

Maine Employer Summit Recap: May 23, 2023

Overview

The Maine Employer Summit was on Tuesday, May 23, 2023 at the Augusta Civic Center. The primary goal of the event was to convene employers along with workforce system employment and training partners to share best practices, brainstorm solutions and connect with resources to support workforce recruitment, retention, and advancement challenges.

More than **500 individuals registered for the event** with approximately **300+ in-person participants** at the Civic Center and the remaining participating virtually. Participants represented employers from all sectors—with the majority from healthcare & social assistance organizations, professional and business services, and the hospitality sector. Employer participants represented small and large businesses—with about one-third of participants from businesses with less than 50 staff and one-third with 250+ employees.

Sector	Registrants
Education, Healthcare, Social Assistance	136
Nonprofit, Government	93
Infrastructure, Trade, Construction	70
Hospitality, Retail, Food, Leisure	50
Professional & Business Services	49
Manufacturing	36
Financial Activities	15
Grand total	451

Sessions and Content

Breakout sessions focused on topics that were identified by the State Workforce Members as key opportunities or challenges within their workforce ([Full schedule here](#)).

Those included:

- Opening session focused on the **current landscape of Maine's workforce** via data shared from the Center for Workforce Research and Information and a closing keynote Kerem Durdag, Chief Operating Officer from Great Works Internet and representatives from Gateway Community Services, Ready Seafood, World Education Services/Global Talent Bridge, and Tyson Foods on **connecting and supporting the advancement of immigrant and refugees** in the workforce
- **Population-specific sessions** focused on attracting and retaining: young adults, older workers, individuals with disabilities, individuals in recovery, individuals in re-entry, and immigrants and refugees
- **Workforce strategy sessions** focused on upskilling through apprenticeship and worker training, shifting recruiting practices through examining job descriptions, and developing employer and industry partnerships to tackle shared workforce challenges, among others
- **Systemic barrier**-focused sessions addressing workforce transportation and childcare challenges



Panelists across our sessions included nearly **30 employer speakers** sharing out best practices to other employers about how they are leveraging State resources or innovating in other ways to address workforce challenges ([full speakers list](#)). These included:

- **Maine Seacoast Vegetables** shared out how they as a smaller business were able to connect with vocational rehabilitation to connect with and employ individuals with disabilities
- **The Nonantum Resort** shared that the benefits of employing individuals in recovery far outweighed risks for their company and encouraged other employers to partner with local recovery centers
- **Sunday River** discussed how their MJRP workforce transportation grant funded a van pool to connect employees to work from more distant communities
- **LL Bean** shared how they are recruiting and supporting older workers in the workplace by increasing awareness of ageism through staff training and being intentional in their hiring practices
- **ReVision Energy** shared how they are building a strong pipeline to energy careers through MJRP-funded pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs

Preliminary anecdotal outcomes

- Participants provided feedback that the most valuable component of the Summit was:
 - **Networking and learned tangible and effective best practices** from other employers (48%)
 - Improving my **understanding of the unique workforce situation** in Maine (44%)
 - Learning about **State resources** and initiatives that could support our workforce challenges (35%)
- DECD's **Maine Career Exploration Program** had 30+ employers sign up to participate in their job placement & shadowing programs
- **DHHS childcare** staff connected with at least 5 employers that were interested in exploring how to offer on-site childcare to employees
- The **Bureau of Rehabilitation Services** team talked to 10+ new employers about offering new work-based learning placements for individuals with disabilities
- The **Maine Apprenticeship Team** had 10+ employers sign up to learn more about becoming an employer sponsor of apprenticeship



Additional information feedback from the event included participant evaluation and all recorded sessions will be available next week

