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**Maine Industry Partnerships Program**

**Goals and First Stage Deliverables**

**Background**

Industry partnerships provide the foundation for Maine's demand-driven workforce strategy, which is designed to meet the workforce needs of businesses, the career goals and training needs of workers, and Maine’s economic development goals. The Maine Department of Labor aims to cultivate and sustain a wide range of industry partnerships in industries that are either foundational or emerging in the state, provide skills needed for the future, and represent the diverse expertise, regional resources, and changing needs of Maine residents.

Anticipated results for the establishment and growth of industry partnerships in Maine include:

* Regular coordination between employers and the workforce system resulting in increased employer satisfaction
* Career pathways are in place and related increases in employee advancement
* Employers report increased ease of hiring and greater retention
* Industry partners report an increase in quality jobs within their sector
* There is an increase in diversity in the workforce of employers at all levels of their organization
* Employers report increased ability to meet their customers’ demands because they have a qualified and available workforce
* Residents report increased understanding of how to enter and advance in an industry or career pathway

**Industry Partnerships Key Players**

Industry partnerships are typically led by members from private businesses in the aligned industry sector. These members are most often C-suite or other executives or those who have been granted decision making powers for the purposes of the partnership. The goal is always to have multiple businesses represented and from a variety of types of businesses (large and small, established and start-ups, regional and national, etc.). In addition to the private businesses, successful industry partnerships engage members from these types of partners:

* Chambers of Commerce
* Public agencies (state, county, municipal, as needed, as well as local workforce boards)
* Educational partners (K-12, higher education, trade schools, and others who provide non-traditional educational pathways)
* Tribal organizations
* Labor unions
* Aligned non-profits
* Community partners
* Members of the public who would be considered the targeted community for a specific initiative

**Maine Sector Strategy Collaborative**

The State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) will establish the Maine Sector Strategy Collaborative [[1]](#footnote-1)to assist industry partnerships throughout the State of Maine, ensuring they have the support they need to flourish. The Collaborative will be to:

* Provide sustainable and ongoing infrastructure to support the growth of industry partnerships in the State of Maine
* Adopt a shared vision that is supported by documentation from key stakeholders as appropriate to Maine’s workforce system, which meets employer needs, produces long-term positive outcomes for workers and their communities, and designates agreed-upon milestones
* Act as a convenor for standing up new partnerships, growing existing partnerships, and providing a platform for broad engagement between partnerships across the state and regularly engage key stakeholders
* Assist industry partnerships in achieving the *Strategic Areas of Focus for Industry Partnerships* by working with employers, training participants, worker-serving organizations, employees, government agencies, and other organizations to solve problems within sectors and help grow sectors by developing trust and a base of knowledge about the organizations and businesses
* Align state policies and leverage resources across Maine’s workforce system to ensure industry partnerships are successful
* Work with industry partnerships to provide wraparound services to workers, specifically identifying the services (childcare, healthcare, transportation, etc.) employers reasonably anticipate that workers will need, and work with community-based organizations, local government, and other key partners to deliver this work effectively to industry partnerships
* Leverage available public and private resources and support, where possible and appropriate, partnerships’ pursuit of ongoing funding in the form of grants or foundation backing.
* Serve as the primary home for tracking industry partnerships occurring across the state and for communicating the progress and successes of those partnerships
* Maintain up-to-date information on jobs, wages, and benefits and collect and report data on outcomes for Industry Partnership programs
* Serve as a subject matter expert in the field of industry partnerships and provide training and support for new and existing partnerships

The Maine Sector Strategy Collaborative shall be made up of the following entities:

* Maine Department of Labor
* Maine Department of Economic and Community Development
* Maine Department of Corrections
* Maine Department of Education
* Maine Department of Health and Human Services
* Maine Community College System
* University of Maine System
* Local Workforce Development Boards

The Collaborative will provide the following framework for Maine businesses:

* Provide a means to engage directly with industries by organizing businesses, employers, workers, labor organizations and industry associations into a collaborative structure that supports the sharing of information, ideas, and challenges common to their industry.
* Facilitate economies of scale by aggregating training and education needs of multiple employers within targeted industries.
* Focus scarce resources on targeted industries, as well as focus comprehensively on the workforce skills, from entry level to advanced, required to grow Maine’s economy.
* Better align state programs and resources serving employers and workers to reduce inefficiencies and streamline state efforts by coordinating various programs and braiding disparate funding streams intended for the same purpose.
* Help Maine businesses identify and collaborate to recruit new workers from a diverse pool of individuals seeking jobs, retrain dislocated workers, hire foreign-trained professionals, retain incumbent workers, and adopt new technologies to foster on-the-job learning.
* Develop and strengthen career ladders within and across companies, enabling entry-level workers to improve skills and advance to higher-wage jobs.

**Strategic Areas of Focus**

Building on initial Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan investments the SWDB launched the Industry Partnerships Program in 2022. Based on the results and experience in this pilot program, the SWDB has identified four strategic areas of focus for industry partnerships.

1. **Maine’s industry sectors are organized with participation of multiple employers, of different sizes, with a statewide reach. Industry partnerships will:**
   * Organize businesses, employers, workers, labor organizations and industry associations into a collaborative structure that supports the sharing of information, ideas and challenges common to their industry cluster
   * Regularly collect and analyze workforce-related data from employers in their sector to understand trends, opportunities, and gaps to be addressed
   * Develop and strengthen clear career pathways within the industry sector that fill needed skill gaps and enable entry-level workers to improve skills and advance to higher-wage jobs
   * Identify the training needs of multiple businesses, especially a shortage of skills that are critical to the competitiveness and innovation of the industry cluster and facilitate economies of scale by aggregating training and education needs of multiple employers.
2. **Industry partnerships will coordinate with Maine’s workforce system, both regionally and statewide, to strategically align efforts and resources to:**
   * Connect workers to education and training, career pathways with stackable credentials, and work supports that enable them to retain and advance in the workplace
   * Create connections with Local Workforce Development Boards and partners across the workforce system to ensure employer demand and resident skill interests are met
   * Establish industry partnerships as an integral part of Maine’s workforce system, fostering and strengthening relationships between, and among, education and training programs working to address the needs of related industry sectors
   * Facilitate relationships, remove barriers, and leverage and align resources between participating departments and agencies of State Government and employers working to address the needs of related industry sectors
   * Inform and collaborate with CTE’s, Local Workforce Development Boards, youth councils, business-education partnerships, secondary and postsecondary educational institutions, and parents and career counselors for the purpose of addressing the challenges of connecting disadvantaged adults and youth to careers.
3. **Industry partnerships are focused on the development of quality jobs so that:**
   * Maine industries agree upon a common definition of a quality job
   * Employers are using best practices to create and/or offer quality jobs that lead to retention and advancement for employees, and to filling critical skill gaps for employers
   * Industry partnerships foster a commitment to a positive workplace culture with an emphasis on embedding equity practices and policies
   * Industry partnerships and their employers identify and collaborate to address common organizational and human resource challenges, including, but not limited to, recruiting new workers, retraining dislocated workers, hiring foreign-trained professionals, retaining incumbent workers, implementing a high-performance work organization with quality jobs, adopting new technologies, and fostering experiential and contextualized on-the-job learning
4. **Maine’s industry sectors are better able to attract talent both within and outside of Maine through industry partner initiatives that:**
   * Help companies attract potential employees from a diverse pool of persons seeking jobs including, but not limited to, veterans, New Mainers, BIPOC populations, people with disabilities, youth, women, older workers, and individuals with barriers to employment
   * Establish common outreach and marketing strategies for industry employers to recruit new employees

**Highlighted Industries**

The Maine Industry Partnerships Program has aligned its long-term goals with the Governor’s 10-year plan for economic development and highlights the following industries as areas of focus.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Foundational** | **Emergent** | **Skills of the Future** | **Additional** |
| Healthcare  Education  Hospitality/Retail | Advanced Manufacturing  Forestry  Energy & Infrastructure  Defense & Space Innovation | IT/Cybersecurity | Agriculture  Aquaculture  Creative placemaking  Lifesciences  Outdoor recreation |

**First-Stage Deliverables for Maine’s Industry Partnership Program with Timeline**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Deliverable** | **Anticipated Completion Date** | **Notes** |
| Industry Partnerships Program Overview & One Pager | September 13, 2024 | To be presented to SWDB for review |
| Industry Partnerships Grantee Meeting | December 13, 2024 | Discuss future of IPs and brainstorm ideas. Solicit 2-3 ideas for potential additional funding. Present findings to SWDB. |
| Identify Collaborative member organizations and representatives | December 1, 2024 |  |
| Full Collaborative membership list with contact information | December 13, 2024 | Distribute to SWDB |
| Collaborative Committee First Meeting | Mid-January 2025 (Virtual) | Led by Molly Thompson and Chris Quint for the purpose of establishing roles and responsibilities for members and outlining plans for 2025 |
| Audit of all industry partnerships currently in progress in Maine with descriptions of their work and contact information | December 13, 2024 | Distribute to SWDB |
| Launch Best Practices webinar series for 2025 with four webinars per year in February, April, September, and November | Launch in January 2025  Complete by December 2025 | One round table with 2 current grantees leading discussion  Content TBD but metrics likely to be one |
| Create Industry Partnerships website within WorkSource Maine | TBD – Aiming for June 2025 | Will house information on all partnerships in the state with links to their sites and contact info |
| Schedule of webinars posted online, and invitations sent | January 15, 2025 |  |
| Quarterly progress reports | Week before each board meeting | Delivered to SWDB |
| Annual report | December 2025 | Delivered to SWDB |

**MJRP Industry Partnership Grant Program**

To meet the needs of those industries disrupted by COVID-19, the State Workforce Development Board (SWSB) launched the Industry Partnerships Program. The $3.7 million program, part of the Governor’s workforce strategy and a key priority to Maine’s long-term economic growth, has funded six Industry Partnership initiatives, which include a combination of businesses, industry associations, education and training providers, and community-based organizations. The projects were funded in 2020 with the bulk of the projects starting work in 2023.

The Industry Partnership Grant Program is focused on the recruiting, retention, and career advancement of workers in meaningful, good-paying careers. Through the program, the SWDB supports sector-based approaches to identify each industry’s most important workforce needs and works with training and educational organizations to provide trainings that develop skilled workers to meet the needs to Maine employers, creating strong pipelines of workers through structured career pathways.

**Maine Development Foundation/FOR Maine – Forest & Forest Products Secotr**: The goal of this partnership is to build a resilient and diverse forest products sector workforce by creating workforce and education pathways, mitigating obstacles and misperceptions, expanding education, and training, and creating recruitment and retention strategies for future workforce development.

During the past year, the “Business of Maine's Forest Products Sector” course with Washington County Community College was launched, starting on November 21, 2023. The initial cohort of 43 students is expected to finish in 2024 with another 18 students scheduled to complete the course by the end of summer. The course will use industry and workforce partnerships to link Mainers with jobs, support resources, education and industry experts.

FOR/Maine has also partnered with New Ventures Maine to host high school students and teach them about engineering and forest product sector jobs that are available.

**Maine Tourism Association - Hospitality & Tourism Sectors**: The goal of this partnership is to connect students, parents, and job seekers to jobs in hospitality and tourism. The initiative will develop trainings for current industry employees focused on retention of valuable staff and highlighting the opportunities for growth within the hospitality & tourism sectors.

The Maine Tourism Association held the Tourism Workforce Summit on October 25, 2023, which brought together 140 business leaders, associations, service providers, and more for a full day to discuss workforce issues that impact the industry. Another Tourism Workforce Summit has been planned for this October 22-23 and will be held at Thomas College in Waterville.

Content has also been created on social media and YouTube, highlighting careers in tourism and hospitality in Maine. [TourismForME](https://www.tourismforme.com/) showcases hospitality and tourism careers around Maine, including work in restaurants and for the Portland Sea Dogs.

**Maine Business Education Partnership - Retail Sector**: The goal of this partnership is to recruit, train, and explore best practices that will enhance the professional development of new hires and upgrade the skills of incumbent workers in the retail sector. The program will also introduce the “Retail Career Pathways Partnership” to students, assisting them in achieving a positive career trajectory at 50 recruitment events and field trips for high schoolers interested in the retail sector.

Currently, there are over 300 individuals enrolled in or already completed RISE Up trainings that provide nationally recognized credentials in the retail industry. The Maine Business Education Partnership has 27 retail employers from around Maine engaged in their work.

**Children’s Oral Health Network of Maine - Oral Health Care Sector**: The goal of this partnership is to drive a significant expansion of the oral health workforce statewide by creating a new entry point on the career pathway and training new workers to support the needs of the sector and the patients they serve.

The training for the Oral Health Navigator position is in the final stages of development and review with an anticipated rollout in 2024.

In partnership with COHN and MCD Global Health, during the Spring Semester, UMA's Dental Health Programs held the newly designed class, RDH to IPDH: Transitioning from a Registered Dental Hygienist to the Integrated Independent Practice of Dental Hygiene (IPDH). Recruitment materials went out to over 200 people. Over 40 Maine-based dental hygienists statewide sought information regarding this course, 30 fully enrolled, and 29 completed the entire seven-week course. 28 people received full tuition reimbursement through the DOL Tuition Remission Program providing over $75,000 to UMA to cover costs associated with the course.

This course was so successful MCD Global Health is creating a companion toolkit to support RDHs in their ongoing efforts to pursue IPDH authority.

**Northeastern University, The Roux Institute - Health Care Sector**: The goal of this partnership is to develop a pilot program that connects pre-clinical, post-baccalaureate students with front-end healthcare opportunities in Maine to address both the short-term and long-term needs of Maine’s health care sector and convening healthcare providers in the state to identify critical job openings.

There are 23 individuals that were hired in the first cohort of participants in the pilot program among five different employers. The second cohort received over one hundred applicants, with more interest from graduates from out-of-state than the first cohort. Only 27% of the second cohort applicants listed a Maine residence.

**Maine Labor and Resource Center - Healthcare & Social Services Sectors**: The goal of this partnership is to bring together 22 health and welfare-related community-based nonprofit organizations and small businesses to form a sustainable partnership in the healthcare & social service sectors. The partnership will focus on elevating jobs within the healthcare & social services sectors by working directly with employers to build clear career pathways to advancement, and recruiting and supporting immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in these roles, as well as providing ESL classes.

The Maine Labor and Resource Center has done significant amount of work to set up their infrastructure and making connections with businesses and non-profits in the Lewiston-Auburn region. They have worked with nearly 70 New Mainers to connect to trainings and write their resumes leading up to being able to work in Maine.

1. Maine Revised Statutes; Title 26: Labor and Industry, Chapter 39: Maine Industry Partnerships [↑](#footnote-ref-1)