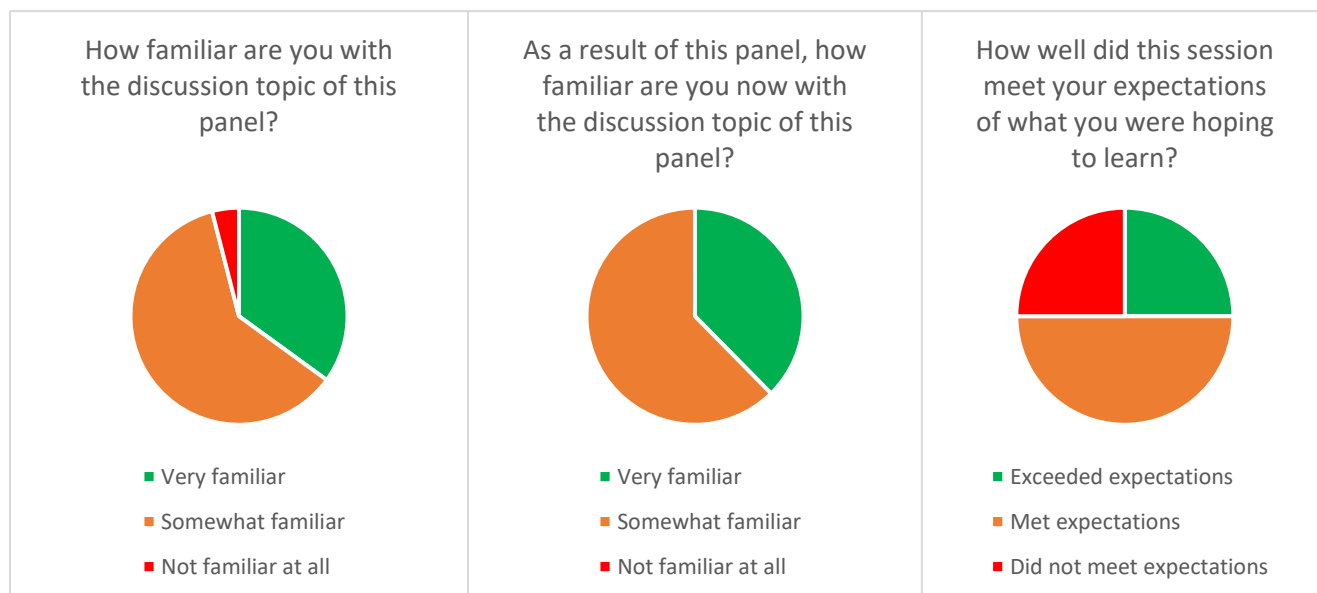
Connecting With & Supporting the Recovery Community with Employment



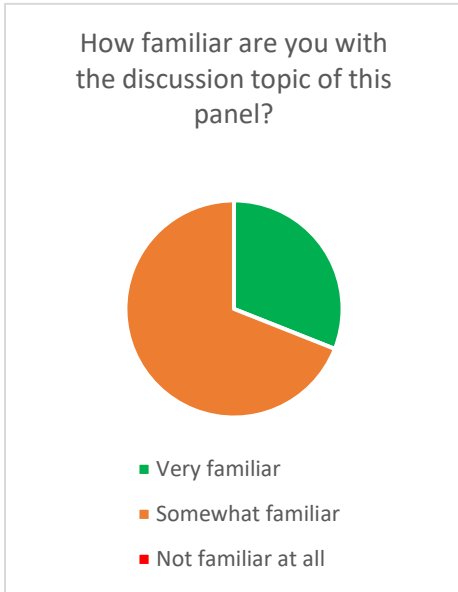
Sector-Based Solutions & Employer Partnerships to Overcome Shared Workforce Challenges



Attracting & Retaining Young Adult Workers

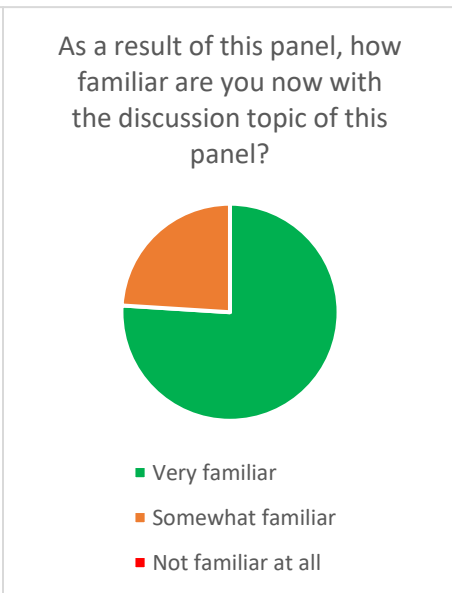
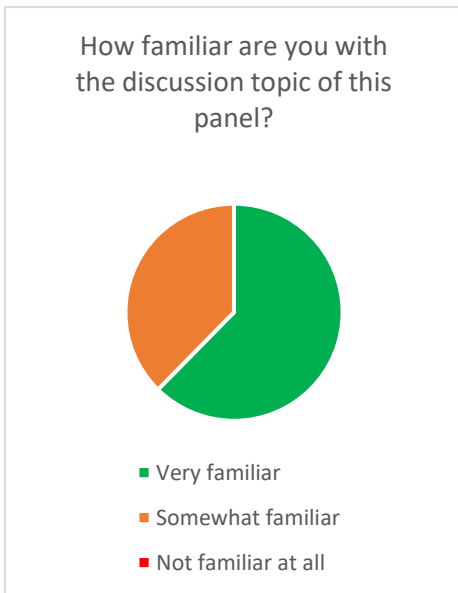


Worker's Rights & Safety: Job Safety, Overtime & Work Permits

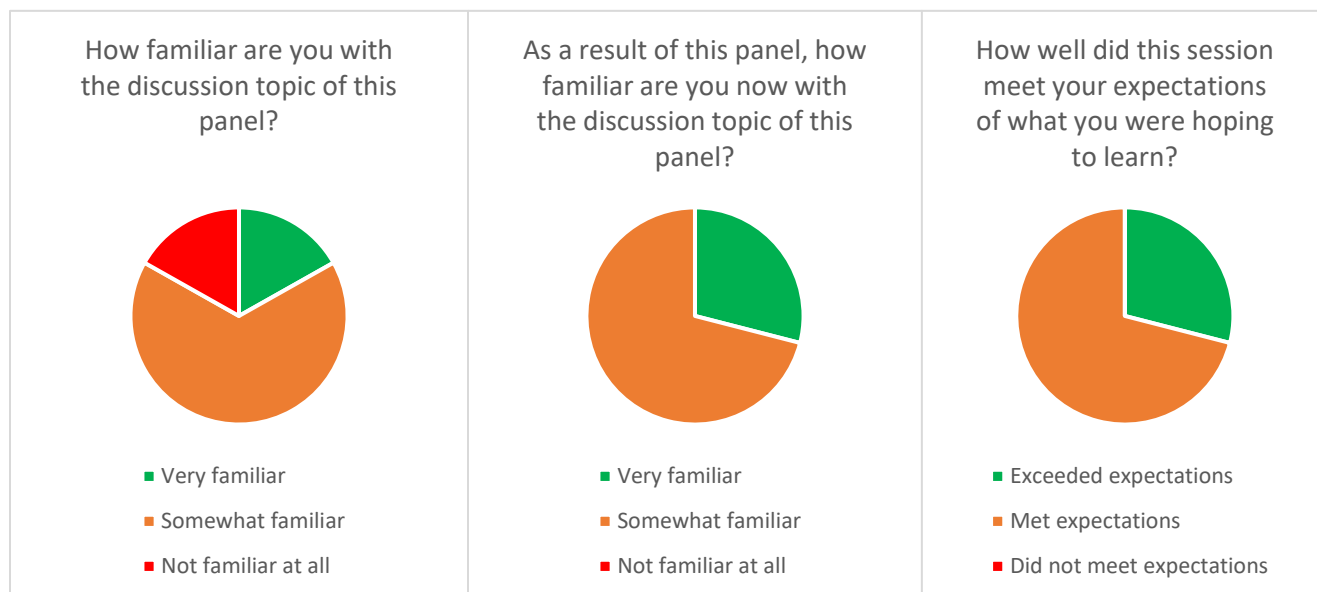


Post-session survey was not administered.

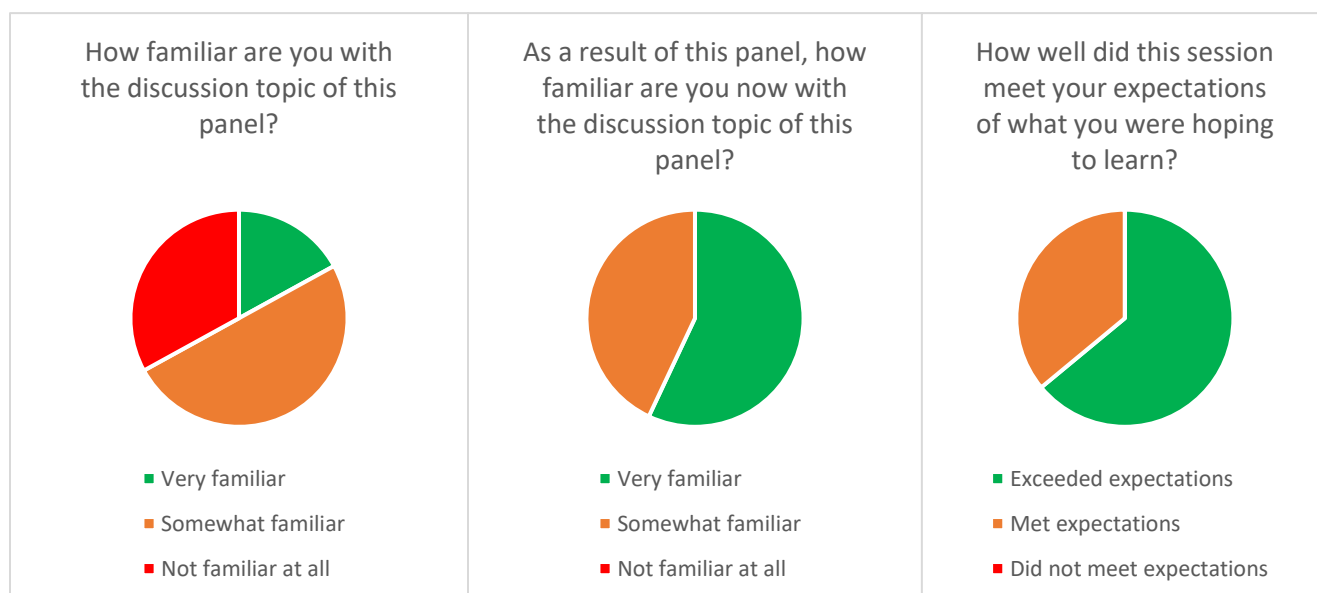
Updating Recruitment Processes



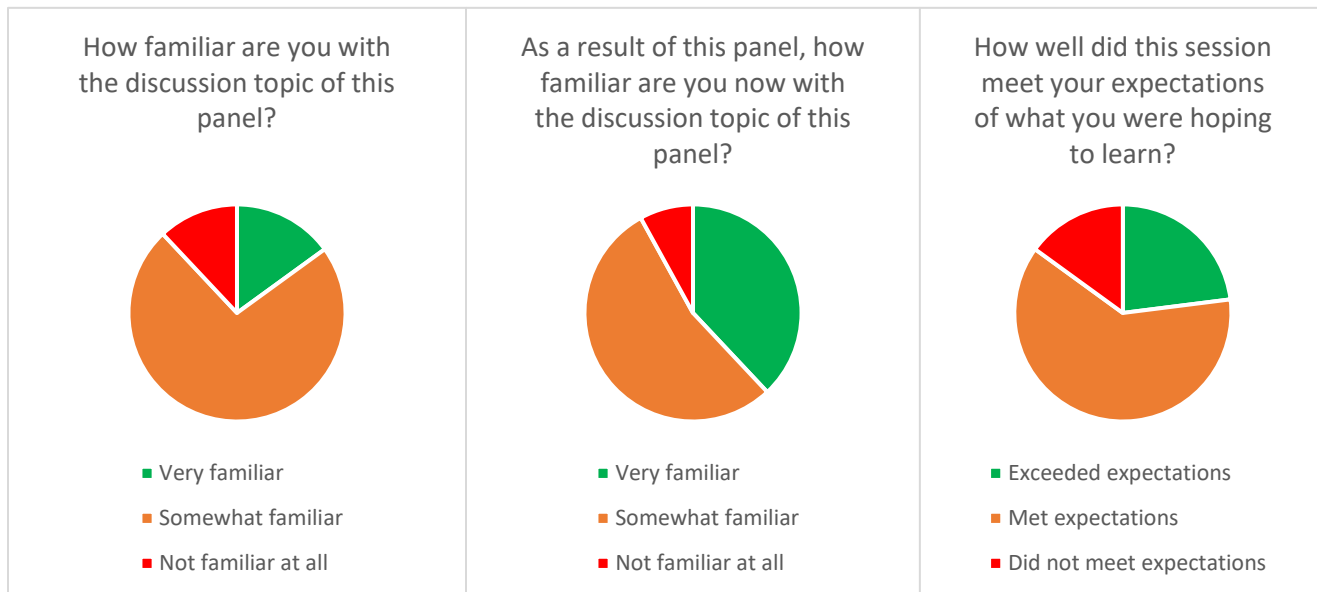
Maine-Based Practices of Connecting with and Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Workers



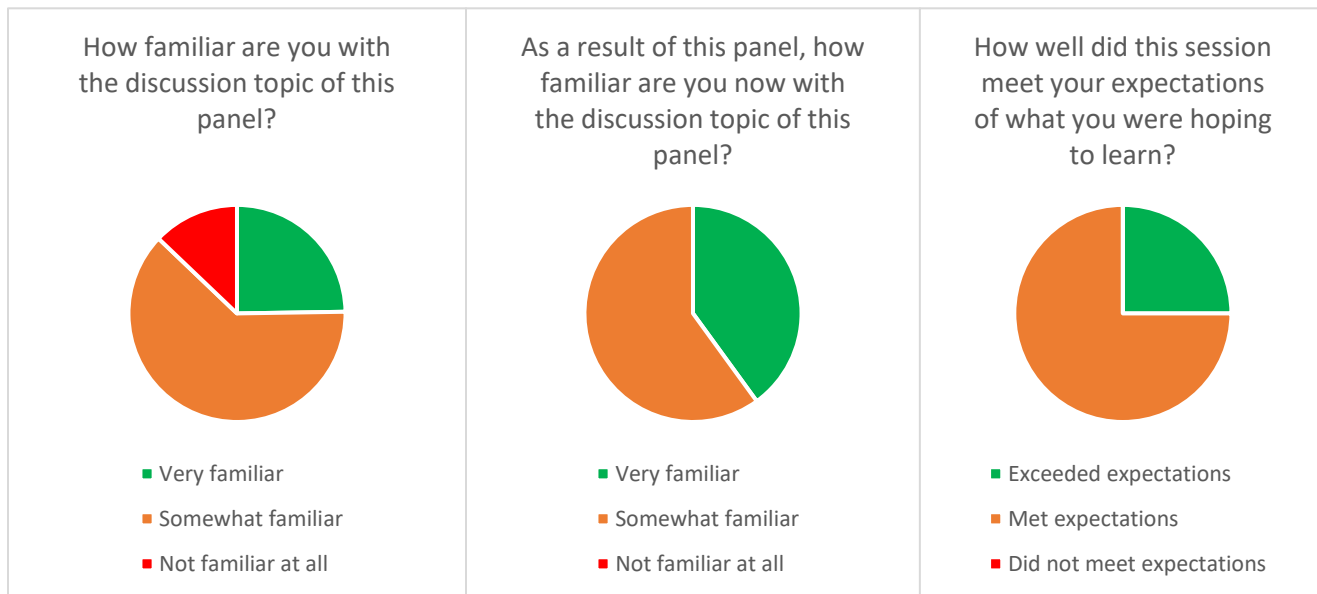
Hiring & Retaining Older Workers



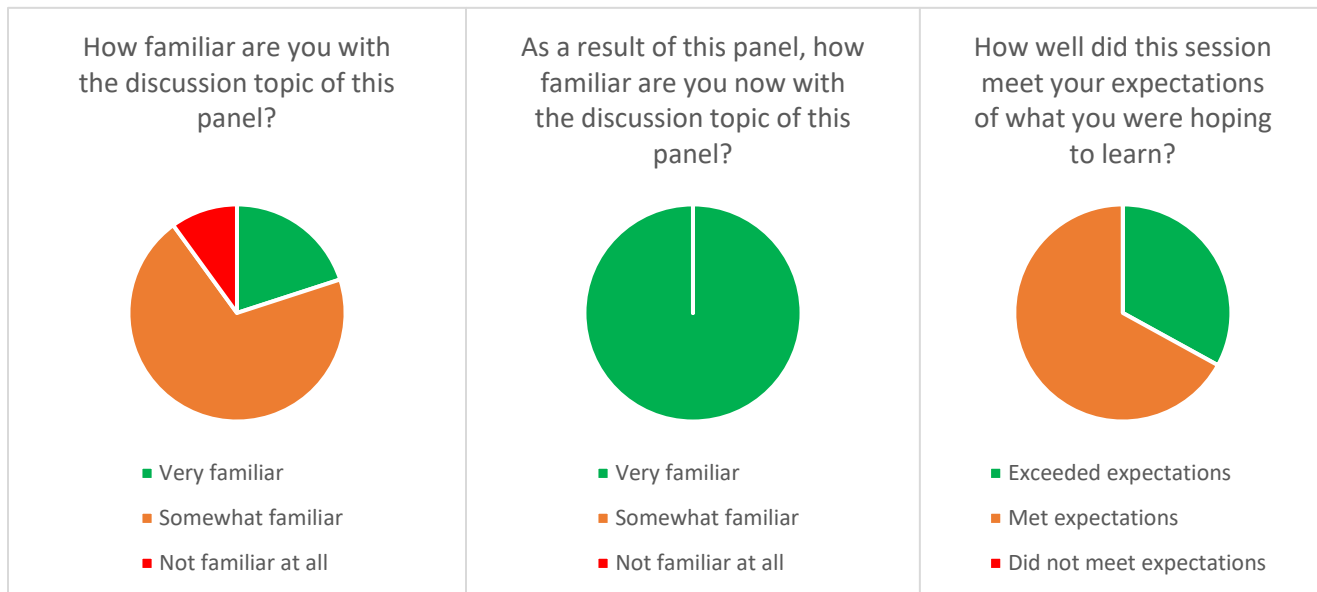
Creating Appealing Entry-Level Jobs with Flexibility & Opportunities to Advance



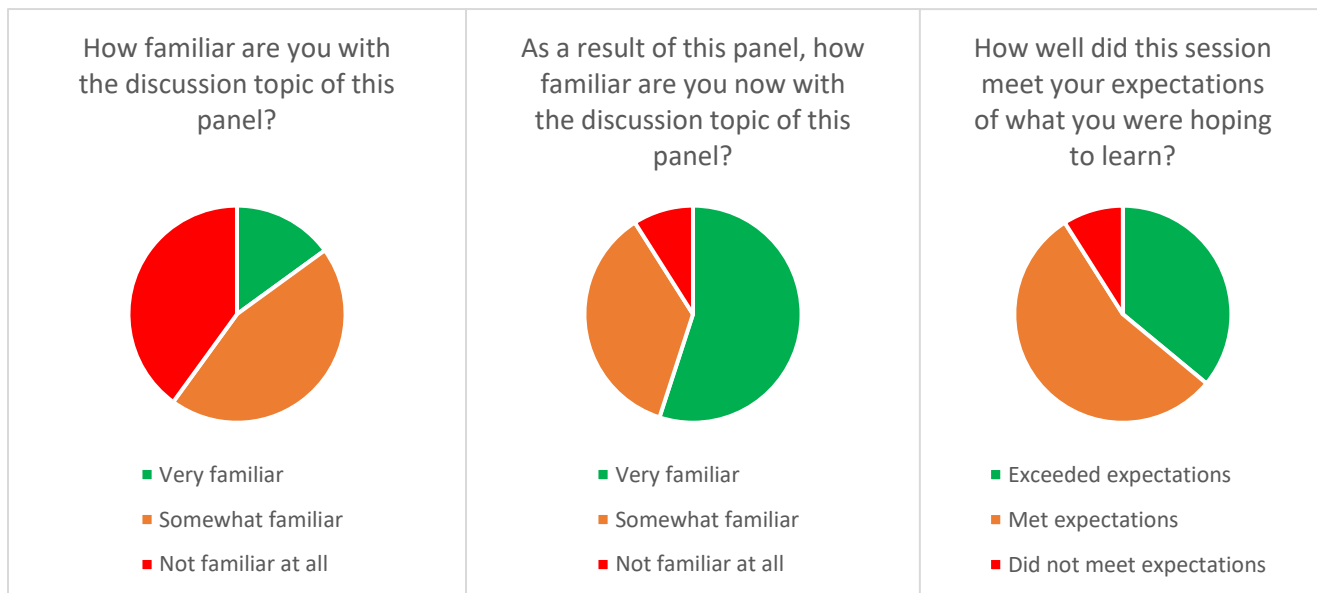
Retaining and Accommodating for Individuals with Disabilities



Innovating to Address Workforce Transportation Issues



Connecting With & Supporting the Re-Entry Community with Employment Opportunities



SURVEY RESULTS: (as of 5/26/2023, 169 responses)

1. Did you attend in-person or virtually? (145 responses)
 - **81% in-person**
 - 19% virtually

2. If you were registered but did not attend, why? (24 responses)
 - **71% Something came up/I had a conflict**
 - 13% I forgot about the summit
 - 17% other (rescheduled date did not work for me)

3. How would you rate Reach: The Maine Employer Summit? (119 responses)
 - 21% Excellent
 - **45% Really Good**
 - 25% Good
 - 9% Ok
 - 0% Not Good

4. As a result of the Summit, how would you rate your awareness of Maine's specific workforce challenges? (117 responses)
 - **73% Very Aware**
 - 27% Somewhat Aware
 - 0% Not Aware

5. As a result of the Summit, how would you rate your awareness of the various initiatives, resources and supports that exist to support your workforce needs? (117 responses)
 - **54% Very Aware**
 - 46% Somewhat Aware
 - 0% Not Aware

6. How helpful was the Summit in providing resources or practical ideas to address your workforce challenges and implement in your own operations? (117 responses)
 - 17% Extremely Helpful
 - **39% Very Helpful**

- 26% Helpful
- 17% Somewhat Helpful
- 1% Not Helpful at All (1 person)

7. A best practice, program or innovation I learned at The Summit that I'd like to try is... (58 responses)

Top Answers:

- Maine Career Exploration program
- Conducting a survey with recent hires to evaluate our own hiring process
- trying new recruiting tools
- Omitting the term "entry-level job" and replacing it with "foundational job." This is relevant to adults entering a new position after retirement, military service, or a career change.
- I will be looking into the apprenticeship supports/programs
- Being able to open a table at a Career Center to recruit/work more with local Career Center
- Adding information on our job descriptions that international degrees could be considered along with domestic accredited programs.
- Maine GO and the Maine Childcare program

Additional Answers:

- Connecting with high schools through Career Exploration, JMG, etc. instead of trying to do so directly for added "clout" which may inspire reciprocal connection.
- Providing childcare forms (for childcare stipends) upon hire and an employee evaluation at 90 days to determine what's working and whether anything needs to be changed/improved upon.
- Try PLUM assessments to help get a good fit for our organization.
- develop some more defined career pathways at my company
- I very much appreciated hearing about the firsthand successes of employers across the state and how they met a variety of workforce challenges head on.
- Helping companies understand the benefits of adding technology that allows for a greater pool of candidates to work and find greater satisfaction with a job.
- Setting up and DCFA
- Creating partnerships with other businesses and resources to help with recruitment needs.
- Accessing resources for employees.
- Just the opportunities to find applicants throughout Maine.
- Recruiting the older workforce
- re entry into workforce for incarcerated women
- Creating an EVP

- Offering ESOL in tandem with other growth opportunities because we're looking at employees as immediate contributors and not "ten years from now when English is good" contributors, which is silly and wasteful.
- Partnering with resettlement programs to recruit the immigrant or refugee community.
- Some general ideas that I picked up from other employers with ideas to implement for retaining employees and improving culture within the existing workforce.
- The child care savings account. Also adding the child care link to inboard material... although I've heard that it's incomplete and hard to navigate so parents get frustrated with it. But I haven't tried myself yet.
- putting labor law posters into multiple languages
- The new mainer population is key to our business survival.
- Innovating the hiring process
- Questionnaire for new Americans 2 weeks after hire.
- Focus on New Mainers and supporting their transition into good paying, quality jobs.
- ELO as another resource for youth engagement.
- Ways to engage with populations not yet represented.
- I am in the business of helping employers. I found it to be a great networking event and the opportunity to learn from their perspective.
- Best practices around hiring and recruitment.
- Rewriting job postings to be receptive to immigrant and refugee applicants.
- Harold Alfond training "scholarship" program.
- Training support for employees
- Mentor programs
- The Employee Life Cycle
- RISE Up certification and credentials for retail.
- Transportation management system
- Instead of calling people "immigrants", call the "new Mainers" instead....
- Creating more pipeline programs for staff already employed.

8. The workforce topic I want to learn more about is... (53 responses)

Top Answers:

- Recruitment
- Tapping in to immigrant/refugee community/Supporting immigrant and refugee workers
- Small business tools/how small businesses make this work
- Recruitment for healthcare
- Retention

-
- re entry into the workforce

Additional Answers:

- The idea of accessing the recovery community has promise, but how exactly to do this was largely unmentioned.
- How to run a successful apprenticeship program.
- Bonuses- sign on bonuses, years of service bonuses, etc. How are other employers doing them and are they effective? Balancing pay scales within a nonprofit. As minimum wage has increased, newer employers are often making only a few dollars less than senior staff and even newer management.
- Specific ways to recruit those in the disability community
- Transportation solutions
- Healthcare
- How to to implement universal accessibility principles into workforce training programs
- Resources available for new Mainers
- The Maine Career Exploration opportunities for students.
- Attracting and retaining young adult workers
- Training programs and grants
- Programs that support employers as they train new hires.
- Apprenticeship partnering
- Improving barriers to childcare
- Maine resources for offering multilingual training options. Like Microsoft Office in French and Swahili, for example. Do those exist?
- Culture changes, systemic changes, buy in from management to affect the changes we need to make an actual difference.
- How small businesses can retain employees when state government and larger businesses have greater resources.
- English as an essential requirement
- How to develop workforce housing if we are going to attract out of state workers.
- Veteran hire
- How to engage employers as active (they invest time and money) partners in this work
- Partnering with Maine local universities and possibly career centers in the high schools.
- How to attract educators to Maine
- How to attract the younger generation. The class held did not cover this at all, more so the systems they were using, not about attracting younger employees.
- establishing culture in the workplace

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- Supporting employees with mental health illnesses.
 - public-private partnerships; specific ways for employers, workforce development agencies, and educational institutions to partner up
 - How to actually FIND employees
 - Workforce authorization for immigrants
 - Education/professional development as a recruitment and retention tool.

9. What would have improved your experience? (59 responses)

Top Answers:

- Nothing, it was great!
- Having more than one networking/brainstorming session at the end. Maybe three 20-minutes ones with 3 different experts instead of one hour-long one with one expert.
- More options as a virtual attendee
- Getting actionable plans/best practices/tools/tips/solutions for the different topics
- Building was too cold
- More description of sessions/speaker info

Additional Answers:

- Attending in-person
- Photographer was distracting
- More about small business and rural areas
- More opportunities for employers to discuss their challenges. I think we are all still a bit misguided in our approaches. While upskilling and apprenticeships are commendable and necessary, our real challenge is the lack of people available to work in this state.
- A representative from the young adult workforce to share their expectations and challenges in finding and retaining work.
- More interactive learning opportunities
- The last keynote and panel was so informative and vital for Maine. It was an important topic and too many people left after lunch. It would have been nice to see it highlighted early in the day.
- More non-profit participation
- More employers in the room
- More sector based conversations
- Longer morning sessions
- Repeat the sessions so we can go to all of them

- The speakers, information, etc, was largely focused on industries/companies that hire primarily in person for healthcare and trades. I support an organization that is Maine-based, global and publicly traded, with a majority of the workforce working remote or hybrid. A lot of the opportunities and best practices shared didn't resonate with the roles or workforce I recruit / support. The panel discussions were helpful, but would have liked to hear presentations from experts, more focused on the topic / process, rather than question/answer from multiple people.

10. What would you like to see regarding next steps? (45 responses)

Top Answers:

- More events like Reach! Keep the conversation going.
- Share slides/recordings/resources
- How to implement some of the solutions and ideas presented
- Increased aware of the website for other employers to access with information on the resources that were shared at the summit

Additional Answers:

- Partnering with other organizations & seeing the state facilitate that/Offering follow up Zoom meetings throughout the year for different sectors to meet and have further discussions. Discussions including progress made since the Summit, any new challenges or continued challenges, etc./ Other ways of connecting with business regarding hiring practices, retention of staff and best practices.
- A quarterly presentation on companies that are doing well with recruiting and retention with the communities covered in the Summit. How did they get to where they are, and how could we take steps in Maine to follow in their footsteps?
- Quarterly half day workshops digging into the issues we have regarding employment and training challenges and opportunities
- Focus needs to be placed on affordable housing so that local residents and immigrants, both domestic and international, can create lives here in Maine.
- A brainstorming session with young adults. Seniors in high school, freshman college students. How can we get this potential workforce to invest in Maine jobs as their future.
- Address this again, as things progress. Advertise old programs and new programs and initiatives that will be coming as our demographics change.
- Heavier emphasis on green industries.
- Initiatives related to childcare assistance for Mainers.
- More business-to-business technical assistance workshops.
- A part two with everyone's feedback implemented, including longer action planning/partnership blocks where we start forming those relationships instead of just listening together. Listening and learning is good, but action is where the real difference will happen.
- A nonprofit, sector specific summit would be helpful

- The companies best positioned to take advantage of the various programs that the State presented at the conference are the large companies in the state that have the staff and resources to set up rideshares, offer childcare, build career pathways, participate in sector initiatives--in other words, the companies that need the least amount of help. Why is the default always "here's money, you design the program, business" as though small businesses have the time, wherewithal, or resources to do that?
- Ask people to send in examples of successful results that were percolated during the summit. It could help support another summit in future years.
- I know you preferred for people to participate on-site, and if you host in southern Maine, I may do so in future, but please don't disregard the enormous value of the virtual streamed sessions. Even though I could not attend every breakout I wanted, I still pull great information from the streamed sessions. I hope you continue to offer the virtual option if you do this again
- I would like a briefing every month
- More information of the initiatives to solve barriers like affordable housing, transportation and childcare in rural areas.

11. Is there anything else you would like to share? (42 responses)

Top Answers:

- Great experience/great job/great time/great networking/well organized/nice energy
- Have full sessions devoted to specific sectors (healthcare, education, retail, etc.)
- Great speakers, specific shout-outs to:
 - Gal from K & A
 - Jess in the older workers session
 - Mike in the opening talk – data was GREAT
 - Closing panel

Additional Answers:

- It was unfortunate that the Dept of Education was not represented at this summit. I'm not sure how we can have discussions about workforce needs in the state without the group who is preparing our largest pool of available candidates, our students.
- Advise against using color coding to break into groups. This is an accessibility issue for people with varying degrees of color blindness.
- Was it intentional to have so few businesspeople in attendance? Seemed overwhelmingly nonprofit and government. The voice of business pretty silent.
- The closing speaker was very powerful. Also, the companies that had the most exposure were big Maine companies. It would be helpful to hear about small company initiatives.
- I'd like to see the state use the messaging from the final panel to education the general population to truly understand that asylum seekers and immigrants are the key to a vibrant and healthy future for Maine.

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- More questionnaires, more about hiring immigrants, and more about recovery and cannabis in the workplace. These are topics we ALL face and need to address. More about resources for employers. I did not even know about a few of these until this conference, which means there are more!
 - Hands on training in peer workforce development, career mapping, and DEIB plans
 - More solutions

12. What best describes the industry you are in? (117 responses)

- **24% Healthcare & social assistance**
- 12% Education
- 3% Hospitality & leisure
- 6% Retail
- 2% Financial activities
- **21% nonprofit & government**
- 8% Manufacturing
- 11% Infrastructure, construction & trades
- 7% Professional & business services

13. What best describes your organization's staff size? (117 responses)

- 12% 1-10
- **20% 11-49**
- **35% 50-249**
- 11% 250-499
- **22% 500+**

-END-