

MAINE UNIFIED  
WORKFORCE INNOVATION  
AND OPPORTUNITY ACT  
STATE PLAN 2024 - 2027

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## I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### I.(a) PLAN TYPE

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The following pages outline Maine's four-year strategic and operational plan for enhancing its workforce. Maine, like the rest of the nation, is returning to regular operations after the pandemic, has experienced a significant economic recovery, and is experiencing low unemployment similar to pre-pandemic levels. This plan is developed with the intent of continuing the success of Maine's businesses and engaging people whose employment barriers have kept them from thriving in this economy.

This is a Unified Plan developed in accordance with the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to establish the long-term agenda for Maine's workforce development system. This plan covers the following programs authorized by the WIOA:

- 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

Under the direction of the Maine State Workforce Development Board (hereafter referred to as the State Workforce Board or SWB), the aforementioned programs and other stakeholders participated in facilitated sessions to develop the vision and priorities for the Unified Plan and to collaborate on the development of an integrated, performance-based employment and training system. This Unified Plan will result in quality jobs for Mainers, employers matched with skilled workers, and a more efficient workforce development system (WDS).

### I.(b) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## II. STRATEGIC PLANNING ELEMENTS

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Three months after the [Maine 2020-2029 Economic Development Strategy](#) (hereafter referred to as the 10-year strategy) was released, the first Covid case was detected in Maine. A lot has happened since then. The original plan gave Maine a roadmap to address the immediate impacts as well as invest in improvements of the long-standing systemic challenges. The Governor, working with the legislature, invested \$400 million in federal recovery funds into workforce training, the green

economy, broadband, and infrastructure. Maine's GDP has grown faster than any other New England state and even faster than New York or California. Incomes are up more than inflation. Tourism revenue is up. Traffic is back on the highways. Public places are open again. Now it is time to look at the next set of actions to continue progress toward the goals.

Maine has already met two of the three ten-year goals in the 2020-2029 Strategy. Growth in real wages and growth in productivity have both exceeded 10% in the last four years. But the continuation of these positive trends is not guaranteed in the future; we still have work to do. On the third goal of labor force growth, we have made significant progress but still fall short of where we need to be. And Maine needs to do more to ensure that the benefits of growth are shared by everyone – Mainers of all regions, races, physical abilities, and sexual orientations.

Now is the time to look at the next set of actions to continue progress toward the goals.

This update reaffirms the vision and 7 strategies of the original Plan. However, it revises and adds 57 new actions for implementation. The actions are based on current market data and inputs from discussions with hundreds of Maine people during 2023. Many of these actions are extensions of work that was initiated in the last few years. While the work has started it needs to be sustained to achieve long term goals.

The vision of the Maine 2020-2029 Economic Development Strategy – and Maine's Unified Plan – is:

*By 2030, Maine will be an international leader with a vibrant, sustainable, environmentally responsible economy. All across the state, the people of Maine will have access to an unmatched quality of life and good paying jobs.*

## 10-Year Plan Refresh

Maine used a collaborative process to establish the vision, goals, and strategies represented in the original plan, and this collaboration continued into the creation of Maine's Economic Recovery Plan during the pandemic and now with the refresh of the 10-Year Economic Development Plan. The SWB was directly involved in the revisioning of the 10-year plan, with the intent that the plan 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.

Building on the previous work, the SWB cohosted seven statewide visioning sessions with the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) to gather input into the review of

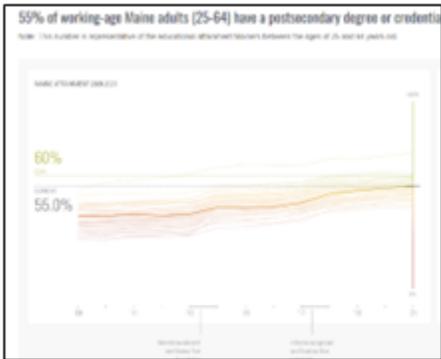
the State’s 10-Year Economic Development Plan and Workforce Strategic Vision. These sessions were also cohosted with the Local Workforce Development Boards and Local Economic Development Districts. The SWB and DECD also joined nearly 40 additional partners and stakeholders at their own events and meetings to solicit their thoughts moving forward. In coordination with DECD, the SWB released an update to the State’s 10-Year Economic Development Plan that embeds an updated workforce vision that aligns with the SWB’s goals in March 2024.

In addition to the listening sessions, the SWB reconvened the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) implementation steering committee that included the directors of Maine’s local workforce investment boards and the directors of the authorized core programs: Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Adult and Basic Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation<sup>4</sup>. The Steering Committee’s role was to monitor the implementation of the State’s workforce plan.

The result of this refresh process was a realigned vision that renewed the system’s focus on seven strategic areas of need.

- Strategy A: Grow Local Talent
- Strategy B: Attract New Talent
- Strategy C: Promote Innovation
- Strategy D: Build Connections
- Strategy E: Provide Supporting Infrastructure
- Strategy F: Maintain Stable and Predictable Business Rules
- Strategy G: Promote Hubs of Excellence

Maine’s WIOA State Plan will focus on Strategies A, B, and C, with workforce being a critical consideration in all 7 strategies.



### Strategy A: Grow Local Talent

Through investments like free community college, Maine has increased the percentage of its workforce with a “credential of value” (either a college degree or trade certification – see attached graph). Credentials of value are critical to meeting the workforce needs of the economy and ensuring Maine people can select their spot in the economy. Credentials of value directly correlate to increased wage growth for individuals and increased

productivity in Maine's economy. The State, education and the private sector have also invested in career exploration and high school technical education, as well as pathways to career initiatives for undergraduates. This offers Maine's young people a chance to learn about opportunities, connect them to work and gain work skills, knowledge, and capabilities that are vital to their long-term participation and leadership in Maine's economy.

### **Strategy B: Attract New Talent**

Maine experienced more in-migration in 2021 than it had since 1950, and in fact had the 7<sup>th</sup> fastest rate of in-migration among all of the states. Marketing the Maine brand, expanded broadband, the opportunity for remote work, and the resettlement of immigrants all played a role. Even so, we still will need more people of working age to meet the goal of labor force growth set in the plan.

Ten recommended actions include launching a state talent attraction campaign, as well as supporting individual employers in similar efforts; promoting Maine's higher education institutions as a way of attracting talent; connecting New England students to Maine careers and employers; connecting new Mainers to career pathways; recognizing out-of-state and out-of-country professional certifications; and maintaining a high quality of life in our communities.

### **Strategy G: Promote Hubs of Excellence**

Hubs of Excellence are communities where business, education and government combine to implement a common vision for growth around a distinctive cluster of quality of life and economic activities. In recent years, Waterville has taken big steps to establish itself as an art and film destination for northern New England; Skowhegan as a center for local foods; and Rangeley for four-season outdoor recreation. Many other communities are in the process of creating a brand and local alliances.

Five actions are recommended: better defining hub communities; engaging industry partners; linking nonprofits and academia to Maine hubs; creating pilot projects; and marketing.

## II.(a) ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

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### II.(a.1) ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

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#### II.(A.1.A) ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

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Economic conditions in much of Maine are positive going into 2024. Jobs have reached new records highs and unemployment rates are near record lows. These conditions have yielded opportunities for advancement for many in the workforce while also creating a competitive hiring environment for employers. Demographic factors are shaping workforce and job trends. An imbalanced population age structure is contributing to tight labor market conditions in which employers must compete to attract and retain workers. Productivity of the workforce has gradually improved over many years, a trend that is certain to continue. Workforce constraints are likely to be offset by productivity gains which will vary by sector. In-migration has offset the population age structure to some extent in recent years and contributed to high demand for housing and rising housing prices. Many groups face significant barriers to economic opportunity including people in historically marginalized groups, with disabilities, living in poverty, justice involved or struggling with substance use disorder. There are significant differences in many economic measures across substate regions, particularly between Coastal, Southern and Central areas and the Northern Rim.

#### **Recent Trends and Current Conditions**

Total output of the economy has grown steadily. [Real gross domestic product reached](#) \$74 billion by mid-2023.<sup>1</sup> [Nonfarm wage and salary jobs](#) reached an all-time high for five consecutive months at the end of 2023, having surpassed the pre-pandemic high in the fall of 2022. [Unemployment rates](#) have consistently been below national rates and well below the long-term average for the state. December 2023 marked the 25th consecutive month the rate was below four percent – the second longest such period.

Net migration into the state has contributed to sustained job growth. Net migration surged to about 21,000 in 2021, representing the largest population gain from net migration (since 1950). In-migration has continued at a slightly slower pace of 16,500 in 2022 and 11,500 in 2023. Natural population changes have been negative (more deaths than births) each year over the last decade.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Real Gross Domestic Product by State Chained 2017 Dollars, Seasonally Adjusted

In-migration has been necessary to offset natural population decreases for the population to grow, reaching over 1.39 million in 2023.<sup>2</sup>

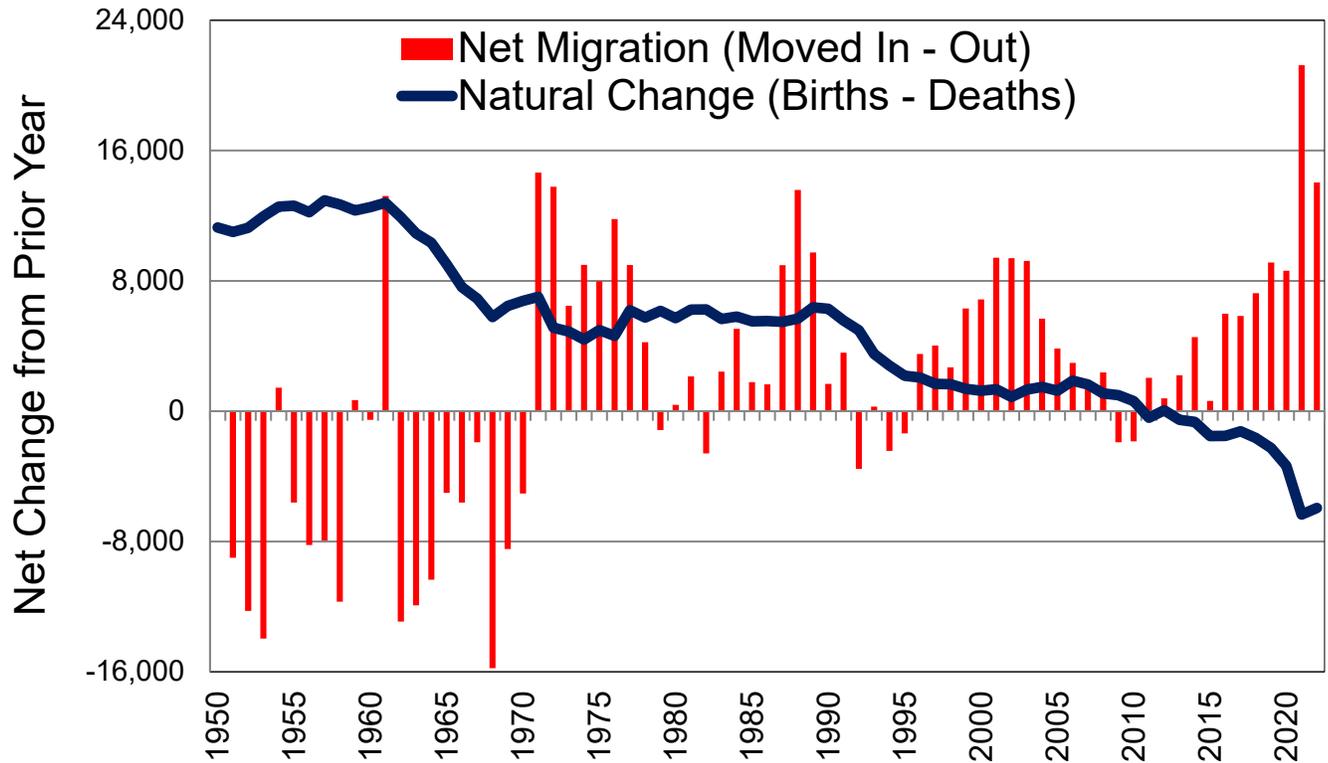


FIGURE 1: COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE

**Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations**

Job gains in the last three decades were primarily in healthcare and social assistance and in professional and business services. Each of those sectors added more than 40,000 jobs. Gains in most other sectors were under 10,000. Manufacturing jobs decreased more than 40,000 through 2010 and then stabilized thereafter.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau Population and Housing Unit Estimates

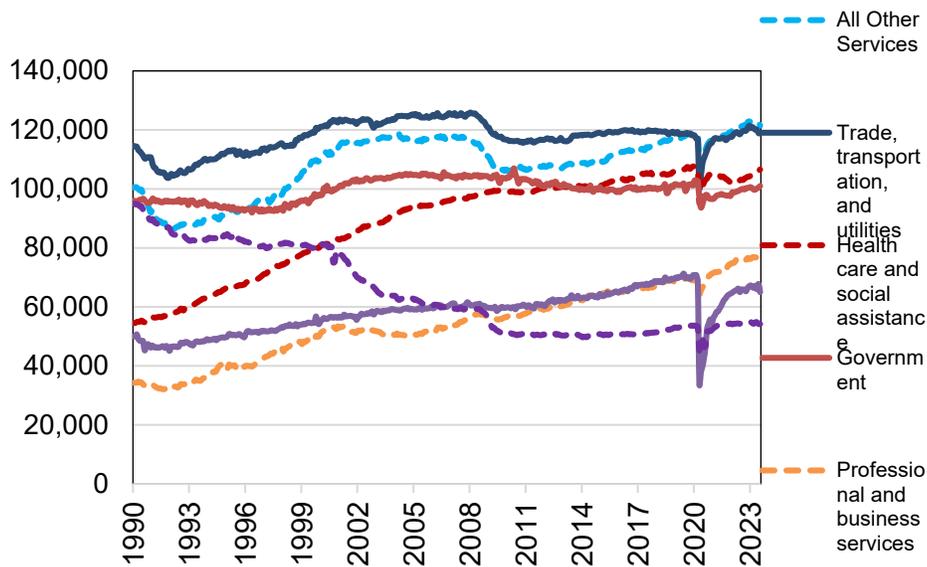


FIGURE 2: CHANGE IN JOBS BY SECTOR

Around half of jobs are in the four largest sectors: health care and social assistance (16 percent), retail trade (13 percent), professional and business services (12 percent) and leisure and hospitality (11 percent).

Demographic shifts, changes in demand for goods and services, and advancements in technology and productivity drive labor demand. An aging population has resulted in increasing demand for health care and social assistance, a trend that is expected to continue. Productivity gains and e-commerce are projected to lead to some decreases in retail employment. Overall, the distribution of jobs across industries is not expected to change greatly through 2030. The sectors with the most jobs – healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, professional and business services, and leisure and hospitality – are expected to remain the largest.

From 2022 to 2030, employment in health care and social assistance is expected to experience the greatest increase. Other large sectors are expected to maintain relatively stable employment levels over the next decade. In all sectors, even those in which a gradual decline in employment is projected, large numbers of job openings are expected to replace workers who shift to a job in a new sector, or who retire or otherwise leave the labor force. These openings, regardless of industry, provide economic opportunity for job seekers.

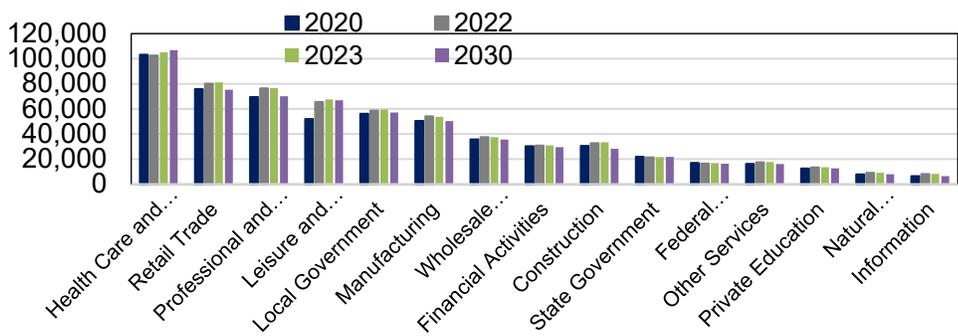


FIGURE 3: CHANGE IN JOBS BY INDUSTRY 2020 TO 2030

### Occupational Composition

The [occupational structure of employment](#) in Maine is concentrated among a few specific occupational groups. Unique occupations are grouped by similar skills, tasks, and functions. About 30 percent of jobs are found in the largest three and 75 percent are in the top ten of the twenty-two total occupational groups. Maine’s structure is similar to the national pattern of employment but with a slightly higher share in sales and food preparation and serving occupations and slightly lower in transportation and material handling.

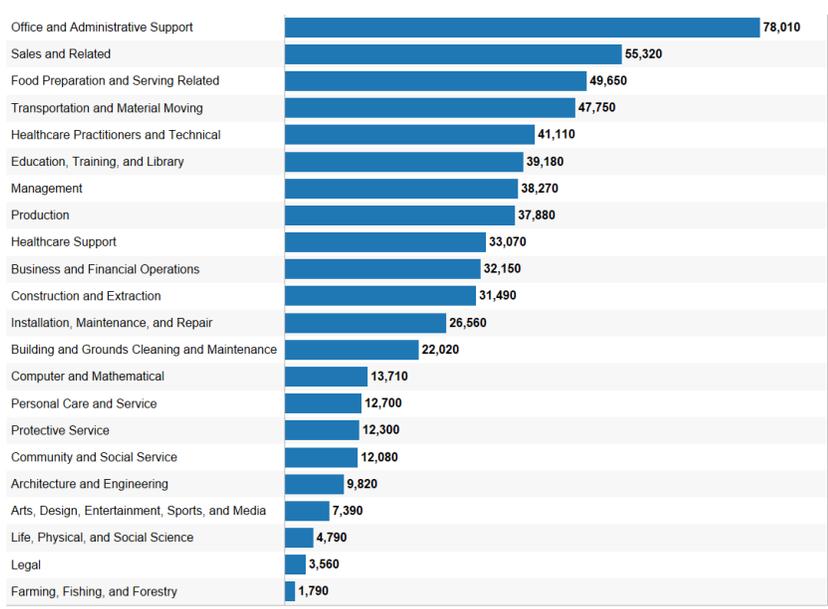


FIGURE 4: ESTIMATES EMPLOYMENT BY MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUP, 2022

Among the approximately 650 occupations in which there is employment in Maine, the top-four comprises 10 percent and top-twenty-five comprises 37 percent of total jobs. Among the top-twenty-five occupations by employment, 17 require at least a high school diploma, including nine that require advanced education beyond high school. The highest employed occupations with no formal requirements are found in sales, food preparation and serving, and building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupational groups.

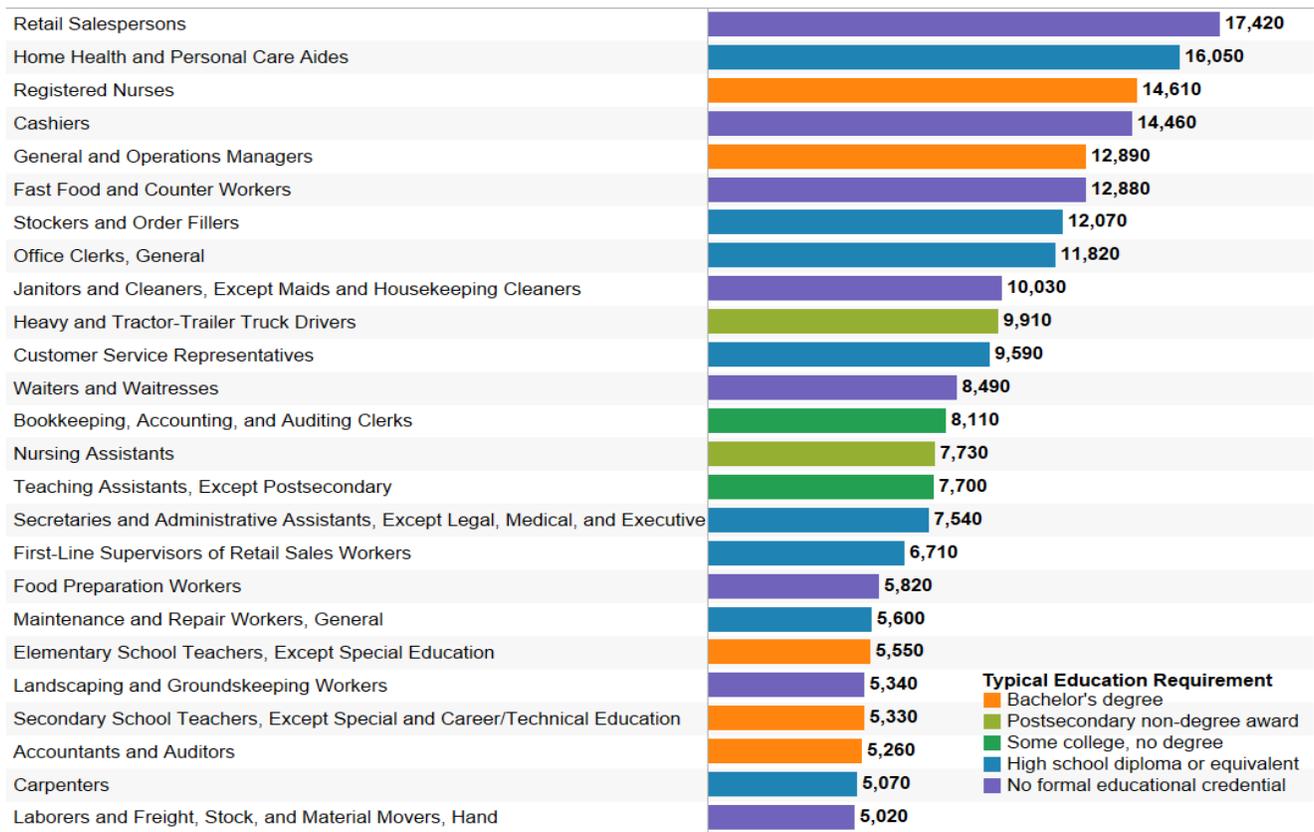


FIGURE 5: TOP 25 OCCUPATIONS BY ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT 2022

The largest share of jobs were in occupations that required a high school diploma (40 percent), a bachelor’s degree (21 percent), or had no formal education requirement (21 percent). There were over 1,500 more jobs in occupations requiring a bachelor’s degree than there were in occupations requiring no formal credential. While the educational requirements needed to find work are

unlikely to change dramatically in the short-term, long-term advances in technology and innovation are likely to continue to impact some lower-skill occupations while creating opportunities for other higher skill jobs.

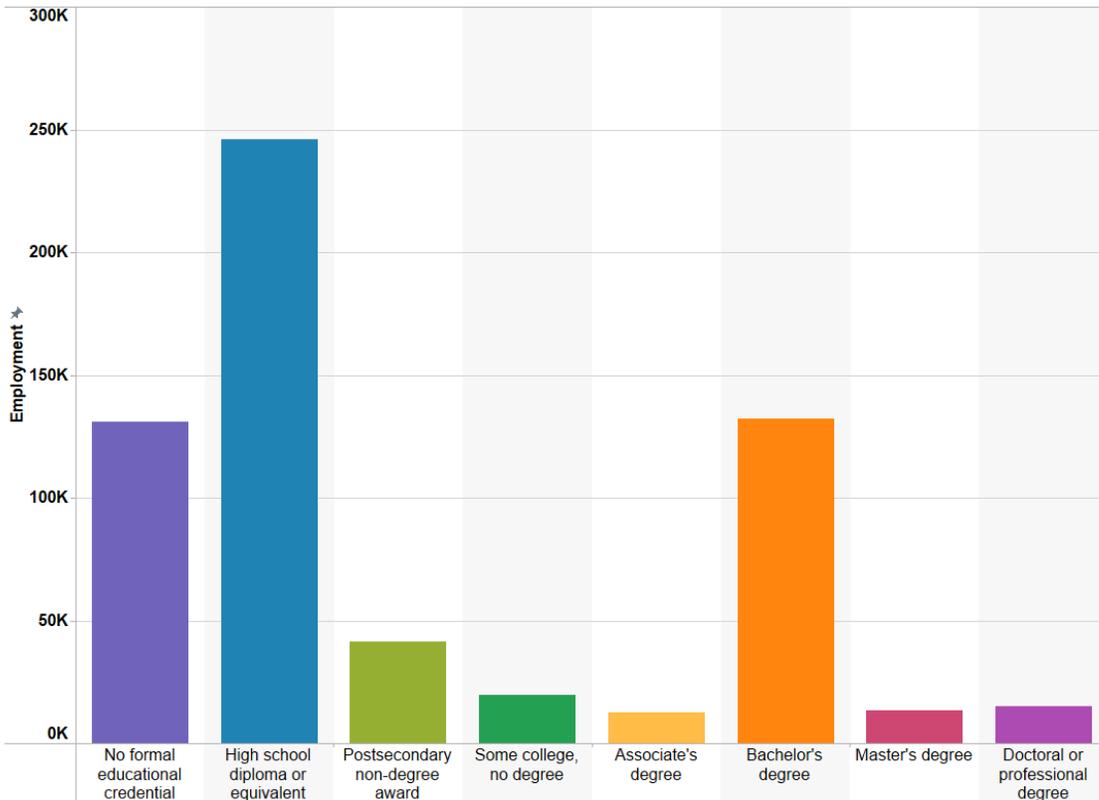


FIGURE 6: ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATIONAL BY TYPICAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENT 2022

### Occupational Outlook

Through 2030, an average of 75,000 job openings are expected each year. Some will arise from job growth, however, most – about 98 percent – are expected to stem from the needs of employers to replace those who change jobs to other occupations, gain promotions, or who leave the labor force for retirement or other reasons. The largest share of openings is expected in occupations that tend to have higher than average rates of turnover. Those generally are in functions with lower-than-average skill requirements and wages. In many cases those jobs tend to have a younger workforce

that is less established in their career than they will eventually be when they transition to different occupations with higher education and skill requirements.

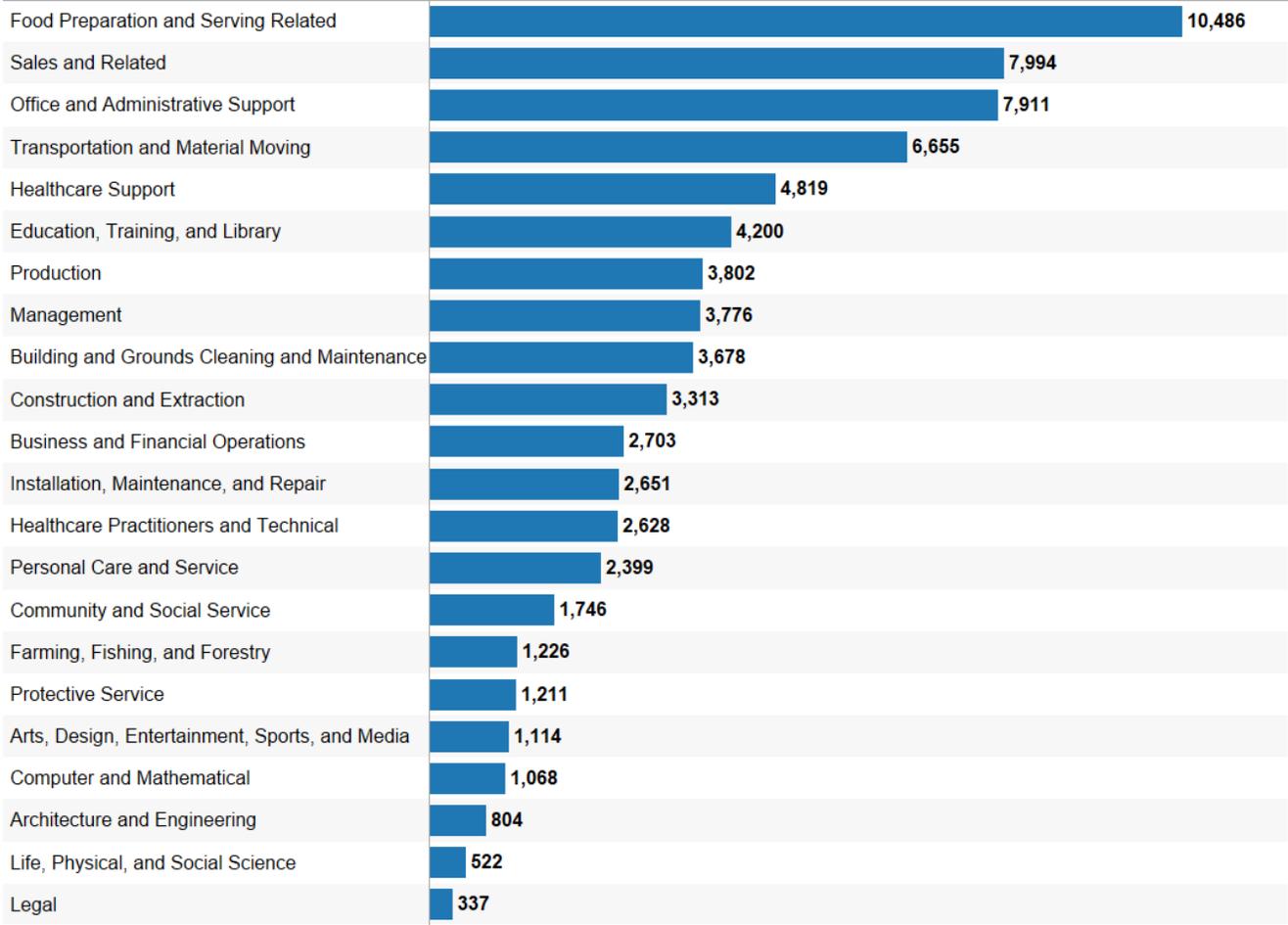


FIGURE 7: PROJECTED ANNUAL OPENINGS BY MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUP 2020-2030

Among occupations that typically require an education beyond high school, the highest projected annual openings are for Nursing Assistants, Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, General & Operations Managers, and Registered Nurses. Over half of the occupations in the top-twenty-five are found in healthcare, education, and business and financial services.

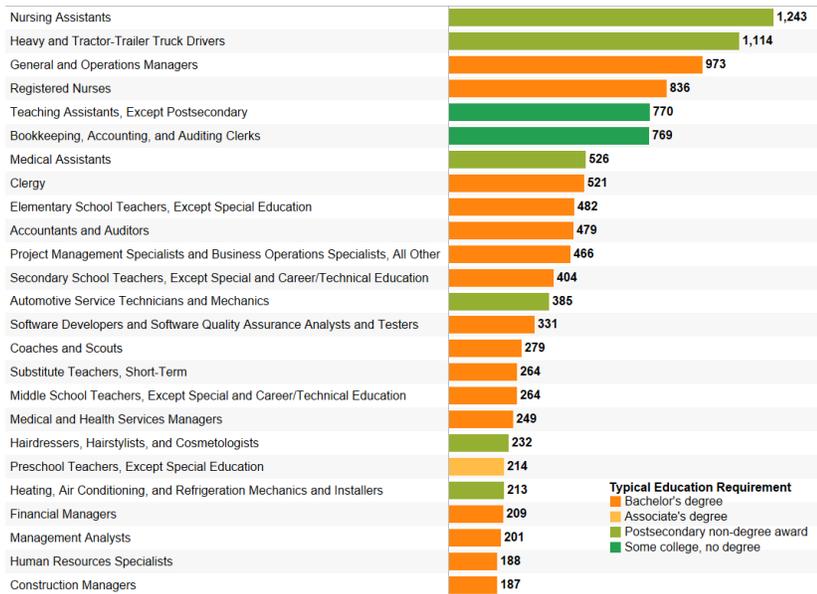


FIGURE 8: TOP 25 OCCUPATIONS BY PROJECTED ANNUAL OPENINGS REQUIRING ADVANCED EDUCATION 2020-2030

Annual openings are projected to be highest in occupations that typically require a high school diploma or have no formal requirement. Conversely, openings are lowest in occupations requiring advanced education credentials. These occupations tend to employ older, well-established workers with higher wages, benefits, and lower rates of turnover. Additionally, many of these occupations require specialized education, like nurses or engineers, that cannot be substituted by a degree in another field such as business or education. While these factors lead to fewer openings, there will still be significant demand for workers stemming from replacement needs.

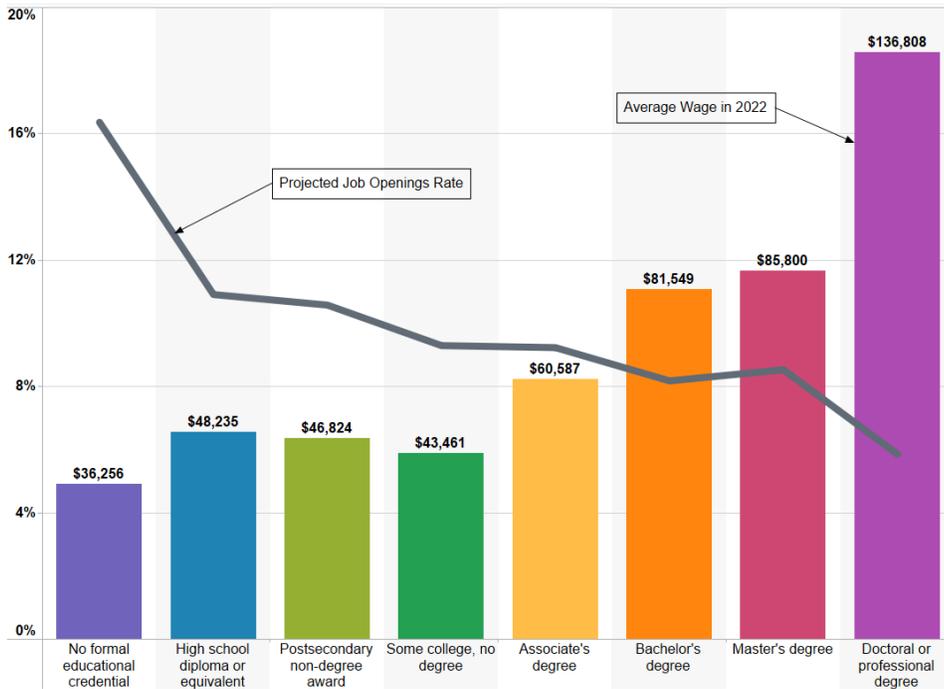


FIGURE 9: PROJECTED JOB OPENINGS RATE BY OCCUPATIONS BY TYPICAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENT, 2020-2030 WITH 2022 AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGE

Innovation will continue to impact jobs. Most of these changes will occur gradually and play out over decades rather than years. With an aging population, openings are expected for workers across all education levels as many reach retirement ages creating opportunities for upward mobility for others.

### Regional Trends

There are significant differences in economic conditions, job and population growth across substate regions, particularly between Coastal, Southern and Central areas and the Northern Rim. Counties in the Northern Rim generally have higher poverty rates, higher unemployment rates, higher disability rates, lower educational attainment, lower household incomes, and lower labor force participation rates.

There has been a gradual displacement of workers in sectors of Maine’s economy focused on the production of goods (sawmills, paper mills, textile mills, shoe shops and other types of

manufacturing, timber harvesting and agriculture) due to the combination of technological advances, import competition and other factors. Many communities in the Northern Rim were settled around these economic opportunities which attracted population decades ago. The manufacturing sector comprised more than 40 percent of nonfarm jobs through 1953, 30 percent through 1971, and 20 percent through 1988. Today it comprises eight percent. The decrease in manufacturing impacted the entire state, especially certain “mill towns” that experienced major business closures and prolonged periods of upheaval as a result of losing what, in many cases, was the largest employer in the area.

The shifting economic base has led to some geographic mismatches between people and job opportunities. Younger generations may leave for southern Maine or other states in pursuit of further education or better job opportunities, leaving a generally older population behind. Several counties in Maine are among the oldest in the nation by median age. Since 2020, population growth due to in-migration has been greatest in the coastal counties though some counties experiencing long-term population decline have seen modest growth in recent years.

Jobs are increasingly concentrated in and around cities primarily because stable and growing industries tend to be in densely populated areas. Healthcare is mostly concentrated in and around hospitals which are only found in places of population density. Technology, law, accounting and insurance firms and other types of professional services, colleges, and other industries that comprise a rising share of jobs also are primarily found in cities. Since 2020, remote work has enabled many workers to live further away from their employer, enabling many workers with remote work flexibility to relocate and others to apply for jobs with fewer geographic constraints. Still, long term job growth generally remains centered around urban areas.

Maine has identified three regions for the purpose of aligning workforce development resources to regional economies as shown in the map below. These regions are referred to as Northeastern, Central Western, and Coastal Counties. The SWB and Local Workforce Boards considered factors such as alignment with economic development districts and postsecondary institutions, inclusion of major urban hubs and distribution of employment by industry. This structure supports partnerships already in place for community planning and development, and appropriate distribution of financial resources for workforce development.



FIGURE 10: SUB-STATE REGIONS

Several factors set the workforce board regions apart.

The Coastal Counties region contains 49 percent of the population, 53 percent of total jobs, and 57 percent of total wages and salaries, though just 12 percent of the land area. This region has a high concentration of jobs in the health care and social assistance, professional and business services, financial activities, and leisure and hospitality sectors.

| <b>Workforce Investment Region</b> | <b>Population</b> | <b>Average Weekly Wage</b> | <b>Job Share</b> | <b>Wage Share</b> | <b>Population Share</b> |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Central Western                    | 379,630           | \$1,007                    | 25%              | 23%               | 27%                     |
| Coastal Counties                   | 679,196           | \$1,188                    | 53%              | 57%               | 49%                     |
| Northeastern                       | 326,514           | \$959                      | 22%              | 20%               | 24%                     |

## TABLE 1: 2022 DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION, JOBS AND WAGES BY SUB-STATE REGION

Between 2012 and 2022, population has increased in the Central Western and Coastal Counties and declined slightly in the Northeastern region. All three regions experienced varying levels of population growth from 2020 to 2022, with half of the net population growth occurring in Coastal Counties. Some of the growth is from people moving from northern Maine in search of better job prospects, and some is attributable to both domestic and international in-migration.

The Central Western region has approximately 25 percent of jobs and 27 percent of the population on 29 percent of the state's land area. The region has a concentration of jobs in manufacturing, education, and government with many jobs in state government located in or near Augusta, the Capital of the State. Central counties experienced population growth over the past decade, with the outlying counties experiencing a modest decrease or little change.

The expansive but sparsely populated Northeastern region represents nearly 60 percent of the state's land and 24 percent of the population. The region has 22 percent of the jobs with relatively high concentrations in natural resources, government, and retail. The Northeastern region also has the lowest share of manufacturing jobs. Many companies in this sector have downsized or ceased operations. In the past decade, population has declined in the Northeastern region.

A more detailed discussion for each region follows below.

### Coastal Counties Region

The Coastal Counties Region is comprised of six counties and is the most demographically and economically diverse of Maine's three regions. Six of the ten largest municipalities in the state are in this region: Portland, South Portland, Brunswick and Scarborough in Cumberland County, and Biddeford and Saco in York County.

Given the size of the area, the region is generally classified into four distinct hubs for service delivery purposes.

York County, located in the southern area of the region, is the gateway to Maine. Its coastal plain contains Maine's most visited beaches and supports a large tourism base. Beyond tourism, York County has several defined economic clusters related to national defense, healthcare, retail, and manufacturing. Interstate 95, which runs north to south through York and Cumberland Counties, creates an east to west demarcation that separates the seasonal tourism industry of the beaches and larger commerce centers from the rural, agricultural, residential areas, and many small business and retail-centered communities.

Just up the coast, Cumberland County, is the most populous county and home to the most populous city. Portland has experienced a resurgence of shipping and bulk cargo transfers, and it is a major port of call for cruise ships. The city hosts the state's largest airport and is a hub for healthcare, banking, insurance, IT, bio tech, research and development, education, and retail. West of Interstate 95 is characterized by expanding residential communities and retail, though housing affordability has become increasingly problematic making the area unaffordable to many. The lakes and mountain regions are a hub for tourism and recreational activities.

Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox, and Waldo counties, commonly identified as the mid coast, comprise the northern segment of the region. These counties are historically steeped in farming, dairy, fishing and shipbuilding. The mid coast economy is supported by a significant influx of seasonal tourists and part time residents. Shipbuilder Bath Iron Works, located in Sagadahoc County, is the largest private sector manufacturer in the state. While the closure of the Brunswick Naval Air Station in 2011 presented a challenge to the local economy, the Brunswick Landing redevelopment is now one of the most developed commercial hubs in the state. The six target sectors for the Brunswick Landing redevelopment (aerospace, composites, IT, bio tech, renewable energy, and education) now bolster a local economy established around manufacturing, higher education, healthcare, leisure and hospitality, and retail.

Population and workforce trends in this region are more favorable due to higher birth rates and immigration. The population age structure is somewhat imbalanced, though less so than other regions. Job growth in the past two decades has been most rapid in York (18 percent higher) and Cumberland counties (10 percent higher), exceeding the statewide rate of job growth. Job growth rates have been similar to the statewide growth rate or somewhat lower in Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Waldo, and Knox counties. Because the region comprises such a large share of jobs in Maine, its

industry composition is not significantly different from the state. The region has a slightly smaller share of government jobs.

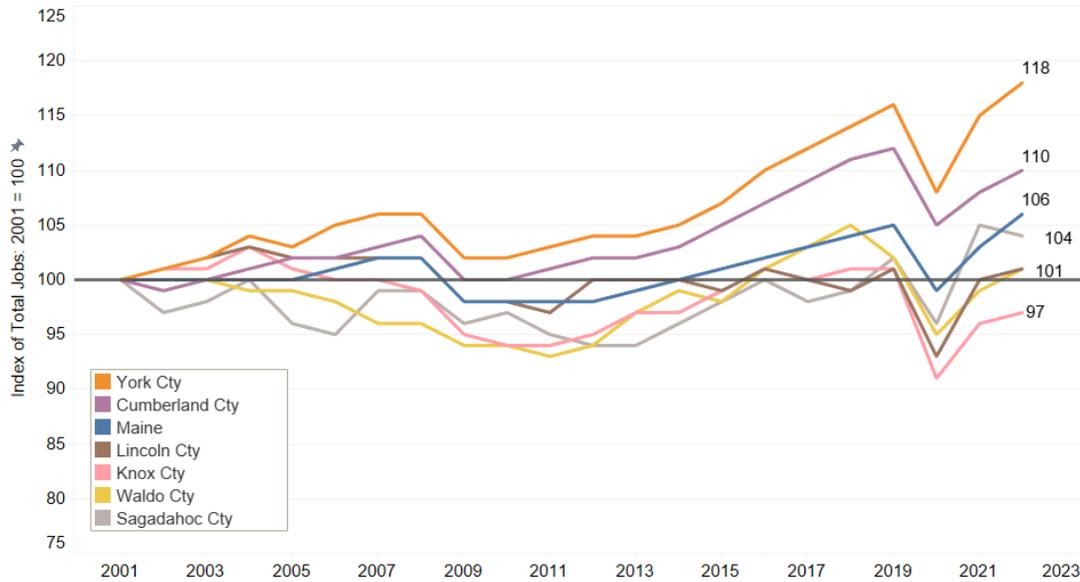


FIGURE 11: COASTAL COUNTIES COVERED JOB INDEX

The 2023 annual average unemployment rate of 2.4 percent in the region was below the statewide average rate of 2.8 percent. Within the region, unemployment rates ranged from a low of 2.3 percent in Sagadahoc County and 2.4 percent in Cumberland County, to a high of 2.9 percent in Waldo County, all rates that are historically low. Unemployment rates in Sagadahoc, Cumberland, and York counties have consistently been among the lowest over many years.

Incomes are higher in the southern counties of York, Cumberland, and Sagadahoc. Median household income ranged from a high of \$87,710 in Cumberland County to a low of \$62,694 in Waldo County according to 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. The state median household income is \$68,251<sup>3</sup>. York and Cumberland counties have the highest density of population and jobs, accounting for 82 percent of the region’s jobs, with an above-average share of jobs in high paying sectors including healthcare and social assistance, professional and business

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table S1901

services, financial activities, and manufacturing. The mid coast counties of Lincoln, Knox, and Waldo are less populated and have a higher share of jobs in somewhat lower paying sectors such as retail trade, leisure and hospitality, and transportation and warehousing.

## EMPLOYERS

In 2023 the largest private employers were primarily in the healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, and financial activities sectors. The three southernmost counties have a concentration of jobs associated with national defense which includes the federal Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Pratt and Whitney Aircraft Group, and Bath Iron Works.

| <b>Rank</b> | <b>Employer</b>                      | <b>Industry</b>  | <b>Employment Range</b> |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| <b>1</b>    | MAINEHEALTH - PORTLAND               | General Medical and Surgical Hospitals                                   | 7,001 to 7,500          |
| <b>2</b>    | BATH IRON WORKS CORP GEN DYNAMICS    | Ship Building and Repairing  | 6,001 to 6,500          |
| <b>3</b>    | UNUM GROUP                           | Direct Life Insurance Carriers   | 2,001 to 2,500          |
| <b>4</b>    | RTX CORPORATION                      | Aircraft Engine and Engine Parts Manufacturing                           | 2,001 to 2,500          |
| <b>5</b>    | IDEXX LABORATORIES INC               | Pharmaceutical Preparation Manufacturing                                 | 1,001 to 1,500          |
| <b>6</b>    | BOWDOIN COLLEGE                      | Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools                         | 1,001 to 1,500          |
| <b>7</b>    | MAINEHEALTH - PEN BAY MEDICAL CENTER | General Medical and Surgical Hospitals                                   | 1,001 to 1,500          |
| <b>8</b>    | MAINEHEALTH - BIDDEFORD HOSPITAL     | General Medical and Surgical Hospitals                                   | 1,001 to 1,500          |
| <b>9</b>    | WEX INC                              | Financial Transactions Processing, Reserve, and Clearinghouse Activities | 501 to 1,000            |
| <b>10</b>   | IDEXX OPERATIONS INC                 | Drugs and Druggists' Sundries Merchant Wholesalers                       | 501 to 1,000            |
| <b>11</b>   | MAINEHEALTH - MID-COAST HOSPITAL     | General Medical and Surgical Hospitals                                   | 501 to 1,000            |
| <b>12</b>   | L.L.BEAN, INC. - FULFILLMENT CENTER  | General Warehousing and Storage  | 501 to 1,000            |
| <b>13</b>   | NORTHERN LIGHT MERCY HOSPITAL        | General Medical and Surgical Hospitals                                   | 501 to 1,000            |

|           |   |  |              |
|-----------|---|--|--------------|
| <b>14</b> | L.L.BEAN, INC. - HEADQUARTERS               | Corporate, Subsidiary, and Regional Managing Offices           | 501 to 1,000 |
| <b>15</b> | ATHENAHEALTH INC                            | Corporate, Subsidiary, and Regional Managing Offices           | 501 to 1,000 |
| <b>16</b> | IDEXX DISTRIBUTION INC                      | Other Professional Equipment and Supplies Merchant Wholesalers | 501 to 1,000 |
| <b>17</b> | T D BANK N A                                | Corporate, Subsidiary, and Regional Managing Offices           | 501 to 1,000 |
| <b>18</b> | MAINEHEALTH - WESTBROOK                     | Computer Systems Design Services                               | 501 to 1,000 |
| <b>19</b> | UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND - BIDDEFORD       | Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools               | 501 to 1,000 |
| <b>20</b> | MAINEHEALTH - WALDO COUNTY GENERAL HOSPITAL | General Medical and Surgical Hospitals                         | 501 to 1,000 |
| <b>21</b> | YORK HOSPITAL                               | General Medical and Surgical Hospitals                         | 501 to 1,000 |
| <b>22</b> | TYLER TECHNOLOGIES INC                      | Computer Systems Design Services                               | 501 to 1,000 |
| <b>23</b> | UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND - PORTLAND        | Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools               | 501 to 1,000 |
| <b>24</b> | GRANITE BAY CARE INC                        | Residential Mental Health and Substance Abuse Facilities       | 501 to 1,000 |
| <b>25</b> | L.L.BEAN, INC.                              | Sporting Goods Retailers                                       | 501 to 1,000 |

TABLE 2: TOP 25 PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYERS COSTAL COUNTIES REGION, 2023 Q3

Eighty percent of workforce in the coastal counties' region lives and works within the area. About 58,800 resident workers commute to jobs outside the region, offset by 57,160 non-resident workers commuting into the region.<sup>4</sup>

#### Central Western Region

The largest population centers in the region are the cities of Lewiston and Auburn in Androscoggin County, and Augusta and Waterville in Kennebec County. The population age structure is quite imbalanced with the largest demographic group in the region, 37 percent of the population, age 55 and over. 36 percent of the population in the region are in prime working ages of 25-54 and the

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *OnTheMap*, 2021

remaining 28 percent are under age 25. Through 2035, the Central Western Region is projected to have a modest increase in population, but the working-age population is expected to decline.

In 2023, the annual average unemployment rate in the Central Western region was 3 percent. Unemployment rates ranged from a low of 2.5 percent in Kennebec County to a high of 4 percent in Somerset County. The disparity of unemployment rates across the region is largely due to differences in the economic structure region. The central, more populous counties of Androscoggin and Kennebec have more job opportunities than the more sparsely populated rim counties of Franklin, Oxford, and Somerset.

The economic base in Androscoggin and Kennebec counties is diversified across a broad spectrum of industries, with higher concentrations of jobs in professional and business services, transportation and warehousing, and healthcare. The capital in Augusta has a significant concentration of jobs in state government. Kennebec and Androscoggin counties are home to 72 percent of jobs in the region. Post-secondary education also makes up major hubs of employment including Colby College in Waterville, Bates College in Lewiston, University of Maine campuses in Farmington and Augusta, and Maine Community College campuses in Auburn and Fairfield.

In the rim counties the economy is less diverse and more concentrated in forestry-related industries, seasonal agriculture, and hospitality, including major ski resorts. Some industries have seen a long-term decline in labor demand, particularly paper manufacturing. In 2023, there were 18 percent fewer jobs in Somerset County, 11 percent fewer jobs in Franklin County, and 6 percent fewer jobs in Oxford County relative to 2001.

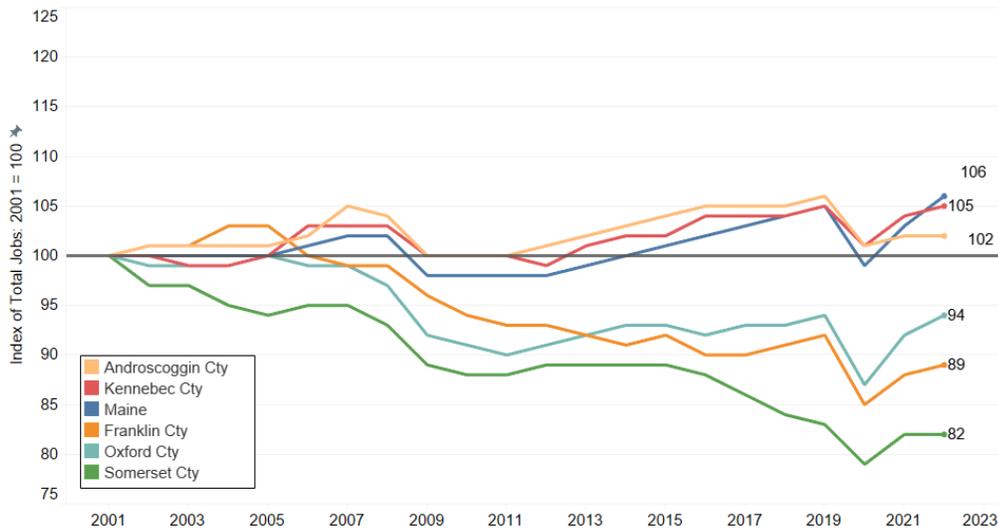


FIGURE 12: CENTRAL-WESTERN COVERED JOB INDEX

Within the region, incomes are higher in the central counties of Androscoggin and Kennebec. The median household income ranged from a high of \$64,500 in Androscoggin County to a low of \$53,527 in Somerset County according to 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Median household income was lower in each county in the region than the state median income of \$68,251<sup>5</sup>.

EMPLOYERS

In 2023, the largest private sector employers were primarily in the healthcare and social assistance, paper and paper product manufacturing, and post-secondary education sectors.

| Rank | Employer                                   | Industry                               | Employment Range |
|------|--|--|------------------|
| 1    | MAINEGENERAL HEALTH - HAROLD ALFOND CENTER | General Medical and Surgical Hospitals | 2,001 to 2,500   |
| 2    | CENTRAL MAINE MEDICAL CENTER               | General Medical and Surgical Hospitals | 1,501 to 2,000   |

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table S1901

|           |  |   |                |
|-----------|--|---|----------------|
| <b>3</b>  | COLBY COLLEGE                            | Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools        | 1,001 to 1,500 |
| <b>4</b>  | ST MARY'S REGIONAL MEDICAL CTR           | General Medical and Surgical Hospitals                  | 1,001 to 1,500 |
| <b>5</b>  | BATES COLLEGE                            | Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools        | 501 to 1,000   |
| <b>6</b>  | S D WARREN                               | Paper Mills   | 501 to 1,000   |
| <b>7</b>  | MAINEHEALTH - FRANKLIN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL | General Medical and Surgical Hospitals                  | 501 to 1,000   |
| <b>8</b>  | WAL-MART LEWISTON                        | General Warehousing and Storage                         | 501 to 1,000   |
| <b>9</b>  | REDINGTON FAIRVIEW GENERAL HOSPITAL      | General Medical and Surgical Hospitals                  | 501 to 1,000   |
| <b>10</b> | T-MOBILE USA INC                         | Wireless Telecommunications Carriers (except Satellite) | 501 to 1,000   |
| <b>11</b> | MAINEHEALTH - STEPHENS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL | General Medical and Surgical Hospitals                  | 501 to 1,000   |
| <b>12</b> | ND PAPER INC                             | Paper Mills   | 501 to 1,000   |
| <b>13</b> | HUHTAMAKI INC                            | All Other Converted Paper Product Manufacturing         | 501 to 1,000   |
| <b>14</b> | TAMBRANDS INC                            | Sanitary Paper Product Manufacturing                    | 501 to 1,000   |

TABLE 3: TOP PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYERS CENTRAL-WESTERN REGION, 2023 Q3 WITH MORE THAN 500 JOBS

73 percent of the job holders lived and worked within the region. In 2021, about 50,300 resident workers commuted to jobs outside the region, partially offset by close to 39,000 nonresident workers commuting into the region to work.<sup>6</sup>

### Northeastern Region

The five counties comprising the Northeastern region encompass 59 percent of Maine's land area. The largest population centers in the region are the cities of Bangor, Orono, and Brewer in Penobscot County and Presque Isle and Caribou in Aroostook County.

An aging population is expected to impact the regional economy. Over the next decade, the region is projected have a slight decrease in population, with a sharper decline in the working-age

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *OnTheMap*, 2021

population. Population in the region peaked in the early 1990's at 336,500 settling around 10,000 lower in 2022 (326,500). In the last 3 decades population has fallen in Aroostook (23 percent lower) and Washington (12 percent lower) counties, offset somewhat by population growth in Hancock (19 percent) and Penobscot (4 percent) counties. The largest segment of the population in the region is age 55 or over (39 percent). 35 percent of the population is in prime working ages (25 to 54) and only 26 percent is under age 25.

The 2023 annual average unemployment rate of 3.3 percent was higher than the statewide average. Within the region unemployment rates ranged from a low of 2.9 percent in Penobscot County to a high of 4 percent in Washington and Piscataquis Counties. The disparity of unemployment rates across the five counties is due in large part to the differences in the region's economic structure. The more densely populated Hancock and Penobscot Counties offer a greater number and diversity of jobs compared to the more sparsely populated northern and eastern counties of Piscataquis, Aroostook, and Washington. Total jobs in most of the region have changed little from two decades before with the exception of Aroostook and Washington counties which have about 15 percent fewer jobs.

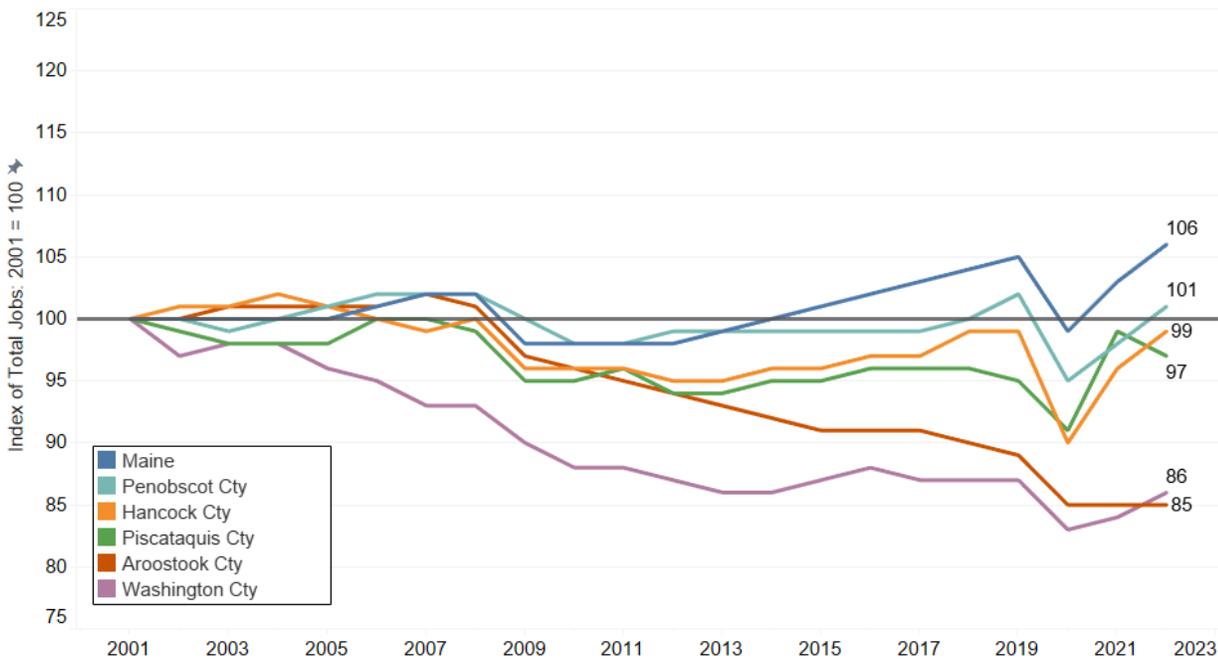


FIGURE 13: NORTHEASTERN COVERED JOB INDEX

There are three distinct economies within the region: coastal Hancock and Washington counties, regional service centers in Bangor and Presque Isle/Caribou, and Piscataquis, interior Hancock, Washington, and rural Penobscot and Aroostook counties.

The economic base in coastal Hancock and Washington Counties is highly dependent on seasonal, tourism-related commerce and maritime trades, with concentrations of jobs in hospitality, retail, and construction industries. Hancock County is home to Acadia National Park which is among the most visited national parks in the country. The labor market in Hancock County is highly seasonal; jobs can be 35 percent higher or more during peak summer months relative to winter lows.

The economic base in the Bangor metropolitan area and Presque Isle/Caribou is diversified across a broad spectrum of industries with relatively large shares of jobs in retail, wholesale trade, and health care and social assistance. These areas are commercial and regional centers for government administration and educational services.

Away from the coast, and outside of its service areas, the region is rural. The economic base is heavily dependent on natural resource-based industries such as farming and logging, woods-based manufacturing, and seasonal tourism.

Within the region, incomes were higher in the central Hancock and Penobscot Counties than the northern and eastern counties of Aroostook, Piscataquis, and Washington. The median household income ranged from a high of \$64,149 in Hancock County to a low of \$50,843 in Aroostook County. Median household income was lower in each county in the region than the state median income of \$68,251.<sup>7</sup>

## EMPLOYERS

In 2023 there were only seven private sector employers with at least 500 jobs. These employers were primarily in the healthcare, administration of healthcare, and research and development sectors.

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table S1901

| <b>Rank</b> | <b>Employer</b>                  | <b>Industry</b>   | <b>Employment Range</b> |
|-------------|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| <b>1</b>    | EASTERN MAINE MEDICAL CENTER     | General Medical and Surgical Hospitals                                      | 2,501 to 3,000          |
| <b>2</b>    | THE JACKSON LABORATORY           | Research and Development in Biotechnology (except Nanobiotechnology)        | 1,001 to 1,500          |
| <b>3</b>    | ST JOSEPH HOSPITAL INC           | General Medical and Surgical Hospitals                                      | 1,001 to 1,500          |
| <b>4</b>    | EASTERN MAINE HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS | Corporate, Subsidiary, and Regional Managing Offices                        | 501 to 1,000            |
| <b>5</b>    | AROOSTOOK MEDICAL CENTER, THE    | General Medical and Surgical Hospitals                                      | 501 to 1,000            |
| <b>6</b>    | ACADIA HOSPITAL CORP             | Psychiatric and Substance Abuse Hospitals                                   | 501 to 1,000            |
| <b>7</b>    | PRODUCTION SERVICES OF MAINE LLC | Promoters of Performing Arts, Sports, and Similar Events without Facilities | 501 to 1,000            |

TABLE 4: TOP PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYERS CENTRAL-WESTERN REGION, 2023 Q3 WITH MORE THAN 500 JOBS

Most jobs holders in the region live and work within the area. In 2021, about 7,900 resident workers commuted to jobs outside of Aroostook-Washington counties, partially offset by 4,500 non-resident workers who commuted in. About 20,700 resident workers commuted to jobs outside of the Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Hancock counties, offset by 21,000 non-resident workers who commuted into the three counties.<sup>8</sup>

## II.(a.1.B) Workforce Analysis

### Employment and Unemployment

#### Labor Force Estimates

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *OnTheMap*, 2021

The statewide seasonally adjusted unemployment rate averaged 2.7 percent through 2023. Unemployment has been below the national rate for 193 consecutive months, except for three months in 2021 when they were the same.

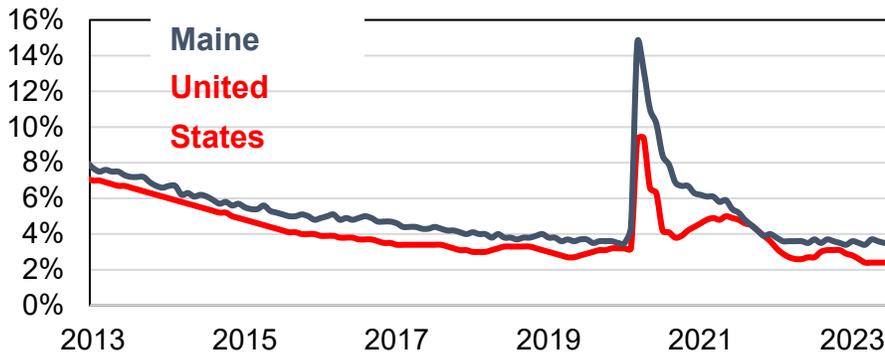


FIGURE 14: UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (SEASONALLY ADJUSTED)

The labor force participation rate measures the share of the population age 16 and over that is employed or actively seeking employment. Participation rates have gradually declined over the last two decades as a rising share of the population advances beyond peak participation ages. In 2022, those 65 and over – most retired – outnumber those in each ten-year working-age cohort. Those 55 to 64 – most approaching retirement – are the second largest in number.

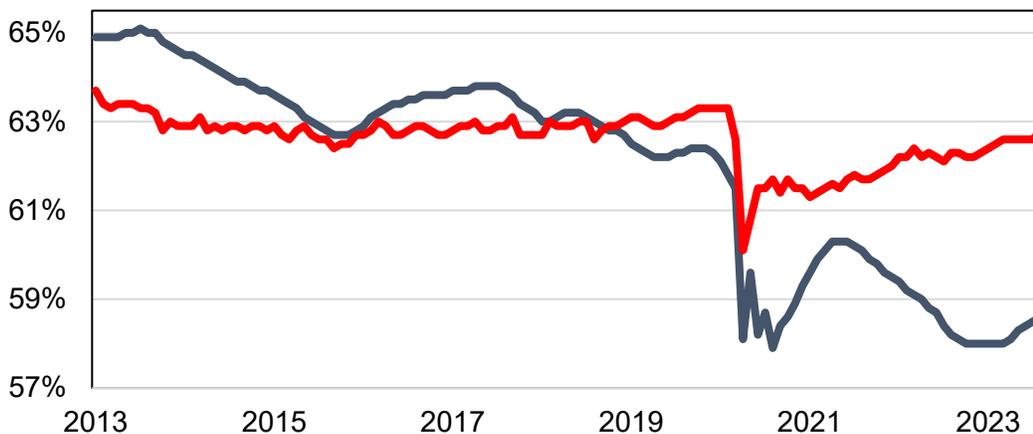


FIGURE 15: LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE

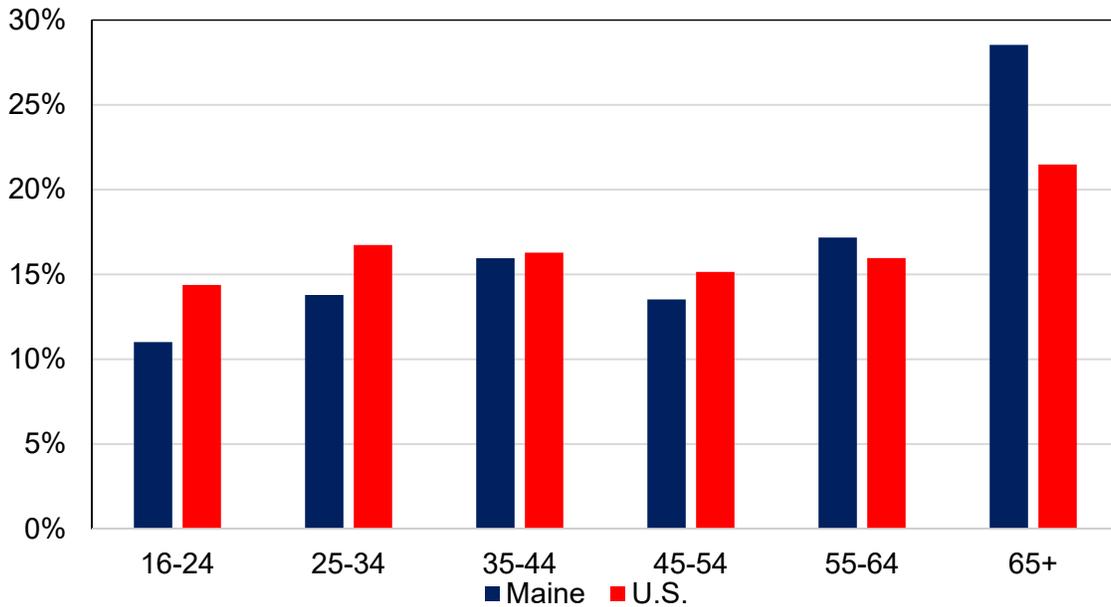
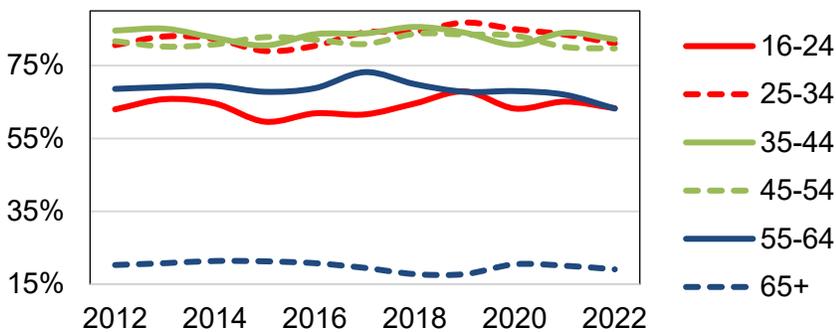


FIGURE 16: 2022 SHARE OF AGE 16+ CIVILIAN POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

Overall labor force participation rates increased steadily from the 1950s through 1990s, due to a combination of rising female labor force participation and baby boomers advancing to their peak age of participation. Due to falling birth rates over many years, those aging into prime working ages are outnumbered by those aging out. Labor force participation within age groups has changed little over time. Participation rates within age groups today are similar to that of the nation, except for those under age 25, which are higher in Maine.



## FIGURE 17: LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES BY AGE

### Educational Attainment

Labor force participation is strongly related to opportunity. Higher levels of educational attainment are associated with higher paying job opportunities and higher rates of labor force participation. The median income among bachelor's degree recipients is about \$17,000 higher per year relative to high school graduates.<sup>9</sup> Among the population age 25-64, participation rates ranged from 54 percent among those with less than a high school diploma, 73 percent for those with a high school diploma, and 88 percent of those with a bachelor's degree.<sup>10</sup> Unemployment rates also decrease with higher educational attainment. Unemployment rates are 8.5 percent for those without a high school diploma, 4.9 percent for those with a high school diploma, and 2.3 percent for those with some level of post-secondary education.

During the 2022-23 academic year 87 percent of students graduated from high school in four years, similar to the national rate.<sup>11</sup> 57 percent of high school graduates enrolled in college upon graduating, a rate this is much lower among economically disadvantaged students (36 percent).<sup>12</sup> A college degree is not the only path that leads to a high-quality career. 28 percent of jobs are in occupations that usually require a post-secondary doctoral or professional, master's, bachelor's, or associate's degree. At the same time, post-secondary programs that develop skills relevant to gaining and succeeding in well-paying occupations clearly lead to a boost in lifetime earnings that exceeds the cost of gaining the degree. Though gains in average earnings experienced by degree holders have exceeded those of other workers over the years, this does not imply that all graduates of all programs will benefit from higher earnings. It also does not imply that college is the only path to a stable career with high earnings.

### Job Opening Rates

Maine's job opening rate has closely tracked that of the nation. The combination of economic growth and tight labor markets pushed job opening rates above 7 percent in 2021. Job openings rate have

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<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B20004

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table S2301

<sup>11</sup> Maine Department of Education, [Data Warehouse](#) Graduation Data

<sup>12</sup> Maine Department of Education, [Data Warehouse](#) College Enrollment

since trended downward through the end of 2023 to near 6 percent. In the last year on average, there were two job openings per each one unemployed job seeker.

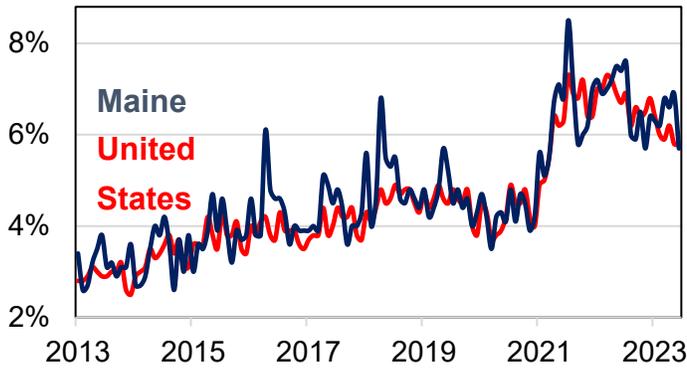


FIGURE 18: JOB OPENINGS RATES

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## STRATEGIES FOR EMPLOYERS

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Past decades in Maine’s labor market have mostly been characterized by a relatively low labor demand and a relatively high labor supply. The balance began to flip in the period just before the pandemic and during the robust economic recovery that followed. Labor is more scarce creating a competitive environment for employers seeking to attract and retain talented workers. Heading into 2024, employers in many sectors are facing completion for workers because of the aging population structure which is constraining growth of the labor supply. In this competitive hiring environment, employers may:

- Consider a broader pool of job seekers that may include workers with disabilities, justice involved and those with substance use disorders
- Reevaluate required education/experience for some occupations
- Examine what they offer to jobseekers: workforce development, compensation, upward mobility, flexibility, mission, ect.

- Work with local education and training providers such as community colleges to provide input on programs and curricula that would lead more directly to employment opportunities for students
- Consider alternative production methods and rely more on technology to increase the productivity of existing labor resources

The population structure has played a major role in shaping job and workforce trends. The workforce is expected to be made up of a larger share of those age 65 and over, a growing demographic expected to live longer and work later in life than their predecessors. The U.S. labor force participation rate among those age 65 to 74 increased from about 16 percent in the early 1990s to over 26 percent and is projected to rise further to 30 percent by 2032 according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. [Acemoglu, Mühlbach and Scott \(2022\)](#) find that the U.S. economy has shifted toward age friendly jobs that are characterized as involving: less physical exertion and moderate activity, greater use of social and communication skills, greater autonomy, prioritize scheduling flexibility, shorter commutes, hybrid or remote work, less demanding cognitive and physical work, reduced job stress and less harsh environmental conditions.<sup>13</sup>

Recent national studies have found that competitive labor markets are leading to expansion of economic opportunities. [Maestas and Ne'eman \(2023\)](#) find that tight labor markets and the adoption of remote work have contributed to significant economic gains for people with disabilities.<sup>14</sup> The employment to population ratio among people with disabilities was significantly higher in 2023 than it was four years earlier. [Autor, Dube and McGrew \(2023\)](#) find that competition for workers is having the effect of reducing earnings inequality and the college wage premium.<sup>15</sup>

## PRIORITY POPULATIONS

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<sup>13</sup> Acemoglu, Daron & Mühlbach, Nicolaj Søndergaard & Scott, Andrew J., 2022. "[The rise of age-friendly jobs](#)," *The Journal of the Economics of Ageing*, Elsevier, vol. 23(C).

<sup>14</sup> Ari Ne'eman, Nicole Maestas, "How has COVID-19 impacted disability employment?", *Disability and Health Journal*, Volume 16, Issue 2, 2023, 101429,

<sup>15</sup> Autor, David & Arindrajit Dube & Annie McGrew, 2023. "[The Unexpected Compression: Competition at Work in the Low Wage Labor Market](#)," *NBER Working Papers* 31010, National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc.

Stakeholders and businesses in Maine grasp the need to prioritize services that will facilitate participation of **all** potential members of the labor force. They will continue to work to implement strategies that alleviate barriers to attaining employment.

The SWB advocates on behalf of individuals facing challenges to employment. An official standing committee is charged with examining the barriers specific target populations face and developing recommendations that address such barriers. SWB promotes employment without discrimination based on the basis of gender, race, age, ethnicity, national origin or other barriers.

Individuals with barriers to employment include the following:

- Displaced homemakers
- Eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers
- English language learners and those facing substantial cultural barriers
- Justice involved Foster care youth or youth transitioning out of foster care
- Homeless individuals
- Native American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians
- Individuals with disabilities, including youth with disabilities
- Individuals with low literacy levels
- Older individuals
- Individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility for TANF
- Long-term unemployed individuals
- Low-income individuals
- Single parents

## PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Maine can rightly claim a long standing and abiding concern with the employment issues facing people with disabilities. Addressing these issues and increasing the workforce participation of this population must be a priority to improve the economic wellbeing of individuals with disabilities but also for the state as a whole. Notably, Maine prohibits the payment of sub-minimum wages to people

with disabilities through a state law enacted in 2020. Maine is also an Employment First State, requiring that competitive integrated employment be the first and preferred service or support option offered by state agencies to individuals with disabilities.

From 2017 through 2021, just over 211,000 persons with one or more disabilities resided in Maine, equal to almost 16 percent of its civilian non-institutionalized population of 1.3 million. This proportion was higher than that of the United States in which an estimated 12.6 percent of residents had a disability. The age distribution of the civilian noninstitutionalized population with disabilities differs from the general population (with and without disabilities) and has a higher share of persons over 64 and a lower share in cohorts 64 or younger. In Maine, nearly 42 percent of the population with disabilities is over 64 years, more than double the comparable share of the general population, two times the comparable share of the general population (21%).

Adults with disabilities in Maine are less likely to be employed than adults without disabilities. Fewer than half work or seek work; the unemployment rate among adults with disabilities is three times that of other working age adults. From 2017 through 2021, almost 37 percent of working-age Mainers with disabilities were employed compared to 80 percent of those with no disability. Those who do work earn less than workers with no disability. Median earnings of workers with disabilities were \$22,938 in a twelve-month period, compared to median earnings of \$38,071 among workers with no disability. Adults with a disability are more likely to live in or near poverty regardless of work status and are less likely to have postsecondary education than adults with no disability.

As described in the labor market information reported in the previous state plan modification, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in unprecedented disruptions in the labor market and there were significant impacts to workers with disabilities, many of whom had underlying medical conditions with greater risk to the virus but there have been some promising trends being seen in the Current Population Survey, which is a primary source of monthly labor force statistics used by the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics. As reported by the University of New Hampshire's (UNH) Center for Research on Disability at the end of 2021, the labor force participation of people with disabilities across the country has recovered from the pandemic-related slowdown and actually increased to above pre-pandemic levels.

***The Commission on Disability and Employment (CDE):***

The CDE was established by the Maine Legislature in 1997. It promotes collaboration with the public and private sectors to increase awareness of and influence policy related to employment for people with disabilities. Its members envision a Maine workforce that includes all people with disabilities employed in jobs that meet both their economic and personal needs. The CDE issues a formal annual report that includes recommendations to the Governor and Legislature. One of the current actions of the Committee is the creation of a presentation for employers on hiring individuals with disabilities.

## WOMEN

In March 2021, the United States Census Bureau produced an issue brief on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women in the full-time, year-round workforce. Using 2019 data from the American Community Survey and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Identifying “essential worker” occupations, women comprise 44 percent of the nation’s full-time, year-round civilian workforce and 47 percent of all essential workers in the U.S.

According to the Maine Center for Economic Policy’s (MECEP) State of Working Maine: 2021, 49 percent of workers in occupations considered high risk for contagion are women. Maine women comprise a majority of jobs in the sectors most impacted by the pandemic: leisure and hospitality, educational services (both private and public, K-12 and higher education), and healthcare and social assistance. According to the Maine Department of Labor’s Center for Workforce Research and Information, Maine women accounted for 57 percent of the pandemic workers’ jobs lost to Maine men’s 43 percent. As we enter the post-pandemic world of work, the negative effects on working women persist. MECEP’s report further states, “Multiple pandemic-related factors are contributing to the decrease in labor force participation including fewer available job openings, personal safety concerns, school closures and hybrid learning models, and a lack of childcare.”

The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the overall gender wage gap for the full-time, year-round workforce is 82 percent. The Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR), using American Community Survey data, identifies the Maine gender wage gap at just over 83 percent.

The pandemic revealed well-known weaknesses in women’s employment progress. Gender and racial wage inequity exist among workers within the same industries even when those workers have the same qualifications and experience. Those lower wages perpetuate inequity, as women and people of color are less able to build wealth than their white male peers. This gap is even wider for women of color working in Maine. In this state, according to the IWPR, for every dollar a White Man

earns, a Black woman earns 65 cents; a Hispanic woman earns 69 cents, and an Asian or Native American woman earns 67 cents.

To address the recommendations made by the Women’s Employment Committee in its prior reports, and to ensure that women’s concerns are addressed across all demographic and economic strata of Maine life, the State Workforce Board underwent a structural change in 2021 that weaved the concerns of women across age, veteran status, disability, race, ethnicity, etc. throughout a new committee framework. In doing so, women’s employment matters are viewed and tackled across the broad spectrum of Maine’s Jobs and Recovery Plan. In concert with WIOA and other partners, other state departments, and other women’s policy and workforce organizations, Maine’s workforce development system will widen its focus to complement Governor Mills’ Jobs and Recovery Plan<sup>22</sup> by supporting Maine’s small businesses, enhancing job training and skills programs leading to good paying careers, and investing in Maine’s communities’ and families by expanding the very supports that help women most—affordable housing, high quality child and family care, lifelong learning, accessible health care, transportation, internet, and other infrastructure.

Workforce development is an inherent component of our economic self-sufficiency and personal well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that a healthy economy depends on a healthy workforce. Health, itself, relies on an educated population with enough to eat; a safe home, work, and school environment; affordable health care; and reliable affordable transportation to and from the workplace.

#### RURAL RESIDENTS LACKING RELIABLE TRANSPORTATION

Maine is a geographically large, rural state in which those without affordable, reliable transportation face significant barriers to accessing occupational training and employment. Rural communities in the state’s three regions have limited or non-existent public transportation services. The larger cities are served by municipal or regional bus services, but intercity bus links are limited. Stakeholders must work to identify new ways for rural Mainers to access workforce and educational resources. Some do not have access to high-speed internet and many lack basic computer literacy skills. The Department is partnering with the Maine Department of Transportation to run a pilot program with up to 10 participants in recovery to provide an e-bike to transport themselves to work, training, and necessary appointments.

#### **Partnering with Maine’s Public Library System**

Workforce boards will work to promote the resources of Maine’s public library system as a key partner in addressing this issue. Maine has over 266 public libraries, the smallest of them serving an island population and the largest serving urban hubs (Portland, Lewiston-Auburn, and Bangor). Libraries are vital centers of community access to technology and resources for online learning. Recent surveys reveal that 750,000 Mainers have a library card. Over 1.7 million high speed internet sessions took place through 230 libraries. (Each library has between 100 mbps to 1 gigabit of fiber connections.) Maine libraries offer safe, family welcoming environments where single parents can access job search resources with children in tow. They offer informal training in digital literacy from tools to set up email accounts (which are needed to register for labor exchange and file unemployment claims) to assisting with uploading resumes to various job sites.

In partnering with Maine’s public library system, workforce providers can promote participant access to resources in the Digital Maine Library, specifically, the Career Preparation, Adult Skills and Computer Skills Center. The Digital Maine Library also provides access to “Career Transitions,” an online resource for job seekers that assists them in finding sustainable employment. The Maine State Library invests state and federal dollars as well as money from the Maine MTEAF (Maine Telecommunications Access Fund) to provide a vast array of resources for all Maine citizens. The Career Preparation Center provides specific occupational practice tests that assess and provide online skill development through varied occupationally specific tools that address readiness to enter careers from allied health to homeland security. Residents can also access tools that prepare them to pass high school equivalency exams such as the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) and post-secondary entrance exams such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or Accuplacer.

Local Boards will develop agreements with regional libraries and, using best practices already available in state, engage in staff cross-training that will inform workforce system staff about the resources libraries offer and how to promote these to their customers. Library staff in turn will become versed in promoting the programs and resources provided through CareerCenters.

When the CareerCenter closed in Waterville, the Waterville Library (Library) established an active partnership to provide access to career services and expertise from agencies such as the Augusta CareerCenter, New Ventures, the Kennebec Valley Community Action Program, Chambers of Commerce, and local workforce boards. The Library has fully integrated and embedded workforce development as part of its mission and activities, hosting itinerant staff from the Augusta CareerCenter who are able to provide employment and training services as well as a local job fair.

Many public libraries can assist members of the public who are not digitally literate, including those who either do not have access to or do not know how to navigate the internet or on-line resources. All partners must continue to engage in creating solutions because the need for this level of one-on-one digital guidance far outstrips the capacity of either library or CareerCenter staff to address alone.

## OLDER WORKERS

In July 2021, Governor Mills established the Cabinet on Aging by [Executive Order](#) to eliminate silos across State government, enhance communication, and accelerate actions to help every person in Maine age safely, affordably, in ways and settings that best serve individual needs. The Cabinet is co-chaired by Commissioner Lambrew of the Department of Health and Human Services and Commissioner Fortman of the Department of Labor and includes Commissioners of the Departments of Public Safety, Transportation, Professional and Financial Regulation, Economic and Community Development, and Administrative and Financial Services, as well as the Director of the Maine State Housing Authority. The Cabinet is focused on strategies that support the goals of sustainable living; community connections; and the active retirement of older adults by supporting employment and volunteer opportunities.

Older workers in Maine face considerable barriers to employment yet are invaluable to Maine's workforce. The median age in Maine is 44.7 years compared to the national average of 38.4 and there are now more people in Maine age 55 and above than there are people in the prime working ages 25 to 54. In 2022, 28.5 percent of the population was age 65 or older and 17.2 percent ages 55 to 65 with labor force participation decreasing significantly for those entering their 70's and beyond. These demographics are bringing a spotlight to the related economic impact and prompting employers and state agencies to reconsider traditional views about work and retirement and recognizing the importance of capitalizing on the skills and experience of older workers who want - or need - to continue to work, either in their current careers or in "encore" careers.

To that end, the State of Maine has become certified as an Age-Friendly Employer and is encouraging other employers to adopt practices that engage and value older workers, including flexible work hours, schedules, place and benefits, deferred retirement option plans, job sharing, and workplace accommodations. Other strategies that are underway include education and support through employer summits and using public service announcements, as well as making resources and information easily available through a MDOL [website](#), to attract older adults back into the workforce.

The State Workforce Board hosted a webinar on February 21, 2024, on the topic of hiring and retaining older workers. The panel included the Executive Director of the Maine Council on Aging, a representative of Northern Light Health, which is one of the largest employers in the state, and a member of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services. The webinar was held to share best practices with employers in the state. This webinar had over 120 attendees and there are future webinars planned to discuss hiring and retention strategies for other priority populations.

## JUSTICE INVOLVED

The justice involved often face barriers re-entering life outside of the corrections system. The Maine Department of Corrections (DOC) estimates it will release 6,000 prisoners from its facilities within the next five years. Based on the current population, at the time of their release, 31 percent of these individuals will have reading skills comparable to the middle school level and 76 percent will be similarly prepared in math. This lack of proficiency in math, reading and other skills create barriers to employment. The lack of employment prospects often lead to other problems such as securing housing and accessing support services.

Finding employment after release greatly reduces the likelihood that an individual will commit another crime. Workforce service providers assist those transitioning out of the corrections system to access job search assistance resources, but system partners will need to work more closely with employers to identify ways they can best capitalize on this prospective labor pool. Evidence-based approaches will be promoted. Some local areas are currently launching projects that include provision of career services in pre-release and county jails that educate soon to be released inmates about job search and workforce training resources and that establish relationships between them and prospective employers. Maine is also working with employers to reduce concerns about hiring justice involved. Previous job fair-like events have been held at two Maine State Prison facilities. Employers who attended reported that it helped to better understand the system as well as the rehabilitation and education programs in which inmates participate. In addition, Maine is promoting the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and the Federal Bonding Program as incentives to employers considering hiring justice-involved individuals. The MDOL and DOC recently agreed to a partnership where DOC staff will pre-certify for WOTC and issue Federal Bond vouchers to inmates as part of their release processing. These justice involved individuals will leave correctional facilities with documents offering incentives to employers who hire them.

During the First Session of the 130<sup>th</sup> Maine Legislature, Governor Mills signed 'An Act Relating to Fair Chance in Employment.' The law, which became effective in October of 2021, prohibits employers from inquiring about an individual's criminal history on an initial employment application and from stating in employment advertisements that an individual with a criminal history may not apply.

An employer may inquire about a prospective employee's criminal history during an interview or once the prospective employee has been determined otherwise qualified for the position. If an employer inquires about a prospective employee's criminal record, the prospective employee, if still eligible for the position under applicable federal or state law, must be afforded an opportunity to explain the information and the circumstances regarding any convictions, including post-conviction rehabilitation.

There are exceptions if a background check is required or if it would be inappropriate for an individual with a certain criminal history to apply.

The intent of this new legislation is to open up employment opportunities to individuals who were justice involved. This bill adds to the work the Departments of Labor and Corrections are doing in order to help address barriers to employment for this section of the workforce.

DOC has also implemented registered apprenticeship programs in some of its facilities for both staff and inmates. They also work closely with the university and community college system in the provision of educational opportunities for inmates.

#### YOUNGER WORKERS

WIOA requires that all programs serve youth with significant barriers to employment or education, including high school dropouts, pregnant or parenting, homeless or runaway youth, those subject to the criminal justice system, youth with disabilities, and low-income youth who are basic skills deficient or lack English proficiency. These are documentable barriers, but the youth that fall under these categories often cope with numerous additional challenges such as low aspirations, depression, substance use, unstable homes, lack of appropriate adult role models, family violence, neglect, abuse, rural isolation, lack of transportation, sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination, and an overall lack of basic work-readiness competencies.

Youth service providers will partner to assess the need for a full menu of youth-oriented services from attainment of high-school diploma to parenting skills, financial literacy and career counseling. Employers will be at the table to offer work experience, internships and adult role-modelling and will continue to be involved with occupational and career awareness activities like the youth academies offered in all three local areas that provide youth with numerous youth service elements (career exploration, financial literacy, work experience, peer mentoring, and more).

### **Maine Children's Cabinet**

The Maine Children's Cabinet plays a vital role in convening and facilitating coordination across state agencies and initiatives and policies that will improve and promote the healthy development of children and youth in Maine, including youth ages 14-24. Children's cabinet members include the Commissioners of the Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, Labor, Public Safety, and Corrections. In collaboration with key staff from each of these agencies, the work of the Children's Cabinet is coordinated by staff in the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF).

Designated staff from the Departments comprising the Children's Cabinet meet twice monthly to maintain open communication about changes and developments in programming and policies across state agencies for children and youth, coordinate the implementation of specific strategies, and identify new opportunities to collaborate across programs to advance strategies and goals. The Children's Cabinet strategic plans lay out two overarching goals:

- All Maine children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed, and
- All Maine youth enter adulthood healthy and connected to the workforce and/or education.

### **VETERANS**

The flow of veterans and transitioning service members through Maine's one-stop CareerCenters averages over 3,500 people per year. Unemployment for veterans in Maine is at an all-time low with less than 3 percent of our veterans currently unemployed. Wagner-Peyser, WIOA and other USDOL funded projects operate in unison with the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) to ensure that all veterans receive priority of service within the workforce delivery system. These and other workforce programs are the point of entry for Maine veterans, disabled veterans and covered persons. Our employment service capacity is strategically distributed throughout the CareerCenters to serve veterans.

The JVSG is a non-competitive, USDOL funded program that provides over \$700,000 annually to Maine, supporting seven full time staff positions and two half-time positions. A mix of Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPs), Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) and a Consolidated Position work out of one-stop CareerCenter offices. Administration of the JVSG Program is provided by the State's Veteran Program Manager based at the central office in Augusta.

The Hire-A-Vet campaign, which promotes the hiring of 100 veterans in 100 jobs with 100 employers in 100 days, kicked off on August 17, 2023, with an in-person hiring event and resource fair at the Augusta Civic Center. Three additional in-person hiring events were across Maine as part of a new delivery model. The campaign ended on December 1, 2023, with a total of 237 veterans, including 55 women and military family members being hired.

The average hourly wage of veterans hired was \$29.55, the second highest in the campaign's nine-year history. In 2023, 270 employers signed on to the campaign, and all sixteen counties participated in the campaign. In addition, 51 veteran and military service providers participated in each campaign event.

Employers have partnered to make the initiative a success and all goals have been exceeded each year. The campaign has connected over 1,700 employers with 2,000+ veteran-hires since its inception in 2015 and has been recognized as a best practice by the USDOL and the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA).

#### PERSONS WITH LANGUAGE BARRIERS

People who are foreign-born and for whom English is not their primary language typically face considerable barriers to employment in the United States. According to 2018 American Community Survey one-year estimates<sup>25</sup>, approximately 3.5 percent of Mainers were born outside the United States. Of those, nearly one third entered the U.S. since 2010.

According to the American Community Survey, about 6 percent of the population speaks a language other than English at home.

Persons with language barriers live throughout the state. However, clusters of foreign-born Mainers with language barriers are more prevalent in cities where services are more available, such as in Lewiston/Auburn, Greater Portland and Saco/Biddeford. According to the Maine Center for Economic Policy, in addition to New Mainers, Maine has a population of second-, third-, and even fourth-

generation French-speaking Franco-Americans. Roughly 10 percent of adult Franco-Americans and Acadians in Maine do not have a high school diploma or equivalency and one in five has some college but no degree. Low English language proficiency among this population may account for some of these numbers. Even within the cities, the state does not have enough current resources available to meet the need for English language instruction.

In the summer of 2023, Governor Mills signed an Executive Order directing the administration to create an Office of New Americans with the overarching goal of effectively incorporating immigrants into our workforce and communities to strengthen the economy. Legislation was presented to establish the office and will be considered during the Second Session of the 131<sup>st</sup> Maine Legislature. The legislation proposed will establish the Office of New Americans within the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and Future including the establishment of a director position. The director will be charged with establishing the office and hiring a staff. The legislation also includes the creation of an Advisory Council to the Office of New Americans and would include 19 members. These changes are pending action by the Maine Legislature.

#### INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN POVERTY AND WITH LOW LEVELS OF EDUCATION

Other people with barriers to employment in Maine include those who are low income with low levels of education. Estimates between 2015-2019 show twelve percent of the population lives in poverty. Nearly 35% of Black or African American alone and 30% of American Indian or Alaska Native alone lived under the poverty line. Nearly 25,000 Mainers over the age of 25 have less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education, with another 47,000 without a high school diploma. The subcommittees of the SWB focus on many of those populations who are statistically in poverty. Committee chairs are working across the committees in recognition that each constituent group is not mutually exclusive and many barriers to employment are crosscutting.

#### WIOA - TANF PARTNERSHIP OBJECTIVES

Under Governor Mills' administration, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program will be a full partner of the one-stop system as recommended under WIOA. As such, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will support and guide its ASPIRE program service provider (currently and hereafter known as Fedcap) to work with core and required partners of the one-stop system to jointly serve customers and, as appropriate, leverage and share resources on their behalf.

#### **Progress in Partnership**

Four of the twelve American Job Centers/CareerCenters in Maine (Lewiston, Bangor, Presque Isle, Machias) have begun piloting a collaborative service delivery through scheduled co-location of MDOL and DHHS programs/services. Staff from each agency have identified their relevant services and provide on-site assessments, case management, benefit application and administration, plan development, barrier mitigation, connection to training opportunities, and job search activities.

Additionally, CareerCenters have established relationships with local Fedcap offices and their ASPIRE services. Through the Fedcap ASPIRE program, TANF recipients move towards financial independence through case management, job training, education, support and employment services. Staff collaboration between employment services, Fedcap, and other DHHS staff include:

- Job search services including job search assistance, resume and cover letter writing, and interview workshops.
- Registration with Maine JobLink, the labor exchange system that matches worker skills with jobs listed by Maine employers (i.e.: teaching Fedcap staff how to guide TANF clients through this process and/or having employment services staff assist TANF recipients with this process) .
- Coordination between agencies on client service plan development to eliminate unnecessary duplication of services for co-enrolled customers .
- Referrals and program co-enrollment that will enable customers to leverage the supports and resources of multiple programs.
- Co-management and accountability of participant involvement in activities and services of partner programs, such as coordinated and/or shared case management and formal protocols for communication between programs on behalf of shared customers.
- Regular communication between Fedcap and employment services to better align service coordination overall.
- Collaboration on employer outreach and job development activities including on-site job fairs at Fedcap offices.

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Department of Labor (DOL) are partnering with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta to offer five groundbreaking tools that help individuals, employers, and policymakers understand how various career pathways can lead to economic mobility and stability, while also understanding the potential loss of public assistance based on income, career goals, and family dynamics. In Maine, the suite of tools is called CLIFF-Maine Career Ladder Income Mobility and Benefits (CLIMB).

These tools have been offered to Maine through the Atlanta Federal Reserve Bank's Career Ladder Identifier and Financial Forecaster (known as CLIFF), and in partnership with A Whole Family Approach to Jobs, a New England initiative focused on two-generation policy and practice approaches to put families in the center and support parents to work and children to thrive. A leadership team of parents, DHHS, DOL, the John T. Gorman Foundation, state legislators, business, and community organizations have guided the development of this initiative in Maine.

These tools:

- Help individuals understand how much money they are likely to gain through employment as they move through their career pathways over time, and the financial tradeoffs from the loss of public assistance as income increases, to help individuals plan for a stable financial future.
- Identify what may happen to public benefits as individuals increase their employment, and how wages and benefits interact along career pathways in Maine communities.
- Assist stakeholders in identifying barriers to career advancement and economic mobility and to support workers and job seekers in their movement toward economic self-sufficiency.
- Engage employers to examine compensation structures, practices, and policies as workers are offered upskilling and advancement opportunities.

The tools were launched in May 2023 after two pilots. DHHS/DOL immediately began training a large network of case managers, coaches, and other staff in Maine working directly with job seekers and front-line workers as CLIMB coaches.

### **Formal Steps**

DHHS will formally partner with each of Maine's three local workforce boards to take part in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that guides collaborative and integrated service delivery across programs and funding streams. Local workforce boards act as the lead conveners of partners for their regions.

The Northeastern Workforce Development Board (NWDB) has oversight of Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis and Washington counties.

The Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board (CWMWDB) has oversight of Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec Oxford, and Somerset counties.

The Coastal Counties Workforce board, (CCWI) has oversight of Cumberland, Knox Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo, and York Counties.

The boards work with partners to develop and maintain the local one-stop system and to articulate the coordinated service delivery design for their local region. Local boards bring additional partners to the table and promote collaborative resolution of issues facing the region such as poverty, the effects of opioid use and more. Local boards also negotiate cost sharing between partners to ensure adequate one-stop infrastructure and access to all partner programs and eliminate redundancies such as multiple intake or assessment specialists when these could possibly be provided by staff shared between programs.

Signing of a MOU is a formal step that introduces TANF as a partner to the one-stop system and outlines how TANF service providers will work with all required partners going forward.

### **Future Steps**

Maine continues to work toward integration of CLIMB into case management across services and organizations. While over 100 coaches have been trained to use the tool, fear in mis-advising a recipient is pervasive. MDOL will partner with DHHS to provide opportunities to practice using the tool including local in-person convenings of coaches, hosting a community of practice and establishing a stronger connection between the benefit side of DHHS services and the workforce system partners.

Additionally, partner agencies serving TANF recipients have taken steps to adopt a “whole family” 2-generation approach to jobs. The approach takes both the needs of the recipient and the children/other family dependents into consideration when developing service delivery approaches, enabling them to achieve success through a more holistic approach to employment services. MDOL is excited to engage with and support Maine’s Whole Family Approach to Jobs collaboration as we push toward shared the success of Maine parents and children.

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## II.(a.2) WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

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Maine has a variety of programs and activities to address the skilled workforce needs of employers that focus on developing the skills, abilities, and credentials of the population, including those with

barriers to employment. The aggregate public investment in these activities is significant, totaling more than \$500 million. Developing greater levels of coordination and alignment among programs is an integral component of this unified plan and essential to navigating Maine’s many workforce development challenges.

The tables in II.(a.2.a.) provide an analysis of Maine’s workforce development, education, and training activities that receive regular public funding.<sup>27 28</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, programs and activities are grouped into four categories: WIOA core partner programs, other publicly funded employment and training programs, other publicly funded education programs, and additional programs.

## II.(A.2.A) THE STATE’S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

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### WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) CORE PARTNER PROGRAMS

The WIOA core partner programs, adult, dislocated worker and youth programs; employment services; vocational rehabilitation (VR); and adult and basic education) served more than 90,000 participants and represented \$57.418 million in public investment in fiscal year (FY) 2023, 51 percent of which was federal, 26 percent state and 23 percent in other. This information is displayed in Table 5, below. This amount represents a slight increase from \$56.9 million in the State Plan modifications in 2022.

The MDOL oversees administration of the WIOA Title IB, Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and the Title III Employment Services programs. In Program Year 2022 (PY22), 712 adults, 138 dislocated workers, 367 youth were served under these programs. On average, 66.5% found jobs. During the year, 6,779 were Employment Services (ES) participants and 38,002 were reportable individuals.

MDOL’s Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) works to bring about full access to employment, independence, and community integration for people with disabilities. While under the oversight of the U.S. Department of Education, BRS operates within the offices of MDOL at CareerCenters and provides VR services through its Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI). The co-location of VR and employment services offers greater opportunities for aligning programs and services. During PY2022 (SFY2023), BRS had 3,182 new applicants and served 6,212 individuals through plans for employment.

Maine Adult Education (hereafter known as Adult Education) is part of the Maine Department of Education. Service providers are housed within nine educational programming areas (hubs) and consist of 67 local providers aligned with local school districts statewide. In fiscal year (FY) 2023,

over 16,747 individuals participated in high school completion, workforce training, and college transitions programming. Of those, 8,700 participated in federal programs directly linked to high school equivalency completion, entering employment, and entering postsecondary education.

Over 11,000 people also participated in lifelong learning classes such as health and wellness, political awareness, personal finances, and other community enriching courses.

Maine's unified plan emphasizes greater levels of integration, alignment, and coordination among core programs and one-stop partners.

In 2016, Adult Education began implementing Integrated Education and Training (IET). The passage of WIOA in 2014 enabled Adult Education to use federal literacy funds to support training when combined with education. Integrating relevant reading, math, comprehension instruction, occupation training, employability skills, and English language acquisition as needed is a training model with proven effectiveness. Another key piece of an IET is the earning of a credential of value. Combining these elements compresses learning time frames and accelerates entry into the workplace. While IETs are successful, they are expensive to develop and run, making cost-sharing with partners essential. The IET programs offered are based on identified local workforce board needs, and on collaboration with employers, other service providers, and postsecondary institutions. From the initial six programs, the number of IETs has grown. The goal is to continue to increase the number of adults receiving credentials through an IET. IET is a proven training model that enhances learning comprehension by integrating classroom and occupation training and often compresses learning time frames. Based on identified local workforce needs, the pilot projects were developed with extensive employer engagement and the involvement of support service providers and a variety of educational institutions. Since then IET programming has been rolled out statewide and is a required programming element for each adult education hub.

TABLE 5:MAINE’S PUBLIC SECTOR INVESTMENT (IN MILLIONS) IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT; WIOA CORE PARTNER PROGRAMS

| Program   | Federal | State | Other | SFY23 Funding | Overseeing Agency | Program Description   |
|---|---------|-------|-------|---------------|-------------------|---|
| <b>Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title IB</b> | \$7.469 |       |       | \$7.469       | MDOL              | WIOA Title IB provides employment and training services to adults, dislocated workers, and youth who meet priority and eligibility criteria. IB programs overseen by three local workforce boards and delivered through four service providers served a total of 1,230 participants. Of those who exited the programs an average of 75.4 percent were employed. Of those who participated in classroom training, 63 percent earned a degree, diploma or credential. |
| <b>WIOA Title III Employment Services</b>                       | \$3.649 |       |       | \$3.649       | MDOL              | WIOA Title III amends the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933 and provides employment and labor exchange services to individuals and employers. Over 42,700 job seekers accessed the Maine JobLink labor exchange system in which 5,408 employers posted 31,464 jobs. Individualized career services were provided to 4,819 job seekers who required more intensive assistance finding employment.  |

|  |        |       |        |        |                |  |
|--|--------|-------|--------|--------|----------------|--|
| <b>WIOA<br/>Title IV<br/>Rehabilitation<br/>Services</b> | \$16.2 | \$8.7 | \$0.6  | \$25.5 | USDOE/<br>MDOL | <p>The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) works to bring about full access to employment, independence and community integration for people with disabilities: The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation helps individuals with a range of disabling conditions to achieve or retain employment; the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides services to individuals who are blind or have low vision; and the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened assists individuals with hearing loss. During SFY 2023, BRS had 3,182 new applicants and served 6,212 individuals through plans for employment.</p> |
| <b>WIOA<br/>Title II<br/>Adult<br/>Education</b>         | \$1.8  | \$6.5 | \$12.5 | \$20.8 | MDOE           | <p>Maine Adult Education promotes programs that help adults get the foundational skills they need to be educated and productive workers, family members, and citizens. The major areas of instruction and support are adult basic education, adult secondary education (high school completion), English language acquisition, college transition, and workforce training. These</p>   |

|                           |                 |               |               |                 |  |  |
|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|--|--|
|                           |                 |               |               |                 |  | programs emphasize foundational skills such as reading, writing, math, English language competency, career awareness and exploration, workforce training, and problem-solving. In FY23, adult education served 16,747 adults in academic and workforce programs, including 8,700 participants in federal funded programs. An additional 11,000 adults participated in self-sustaining personal enrichment courses. |
|                           | <b>Federal</b>  | <b>State</b>  | <b>Other</b>  | <b>Total</b>    |  |  |
| <b>Totals in millions</b> | <b>\$29.118</b> | <b>\$15.2</b> | <b>\$13.1</b> | <b>\$57.418</b> |  |  |
| <b>Percentages</b>        | <b>51%</b>      | <b>26%</b>    | <b>23%</b>    |                 |  |  |

#### OTHER PUBLICLY FUNDED EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING PROGRAMS

A wide range of employment and training activities in Maine occur outside the core WIOA programs. Many of these activities are described in Table 5, below. These programs deliver employment and job training services to a variety of population groups including veterans, dislocated workers, youth, and individuals with skill deficiencies and other barriers to employment. Programs are accessible through Maine’s one-stop CareerCenters administered by local workforce boards in three regions.

In addition to the programs displayed in Table 6, a variety of other employment and training activities are funded through discretionary grant awards to the state of Maine. Such grants include, but are not limited to H1B grants, Youth Build, and Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Training (TAACT) grants.

TABLE 6: OTHER PUBLICLY FUNDED EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

| Program   | Overseeing Agency | Program Description  |
|---|-------------------|--|
| <b>Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)</b>                       | MDOL              | Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) funds are allocated to state workforce agencies from the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) in direct proportion to the number of veterans seeking employment within their state. The grants support two principal staff positions: disabled veterans' outreach program specialists, and local veterans' employment representatives. This grant provides funds to exclusively serve veterans, other eligible persons and, indirectly, employers.  |
| <b>Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)</b>                          | MDOL              | The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program is a federal program that provides a path for employment growth and opportunity through aid to US workers who have lost their jobs as a result of foreign trade. The TAA program seeks to provide these trade-affected workers with opportunities to obtain the skills, resources, and support they need to become reemployed.   |
| <b>Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)</b>                         | MDOL              | The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax credit available to employers for hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. Maine received a USDOL WOTC backlog grant in 10/2021. An investment in system and processing improvement was also made through federal ARPA funding.   |
| <b>ReEmployment Services &amp; Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)</b> | MDOL              | The ReEmployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program assists unemployed workers to return to work more quickly by delivering and services to those claimants profiled as “most likely to exhaust” and all transitioning veterans receiving unemployment compensation. Targeted claimants will be provided relevant reemployment services and eligibility review interviews. Services will be delivered through group workshops, one-on-one meetings, and other methods allowing individuals who would not be able to attend for various reasons to attend. |

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| <b>CareerCenter General Fund</b>                              | MDOL | The Maine CareerCenter provides a variety of employment and training services at no charge for Maine workers and businesses. A portion of CareerCenter General Funds support staffing and related Apprenticeship programming depending on federal funding levels.  |
| <b>Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP)</b>          | MDOL | The Competitive Skills Scholarship (CSSP) helps workers learn new skills and succeed in a changing economy. The program is open to all qualified Maine residents and pays for education and training for high wage jobs in demand in Maine. The number of new CSSP applicants accepted into the program each year is based on available funding . In 2021, 1.5m of Federal ARPA funding was allocated to CSSP to aid in individual’s recovery from the pandemic.   |
| <b>WIOA Title IV Disability Innovation Fund (DIF)</b>         | MDOL | Awarded by the USDOE in SFY 2024, DVR’s <i>Pathways to Partnerships</i> project is a five-year demonstration project to develop collaborative partnerships between DVR/DBVI, Maine DOE, local schools, and Alpha One, Maine’s sole Center for Independent Living, to help young people with disabilities seamlessly transition to life after high school, preparing them for independent living, competitive integrated employment and community integration.  |
| <b>WIOA Title ID National Dislocated Worker Grants (DWGs)</b> | MDOL | Dislocated worker grants (DWGs) provide additional assistance to support employment and retraining efforts for dislocated workers displaced due to mass layoff or natural disaster. USDOL offers access to these funds through a competitive process to address other issues affecting workers such as the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic or need for technology upgrades. Maine is in the process of developing a true virtual American Job Center to allow access to services to those who are unable to access physical locations due to distance and other barriers including transportation and childcare. |
| <b>Maine Apprenticeship Program (MAP) and Apprenticeship</b>  | MDOL | Maine Apprenticeship Program (MAP) and Apprenticeship Expansion Grant helps mobilize Maine's workforce with structured, on-the-job learning in traditional industries such as construction and manufacturing, as well as emerging industries such as healthcare, information technology, energy, telecommunications and more. Registered apprenticeships connect job seekers looking to learn new skills with employers looking for qualified workers, resulting in a  |

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| <b>Expansion Grant</b>                               |  | workforce with industry-driven training and employers with a competitive edge.  |
| <b>WIOA Title IC:<br/>Penobscot Job Corps Center</b> | Boston Regional Office of Job Corps                        | Job Corps is a no-cost education and career technical training program administered by the USDOL that helps young people ages 16 through 24 improve the quality of their lives through career technical and academic training. The Job Corps program is authorized by Title I-C of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The Penobscot Job Corps Center is operated by Career Systems Development Corporation for the USDOL.  |
| <b>WIOA Title IC:<br/>Loring Job Corps Center</b>    | Boston Regional Office of Job Corps                        | See above   |
| <b>Maine Conservation Corps (MCC)</b>                | Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry | The mission of Maine Conservation Corps (MCC) is to accomplish conservation initiatives that inspire individuals and enhance communities. The MCC is a state AmeriCorps program, comprised of members who undertake conservation projects while completing job readiness training and achieving personal development goals. Service inherently includes the distillation of personal responsibility, accountability, teamwork, communication, problem solving, as well as many other appropriate workplace behaviors and attitudes. Members also engage in career research, goal setting, resume and cover letter writing, develop interview skills, and earn certifications as part of their AmeriCorps terms. |
| <b>New Ventures Maine (NVME)</b>                     | UMA/ UMS   | New Ventures Maine (NVME) is a statewide community outreach and education program of the University of Maine at Augusta/University of Maine System. NVME provides in-person and online training and individual coaching in career planning, entrepreneurship, and financial education and asset building. For Mainers in life and career transitions, NVME provides an empowering environment for participants to define and achieve goals. NVME helps individuals recognize strengths, overcome barriers, access resources, develop a plan and take action towards their goals--finding good jobs,   |

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|  |                | furthering their education, starting a business, managing their money and building savings and assets.   |
| <b>Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)</b> | USDOL/<br>A4TD | The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a community service and work-based training program for unemployed, low-income persons over the age of 55 with barriers to employment. Authorized by the Older Americans Act (Title V), the program provides subsidized, service-based training by placing participants in paid internships at 501C3 non-profit and public agencies. Participants are also able to participate in workshops that improve their job search skills and job readiness. Individuals train for an average of 20 hours per week and are paid minimum wage. The community service training serves as a bridge to unsubsidized employment opportunities.  |
| <b>Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG)</b>                      | JMG            | Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG) partners with public education and private businesses to offer results-driven solutions to ensure all students graduate, attain post-secondary credentials and pursue meaningful careers. JMG is hosted in Maine's public middle and high schools, and community college and university systems. JMG reaches more than 10,000 students throughout all of Maine's 16 counties. JMG programs are led by JMG specialists who serve as mentors and educators. The JMG model integrates competency-based learning strategies with career exploration. JMG helps students overcome academic, financial and social barriers to help students reach their fullest potential. JMG increases high school graduation rates, post-secondary persistence, and degree attainment. |
| <b>WIOA Title ID YouthBuild Portland (YBA)</b>             | USDOL          | Youth Building Alternatives (YBA) program serves teens and young adults who struggle to find their way in the traditional education system. Since 1994, high school dropouts aged 16-24 were assisted in successful transition to adulthood through an alternative education model that includes HiSET exam preparation, construction skills training, leadership development, job skills, and life skills. Through YBA, young adults obtain important certifications including NCCER, OSHA-10, ServSafe, and more. Most advance toward postsecondary education or career-oriented employment. In addition   |

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|   |       | to the program itself, one year of follow-up services support graduates' transition to education and work.  |
| <b>WIOA Title ID National Farmworker (NFJP)</b>               | USDOL | The National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) provides workforce development services and training assistance to migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their dependents.   |
| <b>WIOA Title ID Indian and Native American (INA) Program</b> | USDOL | The purpose of WIOA Indian and Native American (INA) programs is to support employment and training activities in order to: develop more fully the academic, occupational, and literacy skills of such individuals; make such individuals more competitive in the workforce and to equip them with entrepreneurial skills necessary for successful self-employment; and promote the economic and social development of INA communities in accordance with their goals and values. |

*\*Program funding is sporadic.*

In addition to core partner programs and other employment and training programs, the University of Maine System (UMS), the Maine Community College System (MCCS), Maine's Career and Technical Education (CTE), and Maine Quality Centers (MQC) provide education programs to prepare participants for success in careers and the workforce.

With seven campuses and annual enrollment of nearly 30,000, the UMS represents a foundational component of the state's postsecondary education system. The university system offers associate, bachelor, master, and doctoral degrees as well as a selection of specialized undergraduate and graduate certificates.

Maine's network of seven community colleges has a combined enrollment of more than 19,000 students, of which 94 percent are Maine residents. Sixty-five percent of these students attend part time. The MCCS offers certificate, diploma, and associate degree programs directed at the educational, occupational, and technical needs of Maine residents as well as the workforce needs of employers. The goals of the MCCS are to create an educated, skilled, and adaptable labor force responsive to the changing needs of the economy, and to promote local, regional, and statewide economic development.

Additionally, the UMS and MCCS engaged in a regional and national project to improve the transparency of available credentials and educational opportunities through a searchable,

centralized credential registry, Credential Engine. So far, the UMS and MCCS have published over 450 credentials to the searchable registry.

The mission of Maine's CTE program is to ensure that students acquire the high-quality technical skills that will prepare them for postsecondary education, entry into an ever-changing workplace and society, and to meet the rigorous academic standards of Maine's Learning Results. Students benefit from this integrated system of academic and applied learning.

Maine Quality Centers (MQC) provide customized workforce training grants to employers who are either seeking to locate or expand their operations in Maine or who are interested in providing training to their incumbent workers. Training programs are coordinated and delivered through Maine's seven community colleges, and other service and training providers as needed.

In conjunction with the MCCS and MQC, Bath Iron Works (BIW) established a tuition-free training program at the former Brunswick Landing Naval Air Station. Using one of the former airplane hangars, participants get training and exposure to the facets of welding, pipe fitting, insulation and painting in the ship building industry. Acknowledging the difficulties of transportation for some students, housing for the four-week program can also be provided on site. BIW has an agreement to interview successful Maine Job Corps welding students for positions at BIW as they prepare to transition out of Job Corps.

Addressing the workforce development challenges that confront Maine will require coordination and partnership across employment and training programs and education institutions, as well as a commitment to measuring the employment outcomes of program participants. Recognizing the need for greater levels of alignment, the UMS, MCCS and MDOL formed a data sharing partnership to evaluate the employment outcomes of college students. As part of this relationship, the university and community colleges send student records to MDOL where they are matched with corresponding wage records. MDOL then formulates employment and wage outcomes by credential, area of study, and school. These efforts, funded by grants from the USDOL and Maine Department of Education, have resulted in the development of Maine Education and Attainment Research Navigation system or MaineEARNs. This system has since expanded to include Adult Education and vocational rehabilitation programs. MaineEARNs is expected to play an integral role in measuring and providing outcomes information that drives program evaluation and policy decisions.

TABLE 7: OTHER PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

| Program   | Overseeing Agency | Program Description   |
|---|-------------------|---|
| <b>Career and Technical Education (CTE) (secondary)</b> | MDOE              | As part of the Maine Department of Education's ongoing commitment to support all learners, Maine Career and Technical Education (CTE) aims to ensure that students acquire the high-quality, industry-recognized technical skills and related academic standards that will prepare them for postsecondary education and entry into an ever-changing workplace and society.  |
| <b>University of Maine System (UMS)</b>                 | UMS               | The University of Maine System (UMS) offers associates, bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees (including the JD degree) as well as a selection of specialized undergraduate and graduate certificates. The UMS is currently working statewide on an approach to developing a series of micro credentials specific to 21st century work ready and technical skills. The UMS features seven universities—some with multiple campuses—located across the state, as well as eight University College outreach centers, a law school, 31 additional course sites, and a Cooperative Extension program. It has an annual enrollment of nearly 30,000 students in credit bearing programs and serves over 500,000 individuals annually through educational and cultural offerings, including non-credit continuing education and professional development programming. |
| <b>Maine Community College System (MCCS)</b>            | MCCS              | The mission of the Maine Community College System (MCCS) is to provide associate degree, diploma, and certificate programs directed at the educational, occupational, and technical needs of the state's citizens and the workforce needs of the state's employers. The primary goals of the MCCS are to create an educated, skilled and adaptable labor force responsive to changing economic needs and to promote local, regional and statewide economic development.   |
| <b>Maine Quality Centers (MQC)</b>                      | MCCS              | The Maine Quality Centers (MQC) program funds customized workforce training delivered through Maine's seven community colleges. MQC grants are available to fund pre-hire, post-hire, and incumbent worker training. The program is designed to ensure that businesses have the qualified workers they need to succeed. Grant   |

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|  |  | limits for incumbent worker training are based on company size. Employers with 1-50 employees may apply for 100 percent funding. Employers with 51-100 employees may apply for 75 percent funding, with a 25 percent company match. Employers with 101+ employees may apply for 50 percent funding, with a 50 percent company match. Other customized training is provided at no cost to either the business or trainee. |
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#### ADDITIONAL PUBLICLY-FUNDED PROGRAMS

The state correctional system (MDOC), Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment (ASPIRE), and SNAP Employment & Training programs (SNAP E&T), and Higher Opportunity for Pathways to Employment (HOPE) provide workforce development activities to inmates, manufacturing employers and adults with low incomes. Details of these programs are provided below. Please note that the following table does not represent all publicly funded DHHS programs for employment supports with individuals with significant disabilities.

TABLE 8: ADDITIONAL PUBLICLY FUNDED PROGRAMS

| Program  | Overseeing Agency | Program Description   |
|--|-------------------|---|
| <b>State Correctional System</b>   | MDOC              | Provides programs and services to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.   |
| <b>Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment (ASPIRE)</b> | DHHS              | DHHS's Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment (ASPIRE) program is the training and employment program serving TANF recipients by developing individualized employment plans and providing supports which lead to successful transition to employment. |
| <b>Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program Employment &amp;</b>        | DHHS              | DHHS administers Maine's Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), including employment and training activities (E&T). Maine's E&T program is known as SNAP E&T, and is operated by DHHS contracted community agencies.   |

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| <b>Training (SNAP-E&amp;T)</b>                              |      |   |
| <b>Higher Opportunity for Pathways to Employment (HOPE)</b> | DHHS | Higher Opportunities for Pathways to Employment (HOPE) is administered by DHHS to assist low income families. HOPE provides financial assistance and campus-based navigators to support families and help them to achieve education goals leading towards employment. |

### AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

The Maine Department of Labor has several American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)-funded initiatives aimed to address disparities in the workforce system for those who are unemployed, underemployed, or a part of a target group facing barriers to work and career development. The work being done by the Department of Labor includes cross-bureau action as well as coordination with other state agencies.

TABLE 9: AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

| <b>Initiative</b>             | <b>Agency</b> | <b>Comments</b>  |
|-------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Healthcare Tuition Remission  | DOL           | The Training for Incumbent Health Workers program will help an estimated 1,500 people who work in the health care field gain skills and advance with their employer by providing financial support to attain advanced health care credentials. The ability to earn credentials while on the job will allow health care workers to advance in the profession, leading to better paying jobs for them and improved health care services for Maine people. The program lowers barriers to training and education by providing the training free of charge to interested employees – as opposed to tuition reimbursement which requires upfront, out-of-pocket spending. |
| Health Care Career Navigators | DOL           | Health Care Career Navigators will provide customized career guidance – including the creation of person-specific employment and training plans, help navigating available training opportunities, assistance with evaluation and translation of prior credentials, and referrals for health care job and apprenticeship opportunities – to help introduce people into   |

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|  |     | health care jobs. These navigators will be housed within the Maine Department of Labor’s CareerCenters and will work closely with employers and community-based partners to connect jobseekers with opportunities. Navigators will also help out-of-state and foreign-trained professionals translate credentials, access licensing, and learn how prior training may apply to health care jobs in Maine.   |
| ARPA<br>Statistician                             | DOL | A number of workforce initiatives that DOL is leading and supporting in collaboration with other State agency partners are aimed at advancing three key goals: 1) increasing the number of individuals connected to jobs in Maine, 2) increasing the attainment of credentials of value, and 3) increasing the average wage among Mainers. It is imperative to track the success of the workforce initiatives in accordance with these goals—and look at disaggregated data to ensure those communities and industries most affected by COVID-19 are targeted, engaged and realize the benefits of the investments. Several programs are pilot efforts where learning what worked and what didn’t is particularly essential as DOL and other State agencies seek to sustain the impact of these investment. This funding will provide funding for two additional evaluation staff to analyze the outcomes and effectiveness of the workforce ARPA initiatives within DOL by conducting an evaluation. |
| Basic<br>Needs for<br>Underserved<br>Communities | DOL | Through a collaborative partnership with five organizations, including ethnic-based community organizations, worker groups, labor unions, and other community partners, the Peer Workforce Navigator program will assist individuals in communities hit hardest by the pandemic with addressing basic needs and finding employment. In this two-year pilot, peers employed by local community organizations will help individuals from priority communities connect with employment, job training programs, and basic needs supports necessary to persist in work or education, such as child care, transportation, unemployment insurance, and other concrete resources.   |
| Expand<br>Progressive<br>Employment              | DOL | Maine’s Progressive Employment Program offers a flexible and gradual approach to employment for individuals with disabilities. The approach emphasizes creating value for employers as well as individuals, resulting in increased workplace readiness, more supportive work environments, and increased worker and employer satisfaction. Through ARPA funds,  |

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| nt Program                   |     | MDOL will pilot this successful Progressive Employment model with two additional communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and facing significant barriers to employment – individuals who are justice involved and those in recovery.  |
| Career Center Consultants    | DOL | The ARPA resources will expand capacity by hiring additional outreach workers who will provide intensive services to unemployed and underemployed job seekers—with a specific emphasis on communities that experienced disproportionate effects of COVID-19—including BIPOC communities, those with lower educational attainment, justice-involved, immigrant communities, and more. Outreach workers will be out in the community developing relationships with community members by meeting them where they are—in libraries, schools, public spaces, or other settings. Job seekers will get help overcoming skill deficiencies, accessing supports to overcome barriers such as childcare and transportation, and an opportunity to receive continued follow-up support and guidance as they find suitable employment and start in new jobs.   |
| Connecting Workforce to Jobs | DOL | The Maine Department of Labor is working with local workforce boards, community-based organizations, and workforce partners to improve employment outcomes for those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including low-income workers, unemployed & underemployed workers, workers of color, individuals without a college degree, women, younger & older workers, rural workers, women, workers with disabilities, re-entry & recovery communities. Local boards, DOL workforce programs and selected community partners will develop or expand approaches that 1) Address basic needs not met by existing programs to support job placement/retention and 2) Connect with individuals disengaged from the workforce system. The Maine Dept of Labor will provide support to workers from priority communities facing barriers to accessing or retaining work via grants through existing DOL workforce programs, local workforce boards and other community-based organizations with trusted networks among priority communities. |
| Improve Career &             | DOL | By taking a sector-based workforce development approach that organizes industries in Maine disrupted by COVID-19, and that are vital to economic recovery in communities impacted by COVID, DOL will support those   |

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| Industry Awareness               |     | industries’ recovery and enable employers and industries to leverage ARPA and other funds across Maine’s workforce system to create pathways to quality jobs. The Industry Partnerships Initiative seeks to identify, support and help grow workforce collaboratives in strategic sectors of the state’s economy—composed of businesses, employers, workers, labor unions, and/or industry associations.   |
| Eligibility Specialist           | DOL | The federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program provides tax credits to employers who hire individuals that face serious barriers to finding employment, from populations most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. These individuals include long-term unemployed individuals, unemployed veterans, low-wage workers, justice-involved individuals, and workers in certain rural counties—all of which were negatively affected by COVID. This funding will explore and potentially implement systems updates and upgrades and create additional capacity (via on eligibility specialist position) to process employer applications to take advantage of this program. This position will concentrate on applications received since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Expediting the processing of applications filed by the employers will serve as a catalyst in ensuring that the targeted population (individuals disproportionately affected due to COVID-19) becomes gainfully employed at a faster rate. |
| Senior Economic Research Analyst | DOL | This initiative will provide funding to Maine’s Department of Labor for additional evaluation and monitoring capacity as well as case management systems improvement to analyze and improve the outcomes and effectiveness of the Maine Jobs & Recovery Plans workforce initiatives. Many Jobs Plan programs are aimed at advancing three goals: increasing the number of individuals connected to jobs in Maine, increasing the attainment of credentials of value, and increasing the average wage among Mainers. It is imperative to track the success of the workforce initiatives in accordance with these goals—and look at data to ensure that communities and industries most affected by COVID-19 are engaged in supports and realize the benefits of these investments. Several programs are pilot efforts where learning what worked and what didn’t is particularly essential for sustaining the impact of these investment.   |

II.(A.2.B)STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Strengths and weaknesses of Maine's workforce development activities are discussed below. These attributes and characteristics reflect the views of the core partners and the WIOA Steering Committee.

Strengths:

- Commitment and willingness among the core partners and other stakeholders to building a better workforce development system. Partners are committed to continuing to enhance coordination and integration so that the people of Maine are better served. This commitment to bring the shared vision to fruition is foundational to repositioning Maine's workforce development system.
- Quality of service, programs and operations provided by the Core WIOA partners.
- Accessibility of stakeholders, business leaders and key decision makers. Collaboration and partnership are core strengths of Maine's workforce development system activities. Maine's close-knit workforce development communities foster an environment where business relationships can be easily maintained, resources mobilized quickly and access to key decision makers is abundant. This is a state with relatively little bureaucracy, which fosters access to decision makers and resources.
- Maine Apprenticeship Program is successfully expanding by working with industry organizations to reach large and small businesses statewide.
- Maine's relatively small population and lean infrastructure enables collaboration between service providers without layers of bureaucracy. For example, Bath Iron Works has been working with the Maine Community College System and Maine Quality Centers in the development of welding programs and guarantees an interview to anyone who completes the program.

Weaknesses:

- Maine's large geographic size and dispersed population present barriers to the efficient delivery of services. Rural communities in Maine struggle with higher than average unemployment rates. Delivering services to these rural areas is a challenge. Moreover, limited public transportation networks make it difficult for many to access employment opportunities.
- Maine's workforce development, education and training activities are governed by multiple state and federal agencies. This often results in coordination and alignment challenges. Maine is taking steps to better coordinate activities, starting with the creation of a statewide vision and goals for the workforce development system.

- Individual and employer awareness of the workforce system and available opportunities, as well as how to access them continues to be an area for growth. The Department of Labor and SWB have two separate projects that will create a virtual American Job Center and workforce portal (WorkSourceMaine) with resources for employers and job seekers, along with a career pathways tool for job seekers. These projects are aligned and being completed by the same vendor.
- Maine’s demographic challenges impact the state’s future workforce needs. While Maine is projected to have relatively flat job and workforce growth through 2026, there will be an estimated 73,000 jobs openings in Maine each year, largely to replace others as older Mainers leave the workforce. During the pandemic, Maine experienced a large number of older workers that started to leave the labor force, which has led to a smaller number of potential workers. Maine is also the oldest state in the nation based on median age.
- Most stakeholders recognize the importance of using valid and reliable information to drive decision making, program evaluation and support policy initiatives. Unfortunately, the core partners are currently working with three separate and discrete management information systems. The realities of current financial constraints leave the state without the means to develop a robust system for integrating data.
- Maine has limited financial resources to address its many workforce development challenges. WIOA program funds are allocated to states based on population size and unemployment levels. Maine’s outlying counties are geographically large with comparatively small populations and are struggling with considerably higher-than-average unemployment rates. Delivering needed services to individuals in these counties is costly and not effectively supported by the current funding model. In addition, program administration funds are capped at 5 percent resulting in low levels of funding to cover fixed costs required to remain in compliance with administrative activities. Rural, less populous states such as Maine are at a “small state disadvantage” as they receive substantially fewer funds to support system costs comparable to large states.
- One additional concern is the sunset of American Rescue Plan Act funds that will lapse over the course of the State’s four-year plan. We are actively looking at sustainability measures.

## II.(A.2.C) STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

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Workforce system partners continue to come together at the state and regional levels to identify and address challenges and gaps in service approaches, including more intense focus on diversity, inclusion, equity, and accessibility for all Mainers. State agency and workforce partner collaborations like Maine Spark ensure service provider staff are aware of methods for identifying

implicit bias and assuring racial and cultural equity for all populations through shared staff development. New collaborations have naturally resulted as a result of the COVID pandemic, including cross training of Title IB staff by Maine Equal Justice and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services on how to assist participants to apply for TANF, MaineCare, SNAP, and a plethora of other services. System partners collaborate to offer informational sessions that connect individuals to numerous assistance programs.

Additional resources have come to the state through the QUEST disaster relief grant, which focuses on increasing the employability and skills of marginalized populations. The goal of the grant is to provide training in strategic industry sectors that will enable the participants to enter good jobs, with benefits, and family-sustaining wages. This grant allowed the state to expand eligibility criteria to ensure that individuals who have been most adversely impacted by the pandemic could access employment and training services and the level of wraparound supportive services necessary for them to successfully achieve employment goals.

New methods for virtual services will further align and integrate services as a result of new funding received by the State Workforce Board and the Maine Department of Labor. These resources will provide a holistic workforce system portal that will brand Maine's workforce system and a virtual one-stop that will be Maine's comprehensive one-stop with direct connect to all required partner services through a single portal.

Under a grant from the National Governor's Association, the State Workforce Board worked with the Maine Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Economic and Community Development, Education/Maine Adult Education, as well as the Maine Community College System, the University of Maine System, and Maine's local workforce development boards to develop the new unified brand for Maine's workforce system called Work Source Maine. More on this opportunity is discussed later in the plan.

## II.(b) STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

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During November and December 2019, the State Workforce Board (SWB) convened 10 strategic planning sessions attended by over 100 stakeholders, including administrators of core programs, employers, workforce developers, educators, youth, advocates, representatives of state agencies and policy makers, to discuss the workforce development system and create a vision for a bright and prosperous future. This work took place to build on the work done by the Department of Economic and Community Development, which released the State's 10-Year Economic Development plan.

Building on the previous work, the SWB cohosted seven statewide visioning sessions to gather input into the review of the State’s 10-Year Economic Development Plan and Workforce Strategic Vision. The sessions were cohosted with the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) as well as the Local Workforce Development Boards and Local Economic Development Districts. The SWB and DECD also joined nearly 40 additional partners and stakeholders at their own events and meetings to solicit their thoughts moving forward. As a part of the feedback collection process, a survey was developed to collect additional information from stakeholders, which helped inform the process. In December of 2023 there was a joint meeting with the State Workforce Board, 10-Year Plan Executive Steering Committee, and the Maine Economic Growth Council. During this meeting, final recommendations were made moving forward. In coordination with the SWB, the DECD released their update to the State’s 10-Year Economic Development Plan that embeds an updated workforce vision that aligns with the SWB’s goals in March 2024.

Moving forward, there is a significant focus on growing local talent, attracting, and retaining new talent, and creating Hubs of Excellence to promote and foster Industry Partnerships. This aligns and builds off the focus previously identified strategies including “Grow Local Talent” and “Attract New Talent.” There has been a serious recognition to invest in Maine’s workforce of today and the workforce needs of tomorrow.

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## II.(B.1) MAINE’S STRATEGIC VISION FOR 2024 - 2027

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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. All components of the workforce development system will be provided seamlessly, 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.

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## II.(b.2) GOALS

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

1. Maine’s untapped labor pool will enter employment and advance into high-demand occupations of their choice through private and 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 percent of Maine’s workforce will hold a credential of value by 2025.
3. Create a networked, aligned and demand-driven workforce system across public and private partners and fosters the growth of Maine’s economy while supporting equitable, safe, productive employment opportunities.

II. (b)(2)(A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce

To compete in the 21st-century, Maine must attract, develop, and retain a well-trained workforce ready to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing economy. In the short term, we need to provide adults with opportunities to attain the skills needed to transition into available positions. In the long term, we need to ensure that Maine children and young adults are equally well prepared for careers that demand a high-level of proficiency in science, math, engineering, and technology (STEM). By investing in our people and communities, we can ensure that Maine is not only a place where people want to move for economic opportunity but where our children can thrive in meaningful, well-paid careers. This ties back to our goals to have 60% of Maine’s workforce having a credential of value by 2025 and seeing a 10% wage increase.

II. (b)(2)(B) Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

Talent is at the core of Maine’s 10-Year Economic Plan. And while we’re proud to have residents representing all age groups, one challenge in having a population that skews older is that Mainers are retiring in large numbers. To attract new talent, Maine needs to have a dynamic economy that offers recent college graduates and other jobseekers with well-paid careers—opportunities that allow them to achieve a high quality of life for themselves and their families. As part of meeting needs for a skilled workforce, it is important to recognize our goals for credentials of value as mentioned previously. Maine is also making significant efforts to add 75,000 workers by 2030.

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II.(b.3) PERFORMANCE GOALS

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TITLE I ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER AND YOUTH

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TABLE 10: ADULT PERFORMANCE GOALS PY2024 & PY2025

|  |                         |                    |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------|
|  | Title I – Adult Program |                    |
|  | Program Year: 2024      | Program Year: 2025 |

|   | Expected Level | Negotiated Level | Expected Level | Negotiated Level |
|---|----------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)      | 70.5%          |                  | 71.0%          |                  |
| Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)      | 68.0%          |                  | 68.5%          |                  |
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) | \$7,000.00     |                  | \$7,200.00     |                  |
| Credential Attainment Rate                  | 64.0%          |                  | 66.0%          |                  |
| Measurable Skill Gains                      | 50.0%          |                  | 51.0%          |                  |

TABLE 11: DISLOCATED WORKER PERFORMANCE GOALS PY2024 & PY2025

|   | Title I – Dislocated Worker Program |                  |                    |                  |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|   | Program Year: 2024                  |                  | Program Year: 2025 |                  |
|   | Expected Level                      | Negotiated Level | Expected Level     | Negotiated Level |
| Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)      | 75.0%                               |                  | 75.5%              |                  |
| Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)      | 77.0%                               |                  | 77.5%              |                  |
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) | \$8,300.00                          |                  | \$8,500.00         |                  |
| Credential Attainment Rate                  | 67.0%                               |                  | 68.0%              |                  |
| Measurable Skill Gains                      | 57.0%                               |                  | 57.5%              |                  |

TABLE 12: YOUTH PERFORMANCE GOALS PY2024 & PY2025

|  | Title I – Youth Program |                  |                    |                  |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|  | Program Year: 2024      |                  | Program Year: 2025 |                  |
|  | Expected Level          | Negotiated Level | Expected Level     | Negotiated Level |
| Education, Training, or Employment (Second Quarter after Exit) | 68.5%                   |                  | 69.0%              |                  |
| Education, Training, or Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit) | 71.5%                   |                  | 72.0%              |                  |
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)                    | \$4,600.00              |                  | \$4,800.00         |                  |
| Credential Attainment Rate                                     | 57.0%                   |                  | 57.5%              |                  |
| Measurable Skill Gains   | 48.0%                   |                  | 50.0%              |                  |

TITLE II ADULT EDUCATION

TABLE 13: ADULT EDUCATION PERFORMANCE GOALS PY2024 AND PY2025

|  | Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program |                  |                    |                  |
|--|--|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|  | Program Year: 2024   |                  | Program Year: 2025 |                  |
|  | Expected Level   | Negotiated Level | Expected Level     | Negotiated Level |
| Employment (Second Quarter after Exit) | 36.0%  |                  | 37.0%              |                  |
| Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit) | 35.0%  |                  | 36.0%              |                  |

|   |            |  |            |  |
|---|------------|--|------------|--|
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) | \$5,400.00 |  | \$5,500.00 |  |
| Credential Attainment Rate                  | 36.0%      |  | 37.0%      |  |
| Measurable Skill Gains                      | 40.0%      |  | 41.0%      |  |

TITLE III – WAGNER-PEYSER

TABLE 14: WAGNER-PEYSER PERFORMANCE GOALS PY2024 AND PY2025

|   | Title III – Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Program |                  |                    |                  |
|---|--|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|   | Program Year: 2024                                       |                  | Program Year: 2025 |                  |
|   | Expected Level   | Negotiated Level | Expected Level     | Negotiated Level |
| Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)      | 65.0%  |                  | 65.5%              |                  |
| Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)      | 59.0%  |                  | 60.0%              |                  |
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) | \$8,000.00   |                  | \$8,200.00         |                  |
| Credential Attainment Rate                  | Not Applicable   | Not Applicable   | Not Applicable     | Not Applicable   |
| Measurable Skill Gains                      | Not Applicable   | Not Applicable   | Not Applicable     | Not Applicable   |

TITLE IV PROGRAMS—VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

TABLE 15: VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION; PERFORMANCE GOALS PY2024 AND PY2025

|   | Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation Program |                  |                    |                  |
|---|--|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|   | Program Year: 2024                           |                  | Program Year: 2025 |                  |
|   | Expected Level                               | Negotiated Level | Expected Level     | Negotiated Level |
| Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)      | 48.0%  |                  | 50.0%              |                  |
| Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)      | 45.0%  |                  | 47.0%              |                  |
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) | \$4,650.00                                   |                  | \$4,900.00         |                  |
| Credential Attainment Rate                  | 53.0%  |                  | 54.0%              |                  |
| Measurable Skill Gains                      | 45.0%  |                  | 47.0%              |                  |

TABLE 16: ALL WIOA CORE PROGRAMS

|                                      | All WIOA Core Programs |                  |                    |                  |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|                                      | Program Year: 2024     |                  | Program Year: 2025 |                  |
|                                      | Expected Level         | Negotiated Level | Expected Level     | Negotiated Level |
| Effectiveness in Serving Employers   | Not applicable         | Not applicable   | Not applicable     | Not applicable   |
| Additional Indicators of Performance |                        |                  |                    |                  |

|    |
|----|
| 1. |
| 2. |
| 3. |
| 4. |
| 5. |
| 6. |

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II.(b.4) ASSESSMENT

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A State Plan Implementation Steering Committee tracks progress towards the goals set out in the unified plan. The committee is comprised of representatives of the core programs and local board directors. As part of their work, they will continue to monitor the employment of untapped labor pools. For example, the committee will use tools like the American Community Survey for monitoring the employment of people with disabilities.

The state’s economic plan identifies targets of increasing the annual wage by 10 percent and increasing the value of products sold per worker by 10 percent as measures of increased performance of workforce and economic development.

Members of the steering committee also participate in MaineSpark, an initiative striving to have 60 percent of Maine’s workforce have a credential of value by 2025. The State Board has been tasked with making an annual report on this goal to the joint standing committees on education and cultural affairs and labor, business, research and economic development.

The Board gets an update on the progress towards each goal during each quarterly meeting as well as general labor market updates from the Department of Labor’s Director of the Center for Workforce Research and Information.

The State Board will continue to monitor and advise the Governor and the State on progress toward meeting employer needs.

Each core program monitors achievement of its negotiated performance measures and reports these to our federal partners annually.

## II.(c) STATE STRATEGY

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Stakeholders of the workforce development system and state agencies with responsibility for the administration of core programs developed strategic objectives to achieve the state's vision and goals. These strategies reflect Maine's unique economic, workforce, and workforce development characteristics; focus on delivering greater value to customers; and target opportunities for greater alignment between programs and increased system-wide efficiencies. Maine's strategic objectives are discussed below and more fully elaborated throughout this document.

Aligning with Maine's Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029, the Unified State Plan seeks to partner economic development with workforce development. The Economic Development Strategy identifies renewable energy (solar, wind, bio-fuel), sustainable fishing, aquaculture and bio-based products as sectors which will be areas of focus for the next 10 years. Coupling that with Maine's already growing needs in health care and manufacturing, workforce and economic development will be partnering to address the needs of established and emerging industries. Being a large, rural state, local workforce boards will be identifying local industry sectors as areas of focus as well.

During the 2020 State Plan, Maine identified three strategic objectives that were folded into the refresh of the state economic development plan. The 2024 State Plan cycle allowed us an excellent opportunity to align our workforce with economic development in the state by combining goals and embedding the state's workforce development strategy into the long-term economic development plan.

During the collaborative work with the Department of Economic and Community Development to update the 10-Year Plan, several actions were updated and created to clearly align workforce and economic development strategies within three of the identified strategies:

- Strategy A: Grow Local Talent
- Strategy B: Attract New Talent
- Strategy G: Promote Hubs of Excellence

### Strategy A: Grow Local Talent

The first strategy is focused on increasing credentials of value and increasing average wages for workers. This ties back to the previous section where the strategy was outlined.

#### Actions under Strategy A:

### **A1: Expand Free Community College**

**Access to education is essential to creating a gateway for local talent.** We're still building back from the effects of the pandemic. We've made great strides, but we need to continue our commitment to providing support and clear opportunities to our young people. To do that, we must maintain and expand our free community college initiative beyond the 2024-25 academic year.

### **A2: Develop a Job Portal**

**In our digital age, we need to reach Maine's future workforce online.** We will develop and implement a training, education, and career planning web portal that job seekers, community partners, and employers will view as a critical first step in connecting talent with resources that ultimately lead to matching talent with availability. We plan to incorporate student and worker voices to ensure that this site speaks to their needs. The Department of Labor will lead this effort, but success will depend on collaboration of businesses and non-profits to ensure that the content is robust and workers are able to ensure they can showcase their talent and interests so matches can be created. Additionally, marketing will be required to reach both businesses and job seekers.

### **A3: Expand and Promote Registered Apprenticeship**

**Apprenticeships work, but we need more of them.** According to national data, apprenticeship graduates earn an average of \$300,000 more in wages and benefits than their peers throughout their careers, and 91% of apprentices continue working with their employer after their training because they feel more invested and supported. Apprenticeships work to boost wages and retention, but we need more of them. Apprenticeship programming is a partnership between employers and workers that is supported by the Department of Labor. Businesses and labor organizations have invested in the unique training and work experiences that apprenticeships offer. We will expand financial support and technical assistance to businesses and organizations that want to host certified pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs — and we will continue to increase awareness of apprenticeships as a valued pathway to credential attainment.

### **A4: Strengthen Career Pathways**

**The success of our local talent ultimately depends on the pathways available to them.** We plan to create *Career Academies* that outline industry-driven career pathways, work-based learning, and dual-enrollment opportunities in priority sectors for both students and working adults. This will require strengthened coordination between PK-12 schools, Career and Technical centers, labor unions, adult education programs, higher education systems, and employers. Career Academies create a more streamlined approach for participants to **determine the steps necessary to meet their career goals, connect with employers, and attain industry-recognized credentials.**

## **A5: Increase Equitable Workforce Participation**

**In order to succeed, we need to make sure we are actively removing barriers for *all*.** We need to increase equitable workforce participation and provide upskilling opportunities for existing residents, with a focus on historically marginalized communities. We'll accomplish this by addressing barriers to entry through increased wraparound support, strengthened connection with community partners, and other necessary resources with a focus on individuals with disabilities, communities of color, immigrants and refugees, older adults, those reentering the workforce, those in recovery, and those living in rural communities.

## **A6: Expand the Maine Career Exploration Program**

**In order to grow local Maine talent, we must encourage students to explore their interests through experiential learning opportunities in Maine's key industries. In order to grow local Maine talent, we must encourage students to explore their interests through experiential learning opportunities in Maine's key industries.**

The \$25M investment in the Maine Career Exploration Program had built the foundation for the program's three major partnerships with the Maine Department of Education, Jobs for Maine's Graduates, and the Children's Cabinet to have more than **3,500 young people participating in the program** and over 2,500 more young people in the next year. This program aims to improve the workforce participation rates in Maine's younger age bands and to retain talent by showing Maine youth the great opportunities that are available in Maine. Students are getting experience in Maine organizations and are being paid for that work. Finding a balance of investment from the public and private sector will be critical.

This multisystem partnership will continue to implement the Maine Career Exploration Program in compliment with the existing array of services both in our schools and through community-based organizations, while expanding the program's offerings to *all* middle school students. Maine Career Exploration will continue to evaluate and implement National Best Practices for Work-Based Learning as "Step-up" programs to reach younger grades with age-appropriate Career Exploration Opportunities. With this focus on Extended Learning and paid work experience, we can ensure an inclusive and solid connection to key industries and employers for all students.

### **Our Goals for the Next Year of Career Exploration Implementation**

1. Provide 3,000 young people with Paid Career Exploration Opportunities
2. Attract new businesses and non profits to host students
3. Research and implement National Best Practices for Work-Based Learning and supporting the Career Exploration Continuum

4. Create the foundation for middle school programming so that all middle school students have access to Career Exploration foundations

Career exploration doesn't stop at the high school level. There is currently a University of Maine Research Learning experience supported by funding the Harold Alfond Foundation designed to prepare innovators and problem solvers for Maine's workforce. This engages UMS students in research projects that are connected to internships, co-ops and experiences with Maine companies. This direct connection that has students working with Maine businesses to create solutions connects students in practical ways with the opportunities Maine businesses have. This increases our collective ability to retain these students in Maine's workforce.

#### **A7: Support Graduates and Adult Learners**

**Growing and keeping our workforce requires support *after* high school.** Adult Education programming throughout the state has grown over the past four years. During the 2022-2023 school year, more than 11,000 adult learners participated in Maine adult education programming.

2,872 workforce certifications and credentials of value were issued through adult education programming in 2023, which is an increase of over 68% from 2022 to 2023. Adult Education is also helping more people enter into high demand career fields.

- 1,252 medical certifications were issued in 2023, an increase of 57% from 2022.
- 226 licenses and credentials for manufacturing and trucking were issued in 2023, an increase of 63% from 2022.
- 207 business and technology certifications were issued in 2023, an increase of 72% from 2022.

#### **A8: Support International Trained Professionals**

**Maine has an abundance of skilled and talented workers from other countries, yet many face barriers to working at their highest level of education or training.** This is not only a Maine phenomenon but a national one. Nationally, 21 percent of college-educated immigrants, or 2 million, are either unemployed or working in jobs that require no more than a high school diploma (MPI) We need their skills and talent in all of our industries, and we need to maximize the utilization of their existing skills and knowledge. We will support the coordination of adult education, the Maine Community College System and University of Maine System to improve prior learning and skills assessments, identify gaps, and execute initiatives and programming so that internationally educated and trained professionals can reach their occupational and professional goals in an efficient and timely manner in Maine.

## Strategy B: Attract and Retain New Talent

Talent is at the core of Maine's 10-Year Economic Plan and specifically the state's efforts to add 75,000 workers to the talent pool.

Actions under Strategy B:

### **B1: Build and Launch Maine's Talent Attraction Campaign**

**Maine is a great place to live, learn, and work — but not enough people know that yet.** We need to promote Maine's quality of life benefits. We also need to highlight programs such as free community college, affordable and high-quality public four-year universities, education tax credits, professional and occupational licensure recognition, remote work opportunities, student debt tax credit, and others. The Talent Attraction Campaign will create a toolkit for employers, regions, and municipalities to share content to reinforce state-wide talent attraction messages while at the same time highlighting their specific local assets.

### **B2: Highlight Career Pathways for New Mainers**

**Attracting talent requires a well-defined path to success.** We will establish an Office of New Americans that identifies roadblocks in skill development and credentialing in order to create access to high quality work opportunities.

### **B3: Match New England Students with Maine Employers**

**Students in neighboring states should be able to find work here.** We plan to launch a unique initiative that matches New England higher education graduates with smaller employers in Maine. Maine employers have roles that students from all over the country would be interested in. Utilizing the online job portal, leveraging the value of the Maine Opportunity Tax Credit for students and creating direct one to one interaction on these roles will improve the number of recent graduates joining Maine's workforce.

### **B4: Recognize Out-of-State (Occupation and/or Professional) Certifications**

**We need to make it easier to bring expertise to our state.** We need to continue finding opportunities to accept professional and occupational licensure from other states and countries. We also need to identify other pathways to working in Maine, such as provisional licensure.

### **B5: Strengthen Maine's Higher Education Brand**

**Maine has great schools and a strong higher education system — and we should shout it from the rooftops.** We need to market Maine's schools in a way that showcases their unique value and

attracts students. If we increase Maine higher education enrollments, provide local work experience while they are enrolled, and graduate higher numbers into the workforce – we will create a pool of talented and skilled people with local professional and institutional connections who will likely remain in the Maine economy after graduation. Over 6,000 students graduated from the University of Maine system alone in 2022/23.

#### Strategy G: Promote Hubs of Excellence

Leveraging a talented workforce and innovative businesses, a Hub of Excellence provides quality healthcare, superb higher-education opportunities, and active research centers. Beyond improving the economy of an area, hubs also improve quality of life for residents — through cultural opportunities, family support services, and strong communities. Our objective is to do more to help other regions in Maine leverage their strengths and resources, allowing us to attract more talent statewide.

Actions under Strategy G:

##### **G1: Further Define Hubs of Excellence**

**We need to help communities play to their strengths.** We will clearly define the elements that make up a Hub of Excellence, and we will identify the ways in which a Hub can take advantage of its diverse assets and increase its potential for sustained success. In particular, we will ensure a consistent link between Hubs of Excellence and the creative and outdoor economies, in order to retain talent in rural communities. There are great examples in Maine and globally that we can showcase as models for Hubs of Excellence.

##### **G2: Connect Nonprofits and Academia to Communities**

**There are strong nonprofit organizations and university centers across Maine that have the expertise to support community development and industry partnerships.** We need to use technology and new and existing networks to ensure that their expertise is available to interested communities.

##### **G3: Invest in Placemaking**

Maine’s iconic village centers are an important asset for the state, and the world-class quality of life they provide can help the state to attract and retain talent. We will continue to reinvest in Maine’s villages through programs like MaineDOT’s Village Partnership Initiative, which will help develop these areas into more walkable, bikeable, and business-friendly locations that will make Maine communities more attractive places to live, work, invest, and raise a family.

#### **G4: Initiate Pilot Hub Efforts**

**The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston leads a program called the Working Community Challenge.** There are six regions that are currently participating in WCC (see graph). They each have different focus areas, but all are intended to tackle systemic challenges their communities face in order to create more opportunity for their residents. This is a strong wraparound model that is built on local partnership development between the private sector, education, town management and community leaders. While it is too early to have outcomes for Maine yet, this approach has shown results in many other areas of the country.

#### **Additional Strategic Work**

Building off actions from Strategies A and G, the Board is pursuing the creation of the Maine Industry Partnership Collaborative. This would expand on the experience the Board has running a pilot Industry Partnership program.

#### Maine Industry Partnership Collaborative

Industry partnerships provide the foundation for Maine's demand-driven workforce strategy designed to meet the workforce needs of businesses, the career goals and training needs of workers, and Maine's economic development goals. Continued investment in, and growth of, industry partnerships will create lasting change in the labor market to the benefit of both employers and workers and contribute to the state's economic growth and the well-being of communities. The Department and State Workforce Board have been intentional about looking at additional funding opportunities to formalize this role. Opportunities include grants supporting Climate Ready Workforces through NOAA and the creation of Tech Hubs partnerships.

The Maine Industry Partnership Collaborative will have four strategic areas of focus:

1. Maine's industry sectors will be organized with participation of multiple employers, of different sizes, to advance regional and state economic and workforce priorities.
2. Industry partnerships will coordinate with Maine's workforce system, both regionally and statewide, to strategically align efforts and resources.
3. Industry partnerships will focus on the development of quality jobs.
4. Maine's industry sectors will be better positioned to attract talent both within and outside of Maine through coordinated industry partner initiatives.
  - Some of the priority sectors identified are:
    - Foundational: 1) Healthcare, 2) Education, 3) Hospitality/Retail

- Emergent: 4) Advanced Manufacturing/Forest, 5) Energy & Infrastructure, 6) Defense & Space Innovation
- Skills of the future: IT/Cybersecurity

Another strategy has been to 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. One of the actions supporting this is the creation of MyWorkSourceMaine.com.

As referenced earlier, the State Workforce Board received a grant from the National Governor’s Association to develop the new unified brand for Maine’s workforce system called Work Source Maine. The goal of this new unified brand is to build awareness and understanding of the resources available to residents and Maine businesses.

The SWB ended 2022 by embarking on a groundbreaking multi-agency project that will build on the Work Source Maine brand by consolidating existing tools and resources to make it easier for Maine workers and employers to connect to existing programs, resources, and supports within Maine’s workforce system.

In the third quarter of 2023, the SWB released an RFP soliciting competitive, responsive proposals to build a multi-agency education, training, and career planning platform called MyWorkSourceMaine.com. The SWB is negotiating a contract with the selected vendor.

The purpose of MyWorkSourceMaine.com is to:

- organize education, training, career planning information, and other wrap around services into a coordinated online career portal creating a “no wrong door” approach for Maine workers and employers,
- provide users with a simple user-friendly way to access available jobs, workforce trainings, and other needed resources, and
- provide residents with a career pathways tool that will allow them to explore careers within industry sectors and connect to available trainings and job openings.

To meet its infrastructure and climate goals, Maine needs a bolstered workforce in key sectors such as broadband, offshore wind, clean energy, construction, and transportation. According to sectoral workforce assessments and employer research conducted in 2022-2023, Maine is projected to face workforce gaps in key cross-sector occupations, such as transportation and material movers,

construction laborers, electricians and helpers, and civil, industrial, environmental, software and other engineers.

Rising to this challenge, Maine has a strong, aligned workforce system that is advancing job quality and interacting with communities of unemployed and underemployed adults, multilingual learners, young adults in and out of school, people of color, women, justice-involved individuals, and other communities typically left on the sidelines that can be engaged in this work. Through collaboration among Maine Department of Labor, Maine Community College System, Maine Adult Education and University of Maine System—among other local partners—Maine has a proven track record of interagency partnership to invest in and scale workforce development strategies that help underserved populations advance into good jobs.

To catalyze this partnership, the Maine Department of Labor brought on an Infrastructure Workforce Policy Lead as a dedicated capacity for 1) identifying federal funding opportunities in The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Inflation Reduction Act, and CHIPS and Science Act; 2) building workforce strategies tailored to relevant sectors and occupations; 3) bringing together partners across state agencies to execute these strategies; and 4) working with agency partners and the Bureau of Labor Standards to ensure federal funding translates to high-quality job opportunities. Partners meet monthly to coordinate on this work, aligning on shared workforce priorities and identifying opportunities to leverage and strengthen ongoing workforce development efforts.

As a result of interagency partnership, Maine’s education and workforce system is building a skilled, diverse talent pool for key infrastructure occupations. For example:

- MDOL has partnered with employers, labor unions, and others to serve 500 pre-apprentices across 26 certified programs, providing a hands-on work experience and raising awareness of careers in key sectors through programs such as:
  - The Association of General Contractor’s [Maine Construction Academy](#), which hosts 6-week long summer bootcamps targeted at young adults and provides OSHA-10 and CPR certifications—with interviews at member companies.
  - Maine AFL-CIO’s [Union Construction Academy](#), which focuses on connecting and preparing under-represented communities to union construction jobs with a focus on women, the re-entry community and New Mainers—providing OSHA 10, flagging, asbestos awareness, confined space entry, and CRP/First Aid certifications – with interviews at union apprenticeship programs.

- Maine is in the process of doubling its number of registered apprenticeships, with 1687 registered apprentices across 416 employers in occupations such as electricians, technicians, plumbers, construction laborers, and mechanics.
- The Maine Department of Education’s Adult Education Team partnered with employers to address workforce shortages by equipping adult learners with 2,872 certifications and credentials of value in the 2022-2023 academic year alone – a 69% increase from the previous year – in high-demand fields, such as manufacturing, trucking, and technology, and embedding contextualized English language learning to prepare New Mainers (immigrants and refugees) for high-quality jobs.
- The Maine Community College System (MCCS), leveraging state funding, provided pre-hire workforce training to 8,864 Maine residents and upskilling and incumbent training to 8,347 Maine residents through the Harold Alfond Foundation funding, leading to certifications, credentials of higher value, and, ultimately, high-quality jobs.

To advance and build upon these outcomes, Maine’s education and workforce system has capitalized on several grant opportunities by securing:

- **Building Pathways to Infrastructure Jobs:** Under the development track, Coastal Counties Workforce Inc. (CCWI), one of Maine’s three local workforce development boards, secured \$2 million to establish a new sector partnership in Renewable Energy – Green Jobs for ME – to prepare target populations for high-wage, high skills careers as Engineers and Construction Managers.
- **Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment:** The Maine Connectivity Authority (MCA) received \$272 million to fund broadband infrastructure and digital equity for the entire state, including building Maine’s broadband workforce by collaborating with the MCCS to develop a Fiber Technician Training Program, Maine’s CTE staff in the Department of Education to integrate broadband and telecommunications training into their curriculum, and the Maine Department of Labor to establish broadband apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeships. In addition to funding workforce development, MCA’s scoring criteria for project contractors includes allotted points for advancing job quality, including preference for using a directly employed workforce, paying prevailing wages and benefits to workers, and other criteria in line with the Department of Labor’s Good Jobs Principles.
- **National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure:** The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) has received \$11 million in NEVI funding to expand public EV charging in the state and is working in coordination with the MDOL to ensure that the workforce can obtain the necessary training to reliably install this infrastructure. MaineDOT is engaged with the

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in Maine on EV infrastructure training and intends to explore further introducing EV charging and EV car maintenance to relevant MCCS programs.

- **Weatherization Assistance Program:** MaineHousing has received \$31 million to help Maine homeowners and renters repair and improve their homes to increase their energy efficiency and is building a talent pool of weatherization contractors needed for this work, including by equipping contractors with certifications from the Building Performance Institute's Comprehensive Training, expanding existing sustainable construction programs at MCCS, and establishing a training facility to train new and aspiring contractors in the weatherization industry.
- **Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs (Tech Hubs) Phase I:** Maine secured a prestigious "Tech Hub" designation from the Economic Development Administration for the advanced manufacturing of innovative forest bioproducts. As part of the strategic development grant awarded under that designation, the state will be building an Advanced Manufacturing Talent Roadmap, covering current labor market trends for key occupations, training programs, and other assets, and shaping tailored implementation priorities to strengthen the region's advanced manufacturing workforce.

In addition to these secured awards, the state has put together competitive applications and is applying or awaiting award notification for the following grant opportunities:

- **Solar for All:** The Governor's Energy Office, in coordination with MDOL, applied for \$99.5 million from Solar for All. If fully funded, the application would benefit approximately 37,000 low-income and disadvantaged households in Maine via deployment of solar and energy storage and expand workforce development opportunities, strengthening Maine's talent pool of electricians and solar photovoltaic installers.
- **NOAA Climate Ready Workforce:** CCWI has also applied for \$5.5 million to support a statewide partnership – Climate Ready ME – focused on workforce development for jobs in three climate resilience sectors: investing in climate ready infrastructure (e.g. water systems), promoting innovation and sustainability in the blue economy (e.g. seafood products and marine technology), and protecting working lands and waters (e.g. preserving coastal habitats). Workforce training would focus on certified pre-apprenticeship, registered apprenticeship, and short-term credentials aligned to these sectors.
- **State-Based Home Energy Efficiency Contractor Training:** In coordination with the Department of Labor, the Governor's Energy Office has submitted an application for \$1.3 million in formula funds from the Inflation Reduction Act for energy efficiency contractor

workforce development, building a strong pipeline of skilled talent for the sector through job training for individuals, particularly those from disadvantaged communities.

- **Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs (Tech Hubs) Phase II:** Building on Maine's Phase I designation, the state is applying for up to \$75 million in Phase II funding, including a workforce development component that would strengthen and diversify the talent pool across the forest bioproducts value chain – investing in the materials and manufacturing workforce. Driven by two interrelated industry partnerships in forestry and advanced manufacturing, the component would expand access to quality jobs in the forest bioproducts industry by targeting middle-skill occupations and developing the next generation of researchers, innovators, and entrepreneurs through career exploration programs (e.g. certified pre-apprenticeship), industry-aligned training offered by CTEs, Adult Ed, MCCS, and the University of Maine, apprenticeship and other upskilling opportunities, and sector navigation and wraparound supports.
- **Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity:** MaineDOT is submitting an application under this \$1.5 billion program that will include workforce development activities focused on identifying electrification skills gaps and building on the NEVI grant to strengthen existing and emerging electric vehicle maintenance and repair technician training programs at MCCS, with a focus on heavy duty mechanics, charger installers, and training first responders on handling electrical fires.

To attract talent to move into the state — and to retain the talent we have — Maine needs a supporting infrastructure that ensures a quality of life. Broadband and schools, mentioned earlier, are pieces of the puzzle. Childcare, housing and transportation are also part of the picture. Because these functions are largely independent of the economic development system, other entities must be responsible for achieving goals in these areas. There have been major investments in infrastructure in the past 4 years. The Transportation Department received nearly \$300 million in state capital construction funds in 2023. Maine invested \$25 million in federal pandemic aid funds into growing early childhood programs, and provided monthly stipends to more than 7,000 child care workers. The Legislature approved record level funding for housing in 2023 -- over \$90 million for production and homelessness programs. But transportation, housing, and child care are long term problems. They took many years to develop; they will take many years to fix. The American Society of Civil Engineers gave Maine a C-grade in 2020 for its infrastructure maintenance of roads, bridges, transit, and utilities. A statewide study in 2023 found that Maine needs another 80,000 housing units by 2030 to address its historic backlog and the demand from new in-migrants. Maine's child care market is still too expensive for families to afford, too spotty to provide coverage to all families, and too poorly-paying to attract needed workers.

The 2023 Maine Employer Summit connected 500 (300+ in-person) participating employers, government agencies, and workforce partners with resources on how to break down barriers to attracting and hiring specific communities, and shared best practices, challenges, and innovations in creating a more inclusive, sustainable workforce.

Out of the Summit, employers expressed interest in continued learning opportunities moving forward. In response, the State Workforce Board’s Industry Leadership committee put together a webinar series focused on a number of topics employers identified they would like to learn more about. The result will be five webinars focused on strategies for attracting and accommodating workers from priority populations, including, older workers, New Mainers, individuals with disabilities, justice-involved individuals, and individuals in recovery.

The Maine Department of Labor and the State Workforce Board are collaborating with the Department of Economic and Community Development’s Career Exploration Team to host the second Maine Employer Summit titled Engaging Today and Tomorrow’s Workforce. There are plans to host up to 300 employers as well as hosting up to 200 young adults both in and out of school. The focus will be on youth and connections to opportunities currently available to workers in Maine.

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### III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

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#### III.(a) STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

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##### III.(a.1) STATE WORKFORCE BOARD FUNCTIONS

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Maine’s State Workforce Board meets the WIOA state board composition requirements and will implement the functions under section 101 (d) of WIOA. The State Workforce Board will assist the Governor in:

- 1) The development, implementation, and modification of the state plan.
- 2) The review of state policies and programs and recommendations on actions to align programs to support a streamlined system, including the review and provision of comments on the State Plans, if any, for programs and activities of one-stop partners that are not core programs.
- 3) The development and continuous improvement of the workforce system, including:
  - a. The identification of barriers and means to remove them to better coordinate, align, and avoid duplication among programs and activities carried out through the system.

- b. The development of strategies to support use of career pathways for the purpose of providing individuals, including low-skilled adults, youth, and individuals with barriers to employment, with workforce investment activities, education and supportive services to enter or retain employment.
  - c. The development of strategies for providing effective outreach to and improved access for individuals and employers who could benefit from services provided through the workforce development system.
  - d. The development and expansion of strategies for meeting the needs of employers, workers, and jobseekers, particularly through industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations.
  - e. The identification of regions, including planning regions, for the purposes of sec 106(a) and the designation of local areas under section 106, after consultation with local boards and chief elected officials.
  - f. The development and continuous improvement of the one-stop delivery system in local areas, including providing assistance with planning and delivering services.
  - g. The development of strategies to support staff training and awareness across programs supported under the workforce development system.
- 4) The development and updating of comprehensive state performance accountability measures, including state adjusted levels of performance, to assess effectiveness of core programs in the state as required under section 116(b).
- 5) The identification and dissemination of information on best practices, including best practices for:
- a. The effective operation of one-stop centers, relating to the use of business outreach, partnerships, and service delivery strategies, including strategies for serving individuals with barriers to employment;
  - b. The development of effective local boards, which may include information on factors that contribute to enabling local boards to exceed negotiated local levels of performance, sustain fiscal integrity, and achieve other measures of effectiveness; and
  - c. Effective training programs that respond to real-time labor market analysis, effectively use direct assessment and prior learning assessment to measure an individual's prior knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences, and that evaluate such skills and competencies for adaptability to support efficient placement into employment or career pathways.

- 6) The development and review of statewide policies affecting the coordinated provision of services through the state's one-stop system described in sec 121(e), including the development of:
  - a. Objective criteria and procedures for use by local boards in assessing the effectiveness and continuous improvement of one-stop centers.
  - b. Guidance for the allocation of one-stop center infrastructure funds under sec 121(h).
  - c. Policies relating to the appropriate roles and contributions of entities carrying out one-stop partner programs within the one-stop delivery system, including approaches to facilitating equitable and efficient cost allocation of such system.
- 7) The development of strategies for technological improvements to facilitate access and improve the quality of services and activities provided through the one-stop system, including improvements to:
  - a. Enhance digital literacy skills (as defined in sec 202 of the Museum and Library Services Act (20 U.S.C. 9101), referred to in this Act as "digital literacy skills").
  - b. Accelerate participants' acquisition of skills and recognized postsecondary credentials.
  - c. Strengthen the professional development of providers and workforce professionals.
  - d. Ensure technology is accessible to individuals with disabilities and individuals residing in remote areas.
- 8) The development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across one-stop partner programs to enhance service delivery and improve efficiencies in reporting on performance accountability measures. This includes the design and implementation of common intake, data collection, and case management information, and performance accountability measurement and reporting processes, and the incorporation of local input into such design and implementation, to improve coordination of services across one-stop partner programs.
- 9) The development of allocation formulas for fund distribution to local areas for employment and training activities for adults and youth workforce investment activities as permitted under sections 128(b)(3) and 133(b)(3).
- 10) The preparation of annual reports described in paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 116(d).
- 11) The development of the statewide workforce and labor market information system described in section 15(e) of the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 491-2(e)).
- 12) The development of policies that promote statewide objectives for, and enhance the performance of, the workforce development system in the state.

Board membership complies with WIOA-required percentages of business and workforce representatives, government and state agency representatives, and representatives from community-based organizations.

Board membership was expanded in 2019 to include a third county commissioner to ensure representation from each local workforce area. Additionally, legislation was passed to add a seat representing the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) to the board (26 MRSA §2006, sub-§2-A). While the DECD representative had previously participated as an advisory member, this legislation codified their role on the board as a voting member. With the addition of these members, new employers and workforce partners were also added to the board to ensure it meets the employer majority and at least 20 percent workforce member requirements.

This same legislation also made members of the State Workforce Board subject to review by the joint standing committee of the legislature having jurisdiction over labor matters, and confirmation by the Legislature.

The board benefits from additional input from the Commissioners of Health & Human Services, Corrections, and Transportation, as well as representatives of the Maine Community College and the University of Maine systems.

The State Workforce Board meets quarterly and decisions are made by a vote of the majority present as articulated in the State Workforce Board by-laws. The by-laws also require a quorum of at least 50 percent of the appointed members and at least 50 percent of the quorum being business representatives.

The State Workforce Board is funded by the Maine Department of Labor and currently staffed by a director and a workforce development program coordinator. One position, a labor program specialist, is currently being reclassified.

The State Workforce Board established new committees at its December 2021 Board meeting. 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.

## SWB Committee Structure

Three advisory committees are in place, chaired by members of the SWB.

| Committee   | Focus   |
|---|---|
| Worker Employment, Education and Training Committee | 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.  |
| Industry Leadership Committee                       | Engage employers, regional business groups and industry associations to ensure alignment of education and training services with employer demand, focusing on priority industry sectors.  |
| Workforce System Coordination Committee             | 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. |

The Apprenticeship Council and Commission on Disability and Employment, both statutorily mandated, remain as subcommittees. The State Workforce Board submitted legislation, [Maine Public Law 2023 Chapter 13](#), through the Department of Labor in 2023 to clarify the structure and development of Board subcommittees as deemed necessary.

Finally, the new SWB committee structure now includes an Executive Committee, comprised of the SWB Chair, the Chair and Vice Chair from each committee, the Commissioner of the Department of Labor, the State Workforce Board Director, and an ex-officio member of each statutorily mandated committee (Apprenticeship Council and Commission on Disability and Employment). The Executive Committee ensures coordination, alignment, and accountability of the Board’s work.

### Responsibilities of the SWB Committees

The SWB Committees will have advisory authority only and will serve as the focal point for discussion and debate on how to support the state’s economic growth. The responsibilities of the new SWB committees are as follows:

- Identify policies across the system that impede movement towards the goals; elevate to appropriate agency/agencies.
- Identify priority areas for focus of investments based on LMI and other data.
- Identify where connections are needed across the system for fluid delivery of services.
- Identify gaps across system and recommend how/where to fill.
- Engage as an advisor and thought partner to the SWB.
- Establish annual priorities and related work plan aligned with SWB priorities; report on progress at least twice a year to the full SWB.
- Review, monitor, and report out on measurable key performance indicators and milestones.

The State Workforce Board staff also sit on the State Rehabilitation Councils for the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

The State Workforce Board and the State Workforce Agency (SWA - Maine Department of Labor) will work together to establish and convene workgroups that focus on required implementation and service delivery components of WIOA.

Working closely with the SWA, core program staff and the workgroups, the State Workforce Board will fulfill its responsibilities to assist the Governor with all the required functions in section 101(d) of WIOA.

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### III.(a.2) IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

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#### (A) CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGY

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##### **Workforce Development Infrastructure**

Commissioners of the core programs are represented on the State Workforce Board. This ensures a level of equal representation and collaboration to initiate state-level system changes. The State Workforce Board also has the WIOA Implementation Policy Committee (WIPC). This committee is made up of the program directors of the core partner agencies and executive directors of the local workforce boards. This group generates and examines policies to meet WIOA requirements and guide program alignment. System-facing policies are presented to the State Workforce Board for consideration and validation.

The WIOA core program leads and partners and leads from other agencies convene on a monthly basis to share best practices and information and discuss how to support and work in collaboration to implement the goals of WIOA. Partners have made commitments to achieving an integrated and

seamless workforce system through a written memorandum of understanding that provides the framework for how partners collaborate to serve workforce participants and employers. Partners will develop policies and procedures that improve shared customer flow.

The core partners recognize it is important that employees and clients of their agencies understand the vision, the services available to users of the system, and the role and responsibilities of each partner relative to the success of the vision. To that end, they will:

- Work together with the local area one-stop operators to create and disseminate a common message about Maine's workforce development system.
- Provide extensive professional development and cross-training between workforce partners so each can deliver a consistent message on services and practices (i.e. data/resources, recruiting, training opportunities, retention, educational opportunities, layoff assistance).
- Ensure agency points of contact have a broad knowledge and can be responsive and effective in connecting customers with workforce resources.
- Contribute to informational websites for external stakeholders.
- Develop marketing materials that highlight a collaborative approach to service delivery.
- Post partner information on each other's website.
- Create and disseminate marketing materials in alternate formats that are accessible to individuals with disabilities and reflect cultural competence.
- Create and disseminate educational materials for employers regarding the benefits of employing priority populations, including veterans, older adults, youth, individuals with disabilities, justice involved, and New Mainers, paying specific attention to the needs of small businesses in rural areas of the state.
- Use the compilation of data and evaluation with rapid cycle metrics as the cornerstones to increase the effectiveness of Maine's workforce development system. The core programs are committed to sharing data as allowed by law with vigilance regarding confidentiality and information security. The partners will establish mechanisms for tracking benchmark performance indicators. MaineEARNNS is one example of activities involving the core programs that will help analyze and improve Maine's workforce development system.

## **Industry Outreach**

Developing and sustaining close relationships with employers is essential to coordinating integrated responses to their needs. Using input from employers, the system will develop education and training programs to equip existing and future workers with necessary skills and align education and training programs that support industry-identified career pathways.

Employers will be engaged as system partners in a variety of ways to identify skill needs, validate stackable credentials, and act as training providers of work-based learning activities such as work-experience, on-the-job training, internships, apprenticeship, and customized training.

Business partners will be engaged at both the state and regional levels, through utilization and implementation of ongoing employer assistance initiatives such as the State Workforce Assistance Team (SWAT), a team made up of partners from education, workforce development, and economic development, and through strategic meetings with industry and trade associations and business-led forums.

A collaborative outreach campaign will be developed with involvement of workforce resource partners, education and training providers, and economic development entities. The outreach campaign will include development and delivery of oral presentations and marketing tools collaboratively created by the partners. They will present an easy to access, seamless system of employer services that blend workforce, education, and economic development resources in response to business needs. Recognizing the needs of employers to attract and retain a diverse talent pool, resources will include proven strategies and best practices in building an inclusive workforce.

### **Implement direct contact with businesses and their representatives.**

State and local boards and business outreach team leads will generate the input and involvement of employers through:

- Meeting with individual businesses at local, regional, and state levels.
- Hosting and/or attending regional industry forums that address workforce development needs.
- Strategic planning and formal communications with industry and trade associations
- Events sponsored by state and local workforce boards.
- Employer advisory committees to the Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools, Maine Community Colleges, and the University of Maine system.

### **Lifelong Learning and Employment**

Many Maine employers have identified an immediate need for skilled workers. Concurrently, many Maine adults with the need for employment do not have the time or means to enter traditional training programs or to commit to earning two or four-year degrees. Both employers and workers need alternatives to gain the skills, knowledge, and ability required for jobs within specific industry

sectors. Through collaborative efforts, core partners will promote the use of stackable credentials, micro-credentials, Maine College and Career Access, Registered Apprenticeship, and other training programs that integrate and contextualize academic and workforce skills. These best practices of program delivery accelerate learning through concurrent rather than sequential pathways.

The core partners see great promise in their work to develop and institutionalize portable, industry recognized credentials that can be earned in a relatively short period of time. While recognizing the need for entry-level workers, the Maine workforce system is not interested in creating a system of credentials that lead only into entry-level positions. In full support of the goal to develop a system of lifelong learning and continued connection to employers, Maine is focused on developing a system that addresses accelerated pathways to employment.

To fully implement and support the activities noted above, Maine's core partners are committed to:

- Adopt and articulate a shared vision of an aligned lifelong learning system that clearly delineates each partner's role and responsibilities in the development of a seamless continuum of programs and supports leading to employment.
- Demonstrate shared leadership and commitment to institutionalizing this lifelong learning system.
- Work within the workforce system (including required one-stop partners, non-required organizations and employers) to construct and deploy the activities listed above.
- Focus on the development of portable, stackable credentials of value for in-demand occupations. The U.S. Department of Labor defines a "stackable credential" as "part of a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time to build up an individual's qualifications and help them move along a career pathway or up a career ladder to different and potentially higher-paying jobs" (Training and Employment Guidance Letter 15-10, U.S. Department of Labor).
- Work within Maine's academic arena to support and expand on the work being done to develop portable, stackable, in-demand micro-credentials that are accepted by employers and lead to digital badges bearing post-secondary credit.
- Establish pathways to employment that contain agreed upon multiple entry and exit points that enable all learners to participate as a result of earning various credentials and degrees.
- Give priority consideration to referring adults to the Maine College and Career Access program to receive, according to their learning and employment goals, the academic, employability skills and introductory hard skills needed to enter a postsecondary education or training program without the need for remedial coursework.

- Recognizing the need for individuals to possess foundational skills for success in employment and meeting life challenges, all core partner programs will be developed with consideration regarding the inclusion of foundational skills in math, reading, and literacy which may best be provided prior to entering a credential or other job training program, or concurrently.
- Develop a system of accountability to ensure that education and workforce training initiatives provide the knowledge and skills necessary for employability.
- Provide equal access to these opportunities through the implementation of universal design from the program design stage through implementation and reflect cultural competency.
- Integrate work-readiness skills into programs offered throughout the lifelong learning process.
- Identify and integrate into the workforce system, those supports needed for workplace success, childcare, transportation, mental health, intensive academic and career advisement and other services.
- Use and promote data and continuous improvement strategies. Partners are data-driven and focused on continuously improving efforts by measuring participants' interim and ultimate outcomes as well as process indicators.
- Support professional development. Partners support robust and ongoing professional development for relevant practitioners and administrators.
- Develop a process of promoting credentials as a pathway to employment.
- Create differentiated strategies that support equity in rural areas.

#### (B) ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN

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As authorized by WIOA, the State Workforce Board is also comprised of non-required WIOA partners. Their expertise, knowledge, and resources in the areas of developing an integrated and accountable workforce system will be of great benefit. The State Workforce Board will also make use of every opportunity, including presentations to the Joint Committees of Labor and Housing and Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, to educate the entire legislature about workforce development activities, challenges and infrastructure to ensure alignment and avoid duplication.

Further, the core partners are well-connected to both required and optional one-stop partners, which allows for optimal use of other resources that can support Maine's workforce and employers. Partnerships with other state agencies, such as the Departments of Health and Human Services, Corrections, Education, and Economic and Community Development, are critical to maximizing

federal and state resources while reducing duplicative or parallel efforts. Sources of funds that can be leveraged by mapping across agencies and programs will be identified. SNAP Employment and Training expansion in partnership with DHHS is one example. Pursuing other federal procurement opportunities and funds, such as the Lewiston Choice application, and meeting with philanthropic organizations to understand their priorities are other activities that will be undertaken. These partnerships are also critical to addressing statewide issues of housing, transportation, childcare and access to broadband, which were identified in the many listening sessions conducted for the Governor's economic development plan, as well as the WIOA State Plan. An important part of this strategy is the development of career pathways that include secondary and career and technical education, adult education, apprenticeship, post-secondary education, work-based learning, and other opportunities within industry sectors that are responsive to employer and job seeker needs.

Maine partners have taken great strides toward inculcating the "Whole Family Approach to Jobs" as a best practice for serving low-income individuals and their families. Also referred to as a two-generation approach, it brings human services, education and workforce stakeholders together to:

- Identify program and policy alignment opportunities at the local, state and federal level that will improve employment equity and economic stability for low-income parents and work toward undoing intergenerational poverty for families
- Promote state policies and systems alignment that will improve access to and success in education, training and employment for parents
- Develop a regional learning community focused on whole-family approaches to employment equity that will include employer stakeholders

Maine's Whole Families Working Group conducted research to assess the impact of benefits cliffs on families that rely on social service supports. The study reviewed the interplay between several state and federal programs and found that childcare and health benefits programs had the most extreme cliffs with downward slopes across all benefit programs, negatively impacting parents' financial security and capacity to work outside the home. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) at the state and federal levels was shown to be an effective policy lever to ease the cliff effect but more needs to be done.

Maine enacted a bipartisan package of bills, referred to as the Invest in Tomorrow package (LD 1772, LD 1774), in 2019. The new laws look to address the state's benefits cliffs. The package eliminates the gross income test for TANF, invests \$2 million in whole-family pilot programs and increases the income disregard in TANF to support parents' transition to work. It also authorizes an

increase in TANF funds for transitional food assistance and establishes a working group to align programs and improve accountability for better outcomes for families. In addition, the Legislature enacted LD 765, which requires the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to convene a stakeholder group to study asset limits in various state social service programs, including TANF and SNAP.

It is important for employers to understand how the benefits cliff creates work disincentives for low income working families. These employers understand that a very slight increase in wage could move the employee out of the income bracket to retain subsidized childcare or food stamps which they use to survive. Employers who participate in whole family approaches to jobs are better able to support and retain their employees through involvement with employee supports such as affordable childcare, providing non-cash incentives for exemplary work, supporting employees to advance their skills through tuition assistance or formal training opportunities leading to upward mobility along a formal career ladder.

To prepare a robust system of lifelong learning, agencies beyond the core partners need to be included in the process of developing stackable credentials. Maine is a geographically large state. The challenge of distance and limited resources have resulted in a tradition of collaboration and cooperation. Non-core partners are needed as each brings expertise, adds value to the partnership and greatly increases the success of developing a highly integrated lifelong learning and employment system. Partners vital to meeting this strategy include, but are not limited to, Department of Health and Human Services, state and local libraries, state and local workforce boards, state and local chambers of commerce, secondary educational institutions, Maine's Community College and University Systems, Department of Corrections, industry associations and labor associations. Due to our current shared vision to improve the state's economic viability and the prosperity of residents (many of whom are common clients), a variety of collaborative efforts between these agencies are already in place. These provide a firm foundation to build upon.

The Maine Department of Labor is recognized by USDOL as a State Approving Agency (SAA) for USDOL Registered Apprenticeship Program in Maine. Registered Apprenticeship allows trainees to earn while they learn a skilled occupation under the watchful eye of a mentor. The Maine Apprenticeship Program (MAP) has experienced unprecedented growth, nearly doubling the number of apprentices served with the last year. In part because of the tight labor market, demand from businesses interested in adopting registered apprenticeship to recruit, hire and train a skilled workforce continues to increase. Apprenticeship provides an alternative, structured pathway for youth and adults to earn a credential of value and good wages while meeting employers' needs. As

a truly viable career pathway in Maine, apprenticeship programming continues to expand with the following activities currently underway:

- Partnership with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) to develop apprenticeship opportunities for BRS customers with disabilities. The addition of a BRS Apprenticeship Navigator through MDOL's State Apprenticeship Equity, Expansion, and Innovation grant and related initiatives funded as part of Maine's Jobs and Recovery Plan has significantly expanded apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities for job seekers with disabilities across the state.
- Expansion of existing registered apprenticeship programs offered within the prison system to better prepare formerly-incarcerated individuals for successful re-entry to employment
- Development and expansion of quality youth apprenticeship programs, in collaboration with Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools and community colleges, that provide youth with a paycheck and structured on-the-job learning that allows them to apply relevant and affordable classroom training that results in dual credit toward high school graduation and an associate degree. Also pursue support of out-of-school youth apprentices with WIOA funding and services
- Focus on the registration of additional community colleges as registered sponsors of apprenticeship to facilitate small business access to apprenticeship programming and affordable related technical instruction
- Work with system partners and employers to establish entry level apprenticeship programs that articulate into more advanced apprenticeship training programs

#### (C) COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS

Maine's core programs understand that a coordinated customer service approach is essential to an effective workforce development system, especially when addressing the employment, training and related basic needs of people with barriers. Partner support for the alignment and coordination of workforce development, education, community and economic development resources from both the State and local area level is articulated in each local area Memorandum of Understanding.

Partners have committed to support a comprehensive, accessible, high-quality one-stop system; a system that is accessible and easily navigated by job seekers. This level of collaboration is required for a workforce system that promotes improvement in the structure of and delivery of multiple partner services; addresses the employment and skill needs of workers, jobseekers, and employers;

articulates career pathways for in-demand occupations and industries; results in workforce participation and preparation of underutilized populations and individuals with barriers; and enables workforce participants to enter career pathways that provide self-sustaining wages and offer upward mobility.

Partners of the one-stop delivery system are committed to having the necessary level of knowledge of each partner's programs to be able to make appropriate referrals and braid appropriate resources to support employment, training, and basic needs on behalf of shared customers. Partners work to align and coordinate workforce development resources in a way that is seamless to the customer, maximizes resources, reduces redundancies and improves the outcomes of participants of each partner program.

Progress around system alignment is being made but results come quicker through coordinated, networked, and targeted strategies to engage untapped talent among high-priority or targeted populations. Individuals who may already be financially under-resourced, dealing with health (physical, mental and/or emotional) challenges, lacking foundational academic skills including English language literacy, unaware of the how to navigate the current workforce system, or lacking basic computer skills to apply online require a system of help that is agile and responsive. To accomplish this, Partners commit to understanding basic eligibility and participation requirements/available services and benefits offered by each of the Partner program; staff participation in cross-training opportunities like those provided in State-coordinated monthly Partner meetings; work toward more common intake, assessment and registration tools, and standards; and strengthening referral processes. Intentional coordination of individualized career plan additionally serves as a tool to ensure that activities are integrated, and resources are effectively used across programs to provide comprehensive and high-quality services.

Core partner leads will monitor the progress of collaborative efforts to ensure the needs of sub-populations are being systematically addressed statewide. This group will also work to ensure that no instances of implicit bias are impacting the creation and delivery of services.

Maine is a geographically large, rural state in which those without affordable, reliable transportation face significant barriers to accessing occupational training and employment. Rural communities in the state's three regions have limited or non-existent public transportation services. The larger cities are served by municipal or regional bus services, but intercity bus links are limited. Stakeholders must work to identify new ways for rural Mainers to access workforce and educational resources. Some do not have access to high-speed internet and many lack basic computer literacy skills. The Department is partnering with the Maine Department of

Transportation to run a pilot program with up to 10 participants in recovery to provide an e-bike to transport themselves to work, training, and necessary appointments.

Workforce boards will work to promote the resources of Maine's public library system as a key partner in addressing this issue. Maine has over 266 public libraries, the smallest of them serving an island population and the largest serving urban hubs (Portland, Lewiston-Auburn, and Bangor). Libraries are vital centers of community access to technology and resources for online learning. Recent surveys reveal that 750,000 Mainers have a library card. Over 1.7 million high speed internet sessions took place through 230 libraries. (Each library has between 100 mbps to 1 gigabit of fiber connections.) Maine libraries offer safe, family welcoming environments where single parents can access job search resources with children in tow. They offer informal training in digital literacy from tools to set up email accounts (which are needed to register for labor exchange and file unemployment claims) to assisting with uploading resumes to various job sites.

In partnering with Maine's public library system, workforce providers can promote participant access to resources in the Digital Maine Library, specifically, the Career Preparation, Adult Skills and Computer Skills Center. The Digital Maine Library also provides access to "Career Transitions," an online resource for job seekers that assists them in finding sustainable employment. The Maine State Library invests state and federal dollars as well as money from the Maine MTEAF (Maine Telecommunications Access Fund) to provide a vast array of resources for all Maine citizens. The Career Preparation Center provides specific occupational practice tests that assess and provide online skill development through varied occupationally specific tools that address readiness to enter careers from allied health to homeland security. Residents can also access tools that prepare them to pass high school equivalency exams such as the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) and post-secondary entrance exams such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or Accuplacer.

Local Boards will develop agreements with regional libraries and, using best practices already available in state, engage in staff cross-training that will inform workforce system staff about the resources libraries offer and how to promote these to their customers. Library staff in turn will become versed in promoting the programs and resources provided through CareerCenters.

When the CareerCenter closed in Waterville, the Waterville Library (Library) established an active partnership to provide access to career services and expertise from agencies such as the Augusta CareerCenter, New Ventures, the Kennebec Valley Community Action Program, Chambers of Commerce, and local workforce boards. The Library has fully integrated and embedded workforce development as part of its mission and activities, hosting itinerant staff from the Augusta CareerCenter who are able to provide employment and training services as well as a local job fair.

Many public libraries can assist members of the public who are not digitally literate, including those who either do not have access to or do not know how to navigate the internet or on-line resources. All partners must continue to engage in creating solutions because the need for this level of one-on-one digital guidance far outstrips the capacity of either library or CareerCenter staff to address alone.

BRS works to bring about full access to employment, independence and community integration for people with disabilities. BRS has statewide offices co-located with the CareerCenters. This allows for accessible access to one-stop services for individuals with disabilities. BRS has an IFA and MOUs with each of the Comprehensive One-Stop Centers which includes contributing financially to the cost of the one-stop infrastructure, a description of services that will be made available through all partners, referral methods, and specific methods to ensure the needs of individuals with barriers to employment are met. Additionally, BRS is represented at the State and Local Workforce Development Boards and represents the needs of individuals with disabilities as part of the coordinated system.

#### (D) COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

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Through the statewide visioning sessions, information was gathered from employers and others regarding their understanding of and needs and recommendations for an effective workforce development system. Each core partner has learned from experience that no one agency can successfully meet the needs of employers and workers on their own and that there is strength in the many workforce programs in Maine combining resources on behalf of shared customers. Whenever possible, interagency staff must work to leverage available funds and resources. Moving forward, partners will collaborate and seek opportunities for co-enrollment, so that available funding can support as many individuals as possible.

The outcome of employment is critical for successful engagement and retention of learners in both academic and job skills training programs. WIOA requires that the core partners coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to employers to meet their current and projected workforce needs and to achieve the goals of industry or sector partners in the state. To meet that goal, all partners need to understand the services each has to offer, speak a common language, and promote the part that each partner plays in the system. The use of local, regional and state plans to align programs and activities is also critical to best providing services to employers. Partnerships with businesses and sector strategies will increase knowledge of current and projected workforces needs, to ensure workforce training, education and employment placement are job-driven and forward thinking.

The state plan implementation committee will be responsible for gathering information from the partners to coordinate efforts, streamline services to employers, look for opportunities that dovetail efforts with the Maine Economic and Community Development Plan and leverages resources. It will ensure that each agency can use consistent language to effectively communicate with employers that:

- Their input is required for creation of a workforce system that is committed and responsive to their needs.
- Clarify the roles of each partner in the system.
- Clarify what they can contribute toward establishing stackable credentials and micro-credentials that advance the progress of entry level workers.
- Clarify the benefits of registered apprenticeship, internships, on the job training, customized training, incumbent worker training, and support services.
- Assistance is available to help them identify skills and qualifications for in-demand employment.
- Employer engagement is vital in the creation of credentials that meet their needs and that will result in employment for those who earn them.
- Employer input should guide the identification of sector pathways to enter employment.

Located within the Maine Department of Education, the state office of adult education provides technical and grant management support to over 70 local adult education providers throughout the state. In FY19, providers served over 13,900 adults. The majority of these adults lack the foundational skills in numeracy, literacy and work readiness needed to be competitive in Maine's changing economy. The state director is a voting member of the State Workforce Board and local adult education programs are represented on each local workforce board. Adult education personnel at both the state and local levels participate on a number of boards and initiatives addressing the workforce needs of Maine's employers.

In addition to the state system-wide approach, there are many activities underway with the partners in the coordination of services to employers. Examples include:

- On a quarterly basis, the Statewide Workforce Assistance Team (SWAT), comprised of core partners and other key partners responsible for providing business services, convene to share best practices, provide program updates and learn about new opportunities. SWAT participants include but are not limited to staff from the following partners: WIOA service providers, Wagner Peyser, CareerCenter, Vocational Rehabilitation, Local Veteran Employer Representatives, State-funded apprenticeship and Competitive Skills Scholarship Programs,

Rapid Response and Trade Adjustment Assistance, community colleges, adult education providers, chambers of commerce, and non-profit organizations engaged in workforce development activities. SWAT meetings have been held regularly for the past three years and have been instrumental in furthering collaborative workforce development efforts amongst interested parties.

- The Maine-At-Work Initiative was developed collaboratively with workforce partners and continues to be an easy way for employers to request assistance with their workforce needs. An on-line request is generated and sent to MDOL staff who either respond to the employer inquiry directly or forward it to a partner contact for response. Maine-At-Work is also marketed through a flyer enclosed with each employer's yearly unemployment insurance tax information to prompt them to request assistance if they have any workforce development assistance needs.
- Maine's Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP) is open to individuals whose family income is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level and who do not yet already have a marketable post-secondary degree or credential. CSSP is funded by contributions from employers through and offset from their unemployment insurance taxes. CSSP provides funding to eligible individuals for education, training and necessary support services that lead to high-wage jobs that are in demand in Maine. The education and training must be universally recognized and accepted by the trade or industry in which the participant intends to seek employment. In 2019, CSSP served 1,041 individuals.
- Job Fairs are held regularly at each CareerCenter. In the larger centers, job fairs for specific sectors are held so job seekers can apply to multiple employers within a sector. Staff engage with businesses in attendance to discuss their hiring needs to better understand what the businesses are looking for.
- A successful model that needs to increase in implementation is Integrated Education and Training (IET). As the name implies, this type of programming involves intentional planning to deliver the specific academic, employability skills, and workforce training to a pre-determined audience resulting in a workforce credential and or further training and employment. For example, a group of learners may be enrolled in a welding program that incorporates instruction in reading and/or math all contextualized to pertain to welding. In this instance, the academic and trades instructors might work together to identify the vocabulary and calculation assistance participants will need to be successful. The benefit of this approach is it enables participants who may be closed out of a similar welding class because of low foundational skills to participate and be successful with appropriate supports.

- Historically, adult education providers in Maine have worked independently or with small-scale partnerships for specific purposes. Recently, local programs were grouped into regional hubs to promote common standards, fiscal efficiencies, economy of scale, and greater collaboration amongst the adult education programs within the hub. Rather than compete against each other for financial resources, the emphasis is on mutual collaboration and support. This reorganization has resulted in strengthening all programs, and especially those in smaller, more rural areas. Within the boundaries of each hub there are community college campuses, a local workforce board, CareerCenters, and a University of Maine presence. Many hubs are strengthening their connections to these organizations as well as with other core partners to address the needs of employers and workers.

Local providers will continue their long-standing work of connecting with individual employers to design instructional services in response to their needs. The number of employers contracting directly with a local literacy provider for help with workforce development is growing. As appropriate, these services may include job-site classes, contextualized vocabulary, connections with occupational training, Maine College and Career Access transition programs, micro-credentials, and other means that help build the foundational skills of students while preparing them for successful employment.

- The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) coordinates and aligns services to employers that will encourage and support them in the hiring of individuals with disabilities. In addition to offering *Windmills*, a highly interactive employer Disability Awareness Training, BRS also utilizes in-house staff to help provide the needed connections between Vocational Rehabilitation staff, clients seeking employment, providers, and employers. To do this, BRS learns the needs of employers and connects them with clients that have the strengths, abilities, and interests to meet those needs. BRS started this process, working with youth through a model adopted from Vermont, called *Progressive Employment*, and has now expanded it to all ages of job seekers with disabilities statewide through both the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Maine's *Progressive Employment* initiative takes a dual customer approach to meet the needs of employers and Maine youth with disabilities by matching them to activities such as: job tours, interviews, job shadows, work experience, and on-the-job training. These experiences give the employer the opportunity to meet their next generation of workers at little to no risk while also assisting the youth to build employment skills. Additionally through resources made available through the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan, the Progressive Employment strategy is being piloted over the next two years to assist individuals who have

been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, those who are justice involved and/or in recovery.

Future activities identified during this state plan period related to the coordination, alignment, and provision of services to employers include:

- **Business outreach tools developed with cross-agency partner input:** Tools will be developed to support an integrated, seamless system of services to businesses. New marketing and outreach tools will be co-developed by members of the business response teams from education, economic and workforce development. Integrated business assistance marketing tools will stress services over programs and promote no-wrong-door access, whereby businesses can rely on single point of contact to access the full menu of services.

Similarly, a business needs assessment tool to be used by business outreach team members to assess needs pertaining to workforce and other business challenges will be created with partner and employer input. Use of the common tool will ensure business needs are easily communicated and assigned to specific partners.

An integrated service response tool will be developed to outline response actions, agency resource commitments, employer commitments, and expectations. This tool will be accessible, easy to understand, and serve as a plan to be followed by the employer and the multiple service agencies responding to the business needs.

- **Employer/Business Response Team - No-Wrong Door** State and regional-level business response teams will be identified and cross-trained. These teams will include leads from agencies with resources and capacity to assess and address business needs (both economic and workforce). Business response team members will attend ongoing cross-training necessary to understand and represent the full menu of services and to ensure a single point of access by which employers can acquire the information and resources necessary to address their workforce and business development needs.

Business response teams at the state and regional levels may include representatives from three key resource areas:

- Workforce development:
  - Employment services (MDOL's Bureau of Employment Services and Bureau of Rehabilitation Services) on behalf of:

- Apprenticeship
  - Competitive Skills Scholarship Program -Business
  - Federal Bonding Program
  - Foreign Labor Certification Program
  - Labor Exchange
  - Rapid Response
  - Reemployment Initiatives
  - SafetyWorks
  - Trade Act
  - Veteran's Services
  - Work Opportunity Tax Credit
  - DHHS - TANF (Fedcap – Parents as Scholars – LIFT – HOPE)
  - Title IB service providers (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth)
  - Vocational Rehabilitation (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation & Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired)
  - Pre-Employment Transition Services
  - Workforce boards
- Education and Training:
    - Adult Education
    - Career and Technical Education Secondary Schools
    - Job Corps
    - Maine Community College System
    - Private schools, colleges, universities
    - Trade skills training entities
    - University of Maine System
    - Educate Maine
  - Economic Development
    - Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI)
    - Department of Economic and Community Development
    - Regional and municipal economic development entities
    - Small Business Association
    - Small Business Development Centers
    - May also include (as appropriate):
      - Coastal Enterprises, Inc.
      - Employer representatives

- Finance Authority of Maine
  - Live and Work in Maine
  - Maine Chamber of Commerce
  - Maine Development Foundation
  - Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership
  - Maine Rural Development Authority
  - Maine Technology Institute
  - Philanthropic entities
- **Expert Business Response Team** Comprehensive business support and integrated service strategies will be offered by a fully-informed business response team that has a grasp on the available resources available to be leveraged from a multitude of partner agencies. Cross-training of business response team members will include:
  - Understanding workforce development resources and who to work with at the local, regional, or state level.
  - Understanding economic development resources and who to work with at the local, regional, or state level.
  - Navigating education, training, and research and development resources.
  - Understanding labor market and industry information and sources.
  - Understanding best practices in attracting and retaining untapped labor talent pools.
  - Understanding and effectively utilizing business outreach materials and tools.
  - Effectively assessing employer needs and coordinating efficient low-risk responses in collaboration with business response team partners.
  - Addressing employer needs using the integrated response tool approved by team partners.
  - Tracking and communicating employer services to ensure follow-up and reporting of achieved outcomes.
- **Seamless Coordination of Services** Business response teams will work behind the scenes to address industry needs using an integrated response tool as follows:
  - Using agreed-upon communication protocols to share business needs assessment data with appropriate partners.
  - Within agreed-upon timeframes, partners will review and assess appropriateness of services their agency can offer and will identify the level and type of service(s) they can provide as part of the integrated service response, a point person and contact information, the dollar amount of either in-kind or cash resource to be provided, additional data required or steps the employer must take to access the resource, dates

- by which employer must provide information, timelines in which services/resources are to be provided, and outcomes achieved.
- In most cases, the initial point of contact will act as lead liaison with the business on behalf of all partners and support the employer in achieving the desired outcomes and implementing the integrated service response.
  - Build awareness of the Maine Workforce System Build programs with a human-centric design approach that uses all available digital and non-digital tools. With support from a technical assistance grant from the National Governor's Association (NGA), the SWB will work with workforce system partners to:
    - Develop a portal which will align public workforce programs 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.
    - Create a unified brand for Maine's workforce system that will:
      - Increase awareness of the workforce system for employers, and residents of Maine who are interested in jobs, careers and greater economic opportunities.
      - Improve understanding of the scope of Maine's workforce system services and how to access them.
      - Increase consistency across Maine's workforce partners to create a better sense of unity.

A no-wrong-door, integrated service response strategy removes the need for employers to navigate a vast and complex system of services and assures they are presented with appropriate services. Interagency responses will promote layoff aversion activities, clarify and address perceived skill gaps, and allow workforce agencies to promote the employment of underutilized talent pools. It will link employers to business assistance programs and technical assistance on a just-in-time basis.

Properly assessment of an employer's workforce and business service needs is essential to developing and providing effective solutions. A collaborative approach to addressing business needs will eliminate duplication of efforts and ensure responses are developed with the focus on the employer rather than the program. As stated previously, business response team members must be those with an excellent command of the programs they represent and a good command of services/programs offered by the other partners.

#### (E) PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Educational institutions are key partners in Maine's workforce development system and play a critical role in the State's strategies to increase the effectiveness in how partners work together.

Through articulation agreements, establishment of career pathways, joint professional development, and a focus on best practices that reduce barriers to employment (especially for high priority populations), the partners will work together and meet the strategic vision. To that end:

- The re-branding and marketing of the workforce development system will create and distribute a common message that conveys the role of educational institutions as part of the system.
- The State’s education and training systems will be supported to provide job-driven instruction as part of a cohesive continuum that includes secondary schools, adult education, community colleges, universities, on-the-job training, and apprenticeship.
- Partners will increase engagement with secondary schools to expand student awareness of Maine’s career pathways, in-demand occupations, and employment opportunities.
- Postsecondary educational institutions and training organizations will join in the messaging of the workforce development system.
- Engaging core partners and employers in micro-credentialing and digital badging will ensure that skills are meeting industry and business needs and credentials are recognized by employers.
- Working with education, workforce, and employers, including the MaineSpark and All Learning Counts initiatives, criteria for a “credential of value” will be defined in a way which is clear, measurable, and meaningful to individuals and employers. Career pathways will be identified which allow workers to engage with educational opportunities that lead to higher wage occupations in in-demand sectors.
- Workforce development service providers in each of Maine’s local areas will partner with adult education providers, local community colleges, industry trade groups, and others to develop recruitment and training programs to meet the needs of individual or sector employers. For example, the Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP), provider of adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs in Maine’s most northern county, regularly partners with the local adult education providers to address the new hire training needs of employers. A recent initiative involved three regional health care providers and resulted in a health care academy designed to prepare workers for entry-level positions in patient care. Similarly, a construction boot camp was developed in conjunction with adult education and Associated General Contractors to prepare entry-level workers to enter the construction trades. A new initiative is currently underway that will package recruitment, assessment and training services for a new processing factory.

Though adult education in Maine is characterized as working with learners beyond the age of compulsory education, historically, the majority of learners served have been in 24 and above. The efforts of adult education providers have been on moving this group on to college and/or employment. Adult educators are well-acquainted with the challenges and life situations of this group.

Data now indicates younger learners are seeking adult education services. Most of these students come well-prepared and earn high scores, many at the college and career-ready level. This group is not leaving school because they lack ability, but as a result of environmental issues. They report feeling bullied, disenfranchised, or dealing with anxiety and/or family issues. Adult education is no longer a place for problem students to end up, but a positive solution for a growing number of students. In response to this change, adult education will be taking steps to interact differently with the day school.

Steps planned:

- Conduct several listening sessions to hear from this group of young test takers more about why they chose adult education and how best we can serve them
- Provide professional development to instructors and staff on understanding the needs of this group
- Establish relationships with high school guidance counselors to inform them of possible ways adult education can help them, especially with career and postsecondary advisement as well as micro-credential attainment in technology and health care post-graduation
- Develop pathways to adult education for the 40 percent of high school graduates who do not have any post-secondary plans
- Explore pathways and collaborations with Career and Technical Education programs
- Work with high schools to formulate what it looks like for adult education to serve as a recognized pathway to high school completion

Adult education will look to update MOUs with educational partners and work to increase the number and quality of collaborations with other educational institutions and include those that may be missing.

It is important that communication occurs not only with the public postsecondary system but also the private institutions. There must be engagement with employer training departments to determine what foundational skills their current and prospective employees may need and how these skill requirements might be integrated into their training and hiring efforts.

Adult education will continue to draw on other agencies with expertise in the delivery of English language services to coordinate ways to meet the ever-rising demand for this type of instruction and will develop, introduce, and put into place, a referral system between the various programs and service providers so learners have access to the most appropriate provider.

Core and other partner agencies will collaborate with the “MaineSpark” initiative (with a goal of ensuring 60 percent of Mainers will hold a credential of value by 2025) to ensure alignment of activities, sharing of information, participation in and contribution to cross-training and professional staff development, and participation in local, regional and state strategy implementation sessions. They will ensure local and regional employer stakeholder groups are apprised of the goals and work of the initiative and have opportunity for input on the specific credentials of value being considered and promoted.

Similarly, system partners will work with the University of Maine system to support work initiated through the “All Learning Counts” initiative, funded by the Lumina Foundation and focused on expanding opportunities for adults, (especially people of color) to attain credentials. The initiative supports the goal of MaineSpark and seeks to expand access to a range of credentials from micro-credentials to traditional degrees. Like MaineSpark, “All Learning Counts” is a coalition of public and private organizations working to develop a micro-credential ecosystem and to support adult learners in gaining credentials demanded by employers. Two critical components of this initiative are to validate skills learned outside of educational systems (non-institutional learning) for credit toward credentials and provide more flexible, accessible programming and access to support services that will address personal and academic challenges facing adult learners.

Key partners include University of Maine Orono and Augusta, the Wabanaki Center, Eastern Maine Community College, the Maine Department of Corrections and its vendor Edovo, the Maine Department of Labor, the State Board, the Maine Department of Education – Adult Education, the Maine State Library, the United Technologies Center and Educate Maine. Educate Maine is another collaborative initiative that promotes education and career readiness through teacher education and connecting teachers with businesses to ensure curricula are meeting the needs of industry.

It is important to stay in communication with the state postsecondary system and also the private institutions to stay current on their initiatives and avoid duplication. There must also be engagement with employer training departments to determine what foundational skills their current and perspective employees may need and how they might be integrated into their training and hiring efforts.

Adult education needs to draw on other agencies with expertise in the delivery of English language services to coordinate ways to meet the ever-rising demand for instruction.

A learner referral system between the various programs and service providers must be developed, introduced, put into place, and promoted to ensure learners, and the partner agencies have awareness of and access to the most appropriate provider.

#### (F) IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

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The State’s strategies as described throughout this plan will address issues that prevent access to postsecondary credentials, including establishing youth apprenticeship opportunities and increasing the number of Registered Apprenticeships, addressing student loan debt issues that prohibit readmission, continuing partnership efforts with initiatives, such as Live and Work in Maine, to encourage college graduates to stay and work in Maine, supporting the transition of students from high school to community college and university, including advocating for smoother credit transfers between institutions, developing and sharing a clear, concise consumer handbook with information on postsecondary services, publicizing no-cost and low-cost training opportunities, and promote availability for Vocational Rehabilitation to collaborate and coordinate with educational institutions in provision of services for students with disabilities.

During the work to update the state’s 10-year economic development plan, there was intentional focus on growing local talent, which includes identifying opportunities for improving access to postsecondary credentials.

Access to education is essential to growing a local talent pipeline. We’re still building back from the effects of the pandemic. We’ve made great strides, but we need to continue our commitment to providing support to our young people and beyond. To do that, we must maintain and expand our free community college initiative beyond the 2024 to 2025 academic year.

Growing and keeping our workforce requires support after high school, too. We will advance deliberate and coordinated efforts among adult education, the Maine Community College system, the University of Maine system, and other relevant post-secondary educational institutions to ensure that all Maine graduates and adult learners obtain a credential of value and participate in a local work experience through apprenticeship, co-ops, internships, or externships to promote retention in Maine — or that they are encouraged to return, if they have left.

The world of workforce development is becoming increasingly aware of the meaning, benefits and uses of stackable credentials to enable a person to progress from a series of stackable short-term certificates to postsecondary degrees to their chosen occupations. In the world of education, a very

similar process is referred to as micro-credentials. Each micro-credential certifies competency in a specific skill. These micro-credentials can be stacked to indicate higher level of skill attainment and in Maine, the goal for many is to connect them with recognized course credits and if desired, lead a holder of micro-credentials on to other credentials or degrees.

The benefits to earners of micro-credentials, especially for WIOA clients, are that they are not place based, are short-term, tied to learner mastery, can be earned online at the learner's convenience, are self-directed, contain job embedded content, many include college credit, eliminates duplication of coursework, and can be used to recognize and validate prior learning. These factors make them a valuable solution to the state's need to connect with learners who feel unable to participate in traditional education and/or training due to financial or time constraints or who believe they are not "college material".

The benefits of micro-credentials to the workforce system is that they clearly articulate what the person has done to earn the credential in a job specific area. In addition, whereas new programs of instruction at the higher education level can take a long period of time to develop and be approved, micro-credential development is very nimble. This makes for a timely response to employer needs.

Both adult education and the MDOL are currently participating in an All Learning Counts (ALC) initiative lead by the University of Maine System. The project focuses on engaging adults with barriers in earning micro-credentials and gaining employment. Committees are currently focusing on the sub-populations of low-income, Native American, English language learners and incarcerated individuals. Other partners include the community college system, Maine Department of Corrections, Edovo, Educate Maine and the Maine State Library.

Though the content area will vary, all of the micro-credential work is separated into three consistent areas of competency attainment.

- Level 1- Exploration and Discovery
- Level 2- Skill Development
- Level 3- Initiative/ Leadership

Following the completion of these three levels, the learner earns a stacked macro-badge, which is the cumulative assessment of skills, evidence of learning is visible and validates alternative learning. Micro-badges, capturing 21st Century skill development and/or industry/association credentials, will also be embedded along the pathway, adding further value.

University of Maine System is part of Education Design Lab's Badged to Hire campaign, implementing employer-demanded 21st Century skill badges into courses and programs.

This micro-credential initiative relies on Maine's workforce data regarding areas of employer need and the specific competencies required of employees. It also includes the development of an employer advisory group to ensure, like stackable workplace credentials, that micro-credentials align with employer needs, will be recognized for employment purposes and support Maine's goal of a seamless continuum of programs and supports with a focus on career pathways for in-demand industries.

Adult education is expanding its connection to the state's postsecondary institutions regarding that continuous and seamless continuum. In 2019, adult education providers established a presence on three of the seven community college campuses. Efforts are continuing to expand that number. When adult education is on community college campuses, adult education learners envision themselves as college students and recognize they have adult education support services to help them transition to college. Having staff members on the campus also facilitates the communication that is needed amongst the two systems to articulate the best pathways for students.

Adult education will continue to build on the collaborative success of the Maine College and Career Access (MCCA) transitions program which also fully integrates into Maine's priority to develop a seamless continuum of programs and supports. MCCA, offered by adult education providers across the state, provides academics, college and employability success skills for adult education students seeking a postsecondary credential and/or employment. In the past, MCCA targeted adult students over 25 with a high school credential who were planning to attend a traditional postsecondary institution. In response to a changing adult education population and the Maine workforce needs, the state adult education office revised the grant goals in 2018 to include all adult education students and those seeking any postsecondary credential of value. This change allows adult education providers to increase access for young adults under 25 and for those students without high school credentials. Pathways for students from a high school credential to MCCA or a postsecondary credential were created.

Partner efforts also resulted in the Maine Community College System accepting college and career readiness scores on the HiSET in place of the NextGen ACCUPLACER placement test. This change, which began in early 2019, allows students who perform at the HiSET college and career level to enter directly into credit-bearing courses. Beginning at the time of student intake and throughout their preparation for taking the HiSET, emphasis will be placed on the benefits of scoring at the college and career readiness level. When learners are prepared through MCCA To enter

postsecondary without having to take developmental courses saves money and accelerates the path to graduation. Adult education providers, organized in regional hubs, continue to collaborate to ensure equitable access to MCCA programming across their region, as well as coordinating with postsecondary partners in their region to develop articulated courses or to encourage co-enrollment.

The adult education state director continues to meet with representatives of the workforce training department of the Maine Community College system. These meetings are resulting in increased communication amongst the local programs and their community college partner with the focus on establishing the appropriate place for adult education to support learners in community college trades programs.

With greater availability for adult education students to earn college credits comes the possibility for them to enter community college with six college credits and be eligible for Pell funding. Currently, lack of access to federal financial aid is a major barrier for many WIOA eligible learners to enter postsecondary. Working with postsecondary partners, including the university system to develop a system for these learners to access Pell will greatly increase their access to academic and career education.

#### (G) COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

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In 2019, Maine released its first ten-year economic development plan for the first time in nearly 20 years. This plan for 2020-2029, created by the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) with input from many other government agencies, business leaders and private organizations, focusses on the state's economic growth, particularly in rural Maine, and includes language that resonates with the goals and priorities of this state plan.

“By 2030, Maine will be an international leader with a vibrant, sustainable, environmentally-responsible economy. All across the state, the people of Maine will have access to an unmatched quality of life and good-paying jobs.”<sup>35</sup>

The hinge points of the DECD Plan are talent and innovation. This WIOA state plan includes several steps to address the DECD near-term recommendations and it will be important that related activities are coordinated on state, regional and local levels. Those include the development of a system of stackable, micro-credentials, increasing the availability of online learning, and instituting statewide a variety of real world, on the job learning opportunities.

Maine's economic development strategy focuses on three overarching goals: grow the average annual wage by 10 percent, increase the value of products sold per worker by 10 percent, and attract 75,000 additional people to Maine's talent pool. Seven core strategies have been outlined to achieve these goals:

1. Grow local talent
2. Attract new talent
3. Promote innovation
4. Support universal connectivity
5. Provide supporting infrastructure
6. Maintain a stable business environment
7. Promote hubs of excellence.

Workforce and economic development partners will work collaboratively to implement several action steps outlined in the State economic plan with a focus on four key industry sectors: Healthcare, Clean Energy, Manufacturing and Tourism.

Building on the previous work, the SWB cohosted seven statewide visioning sessions to gather input into the review of the State's 10-Year Economic Development Plan and Workforce Strategic Vision. The sessions were cohosted with the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) as well as the Local Workforce Development Boards and Local Economic Development Districts. The SWB and DECD also joined nearly 40 additional partners and stakeholders at their own events and meetings to solicit their thoughts moving forward. In coordination with DECD, the SWB released an update to the State's 10-Year Economic Development Plan that embeds an updated workforce vision that aligns with the SWB's goals in March 2024.

Aligning with Maine's Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029, the Unified State Plan seeks to partner economic development with workforce development. The Economic Development Strategy identifies renewable energy (solar, wind, bio-fuel), sustainable fishing, aquaculture and bio-based products as sectors which will be areas of focus for the next 10 years. Coupling that with Maine's already growing needs in health care and manufacturing, workforce and economic development will be partnering to address the needs of established and emerging industries. Being a large, rural state, local workforce boards will be identifying local industry sectors as areas of focus as well.

During the 2020 State Plan, Maine identified three strategic objectives that were folded into the refresh of the state economic development plan. The 2024 State Plan cycle allowed us an excellent opportunity to align our workforce with economic development in the state by combining goals and

embedding the state's workforce development strategy into the long-term economic development plan.

During the collaborative work with the Department of Economic and Community Development to update the 10-Year Plan, several actions were updated and created to clearly align workforce and economic development strategies within three of the identified strategies:

- Strategy A: Grow Local Talent
- Strategy B: Attract New Talent
- Strategy G: Promote Hubs of Excellence

Steps will be taken to promote career exploration, apprenticeship and internship opportunities and engage workers in continuing education that will result in attainment of stackable credentials for career advancement. Education partners will work to align curriculums to the digital economy and articulate career pathways that support workers along the continuum of careers in high-demand industry sectors. Providers working with diverse populations will strive to increase their participation in the workforce through specialized outreach, development of paid work experience opportunities, provision of service supports and promotion of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and Federal Bonding programs to name just a few. One example of collaboration for 2024 would be the continuation of our Maine Employer Summit and our partnership with the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development. We are cohosting the 2024 Maine Employer Summit: Engaging Today and Tomorrow's Workforce in May of 2024, which will have an emphasis on youth as well as filling today's jobs with individuals who may currently be on the sidelines.

Workforce and economic development leaders at the State level will continue work to achieve structural alignment of workforce and economic development priorities, joint business engagement responses, and to establish regular use of a common database of employer contacts and service responses.

In addition to this, the State Workforce Board and the workforce development system will be working with the Children's Cabinet to work with other state agencies to address other issues which impact Mainer's abilities to find and maintain employment such as housing, transportation and childcare. Current work the state is involved in, includes:

Regional collaborations between workforce, education, and economic development partners continue to work to align resources and address the needs of local and regional employers.

A TEC is a collection of WIOA partners, higher education, legislator representatives, employers, and other relevant agencies like New Ventures. The leadership is a collaborative effort to “tackle” regional workforce and education issues and to identify and braid services to address business workforce needs.

In the tri-county area of Penobscot, Piscataquis and Hancock counties, Title IB services are provided by Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) which is also the lead regional economic development agency. In these complementary roles, staff from each part of the agency are able to integrate a wide range of services to businesses and community partners, including work to assist the regions recovery from the demise of traditional manufacturing industries (paper, textiles, shoes, etc.) and the associated dislocation of workers and community infrastructure. EMDC was instrumental in leading the charge to revision economic assets in the region leading to identification of new uses for abandoned mill sites, including site clean-up, to pave the way for new business development and launch retraining efforts to reposition the regions workers for new job opportunities resulting from those investments.

Similar collaborations between employers, education providers and workforce programs occur in the Central Western and Coastal Counties regions. Central Western service provider, Western Maine Community Action Program, promotes each collaboration through public media and on their website, publishing testimonials from participants, employers and partner agencies regarding each collaboration. Publications such as these promote additional employers and training providers to follow suit and because the projects often result in direct employment and credentials, it is an efficient way of recruiting prospective job seeker participants into the training initiatives.

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### III.(b) STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

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#### III.(b.1) STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS

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Core partners of this Unified Plan utilize the following case management and management information systems (MIS): Adult Education uses MaineSTARS, Vocational Rehabilitation utilizes AWARE, and workforce programs administered by the Maine Department of Labor use Maine JobLink a system developed and maintained by America’s Job Link Alliance.

The systems comply with current federal reporting requirements for each program. The data elements required for each program are being collected and will be used to support the coordinated implementation of Maine’s strategic objectives.

MaineSTARS is a federally approved MIS system compliant with adult education's National Reporting System. Local adult education programs are required to use MaineSTARS for all intake, demographic, assessment, and attendance data. At the state level, aggregate numbers are compiled in MaineSTARS and used to perform data matches against Maine Department of Labor employment data, high school equivalency completion data, and the National Student Clearinghouse database for postsecondary enrollment.

The AWARE system collects and reports data required by the Rehabilitation Services Administration in the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services, as well as serving as a case management tool for the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The system is maintained by its vendor, Alliance Enterprises, and is updated as needed to meet WIOA reporting requirements.

The Maine JobLink (MJL) is a multi-faceted system with ability to interface with other MIS systems. MJL components include ReportLink which collects and dispatches the data required for federal and state reporting on behalf of multiple employment and training programs, ServiceLink, a case management system from which participant eligibility is determined and documented, employment and training plans are developed and updated, services are tracked, and assessment and outcome data captured, FiscalLink a financial management system that tracks program expenditures and funds leveraged from other resources, JobLink, which provides labor exchange services that match job seekers to employers position listings, ProviderLink also referred to as the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) which provides information on providers and programs approved for WIOA purposes, and finally, CertLink which provides a portal in which Maine employer can submit applications for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). The Maine JobLink system serves the following programs: Title IB Adult, Dislocated worker and Youth programs, Employment Services, Trade Act, Veterans, National Farmworker Jobs Program, Apprenticeship, Competitive Skills Scholarship Program, National Dislocated Worker Grant programs, H1B programs and more as necessary. The system interfaces with Unemployment Compensation's – ReEmployME system, but does not interface with Adult Education's – Maine Stars system, or Vocational Rehabilitation's – AWARE system.

The Maine JobLink system also tracks services to employers from which part of the annual Effectiveness Serving Employers report is generated. Employer assistance staff from multiple agencies enter information about the services provided directly in the employer account. The State has issued a policy delineating requirement for employer service tracking along with a guide for employer assistance staff from all service agencies to use. See PY19-01 Employer Services Tracking policy.

Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI), MDOL's labor market information provider, will add the data on participants of core partners to Maine Education and Attainment Research Navigation system or MaineEARNs, thereby linking the records of core program participants with their corresponding wage and employment records for program evaluation and reporting purposes.

MaineEARNs also provides information on employment and wage outcomes for Maine workers who graduated from the University of Maine System and Maine Community College System after July 2008. Students, parents, educators, administrators, policy makers, and anyone interested in earning education credentials and employment in Maine will be able to use this data to research, plan and make informed decisions. Interest has been expressed by at least one private university to join in the collections and reporting. It is this same system which is being used to meet the requirement for the annual ETPL reporting.

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### III.(b.2) STATE POLICIES

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Administrators of the Maine's core programs share policies, directives, and practices they have implemented specific to their agency to achieve the State's strategic objectives. Leads from each of the core partner agencies are members of the WIOA Implementation Policy Committee (WIPC). A committee tasked with researching, reviewing, approving, and implementing policies that promote service delivery alignment between programs and provide guidance to frontline staff from each of the programs.

Policies such as State policy PY20-03 Co-enrollment Requirements provide direction on the benefits of integrated service delivery, how co-case management can occur, how communications and approvals between the agencies must be discussed, how employment plans and prior assessments from the referring agency can be accepted without duplication, and how resources can be braided together. The policy discusses data sharing and data access permission requirements and the requirement that a participant release be in place prior to co-enrollment. The requirement to co-enroll TAA Program participants who are eligible for the WIOA dislocated worker program continues to apply under Reversion 2021. (See 20 CFR 618.325.) DWGs, as described in Sec. 170 of WIOA, are also available to States to provide these services as noted in TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE LETTER NO. 24-20.

Another such policy PY20-02 Change 1 was developed to provide guidance on how to determine dislocated worker status, not only for the Dislocated Worker program, but for National Dislocated Worker Grants and Disaster Grants received by the State.

All required partner programs follow the State policy pertaining to the requirements for establishing and reviewing the Memorandum of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreements requirements, policies PY16-01 and PY19-04 respectively.

Core partners worked with the State Workforce Board to develop Policy PY19-02 Expanded Definition of Basic Skills Deficient which clarifies additional and alternative ways to make such a determination and discusses reasonable accommodations for certain individuals.

Another policy shared by core partners is the Employer Services Tracking Requirements policy PY19-01 which specifies how to track services provided to employers and when the services must be entered into the Maine JobLink system, and the types of services to be tracked to meet the Effectiveness Serving Employers annual reporting requirements.

The two most important policies shared by the system are the Accessibility, Equal Opportunity, and Nondiscrimination policy PY17-01 jointly developed by a team of core partner program staff and approved by the State Workforce Board. This policy provides guidance to all required partners on how to be compliant with WIOA Section 188 and ensuring regulations identified in 29 CFR 38.

Policy 15-10 Protecting Personally Identifiable (PII) Information, details compliance requirements including how to secure PII, the components of “confidentiality” and staff requirements, custody of records and how to report any breach of information. Related to that policy is policy PY15-07 Conflict of Interest which discusses the requirements for board and committee members and program staff regarding duty to disclose a conflict of interest, situations that pertain to nepotism, and mandatory disclosure requirements.

In addition to system policies, core partners have agreed to accept participant assessments from partner agencies to ensure prospective participants of any program are not required to duplicate assessments for each program. Because core programs share a common purpose in assessing clients, there has been an effort to eliminate unique assessments and focus instead on an assessment process that is standardized, seamless, and integrated whenever possible. Progress in each area is outlined below.

Maine’s partners have agreed to:

- Standardize standards for assessment tools that are accessible and to be used for specific purposes. Two examples broadly used by all partners are the CASAS for numeracy and literacy, and the WOWI (World of Work Inventory) for career goals.

- Make access to assessment seamless, by using electronic CASAS testing which enables access to test scores throughout the state and minimizes assessment mistakes and duplications.
- Ensure partners have received training on the WOWI assessment and can recognize and understand a customer's assessment results even when the assessment is administered by another partner. The result is better communication among core partners.
- Further develop MOUs and guide work that can be done by and between partners to align services and formalize referral processes and guidelines. Such agreements catalog and map out the parts of the workforce development system that will be made up of comprehensive one-stop centers, affiliate one-stop centers, and various other points of service entry, such as partner service sites. The MOUs will be a major tool for articulating specific ways that resources, services, and information will be aligned and integrated and the level and extent to which each partner will jointly serve and or refer an individual customer.

## **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING & COST SHARING**

Core and required partners must collaborate to design and support the local one-stop delivery system and must articulate how they will work together to jointly serve customers and share costs. It must be articulated through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each of the three local workforce boards.

The process requires partners to identify the types and levels of services they offer, the comprehensive, affiliate, and other sites their services can be accessed from, how referrals and customer co-enrollment will be handled, and how resources of each partner will be leveraged and coordinated. In addition to service coordination, local partners must establish cost sharing agreements that at a minimum, delineate how infrastructure costs of the local one-stop system will be supported by each required partner. Local boards act as the lead in negotiating cost sharing and to develop the Infrastructure Funding Agreements. Local areas at an impasse in the agreement process must notify the Bureau of Employment Services who will provide technical assistance and if necessary, implement the state funding mechanism through which the state will impose infrastructure cost sharing requirements for that local area.

The Bureau of Employment services as of 2024 is working on a co-enrollment policy that will pertain to all core programs and other programs. The policy will promote co-enrollment and blending of services that are customer centered, seamless to the customer and that will stimulate higher-level collaboration and leveraging of resources between system partners.

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### III.(b.3) STATE PROGRAM AND STATE WORKFORCE BOARD OVERVIEW

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#### III.(B.3.A) STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

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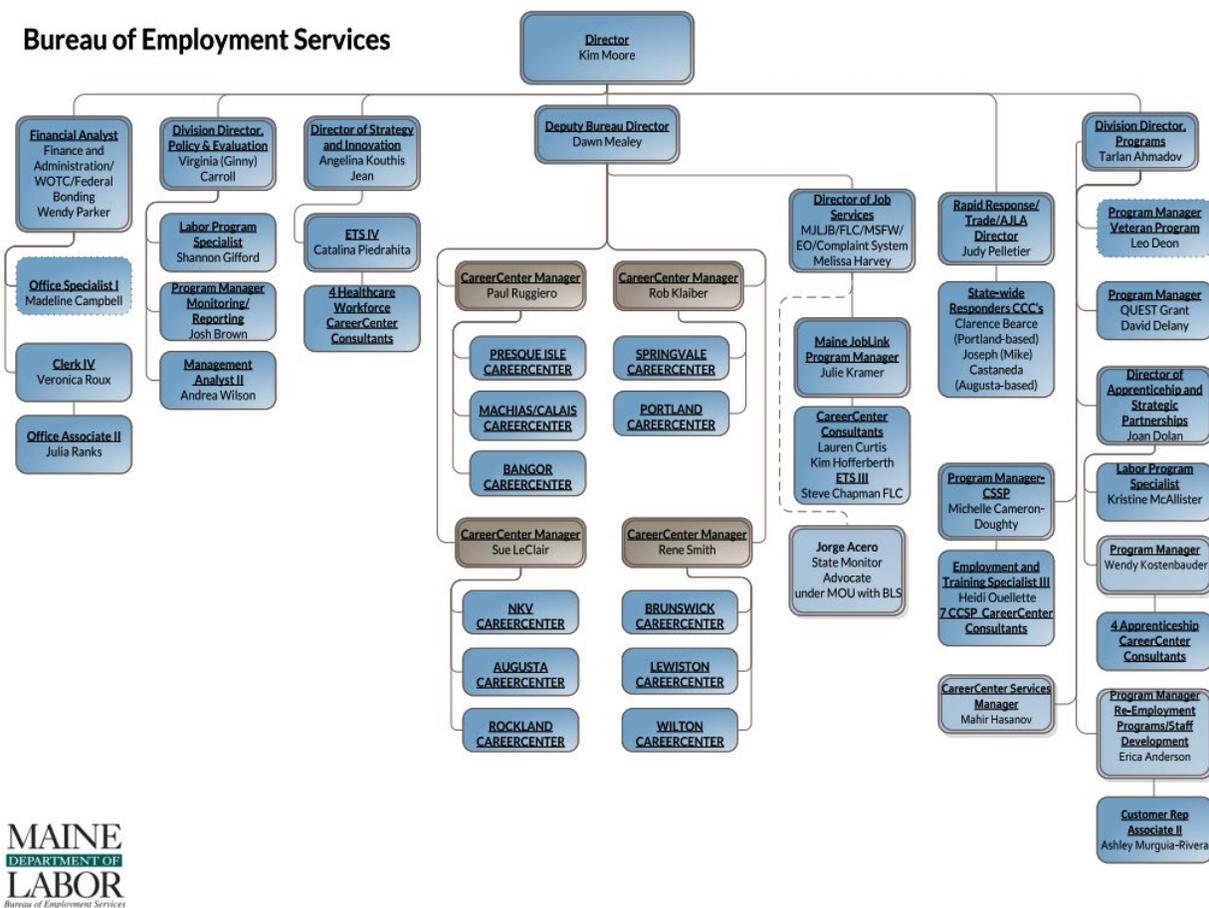
The organization and delivery systems for the core programs covered in this Unified Plan are described below.

#### ADULT, YOUTH, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAMS

The Maine Department of Labor (MDOL) is the State Workforce Agency (SWA) established to provide oversight and administration of state and federal workforce programs. The Bureau of Employment Services (BES), within the MDOL, is designated to provide financial, administrative and policy support to Maine's one-stop system.

The BES provides labor exchange and employment services at one-stop centers across the state and through the Maine JobLink. BES also administers several USDOL-funded employment and training programs including: Veterans Services, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Rapid Response, Registered Apprenticeship Program. Bureau staff also conduct Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) certification and issue bonds to employers through the Federal Bonding grant. BES also administers the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP), a state-funded program targeted to low-income individuals enabling them to attain post-secondary credentials in high-demand, high-wage occupations.

## Bureau of Employment Services



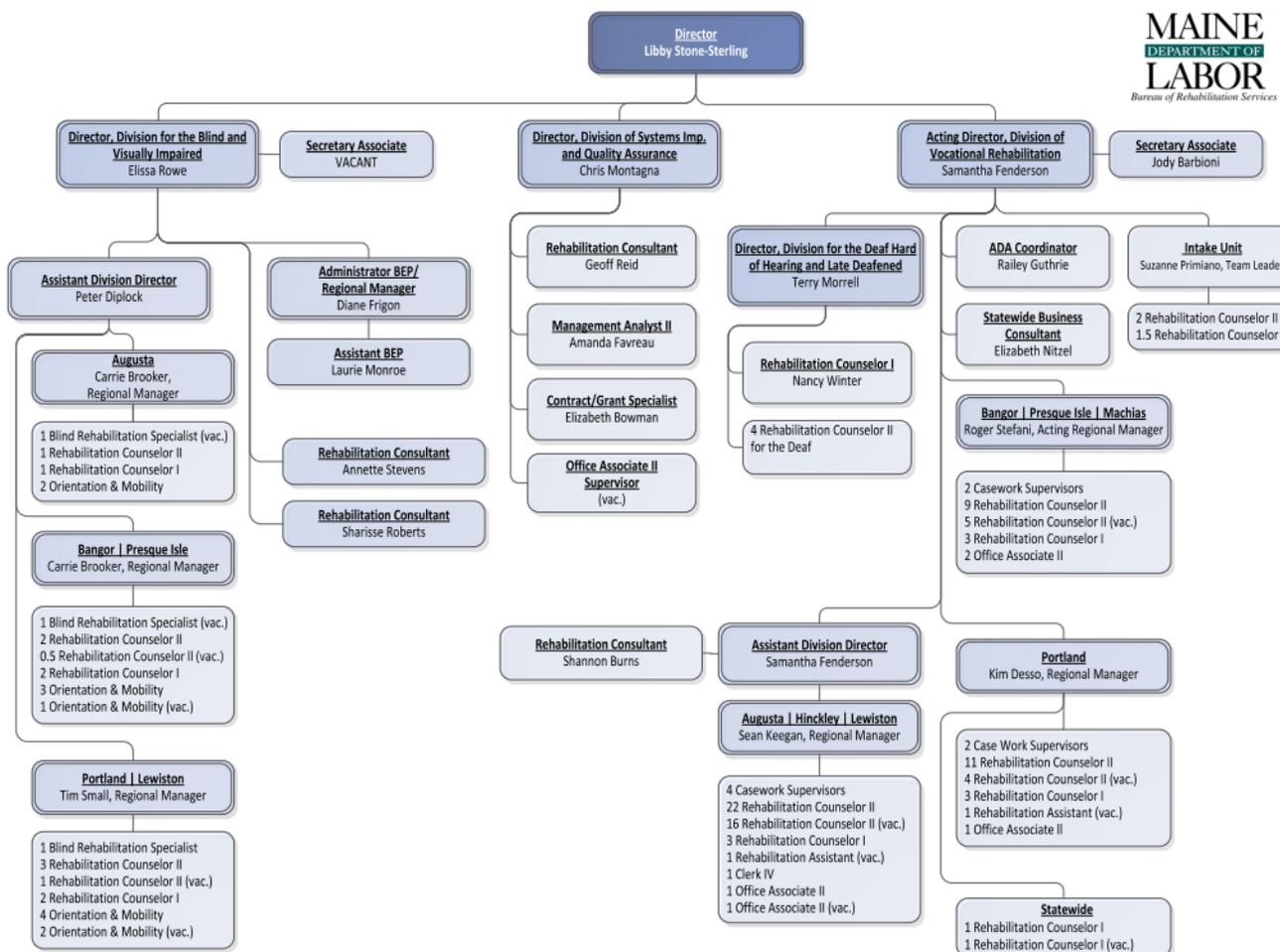
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FIGURE 19: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE--EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Within the Maine Department of Labor’s Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), vocational rehabilitation services are delivered through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI). DVR and DBVI staff are regionally based in seven one-stop centers and provide statewide coverage.

## Bureau of Rehabilitation Services



Rev. 03/24

FIGURE 20: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE--REHABILITATION SERVICES

### ADULT EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Office of Adult Education and Family Literacy is the state agency within the Maine Department of Education that provides services, instruction, and vocational training primarily for individuals beyond the compulsory school age through a career pathways system. Elements of this system include learner intake, assessment, advising, instruction, and individual learning plans. It is guided by data management and analysis, annual monitoring, and annual professional development plans. The system uses appropriately certified staff, is designed to meet identified local needs, and makes

use of partnerships and alignment with workforce development, postsecondary institutions, and support services.

Maine Adult Education offers courses in literacy and adult basic education, English language acquisition, citizenship, high school completion, college transition, career exploration and preparation, job skills training, and personal enrichment. In addition, support services, such as academic and career advising, and financial literacy are provided. Maine Adult Education has over 76 programs located throughout the state administered through public school administrative units.

### Maine Department of Education

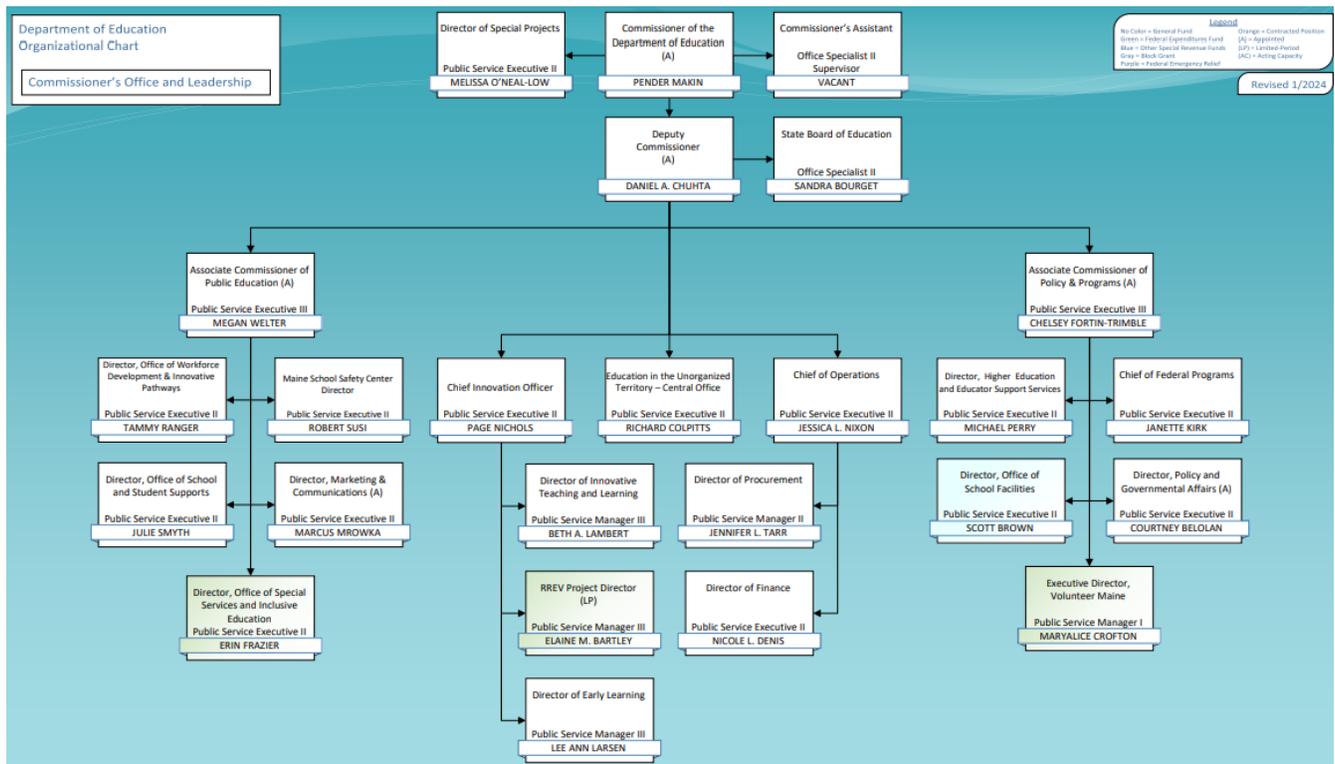


FIGURE 21: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE- DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

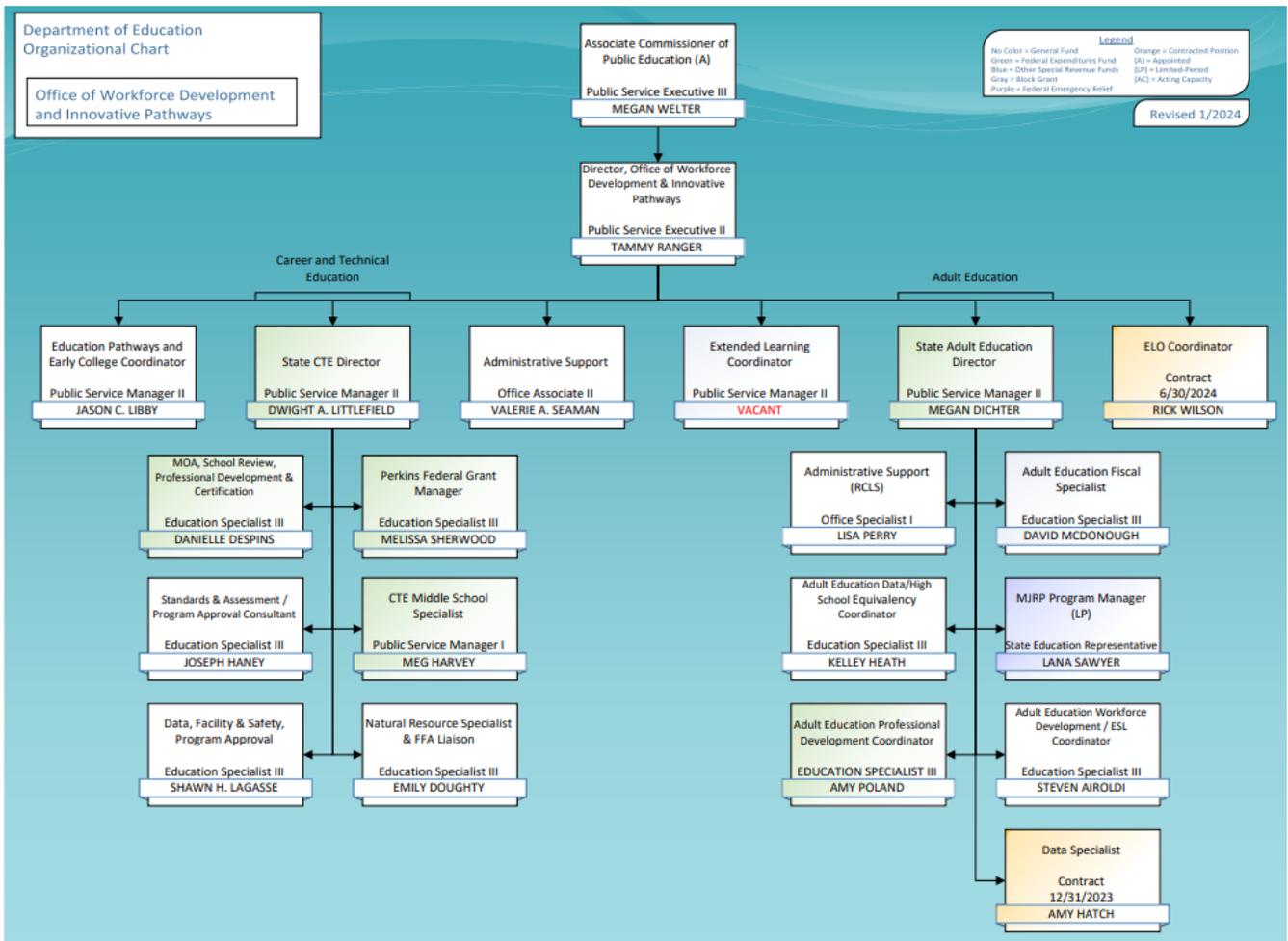


FIGURE 22: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE- OFFICE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATIVE PATHWAYS

### III.(B.3.B) STATE WORKFORCE BOARD

Maine’s SWB is responsible for the functions articulated in WIOA Section 101(d). The SWB serves as a convener of workforce, education, and business stakeholders and seeks to align and improve employment and training activities and programs to enhance the economic prosperity of Maine residents and enable business growth. The SWB implements Governor Mills’ workforce development initiatives and ensures the workforce system is customer focused and responsive to job seeker and employer needs.

## MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

The membership roster for the State Workforce Board, including members' organizational affiliations, is provided.

**TABLE 17: STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEMBERSHIP ROSTER AS OF FEBRUARY 2024**

| NAME                   | COMPANY/ORGANIZATION                    | Affiliation             |
|------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Janet T. Mills         | State of Maine                          | Governor                |
| Laura Fortman          | Commissioner, Maine Department of Labor | Governor's Designee     |
| LuAnn Ballesteros      | The Jackson Laboratory                  | Business representative |
| Ryan Bushey            | Louisiana Pacific                       | Business representative |
| Allyson Coombs         | Bath Iron Works (BIW)                   | Business representative |
| David Dunning          | S.W. Cole Engineering, Inc.             | Business representative |
| Abraham Furth          | Orono Brewing Company                   | Business representative |
| Al Harris              | Sappi North America                     | Business representative |
| Aileen Huang-Saad, PhD | Roux Institute                          | Business representative |
| Colleen Hilton         | Northern Light Health                   | Business representative |
| Adria Horn             | Tilson Technology                       | Business representative |
| Gordon McAleer         | Bixby Chocolate                         | Business representative |
| Alec Rogers            | Grace Hospitality Inc.                  | Business representative |
| Michael Tyler          | Sandy River Company                     | Business representative |

|                            |   |   |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Briana Warner              | Atlantic Sea Farms                                | Business representative   |
| Corinne Watson             | Tiny Homes of Maine                               | Business representative   |
| Ben Waxman                 | American Roots                                    | Business representative   |
| Robin Wood                 | Reed and Reed                                     | Business representative   |
| Vaughan Woodruff,<br>Chair | Revision Energy                                   | Business representative   |
| Tuesdi Woodworth           | Front Street Shipyard                             | Business representative   |
| Vacant                     | Vacant  | Worker Advocate   |
| Melissa Hue                | City of Portland                                  | Worker Advocate   |
| Bruce Noddin               | Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Network                   | Worker Advocate   |
| John Leavitt               | Carpenters Local 1996                             | Labor organization  |
| John Patrick               | AFL-CIO   | Labor organization  |
| Grant Provost              | Iron Worker Local 7                               | Labor organization  |
| Jason Shedlock             | Maine Building and Construction<br>Trades Council | Labor Organization- joint<br>labor-management<br>registered apprenticeship<br>program |
| Peter Baldacci             | Penobscot County Commissioner                     | County Commissioner   |
| Betty Johnson              | Waldo County Commissioner                         | County Commissioner   |
| Joseph Pietroski           | Kennebec County Commissioner                      | County Commissioner   |
| Amy Roeder                 | State Representative                              | Representative  |

|                 |  |                                     |
|-----------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Michael Tipping | State Senator  | Senator                             |
| Heather Johnson | Commissioner, DECD or Designee   | State (Maine Statutory Requirement) |
| Kim Moore       | Bureau of Employment Services  | State (Title I-B & III)             |
| Elissa Rowe     | Director, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired Bureau of Rehabilitation Services | State (Title IV)                    |
| Megan Dichter   | Adult Education  | State (Title II)                    |

Commissioner Laura Fortman was designated as the Governor’s Designee to the Board by Governor Mills pursuant to 26 M.R.S. § 2006 (2-A) in June of 2023. This change was made after statutory changes in Maine clarifying the Governor’s authority to appoint a designee.

In addition to the members listed above, the following commissioners and higher education representatives also provide input to the board:

**TABLE 18: ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONERS AND HIGHER EDUCATION REPRESENTATIVES PROVIDING INPUT**

| NAME              | COMPANY/ORGANIZATION               | Affiliation                              |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Nina Fisher       | Maine Department of Transportation | Deputy Commissioner                      |
| Sara Gagne-Holmes | Health and Human Services          | Deputy Commissioner                      |
| Randy Liberty     | Maine Department of Corrections    | Commissioner                             |
| Jennifer O’Leary  | University of Maine System         | Associate Vice Chancellor                |
| Dan Belyea        | Maine Community College System     | Executive Director of Workforce Training |

## BOARD ACTIVITIES

In addition to the activities described above, the SWB assists the Governor in the development, modification, and implementation of Unified Plan. The SWB convenes member and stakeholder board meetings at least four times per year. Regular communications with board members are carried out via email. The SWB also maintains a website, which contains meeting minutes, important news, and other relevant information. The website serves as a communication tool with stakeholders and interested parties. State board activities also include the production of an annual report and the coordination of other activities that are relevant to the development of the state's workforce. During the autumn of 2023, the board cohosted seven statewide visioning sessions to gather input into the review of the State's 10-Year Economic Development Plan and Workforce Strategic Vision. The sessions were cohosted with the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) as well as the Local Workforce Development Boards and Local Economic Development Districts. The SWB and DECD also joined nearly 40 additional partners and stakeholders at their own events and meetings to solicit their thoughts moving forward. In coordination with DECD, the SWB released an update to the State's 10-Year Economic Development Plan that embeds an updated workforce vision that aligns with the SWB's goals in March 2024. The Board is also partnering with the Departments of Labor and Economic and Community Development to host the second Maine Employer Summit: Engaging Today and Tomorrow's Workforce, which will have an emphasis on youth and engaging with individuals in today's workforce.

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### III. (b.4) ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAMS AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNERS

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#### ASSESSMENT OF TITLE I-B ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER AND YOUTH PROGRAM SERVICES

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Maine Bureau of Employment Services has established a schedule of formal monitoring, which includes a program and fiscal review of each of the Title I-B programs. Maine's Monitoring Policy and Guidance Manual covers oversight and monitoring of WIOA Title I-B and Title III programs and spells out the roles and responsibilities of local area monitoring and identifies criteria to be reviewed annually and on an ongoing basis.

#### FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

Fiscal reviews ensure that expenditures meet the programmatic, performance, cost category, and compliance requirements of WIOA. Fiscal reviews assess the quality of financial administration by reviewing and assuring that service providers have adequate internal controls and fiscal policies

and procedures in place. Financial reviews are conducted using tools provided by the USDOL Employment and Training Administration. In addition to on-site fiscal reviews, the Department of Administrative and Financial Services (DAFS) also reviews the audit reports completed on each local area and their subrecipients. Bureau staff work very closely with DAFs staff to ensure that costs for which funds are being requested are allowable and documentation of such are clear and allocated appropriately.

Fiscal monitoring results in an informal exit interview at which identified findings and concerns are discussed and best practices lauded. It is followed up with a formal report that articulates specific findings, cites the regulations and/or policies pertaining to the findings, outlines required action steps that must be taken to resolve the findings and the timelines in which the action steps must be completed.

Procurement practices and policies are also reviewed to ensure that the local area has a clearly identified process for competitive procurement and appropriate procurement practices are in place for pass-through awards. Contract documents are reviewed to ensure they contain the required citations and protocols and procurement activities are also reviewed to ensure contract award decision makers have followed controls pertaining to conflict of interest.

Finally, the fiscal monitoring that the local areas conduct on their subrecipients is also reviewed for the same purposes listed above.

#### LOCAL BOARD AND PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

The Bureau of Employment Services' monitoring tool is fashioned after the "Core Monitoring Tool" published by the Employment and Training Administration. Each local area and its Title I-B subrecipients are monitored annually. Monitoring is conducted to ensure the one-stop system is in compliance with the intent and substance of the rules governing funding streams and to identify whether the systems are operating to achieve state and local strategic workforce system goals. The monitoring tool is also designed to explore the working relationships between required workforce system partners. Monitoring provides an opportunity to identify best practices that can be replicated and to identify performance and compliance issues that need addressing.

Each year, the Bureau of Employment Services conducts on-site monitoring of the local board during which local board governance is evaluated and local area subrecipient monitoring activity is assessed. The local area governance review includes examination of board policies, board membership, and formal "Memoranda of Understanding" with required partners. It also includes a review of board minutes, requests for proposal, service and subrecipient contracts, quarterly

reports and most recent progress in achieving planned service levels and performance goals. Inadequate policies and/or lack of required board membership are identified as findings and technical assistance is provided upon request.

The local area plan is reviewed against plan guidelines issued by the USDOL and Maine. Plans that do not contain all the required elements are not approved until they comply with all the requirements. Local areas are evaluated on the process used to develop and create the local plan, to ensure adequate involvement of system partners in identifying and implementing strategies outlined in the plan and that the plan contains steps for implementation of identified strategies. Local board certification is approved only if the local board has an approved plan in place, meets negotiated performance measures, maintains required local board membership, addresses any outstanding findings or policy requirements, and sustains fiscal integrity.

Methods the local board uses to communicate, educate and inform sub-recipients and system partners is also evaluated to understand local area effectiveness in meeting plan goals and promoting continuous improvements.

Local area subrecipients are also monitored annually to ensure that the local board oversight is adequate and results in subrecipient compliance. Subrecipient monitoring includes intensive file reviews to ensure that adequate documentation of eligibility, participant services, and performance outcomes are in place. Program staff interviews are utilized to gauge whether program design and delivery is being conducted according to requirements and local area plans and participant interviews are conducted to gain insight on the participant's perspective and satisfaction with the service being provided. Service providers are required to upload all validation and eligibility documentation eliminating the need for paper files. This allows staff to conduct file reviews through the central office on an ongoing basis.

Sub-recipient interviews allow the monitors to assess whether the service providers understand and are implementing service delivery according to the local area plan and whether they are familiar with and appropriately applying federal, state and local board policies and meeting the requirements of specific programs. Tools that service providers use to conduct initial, comprehensive, and academic assessments are also appraised, as are the methods for providing and documenting provision of required services, including information about nondiscrimination and customer complaint process, labor market and career information, and job search assistance processes.

Program Youth services staff are asked to explain how they assess and document each youth participant's need for individualized or training services or need for any of the required youth service elements. File reviews and the number of enrolled, look to identify whether youth have access to each of the elements. Youth program case managers are interviewed to showcase service delivery methods. Staff interviews help reviewers understand how they develop employment and training plans or individual service strategies for youth and whether they partner with outside entities to provide any of the fourteen service elements, such as adult mentoring. Work experience files and agreements are reviewed, and staff members are asked to explain how work experience sites are monitored to determine that they are safe and are asked to describe how any issues identified at such sites are addressed. Service providers must also provide an overview of and discuss how work experience employers are educated about child labor law and safety requirements. Youth service policies and protocols are discussed to identify whether and how they differ from adult program policies and protocols.

#### ASSESSMENT OF EMPLOYER SERVICES

One of the fundamental methods for assessing quality of employer services is to identify if the information and services being provided are being coordinated with other one-stop system partners. Providers are asked to explain how they promote the services of the Maine JobLink and how they collaborate with other Maine business assistance entities, such as the Department of Economic and Community Development or the Small Business Development Centers, the business and industry team members of Maine Community Colleges and other local and regional education and workforce partners. Core partners are required to document services to employers in the Maine JobLink employer account system. This system is used to create the Effectiveness Serving Employers annual report, documentation requires that the employer have an account in the Maine JobLink and staff are educated to explain the many benefits to an employer of having a Maine JobLink account.

#### QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Monitoring is an ongoing activity that requires local areas to submit quarterly reports that identify actual to planned service levels and levels of attainment of negotiated performance goals. Local areas submit both quantitative and qualitative reports which must include at least one service success story from each program each quarter. Planned spending is also reviewed against actual using quarterly fiscal reports to ensure spending thresholds are met and spending caps not exceeded.

Quarterly reporting allows us to address and understand issues regarding service or spending levels that are below or above planned levels. Bureau of Employment Services' responses to quarterly reports may be in written or oral form; whenever there are common issues across multiple local areas at once, a group conference call is initiated to share data and brainstorm action steps to address the issues directly with local board staff. The Bureau of Employment Services has recently added another component to monitoring, which is to conduct random checks of backup documentation for weekly drawdowns; this practice allows a just-in-time review of fiscal practices and internal controls.

In addition to monitoring of one-stop partner programs conducted by their own administrative entity, the level and ability of the partner programs to adhere to the activities identified in the local area Memorandum of Understanding, that pertain to provision of and access to services and cross-agency referrals, will be reviewed as part of the review process identified by each local board and as part of the annual monitoring process conducted by the MDOL.

Local areas are required to provide an annual report on the progress of their local/regional strategic plan activities, including partner-related activities identified in in the plan. These reports will also be used to evaluate and assess the efficacy of one-stop partner roles in the local one-stop systems.

#### DATA VALIDATION

The BES has developed a Data Element Validation Policy Manual that explains how data will be validated for Title I-B and Title III programs, the Trade Act program, and Registered Apprenticeship. The policy requires that all validating documents be uploaded into Maine JobLink at specific times and under specific document upload headings. It requires local areas to conduct a sample file validation exercise once quarterly to ensure staff are keyed in on what is required for data validation and includes both a quarterly and annual data element validation file review to be conducted by bureau staff. The manual identifies acceptable data element validation documentation and tools and report forms to be used by service provider staff. The policy includes a requirement for annual staff training on data validation that will explain the purpose of data element validation and address any areas in which validation checks have failed throughout the year. Files to be validated are randomly selected on a quarterly basis through the Maine JobLink.

#### ONE-STOP CERTIFICATION

A key tool for assessing how well the system functions is the one-stop certification process. The SWB reviewed the criteria that must be considered for one-stop certification and identified two

additional items to be included. The first additional component they identified was outreach; specifically, the level, methods, and outcomes of outreach efforts to both employers and target populations, but particularly to employers offering high-demand, high-wage job openings to targeted populations that cannot readily access one-stop services because they live-in isolated areas or are reentry civilian life after incarceration.

In addition to outreach, the SWB identified the capacity to meet or exceed negotiated performance measures by one-stop, so one-stop center performance can be compared, best practices identified and replicated, corrective action steps be implemented, and additional resources and technical assistance can be applied to one-stops that are having difficulty meeting or exceeding performance measures. State policy PY16-04 One Stop Certification<sup>44</sup> outlines the requirements for implementing a methodology and certifying one-stops.

The certification process is important to setting a minimum level of quality and consistency of services in one-stop centers across Maine. The certification criteria allow the state to set standard expectations for customer-focused, seamless services from a network of partners that will help individuals overcome barriers to becoming and staying employed. In order to be eligible to receive infrastructure funding, one-stop centers must be assessed and certified by the local board at least once every three years using criteria established under WIOA Section 121(g) and identified by the SWB in consultation with the chief elected officials and local boards, as outlined in the policy.

The SWB, in consultation with chief elected officials and local boards, will review the one-stop certification criteria at least once every two years and will update it as necessary to assure continuous improvement of the system. The SWB will ensure that one-stop certification criteria is in alignment with the Unified Plan and that any revisions to the certification criteria will be formalized in a policy issuance and included as a modification to the Unified Plan.

If a local board also acts as a one-stop operator, the SWB will be the entity that evaluates and certifies the one-stops in that local area.

The criteria identified in this guidance will be used to evaluate one-stop centers for effectiveness, customer satisfaction, physical and programmatic accessibility, and alignment and integration of resources for the purpose of continuous improvement.

**Evaluation Criteria** must include assessment of how well the one-stop center:

- Integrates available services for participants and businesses in a way that is tied to locally negotiated performance goals.

- Meets the workforce development needs of participants through provision of services and leverage of resources.
- Meets the employment needs of local employers.
- Operates in a cost-efficient manner.
- Coordinates services among and between one-stop programs in a way that is seamless to the customer and eliminates duplication of services.
- Provides access to partner program services to the maximum extent possible, including providing services outside of regular business hours where and when there is a workforce need identified by the local board.
- Ensures equal opportunity for all individuals, including individuals with barriers to employment, to participate in or benefit from one-stop center services.
- Acts to comply with disability-related regulations implementing WIOA Section 188 set forth in 29 CFR 38.
- Achieves or exceeds state negotiated levels of performance and other performance measures established by the local board for the local area.
- Has a process for identifying and responding to technical assistance needs of staff and partners.
- Has a system of ensuring professional staff have the requisite abilities, knowledge and skills required to administer services, including a system for provision of continuing professional development activities on behalf of professional staff, as necessary.
- Has a system in place to capture and respond to customer feedback and to ensure customer-centric service delivery and customer satisfaction (workers, seekers and employers).
- Has a system in place to assess itself regarding these requirements and to implement continuous improvements.

**State Criteria:** Per the SWB, local boards must also evaluate one-stop centers on the effectiveness of outreach strategies and efforts, including:

- Outreach to employers to provide information about the types of services, information and sector initiatives offered by and through the system.
- Outreach to individuals who cannot easily access the services at the physical one-stop centers, including:
  - Individuals in remote areas.
  - Individuals with disabilities.
  - Individuals with limited English proficiency or literacy.

- Individuals who are currently incarcerated and preparing for release.

**Procedures and Methods of Evaluation:** Local boards may adopt locally identified methods of assessment which may include:

- Assessment through a recognized certification mechanism, like the Malcolm Baldrige Award, that incorporates the above criteria.
- Assessment using a specific evaluation tool designed to review and evaluate the above criteria.
- Assessment using a combination of the above or other method as determined by the local board.

**Local Board Requirements and Deadlines:**

- A draft of the local area process and evaluation instruments to be used must be submitted to the Bureau of Employment Services.
- Local boards must ensure local one-stop system service providers and partners have been made aware of the process and evaluation instruments that will be used to evaluate and certify one-stops.
- All local area one-stops must be evaluated and certified at least once every three years.
- Documentation of certification of each one-stop must be provided to the Bureau of Employment Services.

**Local Area Criteria:** Local boards may identify criteria in addition to that identified in state guidance. They must inform local system partners of the additional criteria via dissemination of formal policy or guidance and must include the additional criteria as part of the local/regional plan and must assess based on the criteria as part of the overall one-stop certification process.

ASSESSMENT OF TITLE III WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAMS -ACCESSIBILITY - EEO  
PRACTICES

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Wagner-Peyser programs are assessed at the same time Title I-B program reviews are being conducted. Staff members are interviewed regarding knowledge and practice of explaining job order procedures and job seeker registration services and are asked to explain the ways in which they provide employer assistance and help in creation and resolution of jobs orders. An assessment of staff knowledge regarding equal opportunity and affirmative action requirements is also conducted along with a review of staff knowledge Wagner-Peyser regulations. Processes to provide

initial assessment and appropriate referrals to center customers and front-end procedures are also reviewed. In some instances, participants may also be interviewed either in person or via telephone.

Monitors use portions of the Section 188 checklist (“Promising Practices Guide”) and the requirements in the Maine Workforce System Policy 17-01, “Accessibility, Equal Opportunity, and Nondiscrimination,” to conduct a portion of the accessibility review. Staff are also interviewed regarding their familiarity with complaint procedures, particularly the discrimination complaint process. WIOA’s Equal Opportunity Statement is reviewed as needed to ensure staff are aware of the particular requirements in handling discrimination allegations.

The State EO Officer role was recently moved from Bureau of Human Resources to the Maine Department of Labor. This will provide better WIOA expertise to the EO functions. The biennial Non-Discrimination Plan (NDP) was recently re-drafted and submitted to the USDOL CRC. After the CRC review, the NDP will be revised and updated to respond to any concerns or findings. A separate equal opportunity review is annually conducted by the State EO officer. Our case management database generates an EO report to provide demographic characteristics of people served. The EO officer reviews subrecipient compliance with universal access and nondiscrimination regulations through comparison of participant applications and enrollments against demographic data. Likewise, participant files are reviewed to ensure that all staff-assisted participants have been provided with the required EO statement and understand their right to file a complaint. Upon completion of the review, providers are supplied with a report of review outcomes and a corrective action plan to address findings.

Once the reviews are completed, the EO Officer will provide updated training to the WIOA core partners that will incorporate any findings into the presentation material.

Staff review the local board’s annual assessment of accessibility of the centers and conduct a brief accessibility assessment while monitoring specific one-stops. Staff members must explain how customers can access the assistive technology in the centers; all required posted information is examined to ensure it reflects the most up-to-date version of the regulations and sites are checked to determine whether information is provided in Braille and other languages besides printed English.

At least once annually, a separate equal employment opportunity review is conducted by the State EO officer. The EO officer reviews subrecipient compliance with universal access and nondiscrimination regulations through examination of participant applications and enrollments against demographic data. Likewise, participant files are reviewed to ensure that all staff-assisted

participants have been provided with the required EO statement and understand their right to file a complaint. Upon completion of the review, providers are supplied with a formal report of review outcomes and a corrective action plan to address findings.

## CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Job Seeker and employer customer satisfaction surveys are conducted at least once annually in addition to any local area customer satisfaction activities. These are conducted using survey monkey and may include short phone interviews as well. In general, the results provide us with information about the perceived value of required services and whether the services are meeting the needs of the customer. The quality of staff assistance is also ascertained through the questionnaire. The results of the service are explained in the Annual Report.

Walk-in customers are requested to fill out a customer satisfaction survey at each visit, this tool has resulted in reconfiguring info center space, reviewing customer guides to ensure they are easy to understand, and other efforts toward continuous improvements.

## PERFORMANCE RESULTS

Every two years, state performance goals for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth and Wagner-Peyser programs are negotiated with USDOL. In turn, the Maine Bureau of Employment Services negotiates performance goals with each of the local areas. Technical assistance is provided to local area board and service provider staff regarding how performance is negotiated, measured and reported. The ability to achieve proposed performance levels can be affected by numerous factors, including unanticipated mass layoffs, layoffs of low-skill workers in a high-skill job market, and lack of job openings in rural areas. Most recently, low unemployment and an increase in minimum wage each year for the last three years have had an effect on negotiated measures.

### Assessment of Core Program Activities Using Annual Performance Accountability Assessment Results.

Now that all four core partners are required to report on the same performance outcomes, the State will be better able to compare outcomes for quality improvement purposes, based not only on the barriers of the individuals served, but on the type and level of services received through each core program.

Using specific reporting elements, such as co-enrollment, level and type of career service provided, level and type of training service provided (or not), amounts spent on each participant for each

service type, participant demographics and local economic factors, the state will be able to develop a quality assessment that more deeply explores all of the data that may affect performance achievement.

The additional data will allow the state to compare the programs, service packages, co-enrollments and specific approaches of local areas (and individual service providers) that meet or exceed planned and negotiated measures with those of local areas that are having difficulty doing so. In doing this, the performance staff will be able to promote and/or require local areas that are struggling to achieve negotiated measures to replicate the practices of local areas that are exceeding goals. Such strategies may include, expanding the number of participants taking part in multiple core programs services simultaneously, such as adult education and Title I-B services. It may also identify that professional staff development pertaining to participant and/or employer outreach needs to be addressed. Finally, it may be that state, local area or service provider policies are restricting service blending possibilities and that by adjusting these the providers will be better able to address participant needs and provide supports for improved employment opportunities and longer-term employment success.

Local Areas are conducting research around high-growth career pathways and training staff to utilize pathway models whenever providing labor market guidance to, or developing individual services strategies with, participants. It is likely there is some direct correlation between clearly defined pathways (both at the individual and local area level) and improved employment attainment and retention outcomes.

Maine reviews performance on a quarterly and annual basis using various methods, including program and fiscal report review, annual and ongoing desk top monitoring, and anecdotal information sharing. By using all available assessment data, monitors have been able to identify service models that result in better outcomes for high-risk youth that could be replicated in some areas but not all. If the state achieves at least 80 percent of the negotiated performance rate they are considered to have met the individual measure; however, when reviewing the overall measures for the state, the adjusted levels attained by all four core partners are considered.

The Bureau of Employment services in partnership with the Center for Workforce Research and Information have recently concluded an evaluation of long-term outcomes of Title IB Adult participants who completed occupational training in health care and other high demand industry sectors industries, using wage match for those who exited the program as far back as 2016. The evaluation identified consistent wage growth of recipients of training over the years and also

identified that a large percentage remained in the industry sector they had been trained in. A copy of the final evaluation was submitted as part of the PY22 Annual Report.

The Center for Workforce Research and Information plan to conduct a similar analysis of individuals served under the Dislocated Worker program and recent National Dislocated Worker Grants received by the State over the past four years.

### **ASSESSMENT OF TITLE IV PROGRAMS—VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**

Within the Department of Labor’s Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), Maine has two federally designated state units, the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), which deliver vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. Each Title IV VR program conducts a comprehensive statewide assessment jointly with their respective State Rehabilitation Councils every three years to determine the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in Maine. It specifically focusses upon individuals with the most significant disabilities; individuals with disabilities who are minorities and have been unserved or underserved; and individuals who are served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system. The results of this evaluation, which relies on a wide range of data sources, including W.I.O.A., the U.S. Census Bureau, Social Security Administration and Consumer Satisfaction Surveys, serves to inform DVR and DBVI’s State Plans and drives activities that are necessary to address the needs of individuals in Maine who are eligible for VR services.

In accordance with Section 116(b) of WIOA, as well as the Rehabilitation Services Administration’s TAC 19-01, BRS is updating its internal controls and quality assurance processes to assure the accuracy, validity, and reliability of its performance data. As part of this effort, BRS is working with its core partners to develop additional data sources that will provide a more complete report of the outcomes achieved by people with disabilities served by DVR and DBVI. In addition to Maine unemployment insurance wage data, Maine will access the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) data by submitting regularly scheduled data requests. BRS has contracted with the National Student Clearinghouse and will access data from that source on a regular basis to document credential attainment, both academic and occupational. BRS is also developing a data sharing agreement with Maine’s Department of Education, to assist with documenting adult, secondary and career and technical credentials and measurable skill gains. Progress on these initiatives have been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and related staffing resources but efforts to improve internal controls and data quality assurance will continue during the remaining two years of this Unified State Plan.

BRS provides ongoing training to all staff so that they have a solid working knowledge of WIOA and how it impacts the work they do. Training topics have included: an overview of WIOA partners, common performance measures, career pathways, and best practices in serving the needs of employers. BRS benefitted from an intensive technical assistance agreement with the previous WINTAC (the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center) in the areas of common performance measures, internal controls, career pathways, apprenticeships and peer mentoring and continues to access technical assistance and training from the VR Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management.

BRS and its core partners are using the Maine JobLink as a common data collection tool for performance data regarding effectiveness serving employers.

### **ASSESSMENT OF TITLE II ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS**

The Maine Department of Education, State Office of Adult Education (as a pass through entity of Adult Education & Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) federal funds, is required to monitor AEFLA subrecipients ([2.CFR § 200.332](#)). This monitoring process has three main goals:

- Ensure each local subrecipient complies with all relevant state and federal regulations, as well as the terms of the grant award;
- Surface areas for subrecipient improvement and provide appropriate technical assistance; and
- Surface and understand areas where local subrecipients are excelling.

The State Office of Adult Education may conduct both virtual and onsite monitoring visits in any one or all the following areas:

- Data, Intake & Assessment
- Instruction, Programming and Performance
- Fiscal

Each fall the State Office will conduct a risk assessment for each funded AEFLA subrecipient. Based on the risk assessment results, the State Office may choose to conduct a full or partial onsite or virtual monitoring.

Monitoring will be scheduled throughout the subrecipient year with priority given to Hubs from High to Low Risk.

The State Office may choose to monitor any subrecipients who have not been monitored in the previous three years or where the State Office has a particular documented concern.

In addition to onsite monitoring, the State Office relies on desk monitoring, the submission of standardized quarterly reports, targeted technical assistance to address any issues coming up in reports (i.e. SSN collection, etc.), evaluations of professional development courses offered, and one-on-one visits initiated by a program, or the state office as needed.

### ASSESSMENT OF TITLE IB AND TITLE III PROGRAMS

The state met or exceeded all of the measures for all four programs, Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Wagner-Peyser. See the adjusted results received from the USDOL January 25, 2024 below:

FIGURE 23: PY22 ADJUSTED PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES FOR TITLE IB ADULT

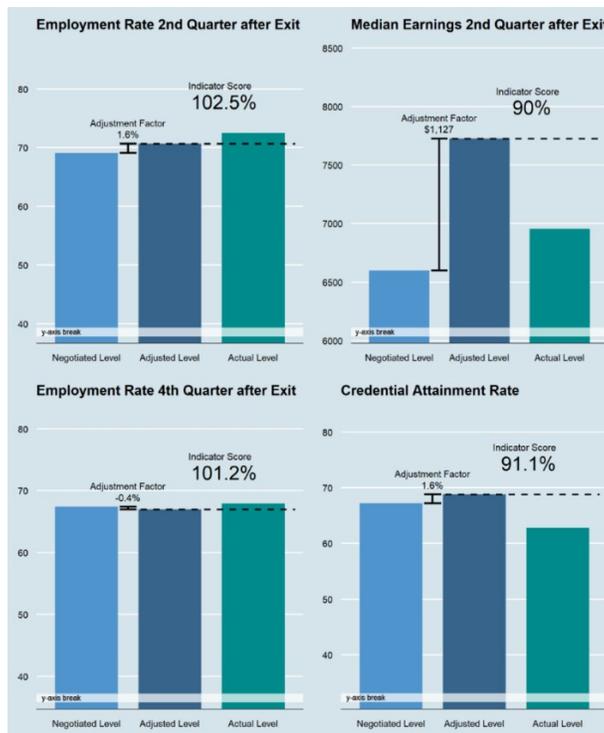


FIGURE 24: PY22 ADJUSTED PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES FOR TITLE IB DISLOCATED WORKER



FIGURE 25: PY22 ADJUSTED PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES FOR TITLE IB YOUTH



FIGURE 26: PY22 ADJUSTED PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES FOR TITLE III WAGNER-PEYSER



## ASSESSMENT OF TITLE II—ADULT EDUCATION

After exceeding federal targets in both FY17 and FY18, measurable skill gains decreased slightly in FY19 and the negotiated target of 41 percent for FY19 was not met. Performance measures are expected to improve in FY21 with recent changes to the managed information system to better capture skill gains for high school completion and an increased focus on post-testing learners. Baseline percentages have been established for employment and postsecondary outcomes in FY19 and with both increased academic rigor and better alignment with comprehensive career pathway services, Maine adult education's baseline percentages will improve.

In 2022-2023 (FY23), Maine adult education experienced a substantial increase in enrollment and served 22% more learners than the previous year. Enrollments increased in both ABE and ESL populations, but ESL enrollments saw the largest increase and grew over 46% from 2021-2022 (FY22). This growth seems to indicate both a return to programming for those English language learners most impacted by the pandemic as well as an increase in the multilingual population coming to Maine.

While an increase in enrollments is a good thing, we want to ensure this influx of learners is receiving the same high quality programming and services. NRS Table 4 demonstrates that for now, we are keeping pace with the enrollment growth. Overall Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) increased 2% from 36.19% in FY22 to 38.36% in FY23 and we met our MSG performance target for the year. The MSG gains in FY23 were primarily achieved through posttesting and the successful attainment of a high school credential, but we know there are gains we are still not counting. We are working closely with local providers to develop clear guidelines and parameters for capturing the new, expanded MSG indicators. Our goal for this year is to have a consistent system in place to capture expanded 2023-2024 gains in next year's NRS reports.

This year, Maine Adult Education met or exceeded its core indicator performance targets in every area.

| Maine FY 23          | Core Performance Indicator | Federal PY22<br>Maine FY 23 (2022-2023)<br>Negotiated Level | Federal PY22<br>Maine FY 23 (2022-2023)<br>Actual |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---|---|
| Follow-up Indicators | Employment Rate Q2         | 34.00%  | 45.62%  |
|                      | Employment Rate Q4         | 33.00%  | 46.87%  |
|                      | Median Earnings            | \$5,275.00  | \$6,987.34  |
|                      | Credential Rate            | 35.00%  | 71.33%  |
| MSG                  | Measurable Skill Gain      | 38.00%  | 38.36   |

A primary factor in meeting these targets is our focus on capturing learner SSN data match releases for as many learners as possible. Five years ago, we began an initiative to improve our data match release rate statewide. Data analysis indicated that for the learners who had releases, the employment rate was usually around 50% or higher. However, the low percentage of learners with a data match release was negatively impacting our employment rates. By focusing on getting accurate social security numbers and SSN data match releases from as many learners as possible, we knew our employment and postsecondary outcomes would increase. To improve the data match release rate, we provided comprehensive professional development and technical assistance throughout the field and began tracking each local program's data match rate. We also implemented a data match target rate of 90% for all programs. Just like our posttest benchmark of 60%, local programs were expected to have a data match rate of 90% or greater for their performance metrics.

#### ASSESSMENT OF TITLE IV PROGRAMS—VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Within the Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), Maine has two federally designated state units, the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), which deliver vocational rehabilitation (VR) services.

In accordance with Section 116(b) of WIOA, as well as the Rehabilitation Services Administration's TAC 19-01, BRS has internal controls and quality assurance processes to assure the accuracy, validity, and reliability of its performance data. As part of this effort, BRS continues to work with its core partners to develop additional data sources that will provide a more complete report of the outcomes achieved by people with disabilities served by DVR and DBVI. In addition to Maine unemployment insurance wage data, BRS is launching a project to access the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) data by submitting regularly scheduled data requests. BRS also contracts with the National Student Clearinghouse and accesses data from that source twice annually to document credential attainment, both academic and occupational. Although still delayed due to staffing shortages and other quality assurance priorities, BRS is also developing a data sharing agreement with Maine's Department of Education, to assist with documenting adult, secondary and career and technical credentials and measurable skill gains.

BRS provides ongoing training to all staff, so that they have a solid working knowledge of WIOA and how it impacts the work they do. Training topics include: an overview of WIOA partners, common performance measures, career pathways, and best practices in serving the needs of employers. Additionally, BRS continues to access technical assistance and training from the VR Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management, which has been particularly beneficial for succession planning and staff transitions.

BRS and its core partners are using the Maine JobLink as a common data collection tool for performance data regarding effectiveness serving employers.

In accordance with RSA-TAC—22-02, BRS DVR/DBVI have identified the performance indicators for PY 2024 and PY 2025 in the table below. Although Maine will continue to report the requisite Effectiveness in Serving Employers data, that indicator will not be submitted until its related rule is finalized.

The Title IV programs have experienced success with meeting or exceeding negotiated Performance Measures with the exception of Measurable Skill Gains. As a result, the VR agencies proposed higher targets for 2024 and 2025 which have been accepted by RSA following negotiation. The gap between actual and negotiated targets for Measurable Skills Gains was largely attributed to both an overestimation as well as underreporting due to a training need – which is being addressed.

Within the Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), Maine has two federally designated state units, the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), which deliver vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. Each Title

IV VR program conducts a comprehensive statewide assessment jointly with their respective State Rehabilitation Councils every three years to determine the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in Maine. It specifically focusses upon individuals with the most significant disabilities; individuals with disabilities who are minorities and have been unserved or underserved; and individuals who are served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system. The results of this evaluation, which relies on a wide range of data sources, including W.I.O.A., the U.S. Census Bureau, Social Security Administration and Consumer Satisfaction Surveys, serves to inform DVR and DBVI's State Plans and drives activities that are necessary to address the needs of individuals in Maine who are eligible for VR services.

In accordance with Section 116(b) of WIOA, as well as the Rehabilitation Services Administration's TAC 19-01, BRS is updating its internal controls and quality assurance processes to assure the accuracy, validity, and reliability of its performance data. As part of this effort, BRS is working with its core partners to develop additional data sources that will provide a more complete report of the outcomes achieved by people with disabilities served by DVR and DBVI. In addition to Maine unemployment insurance wage data, Maine will access the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) data by submitting regularly scheduled data requests. BRS has contracted with the National Student Clearinghouse and will access data from that source on a regular basis to document credential attainment, both academic and occupational. BRS is also developing a data sharing agreement with Maine's Department of Education, to assist with documenting adult, secondary and career and technical credentials and measurable skill gains. Progress on these initiatives have been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and related staffing resources but efforts to improve internal controls and data quality assurance will continue during the remaining two years of this Unified State Plan.

BRS is provides ongoing training to all staff so that they have a solid working knowledge of WIOA and how it impacts the work they do. Training topics have included: an overview of WIOA partners, common performance measures, career pathways, and best practices in serving the needs of employers. BRS benefitted from an intensive technical assistance agreement with the previous WINTAC (the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center) in the areas of common performance measures, internal controls, career pathways, apprenticeships and peer mentoring and continues to access technical assistance and training from the VR Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management.

BRS and its core partners are using the Maine JobLink as a common data collection tool for performance data regarding effectiveness serving employers.

TABLE 19: VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION; PERFORMANCE GOALS PY2024 AND PY2025

|   | <b>PY 2024<br/>Expected<br/>Level</b> | <b>PY 2024<br/>Negotiated<br/>Level</b> | <b>PY 2025<br/>Expected<br/>Level</b> | <b>PY 2025<br/>Negotiated<br/>Level</b> |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)      | 48%                                   |   | 50%                                   |   |
| Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)      | 45%                                   |   | 47%                                   |   |
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit) | \$4,650                               |   | \$4,900                               |   |
| Credential Attainment Rate                  | 53%                                   |   | 54%                                   |   |
| Measurable Skill Gains                      | 45%                                   |   | 47%                                   |   |

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III.(b.5) DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

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III.(B.5.A) TITLE I PROGRAMS

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ADULT AND YOUTH TRAINING FUNDS

Maine uses the basic formula identified in WIOA Sec. 128 (b) for local area distribution of WIOA Title IB youth funds and uses the basic formula identified in WIOA Sec. 132(b) for local area distribution Title IB formula funded Adult and Dislocated Worker funds. Because Maine uses the exact formula identified under these sections of WIOA the State has not issued a separate policy on WIOA Title IB fund distribution to local areas.

TITLE IB ADULT FUNDS

Of the total amount of funds allocated for the Adult program under WIOA §132(b) (1), the State reserves 15 percent for statewide activities and administration as permitted. The remaining amount is distributed to local areas within 30 days of receipt as required by WIOA §182(e). The

state does not utilize a discretionary formula for distribution and has adhered to the basic allocation formula as follows: 33 1/3% of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative number of unemployed individuals residing in areas of substantial unemployment in each local area as compared to the total number of such unemployed individuals in the State. 33 1/3% of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative excess number of unemployed individuals who reside in each local area as compared to the total number of such unemployed individuals in the State.

“Excess number” means the number of unemployed individuals in excess of 4.5 percent of the civilian labor force. 33 1/3% of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative number of disadvantaged adults compared to the total number of disadvantaged adults in the State. Data for the first two requirements will be produced by MDOL’s Center for Workforce Information Services. Data for the third element will be provided by the Employment and Training Administration from census data. The State will employ the discretion given by the Secretary of Labor to utilize the “hold harmless” clause:

MINIMUM PERCENTAGE--No service delivery area within any State shall be allocated an amount equal to less than 90 percent of the average of its allocation percentage for the two preceding fiscal years prior to the fiscal year for which such determination is made. If the amounts appropriated pursuant to section 3(a)(1) for a fiscal year and available to carry out this part are not sufficient to provide an amount equal to at least 90 percent of such allocation percentage to each such area, the amounts allocated to each area shall be ratably reduced.

#### TITLE IB YOUTH FUNDS

Of the total amount of funds allocated for Youth training under WIOA §128, the State will reserve 15% for statewide activities including administration as permitted by WIOA. The remaining amount will be distributed to local areas: 33 1/3% of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative number of unemployed individuals residing in areas of substantial unemployment in each local area as compared to the total number of such unemployed individuals in the State. 33 1/3% of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative excess number of unemployed individuals who reside in each local area as compared to the total number of such unemployed individuals in the State. “Excess number” means the number of unemployed individuals in excess of 4.5 percent of the civilian labor force. 33 1/3% of the federal

allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative number of disadvantaged youths compared to the total number of disadvantaged youths in the State.

The State will not employ the discretionary option described in WIOA §128(b) (3). Data for the first two requirements will be produced by MDOL's Center for Workforce Information Services. Data for the third element will be provided by the Employment and Training Administration from census data. The State will employ the discretion given by the Secretary of Labor to utilize the "hold harmless" clause described above. As Maine follows the WIOA local area distribution formula, we are adding the "minimum percentage" component to the plan which delineates how funds are allocated to local areas for the Youth and Dislocated Worker Programs. The wording is exactly the same for both the Youth and Dislocated Worker allocation description. Minimum Percentage – The Local Area will not receive an allocation percentage for a fiscal year that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the two preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with the preceding sentence shall be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

#### TITLE IB DISLOCATED WORKER FUNDS

Of the total amount of funds allocated for Dislocated Worker services under WIOA §132(b) (2), the State will reserve 25 percent for statewide rapid response activities as permitted by WIOA §133(a) (2) and will reserve 15 percent for statewide activities including administration as permitted by WIOA. The remaining amount will be distributed to local areas according to WIOA §133(b) (2) (B).

The following four data elements will be used to calculate allocation percentages: Insured unemployment- the average weekly number of continued unemployment insurance program claims (less partial) during the previous full year for which data is available for each county is aggregated by local area and divided by the total to arrive at a percentage for each local area. Unemployment concentrations- the annual average of unemployment for each county during the previous full year for which data is available is aggregated by local area and divided by the total to arrive at a percentage for each local area. Declining industries data - the number of jobs lost between the previous full year for which data is available and the year five years previous to that year in both durable and non-durable goods manufacturing by county is aggregated by local area and divided by the total to arrive at a percentage for each local area. Long-term unemployment data - the number of unemployment insurance program exhaustees during the previous full year for which data is available for each county is aggregated by local area and divided by the total to arrive at a

percentage for each local area. Data for these elements will be produced by MDOL's Center for Workforce Information Services. Each of the above elements is weighted equally. The remaining factors named in §133(b)(2)(B)(ii), "plant closing and mass layoff data" and "farmer/rancher economic hardship data" will only be considered if proven to be useful for the distribution of funds to areas of need in Maine. Large plant closings have occurred in some Maine counties, but are not a predictor of the location of future large plant closings. Mass Layoff Statistics have not been published or funded since 2013. The state has been able to adequately incorporate data from Unemployment Insurance claims to identify those related to closings or large layoff events. Outside of this, there is no reliable data that is not already captured. Farmers and ranchers represent a very small part of Maine's labor market and we have not seen significant changes in terms of their role in the economy, widespread disruptions to farms, etc.. So in the context of Maine's economy and labor market, this indicator would not be relevant. As Maine follows the WIOA local area distribution formula, we are adding the "minimum percentage" component to the plan which delineates how funds are allocated to local areas for the Youth and Dislocated Worker Programs. The wording is exactly the same for both the Youth and Dislocated Worker allocation description. Minimum Percentage – The local area will not receive an allocation percentage for a fiscal year that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the two preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with the preceding sentence shall be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

#### TITLE IB ALLOCATION DISTRIBUTION

MDOL will not exceed the 5 percent limitation of the Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker program allocations allowable for administrative functions, any remaining set aside funds will be used to conduct other required and allowable statewide activities. Allocation distributions have always been figured according to each individual county within a local area. The formulas for calculating the allocations based on areas of significant unemployment, excess unemployed, and disadvantaged adults will continue to be used in the county allocation formula.

#### III.(B.5.B) TITLE II PROGRAMS

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Through a competitive, multi-year grant process, eligible providers apply for funds to provide adult education services. Eligible providers may include: local educational agencies; community-based or faith-based organizations; volunteer literacy organizations; institutions of higher education; public or private nonprofit agencies; libraries; public housing authorities; a nonprofit institution having

the ability to provide adult education and literacy services to adults; and a consortium of agencies, organizations, institutions, and libraries described above; a partnership between an employer and an entity described in any of the categories listed above; and other organization types not in the list above that have the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals.

Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy funds are used to provide adult literacy services throughout the state. Historically, adult education services have been provided in a variety of locations (i.e. public schools, libraries, CareerCenters, municipal buildings and other facilities) in each of Maine's 16 counties. Beginning in FY18, the state established nine adult education and career development areas that were aligned with the boundaries of the three local workforce boards. To encourage innovation and maximize efficiencies and resources, local adult education providers within these geographic areas were formed into hubs. The Maine Office of Adult Education awarded one AEFLA grant to each service area with the understanding that the eligible provider would have the capacity and intent to provide adult education services in a variety of locations throughout the service area.

The Adult Education State Office followed all state policies regarding issuance of the AEFLA procurement procedures. Announcement of grant availability was posted on the Maine Division of Procurement website and advertised in the Kennebec Journal for three consecutive days.

Each eligible agency that applies, in order to be considered for funding, has to have demonstrated effectiveness in serving eligible adult learners (low levels of literacy, English language learners, learners with barriers) and the ability to meet the thirteen considerations of WIOA Title II. That effectiveness was determined by the State from the submission of relevant data as part of the proposal process. Required data needed to show numbers of low-level learners served, English language learners, educational gain, transition to employment and/or postsecondary or skills training. Proposals that were unable to provide evidence of adequate effectiveness were not considered.

Maine Adult Education released a competitive RFP (request for proposal) in January, 2024 to award contracts to eligible agencies for the provision of WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) services to eligible individuals in need of AEFLA services to improve their academic and workforce prospects. It is the purpose of Maine Adult Education under WIOA to provide adult education and literacy services that also align with the goals in the State of Maine 2024-2027 Unified Plan and encourage the growth of educational opportunities and, where applicable, to ensure career, citizenship and college readiness for all Maine adults. The initial grant cycle is for FY25-27 (July 1, 2024-June 30, 2026). Subject to continued availability of funding and demonstrated

effectiveness as determined by outcomes, the Department may opt to renew the contracts for two renewal periods, July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2028, and July 1, 2028, through June 30, 2029. The Adult Education State Office followed all state policies regarding issuance of the AEFLA procurement procedures. Announcement of grant availability was posted on the Maine Division of Procurement website and advertised in the Kennebec Journal for three consecutive days.

Each eligible agency that applies, in order to be considered for funding, has to have demonstrated effectiveness in serving eligible adult learners (low levels of literacy, English language learners, learners with barriers) and the ability to meet the thirteen considerations of WIOA Title II. That effectiveness was determined by the State from the submission of relevant data as part of the proposal process. Required data needed to show numbers of low-level learners served, English language learners, educational gain, transition to employment and/or postsecondary or skills training. Proposals that were unable to provide evidence of adequate effectiveness were not considered.

Proposals were assessed on their ability to meet the thirteen considerations and other requirements of WIOA, demonstrated evidence of successful past performance in providing adult literacy services, programmatic alignment with local workforce board plan priorities, and the ability to successfully address the state's priority areas: serving Multilingual learners, digital equity, and Integrated Education and Training. Additional WIOA requirements that must be met include the ability to offer programs that: lead to industry-recognized credentials; lead to postsecondary credentials; meet the educational and training needs of individuals with barriers; relate to in-demand industry sectors and occupations in Maine; and make use of technology to increase accessibility.

As a result of the RFP, Maine adult education expects to award nine two-year contracts to providers, one award to each of the nine service area hubs, as outlined in the RFP. Awardees held in good standing and maintaining demonstrated effectiveness may be eligible to renew the contract for up to two renewal periods. Approximately 25 percent of allocated funding is awarded as a "base amount" and approximately 50 percent of the funding awarded based on learner population needs as evidenced by the average of the past two years of learners served. Incentive awards (approximately 20 percent of funding) were made based on points allocated in the grant scoring based on state priorities and performance metrics.

AEFLA applications are reviewed by a team of adult education content experts. Additionally, applications will be reviewed by applicable Local Workforce Board(s) regarding the proposal's

alignment with the local workforce development plan and the Boards will provide recommendations to MDOE to promote such alignment.

Each application will be reviewed regarding the criteria below:

- **Organizational Capacity:** The program must have the experience and organizational capacity to provide the services required in this RFP as well as past effectiveness in working with adults to improve basic skills.
- **Responsiveness to Regional Need:** The program must be responsive to regional needs as identified in the local workforce development plan including the educational, economic and social/cultural needs of the area.
- **Serving the Most in Need:** The program must serve individuals in the community who were identified as most in need of adult education and literacy activities.
- **Service Delivery Format and Schedules:** The program must have a delivery method, location and schedule that enable individuals to attend and complete programs.
- **Proposed Curricula and Contextualized Instruction:** The program must provide learning in context so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
- **Integrated Education and Training (*state requirement*):** the program must provide IET's that offer opportunities for learners to earn occupational certifications.
- **State Workforce Board Alignment:** The program must demonstrate alignment between the proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local workforce plan as well as the activities of the one-stop partners.
- **Intensity, Quality and Best Practices of Program:** The program must be of sufficient intensity and quality, aligned to standards include well qualified staff and be based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains.

- **Integration of Technology Services and Digital Systems:** The program must effectively use technology, services and delivery systems including distance education, in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning. Such technology, services and systems should lead to improved performance.
- **Meeting Program Outcomes:** The program must meet or exceed minimum program outcome expectations including performance indicators, measurable skills gains and other standards.
- **Reporting:** The program must maintain high-quality data and input that data into a state-provided system to provide accurate and timely reporting.

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### III.(B.5.C) TITLE IV VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

The distribution of Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) funds is based upon historically determined proportions of actual expenditures needed to serve individuals who are blind and visually impaired and those who have other disabilities in Maine, including case services, staffing and administrative costs. The two VR directors work actively with the Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services to monitor the distribution of funds and will be conducting a more in-depth analysis to determine whether any redistribution of funds is needed given the experience over the last few years. The state legislature distributes funding for vocational rehabilitation services as part of the biennial budget. The amounts are generally based on the prior year allotment with adjustments made for personal services and funding requests submitted by the agency for specific purposes. These funding requests may or may not be approved by the legislature. Each VR division of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services has their own individual general fund appropriation account within the biennial budget which is the basis of each individual account within the state's accounting system. The general fund appropriation is not shared between the two divisions.

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### III.(b.6) PROGRAM DATA

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#### III.(B.6.A) DATA ALIGNMENT & INTEGRATION

#### PLANS FOR INTEROPERABLE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR THE CORE PROGRAMS

Core partners of this Unified Plan presently utilize disparate case management and management information systems (MIS): Adult Education uses MaineSTARS, Vocational Rehabilitation utilizes

AWARE, and Wagner-Peyser and Title I-B formula program providers use the Maine JobLink, a product of America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA).

Lack of financial resources restrict the ability for Maine to integrate the management information systems of all four core programs. However, Maine has a mechanism to analyze data from reporting systems for decision making purposes and for conducting evaluations of program outcomes and populations served, explained further under III(b)(6)(A)(iv) below.

The State Workforce Board (SWB) received a grant to create a brand for Maine's workforce system that has been adopted by all partners. The grant will also be used to establish a single "portal" to the statewide system. Additionally, the Maine Department of Labor received a Dislocated Worker Grant (CAREER) grant to create a virtual AJC which will expand access to services for marginalized populations most adversely affected by COVID. These grants will enable more efficient access to the State's entire workforce system. While individualized data will not be shared between systems, access to a multitude of programs and resources will be made available in one portal.

The Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI), MDOL's labor market information provider, will add data on participants of core partners to the Maine Education and Attainment Research Navigation system or MaineEARNs, thereby linking the records of core program participants with their corresponding wage and employment records for program evaluation and reporting purposes.

MaineEARNs also provides information on employment and wage outcomes for Maine workers who graduated from the University of Maine System and Maine Community College System after July 2008. Students, parents, educators, administrators, policy makers, and anyone interested in earning education credentials and employment in Maine will be able to use this data to research, plan and make informed decisions. Interest has been expressed by at least one private university to join in the collections and reporting. It is this same system which is being used to meet the requirement for the annual Eligible Training Provider reporting requirement. Interest has been expressed from the University of Maine System to begin collecting and reporting on the awarding of micro-credentials and including them in the MaineEARNs system.

Maine has made strides in developing the capacity for core programs and other partners to share an integrated data system that will allow each agency to collect, utilize, protect, and report out data specific to their agency while also being able to share and utilize common data from other partner agencies. Agencies are acutely aware of issues of confidentiality and privacy in the sharing and

reporting of information and take measures to ensure that participants provide consent to share information between agencies.

Ultimately, Maine will have to develop the capacity for core programs and other partners to share an integrated data system that will allow each agency to collect, utilize, protect, and report out data specific to their agency while also being able to share and utilize common data from other partner agencies. The core partners are committed to this process and have established a data systems workgroup containing members from each core partner tasked with researching available software and other technology solutions. It is still early in the process for systems alignment, but to date, the group has been formed and begun meeting. First steps in the timeline include researching available software and identifying which data system model might work best in Maine. Additional information regarding specific data system models is included in part two of the data alignment and integration section.

Maine has an integrated system for the following programs:

- Title IB Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth
- Title III Employment Services & JVSG
- Trade Adjustment Assistance
- Maine Registered Apprenticeship Program (including recent expansion grants and ARPA-funded initiatives).
- Dislocated Worker Grants, and until recently
- National Farm Worker Jobs Program

#### PLANS TO INTEGRATE DATA SYSTEMS TO FACILITATE STREAMLINED INTAKE & SERVICE DELIVERY

The needs of aspiring workers enrolled in training or education are met across sectors by educators, employers, labor departments, nonprofits, social service agencies, training organizations, and more. Co-enrollment in supportive programming can lead to greater sustainability of one's educational plan. Many individuals do not enroll in all workforce development programs and supports for which they may be eligible. This is due to a variety of reasons including a lack of awareness of programs, assumption or realization that application processes are complicated, previous experience of application processes or interactions with state agencies being challenging, documentation

requirements, lack of accurate information about eligibility requirements and that they may vary by program, and not knowing how or where to apply.

Workforce programming is critical to the health and wellbeing of Mainers. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 10.8% of Mainers were living in poverty and 26% lived below 200% of the federal poverty threshold in 2021. Without these programs and the financial and other types of supports they offer, many individuals find it impossible to meet their basic needs and improve economic wellbeing.

Individuals who are eligible for one program are often eligible for and could benefit from other programs. These programs are critical to help lift people out of poverty and also to improve both physical and mental health ([Fenelon et al., 2017](#), [National Academies of Sciences E, and Medicine, 2019](#), and [Medicine, 2019](#)). Additionally, simulation modeling by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine has concluded that concurrent enrollment in multiple safety net programs may have even greater impacts due to interactions between health and economic benefits. ([National Academies of Sciences E, and Medicine, 2019](#)).

To access programs and supports, individuals often must work with multiple agencies, located in different locations, provide redundant information, and repeatedly update income and employment information. The administrative steps involved increase the cost of operating the programs and too often result in eligible individuals not receiving the supports for which they are eligible. The time and energy required, assuming the individual is even aware of the other programs and supports, result in too many people being unable to access the programs and services that could be life changing both for the individual and the state of Maine. The streamlining of processes and removal of barriers has the potential to be beneficial to all Mainers, including the participants, program administrators, and taxpayers.

Through a grant received through USDOL in 2018, Maine began to develop WORK Services, an application that was intended provide a pathway to streamlining intake and service delivery across the Core programs. Concessions made due to project timelines and funding resulted in a system that fell short of the project goal- to increase the availability of information to participants and integration of the state's information management systems. In 2020, testing of the system, which had become more of a referral tool, began and the site was launched with little customer uptake. Efforts to move the system more closely to the intended result came with significant cost and was ultimately unaffordable for the Core Programs to support and maintain.

In 2022, the Maine State Legislature passed, *L.D. 1748*, An Act To Improve the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program and To Improve the So-called Leveraging Investments so Families Can Thrive Report produced by the Department of Health and Human Services. This legislation directed the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHD), the Maine Department of Education (MDOE), the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL), the University of Maine System (UMS) and the Maine Community College System (MCCS) to convene a working group to explore the feasibility of creating a single application for persons expressing a desire to enroll in and need to be supported in their attainment of postsecondary education and training programs. What follows is the result of the working group's discussions and research over the past year, culminating in a report to the Legislature in 2024.

Membership of the working group included designees from Maine Department of Education and Maine Department of Labor; designees from the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System; a student with low income currently enrolled in the University of Maine System; and members of advocacy or other organizations with expertise in policy related to accessing postsecondary education and training programs and supports.

Members of the working group discussed the feasibility of creating a single application for postsecondary education and training programs. A range of considerations was examined while thinking of how to move toward a single application. Using an online survey distributed to members, the working group prioritized strategies.

With the understanding that significant initial funding investment would be required to accompany any technology innovations and staffing support, the working group organized the discussions, steps, and considerations for a universal application according to three categories:

1. Data Sharing, Privacy and Security
2. Staff Support
3. Technology and Integration

The organization of the three categories represents a progression from low-cost steps to high investment solutions.

### **Data Sharing, Privacy and Security**

Data sharing across administrative agencies has the potential to facilitate easier enrollment and remove barriers to program access. Putting in place and expanding Memoranda of Understanding

to make data more accessible across agencies, abiding by rigorous data governance, is a straightforward step toward increasing competency and collaboration among workforce development partners. One modernization is the development of a universally accepted privacy and confidentiality statement for applicants allowing for referrals among programs. The goal is to partner as much as possible.

Whether a universal “pre-screener” page is developed or a single application with a standard set of regularly asked questions is adopted and utilized by multiple partner programs, this type of advancement can lead to improved access to a multitude of workforce development programs and services. Implementing protocols and norms that are accepted by all parties, developing standards, and deciding on the mechanism to ensure data is consistent and accurate can be put in place within a community of partners. Standardizing terminology in a “data dictionary” for use of terms allows the same terms to be used by partner agencies.

Another key improvement would involve having a shared and secure digital warehouse for client uploaded documents that are needed by multiple parties. This would relieve prospective students of the burden of providing the same information multiple times to verify eligibility. Instead, they could provide it only once and the system could determine which program they may be eligible for, is most appropriate for them, and facilitate their enrollment in that program (or co-enroll them, where appropriate). Easier access will likely increase the number of individuals participating in postsecondary education and training programs.

### **Staffing Support**

Recognizing the difficulty ensuring direct service providers are educated on workforce efforts and are up-to-date on program services and referrals and applications, developing ways to triage and support all programs can be beneficial. A basic step is a statewide resource mapping endeavor to identify training and education programs and associated supportive service. The start-up phase will entail many hours of labor, even when utilizing simple solutions such as a Google template, housing information on a Google site, and using Google map with pins. However, supplying an uncomplicated solution such as clicking on a Google map pin to obtain an overview of the resource can enhance the work of front-line workers. Developing and putting in place a decision tree for those triaging requests for programs and services is another useful tool. Helping people understand “if this response/then refer here” can facilitate referrals and remove barriers to program access.

Implementing and maintaining resource mapping and tools to assist with triage will call for staffing. Assigning a staff member to work for the entire collection of partners can support all programs

because the person is knowledgeable about statewide postsecondary education and training programs and associated supportive services. Embedded in workforce efforts and training, subject matter expert in the universal application or system devised, the individual is able to assist with universal triage and program application.

## **Technology**

Innovations in technology, where duplication of information and data are eliminated, and understanding how data moves across entities, is a complex decision for all involved. The disparate systems impact how work gets done. As a first step, basic enhancements can be made such as adding links for internal and external resource sharing on sites such as AccessMaine.org. A forward-looking development is devising a basic, universal application that sits atop the existing systems of the community of partners. Creating a pre-screener or basic, shared application allows preliminary assessment of information and enables connection with appropriate programs and supports. CiviForm, a free and open source software developed with the help of Google.Org Fellowship Program, and now collectively maintained by governments that use it, is an example of an existing solution utilized in other states that allows people to find and apply to multiple programs in one place without needing to re-enter information. A future, more highly developed solution is having a portal linking all agency sites that is the single stop for persons expressing a desire to enroll in postsecondary education and training and associated supportive services. The far ahead goal is to climb out of silos and take the leap to adopt an enterprise system.

## **Implementation Considerations**

Creating a single application that is shared, verified, and jointly administered by DHHS, MDOE, MDOL, UMS and MCCS must be a thoughtful process with careful consideration of several factors. Understanding the intersection of any change, particularly technology, with human capacity is critical. Buy-in within the collection of partners is a must to ensure perpetuity of the initiative. As with any systemic change to an application process, to be effective, the single application must be fully used by a variety of agencies and all partners must adopt the tool to show staff and customers the benefit of use. Having partners identify staff to participate, train, and provide support is required at the outset. Finally, planning for integrating a common application with existing IT systems will be required to allow for seamless services to customers. Other decisions required include:

- Control of single application- Shared applications bring unique issues with design and updates authority. There must be a structure in place to determine what information must be gathered on the single application, how updates occur and how the application process

will work for applicants. There must also be mutually agreed upon security standards and systems in place to ensure that data remains secure.

- Costs – Implementing and maintaining a new application will have a cost in both time and money. Decisions related to costs include: where will the funds come from for initial development of the application and continued maintenance, will the costs be split among parties to maintain the application;, and what agreement will be in place to ensure sustainability.
- Customer Release- The single application will need to respect customer choice. A mechanism will need to be devised allowing applicants to “opt in” to allow release of basic customer information to be shared with participating entities. Decisions related to customer data concerns include: how does the single application respect customer choice; and will there be an opt-in option for the customer to approve the sharing of basic, common data for the purpose of determining eligibility for programs across state agencies.
- Data retention – State retention policies may provide guidance on the length of information retention. Involved partners will need to develop a common data retention policy for the purpose of the single application.
- Integration- It will be imperative that all cooperating agencies be committed to making a shared application work and understand that it supports their work to engage individuals in the programs they administer. A commitment would need to be secured from each agency to ensure individuals who utilize the shared application have appropriate follow-up by agencies administering programs for which they are eligible. A roadmap for ongoing responsibilities among participating entities will need to be developed so that the single application triggers the best services and experiences for applicants through collaboration and cooperation among partners.
- Location of single application-Adoption of a single application will require decisions among participating entities about where and how the tool is utilized. The decision will need to be made about how the tool links all sites and permissions to share and store data that support determinations.
- Permissions- Security and staffing are always a concern when crossing state agencies and shared data is present making it important for partners to agree upfront about the overall decision-making structure. Decisions related to permissions include: who will have

permissions to adjust the Common Application; will there be an oversight committee with membership by all linked organizations; how will those having permissions to adjust the Common Application, along with responsibilities of all organizations be clarified and documented.

- Security Standards- Currently, the State and contracted vendors must have clear standards for security around data. A decision point for this process would be to determine whether security standards will align with existing State security standards or if a new standard would be created. Decisions related to security standards include: which entity has the decision-making power for this concern; will Maine OIT set the security standards for this application; and who will approve release updates or changes to security protocols.
- Staff support-An understanding and decision will need to be made regarding staff needed to support and coordinate the single application initiative. A decision point is to determine whether each agency will have staff assigned to this initiative or will there be staff located in one or more agencies that work with all the collaborating agencies.

As previously stated, the working group submitted a report of their findings to the legislature in February of 2024. Recommended next steps are to develop legislation to address the problems identified in the report to better facilitate access to postsecondary educational opportunities for Maine people with low income. Fiscal implications of any intended approach to coordinate systems and service delivery will need to be further identified and evaluated; and without dedicated funding available through Federal programs, ultimately allocated through the Maine Legislature. The Committee members, including those represented by the WIOA core partners, stand ready to continue their work to accomplish coordinated intake and service delivery as directed in the next Legislative session.

#### THE STATE WORKFORCE BOARD'S ROLE ASSISTING THE GOVERNOR IN ALIGNING TECHNOLOGY AND DATA SYSTEMS

The State Workforce Board (SWB) will assist the governor in aligning technology and data systems across partner programs. With the leadership of the SWB a comprehensive strategy for aligning and integrating complex data systems will establish the parameters for new technology systems in order to allow core partner systems to communicate, enable common intake, and other shared front-end system activities. The MDOL is implementing a new management information system, provided by America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA), which facilitates federal reporting. The SWB will also take a

leadership role in establishing the parameters for new system software that will enable common intake and other shared front-end system activities.

The SWB will advise the governor on technology systems for tracking benchmark performance indicators of programs and participants. Maine's Workforce Longitudinal Data System will play an integral role in measuring the outcomes of participants over time in order to measure and direct resources more effectively.

The SWB also convenes the WIOA Steering Committee and facilitates discussions in support of creating improved modes of service delivery to individuals, including those with barriers and who are unemployed. The core partners are also represented on the Steering Committee and through numerous meetings and discussions; a comprehensive strategy that reflects their input and the desire of the governor for increased efficiency of operations is being developed.

Another strategy has been to 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. One of the actions supporting this is the creation of MyWorkSourceMaine.com.

As referenced earlier, the State Workforce Board received a grant from the National Governor's Association to develop the new unified brand for Maine's workforce system called Work Source Maine. The goal of this new unified brand is to build awareness and understanding of the resources available to residents and Maine businesses.

The SWB ended 2022 by embarking on a groundbreaking multi-agency project that will build on the Work Source Maine brand by consolidating existing tools and resources to make it easier for Maine workers and employers to connect to existing programs, resources, and supports within Maine's workforce system.

In the third quarter of 2023, the SWB released an RFP soliciting competitive, responsive proposals to build a multi-agency education, training, and career planning platform called MyWorkSourceMaine.com. The SWB is negotiating a contract with the selected vendor.

The purpose of MyWorkSourceMaine.com is to:

- organize education, training, career planning information, and other wrap around services into a coordinated online career portal creating a "no wrong door" approach for Maine workers and employers,

- provide users with a simple user-friendly way to access available jobs, workforce trainings, and other needed resources, and
- provide residents with a career pathways tool that will allow them to explore careers within industry sectors and connect to available trainings and job openings.

## DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO DEVELOP REPORTS REQUIRED UNDER SECTION 116, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

All core partners currently use wage data from the Unemployment Insurance system to report employment and median earnings performance outcomes required by Section 116 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The Bureau of Unemployment Compensation (BUC), the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), the Bureau of Employment Services (BES), and the Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI) are all housed within the Maine Department of Labor. The BRS has an agreement with the BUC to conduct employment and earnings match necessary to report participant performance to the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor on a quarterly and annual basis. Through an agreement with the CWRI, Maine Adult Education also partners to conduct employment and earnings match on behalf of their customers. The BES houses the management information system (Maine JobLink) used by the following programs: Title I-B Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, Title III employment services, the Jobs for Veteran's State grant, Trade Adjustment Assistance, and Title ID National Farmworker Jobs Program. A process has been built into the system to match employment and earnings data necessary to report employment and earnings performance outcomes.

Credential attainment data for Title I-B adult, dislocated worker and youth services are collected through the Maine JobLink system based on data entered by service provider staff and validated through document uploads. Similarly, staff enter and track measurable skills gains for participants enrolled in training or education services. Title I-B programs report on five types of measurable skills gains. Title I-B providers track educational functioning level (EFL) gains through pre- and post-test scores using CASAS.

Maine's core programs use separate reporting and case management systems; Vocational Rehabilitation utilizes AWARE, Adult Education uses Maine Stars, and remaining programs use the Maine JobLink. All programs conduct UI wage match to determine whether they have met the negotiated rates for the employment and earnings measures. The Maine JobLink is a reporting and case management system that produces quarterly and annual reports for the following programs:

Wagner-Peyser/Employment Services, Title IB Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, Trade Act, Jobs for Veteran's State Grant, National Dislocated Worker Grants (State and Local Area), Local Area H1B grants, Registered Apprenticeship Discretionary Grants, and Maine JobLink is used to document participation and performance for the State Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP) and numerous American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – funded programs.

The Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI), MDOL's labor market information provider, utilizes a data warehouse to conduct evaluation on participant outcomes of the core partners through the Maine Education and Attainment Research Navigation System (MaineEARNs), thereby linking the records of core program participants with their corresponding wage and employment records for program evaluation and reporting purposes. MaineEARNs also provides long-term information on employment and wage outcomes for Maine workers who graduated from the University of Maine System and Maine Community College System after July 2008.

Students, parents, educators, administrators, policy makers, and anyone interested in earning education credentials and employment in Maine will be able to use this data to research, plan, and make informed decisions. The MaineEARNs system is also used to prepare the annual Eligible Training Provider report requirement. Interest has been expressed from the University of Maine System to begin collecting and reporting on the awarding of micro-credentials and including those in the MaineEARNs system. Maine has made strides in developing the capacity for core programs and other partners to share an integrated data system that will allow each agency to collect, utilize, protect, and report out data specific to their agency while also being able to share and utilize common data from other partner agencies. Agencies are acutely aware of issues of confidentiality and privacy in the sharing and reporting of information and take measures to ensure that participants provide consent to share information between agencies. The MaineEARNs system was used to conduct the WIOA Adult program evaluation, a five-year evaluation of employment and earnings outcomes of Title IB Adult participants. A copy of the completed evaluation was appended to the PY22 annual report.

As a core partner, Maine Adult Education, also works with the Center for Workforce Research and Innovation (CWRI) and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) database through the Maine Department of Labor to collect employment and earnings performance data obtained through a data match using participant social security numbers. Although median earnings were not being collected or reported for Adult Education in the past, improved collaboration and integration of data reporting systems processes allow for accurate and complete employment and median wage data for federal reports.

Adult Education also collects performance measures regarding credential attainment and postsecondary outcomes. Credential attainment for secondary school diplomas and high school equivalency is obtained by accessing data through the State's managed information system, MaineSTARS. In 2022 HiSET was acquired by PSI. PSI is currently developing a tool to manage HiSET credential data but the tool is not yet available. Postsecondary enrollment information for adult education is conducted through a data match using the National Student Clearinghouse through the Maine Department of Education. The Clearinghouse data tracks postsecondary enrollment and completion in accredited postsecondary colleges and universities nationwide, but it does not include other postsecondary training programs. Thus, overall enrollment numbers may not be fully captured in the Clearinghouse system.

Measurable skill gains are currently collected and reported for Adult Education using the federally approved CASAS assessment for the pre-and-post testing of participants. Core partners have agreed to coordinate and align measurable skills assessment by implementing eCASAS as the assessment tool used by all partners. Currently eCASAS assessments are recognized and used by all local Adult Education programs, one-stops, and other eligible training providers. Results are shared where appropriate to reduce duplicative testing.

### III.(B.6.B) ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS

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All Title IB performance measures, except measurable skill gains, are measured after exit from the program. Credential and employment outcomes may be measured up to one year after exit from the program. Employment and earnings outcomes, and for youth participants entry into postsecondary education, are measured at the second and fourth quarters after exit. Staff continue to work with clients through provision of follow-up services designed to ensure success after placement in employment and/or education.

The Bureau of Employment Services works with training providers to gather data on completion and credential attainment rates for all students attending approved programs of study listed on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) and their median earnings after exit. The ETP report combines participant outcome data tracked in Maine JobLink with all student data submitted by each training provider to the Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI). Data submitted to CWRI is cycled through their MaineEARNs data base to simplify this reporting requirement for eligible providers and data is combined with Maine JobLink data to produce the annual ETP report required under WIOA and required in Maine for continued approval as an eligible training provider. This report format has recently been reworked to better meet ETP reporting requirements and tools provided by the national Employment and Training Administration are now

used routinely to assess the accuracy of the ETP report. As time moves more data is being gathered that will enable the reporting system to become robust and promote sound decisions by WIOA participants in regard selection of providers and programs and use of their individual training accounts.

Developing long-term participant outcomes is essential to creating a continuous cycle of program and system improvement. Maine has a variety of workforce challenges that require measurement, tracking and assessment. As such, Maine's core partners are committed to producing an evaluation system that extends beyond what's required for federal reporting. MaineEARNs plays an integral role in measuring long-term participant outcomes. The system was used to conduct an evaluation of outcomes of the Title IB Adult program with a focus on completers of training to enter healthcare professions. The culmination of the evaluation was submitted to ETA as an attachment to the PY22 Annual Report. The WIOA Steering Committee, core program managers and the State Workforce Board will continue to collaborate to define the data that is required to inform decision making and program improvement. The Department will explore other programs that are not presently using wage data for performance accountability evaluations to be added to the wage-matching system. There is an opportunity for Maine's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to develop a data sharing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Maine Department of Labor for the purposes of evaluating the outcomes of Department of Health and Human Services participants.

#### Title II ADULT EDUCATION Assessment of Post-program Success

All Title II performance measures, except measurable skill gains, and High School Completion credentials are measured after exit from the program. Employment outcomes and earnings outcomes are measured 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit through a data sharing agreement with the Department of Labor.

The State Office of Adult Education works with adult education providers to gather data on measurable skills gains, and high school completion rates for all students. Adult Education providers must use the State Data System MaineSTARS to record data and submit quarterly data reports. Adult Education providers offering the Maine High School Equivalency HiSET Diploma also track credentials earned through the HiSET data base.

Post-secondary credentials are tracked through an agreement with Clearinghouse. Both the Department of Labor and Clearinghouse data matches depend on the release of participant SSN. Adult Education providers have a goal of 90% data match for participants have made significant progress towards this goal.

## Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

DBVI evaluates post-employment outcomes based upon Core Performance Indicators as established in Section 116 of WIOA. The DBVI works with RSA to establish a negotiated performance level for each indicator. These indicators are:

Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit = Percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.

Employment Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit = Percentage of participants in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program.

Median Earnings - 2nd Quarter After Exit = Median earnings of those in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program.

Credential Attainment = Percentage of participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding on-the-job training and customized training) who attain a recognized post-secondary credential or secondary school diploma or equivalent during participation in, or within one year of, exit from the program.

Measurable Skill Gains Rate = Percentage of participants who, during a program year, are enrolled in an education or training program that leads to a recognized post-secondary credential or employment and who are achieving documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress, towards such a credential or employment.

These Performance Indicators are published quarterly on the Data Dashboard which is managed by the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

### III.(B.6.C) USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE WAGE RECORD DATA

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A Maine Department of Labor Memorandum of Understanding regarding the use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage record data permits the MDOL to use the data in several ways. Wage data is used to measure and manage performance for Title I-B Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs; Wagner-Peyser Employment Services; Trade Adjustment Assistance; Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC); National Dislocated Worker Grants; Title II AEFLA grants; Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation grants; and other federal initiatives.

Wage data is used for customizing and providing services to employers and to measure and evaluate long term outcomes and performance through the Maine Education and Attainment Research

Navigation system (MaineEARNs) on behalf the department, other agencies, and educational institutions. Additionally, wage data is utilized to determine the initial and continued eligibility of training providers approved to receive WIOA training funds and to be included on Maine's Eligible Training Provider List that is posted on the web so consumers can easily access information that will assist them in making choices about education and training programs approved in Maine.

By funding MaineEARNs, Maine's policymakers have clearly signaled the move towards data-driven decision making in future rulemaking, goal setting, and program evaluation. Standard reports are designed to provide information to evaluate the effectiveness of training programs administered by multiple partners. Standard reports guide improvement of the workforce system by enabling administrators to evaluate program effectiveness and allocate limited public funds more effectively.

A Memorandum of Agreement between the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Unemployment Compensation (BUC) and the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) permits the receipt of UI wage record data for individuals served by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI). The data is used to comply with federal performance reporting requirements of the Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation program (20 CFR Part 677). Additionally, the Agreement outlines the provision of employer data to BRS for the purpose of collecting work history and employment outcomes for DVR/DBVI clients, as well as providing effective outreach services to employers.

### III.(B.6.D) PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

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Personally identifiable information at the individual record level is protected through systems security measures required by the State Office of Information Technology (OIT) who either perform safety scans after any release of changes to the system or through OIT approval of outside vendor safety scans before adopting new releases to the system. Staff are required to read and understand the Policy on Protecting Personally Identifiable information and must sign a confidentiality agreement for general purposes and in regard to protecting PII within the systems used, such as Maine JobLink. Staff are required to obtain customer signed release of information forms that are included in the participant files.

State of Maine staff are required to take annual training to safeguard against attacks on systems through a training platform called KnowB4 and are tested on the knowledge gained and tested throughout the year through phishing practice exercises to ensure they remain vigilant. Service providers are required to provide similar training to their staff on an annual basis and sign off to that fact.

In terms of information shared with outside agencies personally identifiable information is protected by aggregating individual records and standardized confidentiality screening. MaineEARNNS public facing results are aggregated to protect the confidentiality of participants being measured. In addition, outcomes with fewer than 10 participants are suppressed for confidentiality purposes. The Center for Workforce Research and Information is implementing additional privacy protections by adopting a System Security Plan based on FIPS 199/NIST 800-60 Vol2, Rev1 guidelines.

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### III.(b.7) PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS

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The State has issued a policy regarding Priority of Service for veterans, policy PY24-27 Priority of Service for Veterans.

The State Workforce Board, the Maine Department of Labor and local workforce service providers are responsible for developing strategies and implementing the Veterans' Priority of Service as required by 38 U.S.C 4215(b) and 20 CFR Parts 1001 and 1010. Maine's one-stop system is the core mechanism that will support, expand, and maintain services to the Veteran population throughout the State. Eligible Veterans and covered persons with significant barriers to employment are those as defined in Veterans' Program Letters (VPL) 03-14, 03-14 Change 1 &2 and 03-19.

Priority of Service applies to Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act Adult, Dislocated and Youth Grants, Demonstration Grants, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Wagner-Peyser, and other core programs funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and administered in Maine by the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL). Accordingly, MDOL has issued guidance to the State's Local Workforce Boards (LWBs) requiring local policy issuance to Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) service providers to include Priority of Service for Veterans requirements in *agreements* (plans, contracts, and subcontracts).

Priority of service means that Veterans and eligible spouses are entitled to take precedence over non-covered persons in obtaining employment, training, and placement services.

A covered person under Priority of Service is a Veteran who is eligible or spouse of an eligible Veteran who is entitled to receive priority of service is a person who has served at least one day in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released from service under any condition other than a condition classified as dishonorable is a covered person. This definition includes Reserve units and National Guard units activated for Federal Service.

The MDOL and one-stop providers will take the necessary actions to ensure that Priority of Service opportunities are clearly visible and articulated to all customers who engage in one-stop services. At a minimum, Priority of Service to Veterans will include adherence to and implementation of the following guidelines:

Outreach/Recruitment:

- Inclusion of information regarding Veterans' priority of service in printed materials targeted to customers and employers.
- Inclusion of information regarding Veterans' priority of service in presentations made to customers and employers.
- Addition of Veterans' priority of service information to Veteran service providers, Maine one-stop centers and MDOL web sites.
- Pro-active recruitment of Veterans by targeted strategies that focus on employers as well as job seeking Veterans.

Notification:

- Addition of a Veterans' Priority of Service rights statement to the complaint procedures provided to a Veteran customer.
- Addition of a Veterans' Priority of Service rights statement to the signature portion of the paper intake forms.
- Provision of the opportunity for Veterans and covered persons to make known their Veteran status.
- The Maine JobLink job notification system, which will inform eligible Veterans of job opportunities before all other registrants.

Intake/Registration for Services:

- Written policies to establish that service providers who receive WIOA funds for employment and training programs will be required to identify covered persons at the point of entry to programs and/or services, so that Veterans and covered persons can leverage the benefits of Priority of Service.
- Written policies and procedures to ensure Veterans and covered persons understand their entitlement to Priority of Service, the full array of employment and training services available, the eligibility requirements that Veterans and covered persons must meet to enter programs and services.

Eligibility for Services will be delineated in written policies and procedures:

- That ensure Veterans and covered persons meet the statutory eligibility requirements applicable to the specific employment and training program.
- That ensure Veterans and covered persons are given Priority of Service where statutory or mandatory priorities are in effect and particularly, where local area service providers have instituted mandatory priorities due to limited funds.
- That ensure eligible Veterans and covered persons receive access to services or resources before non-covered persons when resources for services are limited.
- That target special populations of Veterans, including Special Disabled Veterans, Campaign Badge Veterans, Disabled Veterans, and covered persons.

Many Veterans face difficulty transitioning back to civilian life and may require specialized employment and training services to boost their job prospects. Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) and MDOL have established effective program designs that include other providers, such as the Veterans Administration's Veteran Readiness & Employment Program and Compensated Work Therapy Program. Additionally, Veterans with more severe adjustment difficulties may require counseling, social services, and more in-depth support from specialists who are equipped to address their needs. Maine's Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPs) have built solid professional relationships with a myriad of specialist and can make direct referrals for those Veterans to receive the appropriate support.

Maine's Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) generate the Quarterly Report on Services to Veterans, for which content requirements are identified by one-stop center managers. These reports focus on compliance with federal laws, regulations and negotiated standards with respect to special services and priorities for Veterans.

As new USDOL and MDOL Veterans' programs are introduced and implemented, Maine's Veterans' Representatives and Wagner-Peyser (WP) staff will assist in delivering these services and programs to Veterans.

Delivery of services through the one-stop system to Veterans and covered persons is standardized to ensure that no Veteran or covered person is turned away without receiving some level of service. All WP staff are (and will continue to be) trained to provide initial assessment and triage for all customers entering our CareerCenters, including Veterans. After initial assessment to determine eligibility under the Jobs for Veteran State Grant (JVSG), WP staff will determine if they will provide needed services to the Veteran or if a referral to the local DVOP is required. If the Veteran does not meet the JVSG eligibility or if a DVOP is not currently available, CareerCenter staff will provide one-on-one assistance, including individualized career services, to Veterans and eligible persons. This

may include assessment, planning, advocacy, job development, job matching, referral to other state and federal programs and follow-up. If the Veteran meets JVSG eligibility, they are referred directly to the CareerCenter's DVOP, who works exclusively with Veterans and covered persons to facilitate their access to all programs and services for which they are eligible under the Priority of Service policy. These specialists provide one-on-one assistance that includes case management, assessment, planning, provision of individualized career services, advocacy, job development, job matching, referral to other state and federal programs and follow-up. In addition, at our CareerCenters, LVERs conduct employer outreach and establish employment and training opportunities on behalf of all Veteran clients that are served in their area of responsibility.

As Veterans and covered persons may be referred to any available employment and training service open to the public regardless of funding source, it is important that all one-stop center staff establish and maintain effective working relationships with one-stop system partners and service networks. These relationships will strengthen coordination of interagency efforts to help support Veteran service initiatives. Veterans' Priority of Service language will be integrated into financial and nonfinancial working agreements and Memoranda of Understanding with other organizations to ensure Maine's workforce development system is providing exemplary service to those who have served.

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### III.(b.8) ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

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In 2017, the Maine State Workforce Board (SWB) implemented system policy PY 17-01, Accessibility, Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination, which codified the State's commitment to universal access and non-discrimination. Working through the SWB's [Commission on Disability and Employment](#) committee, the policy was developed by a multi-agency, multi-partner work group to address the requirements in WIOA section 188 and 29 CFR §38 and provide guidance to Maine's one-stop workforce development system on the implementation of equal opportunity, nondiscrimination, and physical and programmatic accessibility provisions in WIOA and related statutes and regulations.

The State continues to enhance the availability of accessibility information and resources through the work of the Information Technology Accessibility Committee (ITAC). The Maine Office of Information Technology (OIT) convenes an Information Technology Accessibility Committee (ITAC) that advises all State of Maine agencies. Contracts for services affecting Information Technology specify: "All IT products must be accessible to persons with disabilities and must comply with State

Accessibility Policy and Standards and the Americans with Disabilities Act. All IT applications must comply with the [Digital Accessibility Policy](https://www.maine.gov/oit/policies/DigitalAccessibilityPolicy.pdf) or at <https://www.maine.gov/oit/policies/DigitalAccessibilityPolicy.pdf>. The website is monitored and updated by the ITAC and includes an Accessibility Guide that provides quick, synthesized information on technical issues for documents and presentations as well as addresses accessibility and etiquette, digital accessibility policies, resources and testing guidelines. The site is regularly updated to ensure content and usability are current. A dedicated Accessibility landing page provides greater visibility and quick access for State agencies and interested partners.

The State will continue to develop sustainable policies and supportive training around assistive technology, equipment responsibility, website and social media accessibility, programmatic and physical accessibility of workshops and events, service animal protocols, appropriate referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation, alternative formats for required tests/assessments, and consistent use of equal employment opportunity and accommodations tag lines. Policy integration into program participation rules governing required orientation workshops, the RESEA program, and other mandatory programs will be examined to ensure accessibility, especially access to alternative formats and accommodations.

In 2022, Maine implemented a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) workgroup to promote systematic awareness of DEIA principles and implement best practices to ensure MDOL as a workplace and as a service provider, is accessible, welcoming, and equitable to all. Four subgroups formed to focus on accessibility, training, outreach, and recruitment and retention. One outcome of the DEIA workgroup is a partnership with the New England ADA to deliver a series training including Disability Awareness and Accessible Documents, and staff-generated topics gathered through a survey. In addition, MDOL entered a year-long contract with CCS Learning Academy (CCSLA) and Human Capital Consultants Consortium (H3C) to:

- establish and sustain Maine’s Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility (DEIA) strategic vision;
- to create a community that supports Maine’s DEIA goals; and,
- to monitor DEIA outcomes.

Maine continues to focus on advancing learning and organization-wide commitment to DEIA, as an employer and through our agency’s services to both employers and jobseekers.

## **One-Stop Centers:**

The Maine Department of Labor provides equitable access to services through community outreach efforts, physical One-Stop or CareerCenters, virtual services and to reach individuals who may not access services in traditional ways. These populations include individuals with barriers to employment, low-income individuals, long-term unemployed, individuals with disabilities, veterans, woman, minorities, rural Maine residents, those from tribal nations, in and out of school youth and at-risk youth, older adults, those in recovery, those with justice-involved pasts, individuals without residency, laid off workers, low reading and/or literacy levels, individuals who are English language learners, New Mainers, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, immigrants and individuals with low skill and/or educational attainment.

Maine CareerCenters, through Bureau of Employment Services, provides career guidance, program information, employment workshops, training support, and job matching programs and services. These services are delivered through 12 CareerCenter locations, through virtual means, and through partnerships with libraries, immigrant welcome centers, Department of Health and Human Services offices, correctional facilities and probation and parole offices, recovery centers, homeless shelters, schools, town offices and other community outreach locations. Maine Department of Labor partners with service providers, Adult Education programs, and the Maine Community College system to deliver coordinated workforce development programs. The CareerCenters work to eliminate barriers individuals experience in the job searching process, whether those barriers are language, technology, or other challenges that can prevent qualified workers from connecting with gainful employment. Within the Maine Department of Labor, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) provides services through its Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI). The Bureau of Employment Services (BES) and Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) maintain a close working relationship with an established referral process for individuals requesting support. BRS is a WIOA core partner with staff located in CareerCenters across the state.

Maine's CareerCenters are ADA accessible, and all services are accessible to individuals with disabilities. CareerCenters offer and use of a variety of assistive technology (AT) and adaptive equipment to mitigate any barriers in using computers or access to services. Available assistive technology includes JAWS and ZoomText, TTY/Maine Relay 711, adjustable height workstations, alternative mouse, and keyboard. When assistive technology needs are requested for participation, staff can direct participants to assistive technology available on-site or can coordinate with Maine CITE's equipment sharing program to arrange for access to an appropriate service or device.

Maine's State ADA Coordinator provides accessibility assessments and technical assistance for physical and programmatic accessibility.

CareerCenter Managers are responsible for ensuring that all assistive technology and adaptive equipment within their Centers are in working order and use alternative resources when needed.

Maine Department of Labor CareerCenters and WIOA partners ensure compliance in their activities, provide training and resources for new and continuing staff, and request technical assistance as needed. They require use of the Equal Opportunity tag line language, for example, MDOL uses "The Department of Labor is an equal opportunity provider. Auxiliary aids and services are available to individuals with disabilities upon request". This tagline is included on all printed documents, web-based content, presentations, and marketing materials.

Staff are trained and instructed to provide reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities who request support and to look for appropriate and reasonable flexibility in policies, practices, and procedures. Staff training includes information on use of resources such as translators and interpreters for language access needs, including American Sign Language (ASL), local transportation services and the complaint resolution process including procedures for handling customer complaints related to discrimination or lack of access.

In 2023, the MDOL ADA Planning Committee, was convened to assess current AT equipment within CareerCenters, policies and practices for effective communication, reasonable accessibility and to identify areas for staff training, resource tools and practice and policy development that would further enhance participant self-sufficiency and/or accommodation requests. This committee is comprised of the State EO Officer, the State ADA Coordinator, the Deputy Commissioner for Labor, the Director of Maine CITE, and representatives of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and Division of the Blind and Visually Impaired. The committee convenes on a regular basis with a focus to provide guidance and education on accessibility processes and equipment across CareerCenters and partner staff. In November 2023, "Delivering Effective Communication", "Auxiliary Aids", and "Reasonable Modifications" training was delivered to CareerCenter and partner staff. An annual training schedule will be created for 2024, to include on-going Windmills training sessions for all staff.

## **One-Stop Certifications:**

Accessibility assessments are conducted at least every three years as part of one-stop certification processes. The WIOA implementation steering team will identify a method for documenting compliance with training requirements for implementation by supervisors and managers. Documentation will be a required element of one-stop certification and monitoring.

Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) and one stop operators are responsible for delivering information on local workforce development system resources in an easy-to-access manner. They conduct outreach to inform the public of these resources. Workforce development system partners and community agencies are informed of resources and how to assist clients and participants in accessing and navigating the workforce system's resources.

In accordance with §678.800, LWDBs are responsible for ensuring that these provisions are implemented, and monitoring is conducted for compliance. LWDBs assess CareerCenters at least once every three years. They review and update criteria when conducting program reviews or when updating their local plans.

When monitoring or other activities reveal a need for system-wide technical assistance, policy updates, or concerns related to non-discrimination and accessibility, the Bureau of Employment Services and others may provide or assist with the necessary technical assistance.

The Maine Department of Labor, including CareerCenters, follow ADA guidelines in their on-line presence with regards to virtual displays, including alternative text for images and when requested, alternative methods of delivery. Invitations and communications to customers include a statement inviting them to contact us for accommodations.

Ensuring the accessibility of one-stop centers and compliance with disability-related regulations is also included in the "One-Stop Certification Criteria Policy", including:

- Making reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities;
- Making reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures where necessary to avoid discrimination against individuals with disabilities;
- Administering programs in the most integrated setting appropriate;

- Communicating with persons with disabilities as effectively as with others;
- Providing appropriate auxiliary aids and services, including assistive technology devices and services to afford individuals with disabilities equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, program activities; and
- Providing for the physical and programmatic accessibility of the CareerCenter to individuals with disabilities.

The Section 188 checklist, 20 CFR Part 38 and policies developed by USDOL office of Civil Rights Center will be used as a guiding document to monitor the system’s progress toward universal access. Quantitative outcomes will be used, when practical, to assess system accessibility and utilization by WIOA’s priority populations. Best practice models from other systems and other states will be researched and tailored to Maine whenever possible.

ADA compliance reviews are part of the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) one-stop certification process. All CareerCenters in each local workforce development area are reviewed for ADA compliance. Additionally, all contracts with providers of services on behalf of the State contain assurances that the services and programs will be accessible.

Program services are monitored annually and updated to ensure inclusion.

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### III.(B.9 ) ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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Maine Department of Labor has implemented practices to ensure Limited English proficient (LEP) individuals, those whose primary language for communication is not English and has a limited ability to read, speak, write, and/or understand English, as defined in 29 CFR 38.4(hh), are afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without LEP or a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use.

English language learners are included in the Accessibility, Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination policy established to codify the State’s commitment to universal access and

programmatic accessibility. This policy continues to be reviewed and enhanced as needed to remain relevant and to address issues that may arise.

New Americans and English language learners continue to be a growing population of individuals served by the core partners and are an area of growth for Maine. In southern Maine, the workforce system has seen a considerable uptick of individuals seeking career services in 2023 that are non-English speaking. CareerCenters are currently leveraging staff who are bi-multilingual and partnering with other agencies with existing experience and knowledge of workforce system to collaborate in providing services to enhance opportunities for those with language access needs. We will continue to expand our collaborations across agencies and pilot different initiatives to ensure our services are reasonably accessible.

Maine is currently taking steps to broaden the scope of language delivery throughout its processes, practices, and delivery of programs and services to the people of Maine. In 2022, Maine established DEIA workgroups to assess the different areas within the Bureaus and workforce system where diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility could be enhanced. Job postings were modified to include plain language writing, a preference for bilingual or multilingual individuals, and to be more inclusive to all the populations Maine serves. Position postings and program/activity advertisings are also sent to Maine workforce partners or community service groups that specifically serve various populations, to expand and improve outreach and meaningful services.

The Maine JobLink (MJL) online case management and data base system currently offers translation in over 120 different languages and statewide service agreements with interpreter vendors are available for accommodations. Additionally, MJL identifies every registrant's preferred language, data which guides the investments into translation of informational fliers and brochures into those languages.

Bureau of Employment Services (BES) has drafted a list of vital documents and has begun to translate many programmatic and employment service materials into languages that represent the top languages spoken by our state population. BES is currently assessing all documents and identifying those of vital record to translate into seven (7) identified languages in addition to English – Spanish, French, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Somali, Lingala, and Arabic. Over the next four (4) years, BES will continue to take steps to ensure meaningful access to LEP individuals, to

include oral interpretation or written translation of materials. The list of vital documents and supporting materials will be reviewed annually or as there is identified language need. The use of plain language is also assessed. Assessment and expansion of service materials in languages spoken by Maine's population will continue throughout 2024 and beyond.

#### IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

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Maine has the benefit of being relatively lean regarding staff and programs which makes regular coordination with partners a common occurrence.

The core partners, local workforce boards and State Board staff meet regularly to monitor the implementation of the State Unified Plan. In addition to monitoring the implementation, this provides the opportunity to collaborate and share information on activities within the plan and emerging opportunities and events across the state.

Local collaboration happens between the core partners, local workforce boards and service providers on a regular basis through local board meetings, committee work, and local initiatives and events.

Additionally, WIOA partners come together once a month to share information and resources and discuss topics of relevance. Sessions have included the following topics:

- ◇ Workforce Transportation Pilot
- ◇ Youth Career Exploration Projects
- ◇ Extended Learning Opportunity partnership between Maine DOE, DOL, VR, JMG
- ◇ DHHS – Improving Outcomes for Youth Program
- ◇ DOC Regional Care Teams
- ◇ McKinney Vento Services for homeless in-school youth and how to partner
- ◇ Progressive Employment
- ◇ Review of USDOL Youth Vision and Updated Youth Guidance
- ◇ Youth Mental First Aid
- ◇ Digital Equity Center
- ◇ Childcare Toolkit for Employers and Working Parents

Partners that regularly attend the meeting include representatives from Employment Services, Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Local Workforce Boards, Title IB Service Providers, Job

Corps, YouthBuild, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education, the Maine Children's Cabinet, and more.

Workforce system partners are also on the regular mailing lists for the State Workforce Board to keep them apprised of the work happening there. Additionally, SWB staff are on the invite list for local board meetings and regional training activities. Local board directors and State staff often participate and attend each other's meetings.

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## V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL PROGRAMS)

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1. The Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services (MDOL/BES) has implemented a conflict of interest policy that meets the requirements of WIOA and that identifies circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for members of a State Workforce Board, a Local Board, or an entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts. For a copy of this policy, please see Conflict of Interest Policy (PY15-07)
2. MDOL/BES has established a policy to provide the public (including individuals with disabilities) with access to State Workforce Board and Local Workforce Board meetings and minutes that record those meetings. The policy requires State and Local Boards to send out notices and post their agendas and meeting minutes on their websites and to ensure that both physical meeting spaces, website information, and minutes are accessible to all. For a copy of this policy, see Access to Board information (PY15-06).
3. Director-level State agency leads from the Wagner-Peyser, Title I-B Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Adult Education have reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified Plan and have approved these elements as serving the needs of the populations served by those programs.
4.
  - a. The Maine Department of Labor assures that representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administrating the core programs, required one-stop partners, other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public have been afforded the opportunity to provide input into the State's Unified Strategic Plan and that the Plan is available and accessible to the general public on the State Board's website.

- b. The Maine Department of Labor assures that the State Workforce Board and State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency were provided multiple opportunities to review and comment on the State's Unified Strategic Plan.
5. The State assures that it has established fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that are necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds received by the State and allotted to local areas for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities.
6. The MDOL Financial Manual references the uniform guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2900 and guidance on limitations and restrictions identified in 20 CFR 683 that fund recipients and sub-recipients must follow. The Financial Manual emphasizes the uniform administrative requirements that recipients must adhere to, how expenditures must be reported, and clarifies process requirements pertaining to procurement and fiscal reporting. The manual also details record retention, requirements for protection of personally identifiable information and incident reporting. The manual is a policy document that informs local areas on the requirements that they have policies and processes in place as internal controls. BES contracts with the Department of Administration and Financial Services (DAFS) to conduct annual fiscal monitoring of each local area and their sub-recipient's administration of WIOA funds to ensure that they comply with the Act and other Federal, State, and local policies and regulations. The annual reviews enable the Bureau to determine whether the sub-recipients are making expenditures against the proper cost categories and within specified cost limitations specified and required spending thresholds. During monitoring, local area and sub-recipient policies are evaluated for compliance with fiscal administrative requirements. Results of monitoring reviews enable the Bureau of Employment Services, on behalf of the Governor, to determine whether a local area is adequately addressing deficiencies and to determine that a local area has maintained fiscal integrity. In the event a local area is not in compliance the Bureau will require prompt corrective action, will provide technical assistance to the sub-recipient with specific corrective steps that must be implemented, and explain any processes or sanctions that may be imposed if compliance findings are not promptly and adequately addressed.
7. Each of the agencies within the Maine Department of Labor and Maine Department of Education take steps to ensure that they and the sub-recipients they oversee comply with Section 188 and all nondiscrimination requirements. The state issued a policy on accessibility and nondiscrimination that stipulates steps partner agencies must take to ensure programmatic and physical accessibility. Monitoring also assures that local boards

are conducting accessibility assessments at least once annually and that staff training regarding accessibility is ongoing.

8. The Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services, the State Workforce Agency, on behalf of the Governor, assures that funds received under WIOA to carry out core program activities (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Adult Literacy, Wagner Peyser, and Vocational Rehabilitation) will not be expended for any purpose other than those that have been authorized with respect to each of these programs under WIOA.
9. The State uses set-aside funds to ensure management information and reporting systems are in place to track and report activities and systems outcomes required by section 116 of WIOA.
10. The State has implemented a one stop certification policy which ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers. Please see the One Stop Certification Criteria policy (PY16-04).
11. The Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services has implemented a policy regarding referral of veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBEs) to Disability Veterans Outreach Program services. Please see Referring veterans with SBE's to DVOPs (policy PY15-20).
12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 U.S.C. 4215 in development and delivery of all workforce development programs and services funded in whole or in part by the U. S. Department of Labor. Please see Veteran's Priority of Services Policy (PY15-23).

## VI. PROGRAM SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

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### ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES

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General Requirements (1) Regions and Local Workforce Development Areas:

With the assistance of the State and Local Boards and Chief Elected Officials, Maine identified three planning regions;

1. Coastal Counties Region – made up of York, Cumberland, Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox, and Waldo Counties,
2. Central Western Region – made up of Androscoggin, Franklin, Oxford, Somerset, and Kennebec Counties,

3. Northeastern Region – made up of Aroostook, Washington, Piscataquis, Penobscot, and Hancock Counties.

The three local areas in Maine coincide with the three planning regions. Historically, Local Boards have been actively engaged in regional planning with their economic development district and community development counterparts.

The following elements were taken into consideration in identifying three distinct regions for the State:

- Equal distribution of Maine’s seven economic development districts
- Equal distribution of WIOA formula funds
- Equal distribution of post-secondary education institutions
- Inclusion of a major urban hub
- Similar labor force distribution and commuting patterns
- Equal share of Maine’s traditional industry sectors
- Equal distribution of emerging and technology-based industries

The three-region configuration is beneficial on a number of scales, not only for the above considerations, but also because of long-standing relationships between workforce development, education, and economic development partners. Policy PY15-09 Establishing WIOA Regions - articulates the requirements for establishing regions that were agreed to.

**Local Area Designation:** The Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Service (BES) consulted with local boards and chief elected officials regarding the requirements for initial and ongoing designation as a local area under WIOA. The process for requesting initial and ongoing designation is outlined in Policy PY15-01 Initial Designation under WIOA.

As required under WIOA Section 106 (b) and as iterated in the State Strategic Plan, the substantive requirements for initial and continued designation of a local workforce development area are as follows:

- The local area is consistent with local labor market area,
- The local area has a common economic development area, and
- The local area has the Federal and non-Federal resources, including appropriate education and training institutions, to administer activities under WIOA Title IB.

A request for local area designation by any unit of general government may be approved at any time provided the State Workforce Board determines that the local area meets the above requirements. Any local area designated under WIA that met the substantive requirements listed above and has performed successfully and sustained fiscal integrity, was approved for initial designation under WIOA.

The term Performed Successfully means that for two program years the local area met or exceeded negotiated measures.

The term Met Performance Criteria means the local area attained at least 80 percent of the negotiated performance measure for each measure.

The term Exceeded Performance Criteria means the local area achieved more than 100 percent of the negotiated performance measures for each measure.

The term Failed Performance Criteria means the local area did not achieve at least 80 percent of the negotiated performance measures for each measure for the prior two years.

The term Sustained Fiscal Integrity means that during the prior two program years prior the local area administered funds in a manner consistent with uniform administrative requirements outlined under 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900 and in accordance with criteria identified in the MDOL Financial Policy Manual.

- 1) Lack of fiscal integrity is deemed as:
  - Mis-expenditure of funds due to willful disregard of the requirements of the provision involved, which may include expenditure of funds:
  - For wage and salary costs of individuals whose salaries and fringe exceed the total compensation threshold identified in 2 CFR §170.330 Appendix-A paragraph e.5
  - On any cost deemed unallowable per 2 CFR 200.420 thru 200.520
  - In excess of allowable thresholds per WIA and/or State and/or Local Policy
  - For costs identified as unallowed per 20 CFR 683.250.
- 2) Willful disregard may also include Fraud, Nonfeasance, or Malfeasance.
- 3) Deemed Grossly Negligent. Gross negligence or gross mismanagement pertains to actions or situations arising out of management ineptitude or oversight and leading to a major violation of policy, process, regulations or subaward provisions. Such actions have the potential to severely hamper accomplishment of program goals, waste government resources, and jeopardize future support for a particular project, including but not limited to un-auditable records, unsupported costs, highly inaccurate fiscal reports or program reports, payroll

discrepancies, payroll deductions not paid to the IRS, and lack of good internal control procedures.

Complied with Accepted Standards of Administration pertains to local area adherence to standards of financial administration as identified throughout 2 CFR 200 which includes:

1. Financial Reporting: Accurate, current, and complete disclosure of the financial activities of each grant awarded must be made as required by the terms of the grant. All allowable costs must be traceable to the accounting records. See Section B of the MDOL financial manual for additional reporting requirements.
2. Accounting Records: Records must be maintained that identify the source and expenditure of grant funds. The records must contain information pertaining to the award and authorization, obligations, unobligated balances, assets, liabilities, outlays or expenditures, and income. The records must be maintained in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.
3. Internal Control: Effective controls and accountability must be maintained for cash, real and personal property, and other assets. All such assets must be adequately safeguarded and used solely for authorized purposes.
4. Budget Control: To ensure that overspending does not occur, actual expenditures or outlays must be compared with budgeted amounts for each grant award. Financial information must be related to performance or productivity data, including the development of unit-cost information when specifically required in the grant.
5. Allowable Costs: The subrecipient must determine what costs are allowable in accordance with OMB cost principles; grant regulations, and the terms of the grant award. In addition, no grant may pay more than its fair share of the costs (allocability).
6. Source Documentation: Accounting records must be supported by source documentation such as cancelled checks, invoices, purchase orders, paid bills, payrolls, time and attendance records, and award documents. The source documentation must relate directly to the costs claimed on the drawdown requests and quarterly financial reports.
7. Cash Management: Procedures for minimizing cash-on-hand must be established by each subrecipient. See Section D of the MDOL Financial Manual for cash management requirements.
8. Adherence to Contract Requirements: Subrecipients must adhere to all requirements delineated in the contract/grant including Federal and State requirements as laid out in each Rider of the contract/grant.

Appeals:

Any local government entity that requests but is not granted initial designation, may, within thirty days of denial, submit a written request for appeal to the State Workforce Board (SWB). Appellants

must submit the appeal in writing and include a copy of the original request for designation, a copy of the denial letter, and provide sufficient evidence to establish that it meets the requirements for local area designation under WIOA and State policy. Appeals must be submitted via certified mail to: the current State Workforce Board Director, 120 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333-0120. Once the SWB director receives the appeal the formal appeals process is initiated, which is comprised of the following steps:

1. A hearing will be scheduled with an impartial hearing's unit within 45 days of receipt of the appeal, during which the additional evidence in support of local area designation will be reviewed and considered.
2. A formal response to the appellant will be provided by the hearing's unit via certified mail, within 45 days of the hearing. The formal response will cite the criteria considered in either approving or denying the appeal for local area designation.
3. If the appeal does not result in local area designation, the local board may appeal to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor as follows:
4. Appeals to the Secretary must be filed, via certified mail - return receipt, no later than 30 days after receipt of notification of denial by the State Workforce Board and must be submitted to: Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20210, Attention: ASET. A copy of this request must be submitted simultaneously to the State Workforce Board.
5. In the appeal to the Secretary, the appellant must establish that it was not accorded procedural rights under the appeal process set forth in the State Policy/Plan and establish that it meets the requirements for designation in WIOA Sections 106(b)(2) or 106(b)(3) and 20 CFR 679-250.
6. The appellant will also be informed that if the Secretary determines that the appellant has met the burden of establishing that it was not accorded procedural rights under the appeal process set forth in the State Plan, or that it meets the requirements for designation under WIOA, the Secretary may require that the local area be designated as a local workforce investment area. The appellant will also be informed that the Secretary may consider any comments submitted by the State Workforce Board in response to the appeal made to the Secretary.
7. The appellant will also be informed that the Secretary will issue a written decision to the Governor. The appellant will be informed that the Commissioner of the Maine Department of Labor, on behalf of the Governor, will abide by the decision of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor.

## **State Funding Mechanism - Appeals Process**

The State Funding Mechanism-Appeals Process is found in State policy PY19-04 Infrastructure Funding Agreement - MOU Phase II (Appendix E). When a local area informs the State they are at an impasse regarding infrastructure cost sharing negotiations, the State Funding Mechanism (SFM) is applied. Under the SFM, MDOL, in consultation with the chief elected officials, the local workforce board, and the State Workforce Board, will determine each required partner's proportionate share of infrastructure costs for that local area, using guidelines pertaining to the State Funding Mechanism as a final determination.

A required partner may appeal the final determination because of a claim that:

- a. The Governor's determination is inconsistent with the proportionate share requirements of 20 CFR 678.735
  - b. The Governor's determination is inconsistent with the cost contribution caps described in 20 CFR 678.738
1. An appeal must be made in writing within 21 days of the Governor's determination and must include specific evidence that the amount determined by the Governor is inconsistent with a. and/or b. above.
  2. Written appeals must be submitted to: Appeals State Workforce Board 120 State House Station Augusta, ME 04333-0120
  3. The appeal will be reviewed by the executive committee of the State Workforce Board, which will provide the appellant with a letter either denying or accepting the appeal within 30 days of receipt.
  4. If the appeal is found to be without merit, it will be denied, and no further action taken.
  5. If the appeal is merited, the executive committee will make a revised determination. The executive committee may consult with the chief elected officials and the local board to attempt to negotiate a mutually agreed upon revised determination. The revised determination will be presented to the State Workforce Board for review and approval.
  6. Upon full approval of the State Workforce Board, the revised determination will be considered final throughout the cost sharing agreement period of duration, until such time as local area cost sharing is renegotiated.

**Questions pertaining to this appeals process may be addressed to:**

[SWB.DOL@maine.gov](mailto:SWB.DOL@maine.gov)  
207-621-5087

TTY users call Maine Relay 711

### **Use of Governor's Set Aside Funding:**

As mentioned in previous state plans, Maine's set-aside funds barely support the required activities identified in 20 CFR 682.200. A portion supports the cost of the Maine JobLink including the Title IB case management and reporting systems which permit data sharing across a number of federally supported workforce programs. Some of the funds are used to conduct Rapid Response activities. Set-aside funds support maintenance of the Eligible Training Provider List, which is used to disseminate information on eligible training providers and support ETPL performance reporting. Sustaining this list takes significant staff time and software programming time to ensure the all-student reporting requirements are met.

Additionally, set-aside funds are used to disseminate information on local area performance, share best practices and providing technical assistance to local areas and required partners on numerous topics. A portion of the funds are used to conduct fiscal and program monitoring activities and support some of the cost of fiscal and management accountability information systems. Set aside funds support staffing necessary to administer the Title IB programs and provide technical assistance and training Title IB service provider staff. The funds also support allowable activities, such as funding State Workforce Board staff positions. If availability of funding permits, the Department will further invest in youth programming, to initiate innovative ways to expand entrepreneurship skill training and/or adult mentoring for WIOA youth.

Set aside funds have not been used to conduct any special projects in the last two years; however, if funding levels permit set aside funds may be used to further invest in the Title IB Youth program to introduce new methods for providing Entrepreneurship Training and/or Adult Mentoring.

Rapid response funds have been used for layoff aversion. One project involved a feasibility study to identify whether an employee buyout would be a possibility for a statewide direct care provider and a second project would have assisted a rural hospital to train and retain nursing staff, but has been postponed due to COVID-19. Because Maine is a small-funded state, it is unlikely that these funds will be used for special projects going forward.

**Statewide Activities- Rapid Response** is a shared responsibility between the State Rapid Response Team, the Dislocated Worker Program service providers, and other state and local stakeholders.

MDOL is responsible for developing components of statewide and local Rapid Response activities, including providing resources to deliver Rapid Response services at the local level, structuring the Rapid Response process, negotiating and budgeting for alliance-based contracts that support Rapid Response capacity, and providing policy direction for Rapid Response delivery and its integration with Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA).

Regional Rapid Response services are coordinated by the Rapid Response Coordinator through the Bureau of Employment Services central office. At the local level, two full-time regional Rapid Response representatives and staff from local CareerCenters provide services to employers and workers affected by lay-offs and mass closures occurring throughout the state.

In addition to provision of policy direction and functional oversight, the coordinator also provides statewide staff development and training. Local Rapid Response staff make initial and follow-up contacts with employers, provide referral services to economic development agencies, document visits and communicate them to appropriate local and State agencies, conduct reemployment orientations and workshops, and facilitate transition into training and job development activities offered by the local one-stop system.

Regional Rapid Response representatives are responsible for coordinating all Rapid Response sessions and ensuing transitional services for the affected workers. However, the full team of representatives may be called upon to act as a statewide team and respond in partnership on behalf of any local area or region that requires expanded assistance with Rapid Response service delivery and initial worker adjustment services.

**Early Intervention:** Maine has built an extremely effective communication system for identifying and responding to potential and actual dislocations. Several avenues exist for identifying companies that may be impacted by downsizing, including:

- A confidential list that identifies companies from which UI has documented five or more initial claims.
- Formal notices required by the WARN act or the Maine Severance Law that are submitted by the affected company to the Dislocated Worker Unit and the Bureau of Labor Standards.
- Websites that monitor and package information about mergers, downsizing, development or investment in offshore facilities that affect the corporate parent companies of Maine subsidiaries are scanned on a regular basis, along with state and local press releases that provide similar information.

- Credible rumors and disclosures are routinely followed up on.
- Early information sharing from economic development and other business assistance entities at the state, regional, and local levels is also encouraged. They are usually the first to know when companies are facing issues that may result in job loss.
- WARN notices and credible rumors, or any information generated from the above sources trigger an immediate contact with the affected company by the local representative, who gathers information about the nature and size of the layoff.

A formal Plant Brief guides the initial interview with the company and collects information that prompts specific response steps, as follows:

- Gathering of general company information, including type and sector that is used to track industry patterns.
- Reason for downsizing, which prompts a referral to one-stop system business assistance services.
- If trade adjustment assistance for firms is warranted, a direct referral to NETAAC (A federal program that provides business assistance to trade-affected companies hoping to avert additional layoffs) may be triggered along with other services that may avert additional layoffs.
- Affirmative responses to Trade Petition questions result in facilitation of a petition for trade certification.
- Information regarding severance packages (i.e., number of weeks of vacation pay, average cost of health insurance and types of health packages to be offered by the company) provide guidance to prepare UI representatives for specific employee questions that may be fielded.
- Demographic information is gathered about the workers who will be attending the session in order to customize each session to the particular worker audience (i.e., age and education levels, length of time with company, language or other barriers, and whether any affected are on active duty).
- Worker task statements are requested and used to scan for skill demand (or lack thereof) in the local labor market and to determine the anticipated retraining or skill development action steps that may be necessary for reemployment purposes.
- Company is asked to facilitate a worker needs survey that is examined for coordination of transitional resources and need for allocation of financial resources.

State Rapid Response staff determines the mix of appropriate responses. Businesses are informed of layoff aversion services and information, and assistance is offered on such strategies as: Work-Share, skill retooling where appropriate for layoff aversion purposes, and access to other business services available at the State, regional or local level. Private-sector local board members and elected officials could be asked to facilitate resolution of problems when there may be an opportunity to intervene to avert a lay off or shutdown. Information from the first contact is also provided directly to the Governor's office for similar reasons. Finally, the information is used to develop a customized package of services from Rapid Response orientations and workshops to training and then job development.

Maine has incorporated a "Jump Start" approach to Rapid Response allowing workers to pursue immediate readjustment/reemployment pathways. At the close of each initial Rapid Response session, participants are encouraged to sign up for next steps.

For those who feel confident to immediately seek new employment, a series of workshops designed to support this goal is offered. This series may include Job Fairs, Maine JobLink registration and how to look for job openings, how to complete applications, develop resumes, and how to excel at interviewing.

Outplacement is conducted almost immediately via referral to the jobs that have been identified through local employer connections and via customized job fairs. Often affected companies are inundated with calls from other companies wishing to hire their exiting workers. The affected company is usually too overwhelmed to coordinate such services. The CareerCenters have been instrumental in taking on this additional task by coordinating job fairs that bring interested employers into contact with the specific laid off workers. In several instances these have been offered right at the worksite of the affected company. These job fairs have proved successful with over 25 percent of employees gaining immediate reemployment and the company allowing affected workers to attend the job fairs and workshops while on company time. In a recent event over 75 percent of employees had found new employment prior to their actual layoff date.

The second transition pathway is targeted to those who may have greater difficulty dealing with job loss and/or have broader barriers to immediate reemployment. This pathway links workers to a series of workshops covering such topics as coping with job loss, career decision making and understanding labor market trends, and gaining perspective through individual assessments leading

to opportunities and resources for skills upgrade and retraining. These will prepare them for in-demand occupations.

Individual needs surveys are used in large layoff events to customize and schedule all Rapid Response services prior to layoff, and employers are encouraged to allow affected workers to complete the surveys in advance. Many companies have provided long term advance notice; in cases like these, the Rapid Response team is able to work with the company and affected workers on an ongoing basis to provide info sessions, workshops and/or TAA briefings at appropriate times. These are generally on company site and on company time.

The model also allows for exceptional information gathering in the event a National Dislocated Worker Grant is needed and provides opportunity to collaborate with economic development to identify companies who may need the specific workforce and be willing to relocate to the affected area to hire and train affected workers. If appropriate, peer support worker(s) will be hired from the laid off group to assist with the services to their co workers. Contracts are generally written with local WIOA service providers who train and supervise the peer worker.

Affected workers from smaller layoffs are offered similar service pathways but may be referred to existing workshop series offered on an ongoing basis by their local CareerCenters. If the layoff occurs without our notification and the employer provides the requested layoff list, each worker is contacted individually and invited to a formal Rapid Response info session or to an orientation to services offered on a regular basis by their regional CareerCenter. It is the goal of Maine's Rapid Response program to contact every laid-off worker regardless of size of company closure or downsizing; each will be invited to access the full array of available services.

In addition to reemployment related services, it has been the custom of Maine's Rapid Response team for larger layoff events to link with the local community to launch or participate in Community Transition Teams on behalf of the affected workers. The activities of these teams include the following:

- Production of resource booklets that feature local community programs and services, printed and provided to each of the affected workers.
- Coordination of resource fairs that provide an opportunity for affected workers to access a range of services from heating and housing assistance to small business development assistance all in a one-stop location.

- Coordination of fundraising events from dinners and barbecues to dances and auctions from which the proceeds can go toward an emergency services fund for affected workers.
- Coordination of a variety of non-employment related workshops, such as consumer debt workshops offered by the regional credit union, to health clinics and stress management workshops offered by local health service providers.

Maine's congressional staffers have been outstanding partners in this effort, and recent collaboration between MDOL and congressional staffers has culminated in a formal plan for implementation of Community Action Teams across the state.

**In the event of a natural disaster:** In addition to utilizing community transition teams, the State Rapid Response lead and team members will work in collaboration with the Maine Emergency Management Association (MEMA), the State Agency with responsibility for lessening the effects of disaster on the lives and property of the people of the State through leadership, coordination and support in the four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. MEMA currently has a system in place that includes year-round training of County level emergency management teams in emergency management techniques, processes and requirements. If available, the Rapid Response team will deploy Rapid Response funds as appropriate for allowable activities in support of MEMA, including outreach, response and recovery. Training funds will be deployed to hire temporary emergency workers as available and appropriate. Companies affected by the natural disaster will be provided with Rapid Response information and affected workers will be apprised of information on disaster unemployment assistance.

**Coordination with Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA):** Members of the Rapid Response team also implement processes to initiate Trade Adjustment services on behalf of affected firms and workers. Team members assist firms and/or affected employees in submitting trade petitions. Affected workers are provided with cursory information about TAA during regular Rapid Response sessions and are apprised of informational activities that will take place if the firm is certified for trade adjustment assistance. Rapid Response and CareerCenter staff members are trained to provide information and ongoing services to trade affected workers and to work collaboratively with staff of the Adult and Dislocated worker programs to coordinate services for trade eligible participants. Prospective participants are informed about timeframes, deadlines, and options for weekly TAA benefits and other services such as Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance, Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance and TAA Relocation Allowance.

Informational materials are provided directly to affected workers for whom a trade petition is pending. These materials explain what the Trade Adjustment Assistance program is and outline the prospective benefits the program can provide and the criteria that affected workers must meet to avail themselves of the services. Once their firm has been certified a series of forums are provided to affected workers to explain the program in full, answer questions, and schedule next steps. Firms that have been affected are also referred to employer trade adjustment assistance for firms and other services as appropriate.

**Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Requirements:** Maine's Title IB service providers utilize work-based training models including on-the-job training (OJT), customized training (CT), work experience (WE), internships, and transitional jobs (TJ). Each local area has policies in place regarding how much participants are paid and amounts employers can be reimbursed to cover training costs.

Service providers often combine work-experience and on-the-job training with occupational training to meet the needs of employers for new hire training. Local workforce boards and Title IB providers work closely with employers with openings in high demand occupations, apprenticeship sponsors, industry associations, and trade unions to identify the skills required by these occupations and to map out career pathways within specific industries so that service providers and participants are aware of the opportunities and expectations of those industries.

Service providers assess prospective participants to identify transferrable skills and identify and clearly delineate the skills that must be practiced on-the-job. In addition to the on-the-job learning component, industry members are asked to identify related instruction or specific coursework and/or occupational certifications the participants can pursue simultaneously or after they are established with the company through registered apprenticeship or company sponsored training. Employers offering work-based learning activities such as on-the-job training, customized training, transitional jobs, work experience, and internships are carefully vetted to identify commitment to provide skilled supervision, the full range of skill learning and practice identified in the contract with the employer, safe work sites, adherence to equal opportunity requirements and most importantly commitment to hire participants who successfully complete training.

Service providers often negotiate a wage increase for the participant upon successful completion of training. Staff engage with employers and participants throughout the term of the training to ensure participant success and to identify any supports the participant or employer may require along the way. Service providers ensure that youth work experience agreements include both occupational and academic learning components which has resulted in expanded communication with employers

providing work-based learning opportunities, better participant/employer matching, and improved outcomes for both employer and participant regarding necessary skill attainment.

Service providers have engaged in a greater number of collaborative partnerships with employers and education providers. This includes partnerships with adult education and community colleges, to develop customized training programs that begin with participant assessment, clear on-the-job learning objectives, formal classroom skill development, and many result in attainment of an industry credential or access to courses leading to one and include occupationally-focused work ready skills.

The Maine Apprenticeship Program has recently implemented State law pertaining to certified pre-apprenticeships for adults and youth looking to enter registered apprenticeship. Thus far 31 pre-apprenticeship programs have been certified with more being considered. The pre-apprenticeships prepare individuals to enter specific registered apprenticeship programs.

### **Registered Apprenticeship**

#### **Maine Apprenticeship Program: Vision, Goals, and Strategies**

A connected Registered Apprenticeship system provides multiple on and off-ramps for individuals—with a clear pipeline for individuals to explore careers and connect to apprenticeship and certified pre-apprenticeship programs.

#### **Expand the number of high-quality certified pre-apprenticeships and Registered Apprenticeships offered within priority communities.**

- Expand reach of existing Registered Apprenticeship offerings.
- Develop new Registered Apprenticeship programs in existing and emerging industries via union, association, and employer partnerships.
- Support and expand quality certified pre-apprenticeship programs and other on-ramp programs.

#### **Increase the number of under-represented workers in Registered Apprenticeship.**

- Develop partnerships with trusted community organizations representing priority communities to build clear on-ramps to pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship programs.
- Develop wraparound support strategies and partnerships to address basic needs including leveraging WIOA funds and other discretionary grant funds.

- Develop clear processes to provide interpersonal support throughout program and after placement.
- Provide tools, training, and accountability mechanisms to support apprenticeship sponsors in fostering equitable and inclusive workplaces.

**Develop an integrated, sustainable, and effective statewide Registered Apprenticeship system.**

- Deepen career and technical education, community college & employer partnerships.
- Integrate apprenticeship deeply into existing workforce system.
- Generate demand through education and outreach efforts on benefits of Registered Apprenticeship.
- Embed accountability systems to track progress, address gaps, and report out.

**Guiding Principles for the Continued Development and Expansion of Maine’s Registered Apprenticeship System and Maine’s vision for a statewide system builds on a Registered Apprenticeship model and includes the following principles:**

- ✓ **Aligned, accessible, and easy to navigate system** including transparent entry and success requirements with common quality standards, continuum of learning with multiple on- and off-ramps, presence of strong intermediary organizations, and embedded into Adult Education, K-12, Career and Technical Education (CTE), and the Maine Community College System.
- ✓ **Clear connection to quality job and credential** including culmination in industry-recognized credential, skills development through mentored, work-based learning, and connection to a Registered Apprenticeship program.
- ✓ **Supported participation of under-represented populations** including supportive services of up to \$1,200 per training and including academic, career exploration, and wraparound supports, involve people who have been shut out from apprenticeship opportunities in leadership and design, and interpersonal supports via mentorship.
- ✓ **Inclusive, safe, supportive, and fair workplaces** including training for sponsors on creating inclusive workplaces and fair compensation and robust labor protections.
- ✓ **Sustainable system, accountable to outcomes** including equity standards for Registered Apprenticeship programs, accountability to equity outcomes, clear systems, and defined metrics to measure progress, and policies, practices, and structures to sustain the apprenticeship system.

## **Investment in the Future**

Funded by the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan and a USDOL State Apprenticeship Expansion, Equity, and Innovation (SAEEI) grant, the Maine Apprenticeship Program launched a \$12.3 million Request for Application grant opportunity in January 2022 and another in November of 2023. Twenty collaborations (employers, community-based organizations, training providers, unions, and apprenticeship intermediaries) were selected to receive grant funding. These investments will:

1. Expand the number of high-quality pre and registered Apprenticeships offered within our priority communities of women, people of color, people with disabilities, and justice involved individuals.
2. Increase the number of under-represented workers in Apprenticeship with a focus on women, people of color, people with disabilities, and justice involved individuals.
3. Expand partnership and alignment with Maine's overall workforce investment system.

In total, 20 organizations were selected to receive \$12.3 million to expand apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities across the State of Maine. These organizations are expected to create new training and work opportunities for 1,500 new apprentices and 2,000 new pre-apprentices, add more than 150 new employer sponsors, and create new apprenticeships in more than 50 new occupations by September of 2026.

### **Training Provider Eligibility Procedure:**

Maine's eligible training provider list (ETPL) is housed in Maine JobLink. The current policy that governs the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) Policy No. PY 15-05 CHANGE 1 ([Link to Policy](#)) was reissued on November 22, 2021. The ETP coordinator is currently in the process of reviewing this policy for areas of improvement to the application process.

The ETPL lists training providers and registered apprenticeship sponsors that have completed the application process. RA sponsors registered with the USDOL or the MDOL are automatically eligible to be included on the ETPL and are exempt from state and local ETP eligibility requirements. RA sponsors are provided with an email, a link, and instructions for filling out an on-line application.

The ETPL opens the door to partnering with providers of Title IB services.

There are currently 36 RA sponsors on the ETPL, and the number is growing daily as a result of funds for apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship through the Maine Jobs Recovery Plan using ARPA funds.

The procedure for initial eligibility for training providers requires that providers:

- Be accredited and/or endorsed nationally or through the State.
- Ensure accessibility to programs.
- Programs of study provided prepare trainees to enter occupations in demand in Maine, and that if programs are only offered online that they provide access to a live instructor.

Providers must complete all data requested on the application form and must sign a data sharing agreement assuring they will provide required performance data on all students participating in the approved programs.

To assist eligible training providers to submit the all-student data annually, the Center for Workforce Research and Information developed a process that permits providers to submit the data safely through the MaineEARNNS portal. The portal converts the data into a format that can be linked with data in the ETPL portion of Maine JobLink to produce the annual Eligible Training Provider report required by USDOL.

Continued eligibility requires provider conformance with requirements for submitting all student data required for annual performance reporting and requires that they review and update information on programs of study at least once every two years. Continued approval of specific programs of study depends upon relevance to occupations that are in demand in Maine. State policy PY15-05 Change 1 articulates requirements required for continued approval on the ETPL. Eligible training providers must sign a data sharing agreement that addresses performance reporting requirements pertaining to all students in approved programs of study and which outlines the specific data that must be provided annually to remain on the ETPL. Providers can apply for approval through the Maine JobLink system "Training Provider." The initial application requires that the provider submit all information regarding their own accreditation as a provider and full information about each program of study, including costs, locations, and methods of delivery (classroom/online), credit hours, resulting credentials, whether or not the program was developed with input from employers or industry groups, assurance that the training is fully accessible and more. They must also identify at least one occupation the training will prepare the student to enter into, the level of pay the student can expect and the rate of employment of all students completing the course of study.

In addition to initial information, providers must submit reports on all students so that an unemployment insurance (UI) wage match can occur to validate earnings and employment placement, and that includes information on the level of completion and subsequent credential each student achieves.

**Priority of Service:** Policy PY15-03 Adult Priority of Service provides guidance to local areas on the requirement to give priority of service to:

- a. Recipients of Public Assistance
- b. Low-income individuals
- c. Individuals who are basic skills deficient (which includes individuals with limited English).

The policy explains the sequence of priority when a veteran also meets this criterion, identifies how the state will monitor compliance with the requirement, and informs local boards that they must implement a local board policy if they identify additional priority for individuals with other barriers to employment. The policy also clarifies that individuals with disabilities may be considered a household of one and only their income is considered for priority purposes. To assure compliance a report has been developed from Maine JobLink that identifies the percentage of participants in each local area that meet the priority criteria to ensure this requirement is being met.

The following sequence of priority will apply:

1. **First priority** will be provided to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient in the local area who are covered persons with respect to veterans' priority. Per 683.230 when past income is an eligibility determinant for a veteran, any amounts received as military pay or allowances by any person who served on active duty and certain other specified benefits must be disregarded for the veteran and for other individuals for whom those amounts would normally be applied in making an eligibility determination for the purpose of determining if the veteran or covered person is a low-income individual.
2. **Second priority** will be provided to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient and are not covered veterans.
3. **Third priority** will be covered persons with respect to the veterans' priority, those covered persons not considered to be recipients of public assistance, low-income or basic skills deficient - who meet one or more of the barriers to employment identified as a priority by the local area, as defined in local board policy.

4. **Fourth priority** will be with respect to non-veterans, who are not recipients of public assistance, low income, or basic skills deficient but who meet one or more of the barriers to employment identified as a priority by the local area, as defined in local board policy.
5. **Fifth priority** will be with respect to adults with other barriers as identified in Local Board policy.

Priority of service does not apply to the dislocated worker or youth populations.

For the purpose of establishing income eligibility for priority of service, people with disabilities are considered a household of one. As outlined in WIOA Section 3(36)(A)(vi), a person with a disability can be considered a low-income individual under the priority of service if the individual's own income meets the income requirement described in WIOA Section 3(36)(A)(ii), even if the individual is a member of a family whose income exceeds the poverty line or is 70 percent of the Lower Living Standard Income Level.

Individualized career services and training services, outlined in WIOA Section 134(c)(2)(A)(xii), are subject to priority of service. Basic career services, outlined in WIOA Section 134(c)(2)(A)(i)-(xi), are not subject to the priority of service as they must be made available to all.

The Local Board has discretion to identify populations in the local area who are not low income, basic skills deficient, or recipients of public assistance but who are individuals documented as having other barriers to employment. Local Boards must establish local policy regarding the determination and implementation of a priority of service specific to the local area.

#### **Criteria for Transfer of Funds:**

Policy PY15-04 Change 1 - Transfer of Funds explains the process by which local areas can request to transfer funds between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and identifies the criteria considered in approving such requests. The policy explains funds transferred from one program to another adopt the eligibility requirements of the program into which they are placed, i.e.: DW funds transferred for use in the Adult program must adhere to the Adult priority of service and eligibility requirements. Local areas must complete a Request for Transfer of Funds Form and may request to transfer up to 100 percent of the formula funds allocated to the local area for that program year allocation.

On behalf of the Governor, staff of the Bureau of Employment Services and the fiscal service center review and approve requests from a Local Board seeking to transfer funds between programs. Requests are reviewed upon receipt, and unless there are extenuating circumstances, notification

of approval will be provided within ten business days or less. Local Areas may not transfer funds to or from the Youth formula program. Local areas must still meet the negotiated performance levels of the program from which the funds are being transferred.

For a request to be approved the local area must establish they have met one of the following criteria:

- A. The local area has significant discretionary funding targeted to serve one population over the other; for example, ample Trade Act and Dislocated Worker Grant funds are available to serve DWs, but only formula funds are available to serve Adults.
- B. The local area has fully expended funds in one program that still has unmet need yet has ample unobligated funds in the other program.
- C. Other: The local board may explain the rationale for the transfer request, identify the situation necessitating the need, and articulate the benefits that will result from the transfer; such rationale should be supported by the Local/Regional Plan and include assurance that the target group from which funds will be taken will not suffer negative consequences as a result.

Local areas seeking to transfer funds must submit the request to the Bureau using the transfer request form and must attach minutes reflecting local board approval of the transfer request. The policy clarifies that a transfer of funds does not require a fiscal amendment to the contract and explains how transferred funds are to be reported on the quarterly financial reports.

### **TAA & WIOA Co-enrollment**

Policy PY20-03 provides guidance to program administrators and service providers regarding mandated co-enrollment requirements of eligible TAA participants in the Title IB Dislocated Worker (DW) program. The policy explains how co-enrollment ensures Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) for trade affected dislocated workers and discusses how program resources can be aligned/braided on behalf of shared customers. The Maine JobLink provides a shared portal for federal reporting and client case management for both Trade Act and Title IB Dislocated Worker program participants.

The policy explains the State must also have co-enrollment available to trade affected workers who are eligible for other one-stop partner programs to ensure that all necessary and appropriate services, including supportive services, are available to the worker. Trade affected workers may choose to decline co-enrollment in WIOA; however, the State cannot deny such a worker benefits or services under the TAA program solely for declining co-enrollment in WIOA. If a TAA participant

declines to be co-enrolled, this must be documented in a case note entitled: TAA Participant Declines Co-Enrollment.

Most trade-affected workers meet the eligibility criteria of a dislocated worker defined at WIOA section 3(15). In certain circumstances, such as a general announcement of a closure, partially separated workers and adversely affected incumbent workers may meet the eligibility criteria as a dislocated worker under WIOA and must also be co-enrolled. TAA does not have a Selective Service compliance requirement; therefore, TAA participants who do not meet the Selective Service registration requirement will be exempt from the Dislocated Worker (DW) co-enrollment requirement. Both TAA and DW participants must be authorized to work in the United States. Referral for co-enrollment eligibility for TAA may not be known at the time Rapid Response services are being offered. Any dislocated worker who can benefit from, or who has requested, DW program services should be enrolled in DW while a TAA petition determination is being reviewed. If a customer is found to be TAA eligible and has not been enrolled in DW program services, TAA staff will make a referral for co-enrollment to the appropriate Title IB service provider for co-enrollment into DW and any other appropriate workforce program.

### **Common Exit**

In addition to consideration of participant eligibility for program co-enrollment, it is also important to understand whether the program in which the participant is to be co-enrolled is a common exit program. Common exit means that the participant will remain enrolled in the program until 90 days has passed without a service from any other common exit program the participant is co-enrolled in. Common exit occurs for participants enrolled in:

- Employment Services (Wagner-Peyser)
- Jobs for Veterans State Grant
- Title IB Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs
- Trade Adjustment Act

TAA funds are to be applied first. The TAA co-enrollment requirement does not require use of DW funds. The primary purpose of co-enrollment with DW is to promote access to DW program services, including: all of the basic and individualized career services available under the Title IB Dislocated Worker program as well as supportive services not covered by the TAA program.

Co-Case Management – program leads may determine which agency will take the role of primary case manager of co-enrolled participants. Such determinations may be based on client rapport with a specific case-manager, staff capacity, or expertise with a specific type of training plan, or, with customer approval, joint case management with shared case management responsibility may serve

the customer best. Whatever transpires, it is important that services be customer-centric and focused on the customers' goals, service needs, and outcomes - not the program or funding stream.

The policy explains that duplication of the employment or training plan and service entry is not necessary. The co-enrolling agency can enter a plan referencing the original agency plan which has already been uploaded and signed by the participant. The co-enrolling agency can add any additional requirements. For example, if a DW participant is co-enrolled in TAA, the TAA case manager will reference the original DW plan, add the services to be provided by TAA and include information on the six TAA criteria that must be met to fund training. The original partner plan must be updated to reference the additional services to be provided by the co-enrolling agency and any updated plans must be signed by all parties and uploaded in the documents file. If a participant is enrolled in occupational training under program A, and program B will be providing supports for that training, then program B must also enter a training service in MJL under their program to ensure training performance outcomes, such as measurable skill gains, will be tracked for performance reporting purposes and to ensure the training is from an eligible training provider, for an in-demand occupation. (Note: although TAA does not require a WIOA approved training provider, most TAA training providers are listed on the ETPL).

Data Access Permissions: Maine JobLink (MJL) provides staff permissions permitting specific agencies and offices to view participant files from programs tracked under MJL. As required under the MJL confidentiality agreement, CareerCenter staff may only view files of participants they are or will be working with and only with approval of the other program/agency. Per the confidentiality agreement, no staff may view participant files of individuals they are not working with directly, unless their position/role requires it for work-related purposes such as assigning cases or performance tracking and reporting functions. Both agencies must agree to give case manager read-access to participant data for co-enrollment purposes. For BES staff to provide permissions for staff from one agency to see files of participants from another program/agency, the agency requesting permissions must get approval from the agency in which the participant is to be co-enrolled via email and must forward that email giving permission to BES when requesting access for staff to view specific case files from the other agency. Agencies/programs must ensure participant releases are uploaded in MJL that document participant consent to co-enrollment and consent for staff from each program to share data and discuss customer plans and progress.

## **Strategy to ensure that WIOA and TAA co-enrolled participants receive necessary funded benefits and services.**

The Maine JobLink system permits TAA and DW staff to see when a participant is co-enrolled and view the specific services the participant is receiving from each funding stream. When a new client is identified as TAA eligible, the TAA staff person contacts the appropriate Title IB service provider to ensure a direct connection is made between the participant and the DW program and that a co-enrollment ensues. The joint case management identified in the co-enrollment policy supports appropriate braiding of funds and continuous communication via Maine JobLink between the co-case managers of TAA/DW clients.

The TAA Program Manager has scheduled monthly meetings with CareerCenter identified TAA staff and managers to review current TAA status, review ways to identify prior unused Trade benefits and assist workers to access training funds. We also discuss various questions and address TAA scenarios. Also identifying RESEA sessions as a way to identify possible past TAA participants with unused benefits, the TAA Program Manager has met with RESEA staff to review identifying TAA eligibility in Maine JobLink. This presentation has also been provided to other work force partner staff at Workforce Solutions, Eastern Maine Development Corporation and Aroostook Community Action Program.

### **Title IB Youth Requirements:**

#### **Youth Program Requirements**

Criteria identified by the State to be used by local boards in awarding grants to providers of youth services is articulated in policy **PY16-03 Youth Service Provider Criteria** as follows:

**A.** For the purpose of identifying appropriate youth service elements and career pathways for each youth participant, the youth provider must be able to conduct an objective assessment of each youth that includes an evaluation of:

- a.** Academic and literacy levels, including English language proficiency,
- b.** Pre-employment competencies and employability skills,
- c.** Prior work experience and transferrable skills,
- d.** Occupational skills, aptitudes (including occupational interests, work preferences, and aptitude for and interest in non-traditional occupations),
- e.** Developmental needs,
- f.** Supportive services necessary to successfully participate in all aspects of the youth program,
- g.** Barriers to transition to employment or post-secondary education,

**h.** Need for each of the fourteen youth service elements,

**i.** Need for comprehensive counseling and coordinated referrals to programs and services such as:

i. Mental health services,

ii. Substance abuse counseling,

iii. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families,

iv. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,

v. Housing and homeless assistance programs,

vi. Programs that address juvenile recidivism,

vii. Programs that assist individuals with disabilities,

viii. Parenting and childcare programs,

ix. Programs that provide guidance to youth whose parent/guardian is incarcerated or affected by addiction, or mental illness.

**B.** Must show evidence of ability to provide services that are age-, needs-, and ability-appropriate, including provision of suitable accommodations for individuals with disabilities.

**C.** Must, in partnership with the youth participant, develop of youth employment plans that articulate goals, benchmarks, activities, and service elements that will launch the youth on a defined career pathway and that will result in the youth meeting (or exceeding) locally negotiated performance measures. Such plans must include identification of short- and long-term goals, including goals for measurable skill gains, credential attainment, employment, and/or transition to postsecondary training or education.

**D.** Must document active involvement of family members, community service members, and others who play a critical in the youths' success, as part of program service design.

**E.** Demonstrate how opportunities for youth to practice leadership and citizenship skills, including providing peer mentoring, project leadership, and community service activities are provided.

**F.** Demonstrate strong business/employer involvement including specific examples of long-term relationships with employers who provide:

**a.** Work experience opportunities that include regular assessment of work readiness and employment competency skills,

**b.** Opportunities for job shadowing or informational interviewing,

**c.** Occupationally specific internships or On-the-Job Training opportunities,

**d.** Practice employment interviews that result in constructive feedback for youth

**e.** Adult mentoring,

**f.** Actual employment opportunities,

**g.** Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities,

- h. Participation in youth career exploration events and job fairs, and/or
  - i. Participation in youth committees and other youth advisory boards.
- G. Demonstrate an atmosphere of inclusion, appreciation of diversity, and commitment to youth advocacy through examples and anecdotal evidence of such.
- H. Demonstrate significant relationships with, and ability to braid the services of, a variety of community organizations that serve at-risk youth, through formal memoranda of understanding, contracts, or other formal agreements that provide evidence of such relationships, including relationships with Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, the juvenile justice system, Health and Human Services, post-secondary education providers, financial aid providers, employer organizations, and others.
- I. Demonstrate the ability to offer work-based learning experiences that stress the connection between academic knowledge and work activities, through provision of work-site agreements.
- J. Provide evidence of accessible facilities, programs, technology, and ability to provide appropriate accommodations for youth with disabilities.
- K. Demonstrate ways in which the youth program establishes high expectations for youth participants, including evidence showing most youth participants who enter the program participate in and complete the activities identified on the youth employment plan, and showing the program meets identified performance measures.
- L. Document ability to connect youth participants with all fourteen youth service elements, either through direct provision or through partnerships, MOUs, or other methods, to include provision of:
  - a. Tutoring and/or Study Skills,
  - b. Access to drop out recovery programs or alternative education,
  - c. Work-based learning,
  - d. Occupational Skills Training,
  - e. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as occupational training,
  - f. Leadership development,
  - g. Adult Mentoring,
  - h. Support Services,
  - i. Follow-up Services,
  - j. Comprehensive guidance and counseling,
  - k. Financial Literacy,
  - l. Entrepreneurial Skills/ Training,
  - m. Career guidance and counseling, including provision of local and state labor market information and information about how to prepare to enter occupations that are in demand in the local area and in Maine, and

n. Activities that prepare youth for entry into post-secondary education.

M. Evidence of employment of professional staff, including requisite credentials and experience and demonstration of a commitment to staff development that prepares staff to deliver the services identified above.

Due to limited formula funding, all three local areas procured youth services through a competitive RFP process through which they selected service providers that also provide career services to the adult and dislocated worker populations. Local boards in Maine do not provide services directly to participants; however, they do partner with outside organizations when necessary to connect youth to necessary mental health and/or substance use disorder counseling.

**2. Achieving Equitable Results for In-and Out-of-School Youth:** To ensure equitable results for in- and out-of-school youth the Maine Department of Labor requested a waiver of the requirement to spend 75% of youth funds on out-of-school youth. The waiver has triggered renewed relationships with high schools to jointly serve youth at risk of dropping out of school and the labor force. Through a grant from the Maine Children's Cabinet, the Department of Education launched a new Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO) program that permits high school students to earn credit toward graduation for participating in paid work experience. Multiple agencies convened to provide a three-day symposium that involved high school teachers to be trained as ELO coordinators, and included staff from Vocational Rehabilitation, WIOA IB youth programs, and Jobs for Maine Graduates. Another similar program will be convened this spring to ensure additional exchange between WIOA service providers and the schools, to highlight the successes achieved through the partnership, and to ensure continued collaboration to serve high school juniors and seniors eligible for Title IB and Title IV services.

Service providers conduct extensive outreach to identify eligible in- and out-of-school youth for enrollment. They rely on partner agency referrals and strategically place youth staff at outreach posts, such as community action programs, housing authorities, immigrant welcome centers, community-based organizations that serve immigrant and refugee populations, and other at-risk youth populations, community colleges, homeless shelters and programs serving homeless youth, new parent programs and regional juvenile justice offices where eligible youth participants are accessing other services. Relationships with these agencies to jointly serve, co-enroll and braid resources to better serve youth, have grown significantly as a result.

Retaining out-of-school youth in program activities has always been a challenge, partly because of Maine's vast geography, rurality, and lack of public transportation - but also because of the fleeting nature and caprice of this age group. Until recently, geography made it difficult to offer programs to

cohorts of youth who could benefit from the opportunity to bond with each other throughout the experience, support their peers through challenges, and share in celebrating achievements; however, that has changed significantly since the pandemic with the implementation of virtual youth academies in which cohorts of youth can participate jointly in receiving a number of required youth service elements. Virtual cohort approaches have become the norm and support youth in building personal esteem, providing opportunities for civic engagement, team building, and understanding the value of diversity, equity, and social justice. One youth from a very rural county expressed pleasure at being able to connect with others her own age and no longer being isolated due to distance from regional urban hubs. Also, two local areas are in the process of implementing youth incentive policies to reward youth participants who successfully complete training and work experience activities.

### **3. State Initiatives to Assist Local Boards to Implement Innovative Youth Service Delivery Models:**

WIOA requires that the 14 youth service elements be made available to youth participants. WIOA does not require the use of WIOA formula funds for every program element and encourages programs to leverage partner resources to provide some of the readily available program elements at no cost to youth participants. Service providers must ensure that if a program element is not funded with WIOA Title IB youth funds, the local program has an agreement in place with a partner organization that provides access to the program element and ensures the element provided by the outside agency will be closely connected to and coordinated with the WIOA youth program. There is no requirement that youth participate in all 14 youth elements; the youth assessment should determine the specific service elements a youth participates in and must be identified in his/her individual service strategy. All activities must be documented within the Maine JobLink, Labor's performance tracking and case management database system.

Maine's current WIOA youth program providers have a long history of innovative programming for the youth service elements. Both providers have developed versions of a "Youth Academy", training, often provided virtually, for youth to learn about their local labor market and related career and education opportunities. While flexible and responsive to the cohort's additional sector interests, industry focus includes high wage in demand careers in healthcare, IT and construction/clean energy/infrastructure. Most recently, the Maine Department of Labor provided technical assistance to the Northeastern local area to identify how youth funds could be used to implement a new curriculum for youth academy attendees that will result in one college credit within in the Maine

Community College System. The new curriculum results in youth completing many of the required youth service elements through interactive activities.

In the past year, the MDOL Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI) developed “Labor Market Information for Students”, a discovery dashboard for youth to explore the many career options available to them, what the future looks like for occupations in Maine, and the educational/training requirements that are often necessary to pursue a desired career path. This customized tool was introduced to Core Partners, including the WIOA youth program staff, during the State-hosted WIOA Core Team meeting, which is focused on innovative practices, initiatives, and opportunities to connect with related work and providers.

Conversations and presentations in core team meetings have resulted in strengthened connections between CTEs, high schools, other youth service providers, and youth-focused resources that help the providers to provide service elements and stretch their limited WIOA youth resources. A recent example of these connections has resulted in intentional connections between ARPA funded school-based initiatives focused on Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs) and the WIOA Youth and Vocational Rehabilitation providers and led to co-enrollments that allow for continuation of services well beyond the ELO. ELOs are hands-on, credit-bearing experiences (for elective or core credit) outside of the traditional classroom with an emphasis on community-based career exploration. These programs include paid work experiences, expanding educational opportunities in rural Maine, work skills development, and increasing engagement of otherwise disengaged youth. Grants totaling more than \$5.6 million were received by 26 programs across Maine covering 13 counties. The State facilitated direct connections to regional ELOs and coordinated WIOA youth program presentations during their two annual convenings.

The Maine Apprenticeship Program, with assistance from ETA and ARPA grants, has formalized pre-apprenticeship programs in Maine Statute. The programs prepare pre-apprentices to enter registered apprenticeship programs in the following occupations: Aquaculture, Carpentry, Culinary Arts, Automotive Technician, Clean Energy, and Construction. To bring this to fruition, there was significant collaboration between union-sponsored apprenticeship programs, community-based apprenticeship sponsors, industry members, high school Career and Technical Education Centers and Maine’s Community Colleges. Participating employers and industry associations promoting and implementing the pre-apprenticeships include the Association of General Contractors, Hospitality Maine, Educate Maine, the Maine Aquaculture Association, Reed and Reed Construction, and Revision Energy. Youth serving programs are also involved including numerous Adult Education

providers, YouthBuild, and several Career and Technical Education programs across the state. These opportunities have cemented WIOA involvement in registered apprenticeship as a pathway to employment and education, not just for youth but all program participants.

The State will continue to facilitate connections to projects and providers that specialize in youth program elements as the work of the Governor’s Office of Policy, Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) Children’s Cabinet. MDOL has been a leading partner in the [Plan for Maine Youth’s second of two strategies](#)- that all Maine youth enter adulthood healthy, connected to the workforce and/or education. The Cabinet’s short, intermediate and long-term strategies are bolstering the availability and strengthening the delivery of services directly connected to youth program elements, particularly comprehensive guidance and counseling, post-secondary preparation and transition activities, supportive services, education concurrent with workforce preparation and training, and work experiences.

## **YOUTH PROGRAM WAIVERS**

The Maine Department of Labor submitted a request for continuation of the waiver of WIOA Section 129(a)(4)(A) requiring the state and local areas to spend not less than 75 percent of youth funds to provide career and training services to out-of-school youth. The original waiver was approved for the remaining PY20 and full PY21 funding periods, the second and most recent request was approved on December 7, 2023, for the PY23 funding period.

The request provided background on an overarching goal of Maine Children’s Cabinet to provide a paid work experiences to high-school students, particularly those at risk of dropping out. Additionally, the Maine Apprenticeship Council approved numerous pre-apprenticeship programs that are open to high school juniors and seniors. The approved waiver will permit Title IB service providers to recruit and enroll WIOA eligible in-school youth to support paid work experience and paid supports for those enrolled in approved pre-apprenticeship programs.

Results of the initial waiver showed a significant increase in in-school youth enrollments and increased spending on youth work experience activities. It took a while for WIOA service providers to reengage with high schools in their local areas so start up on the initial waiver was slower than anticipated. WIOA service providers are engaged in supporting other in-school youth initiatives such as the Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) offered through several Maine high schools. ELOs can include a paid work experience that can earn a student credit toward high school completion.

Maine would like to request a waiver for the PY24 allocation period as we continue to see an uptick in in-school youth enrollments. In the first two quarters of the new program year 38 percent of new enrollees were in-school youth. This is due to the enormous efforts of the Children’s Cabinet and the WIOA IB partners to connect WIOA services to high school youth in need of assistance. Two recent webinars showcased how WIOA programs can assist high school youth in need to access WIOA Program services and how they can partner with the schools to participate in Extended Learning Opportunities, which often include paid worker experiences and through which the youth can earn credit toward high school graduation. Maine’s WIOA IB Youth service providers presented to hundreds of teachers at Maine high schools. There has been an uptick in positive outcomes, and the current quarterly rolling four report shows an overall fourth quarter placement rate for youth of 83.87% and a credential attainment rate for youth of 58.06%. Maine will continue to closely track the outcomes of in-school youth and those enrolled in the PY23 period and the prior three years to determine whether to request another waiver for the PY25 allocation period as well.

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#### TITLE 1-B ASSURANCES

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1. The Bureau of Employment Services of the Maine Department of Labor has implemented a policy to ensure that Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of career and training services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients, or basic skills deficient. Please see [policy PY15-03 Adult Priority of Service](#).
2. The Bureau of Employment Services of the Maine Department of Labor has implemented a policy to ensure that local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JSVG program’s Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist. Please see [policy PY15-20 Change 1 Referring Veterans with SBEs](#). The State Workforce Board has implemented a written policy and procedures setting forth the criteria to be used by Chief Elected Officials for the appointment of local workforce development board members. Please see [policy PY15-02 Criteria for Appointing Local Board Members](#).
3. The State Workforce Board has drafted a policy and procedures to ensure local workforce development boards are certified by the Governor every two years in accordance with WIOA Section 107 (c) (2). Please see [policy PY15-22 Local Board Certification Requirements](#).
4. The State of Maine does not use an alternative entity in place of the State Workforce Board.
5. The Maine Department of Labor distributes adult and dislocated worker program funds using the formulas delineated in WIOA Section 133 (b) (2) (A) and (B). Maine does not utilize the discretionary allocation method described in Section 133(b) (3). In the event the State identifies funds that may be made available for reallocation from one local area to another

local area the State will follow the reallocation procedures delineated under WIOA Section 133 (c).

6. Through annual and ongoing monitoring and review processes, the Bureau of Employment Services of the Maine Department of Labor assures that WIOA Title I funds are not used to promote or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA Section 181 (b) (7).
7. The Maine Department of Labor distributes youth funds using the formulas delineated in WIOA Section 128 (a) and (b). Maine does not utilize the discretionary allocation method identified in Section 128 (b) (3). In the event the State identifies funds that may be made available for reallocation from one local area to another local area, the State will follow the reallocation procedures delineated under WIOA Section 128 (c).
8. The Maine Department of Labor administers the following federally funded programs: Vocational Rehabilitation, Wagner-Peyser, and the Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth formula programs under Title I of WIOA. In addition, the Maine Department of Labor oversees implementation of State Statutes regarding provision of vocational rehabilitation services to eligible individuals with disabilities. Maine assures that State Vocational Rehabilitation Statutes work in tandem with and cooperatively with the requirements for services of individuals with disabilities identified under Title I of WIOA.
9. The Maine Department of Labor assures that it will report on the impact and outcome of approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report. Maine received a waiver on the requirement to spend 75% of youth funds on out-of-school youth and waiver of limit of use of ITAs for out-of-school youth only. More on these waivers discussed under the section on Title IB Youth Services.
10. The Bureau of Employment Services of the Maine Department of Labor assures that it has taken action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900. The Bureau has contracted with the Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services to conduct annual and as needed financial monitoring of recipients and sub-recipients of WIOA Title I funds to ensure compliance with WIOA and OMB requirements, as well as to ensure that any procurement transactions to be conducted between local boards and the Maine Department of Labor will be conducted on a cost-reimbursement basis. Currently, the Maine Department of Labor awards only pass-through funds to local boards.

**Employment Service Professional Staff Development:**

**1. Employment Service Staff. Describe how the State will staff the provision of labor exchange services under the Wagner-Peyser Act, such as through State employees, including but not limited to state merit staff employees, staff of a subrecipient, or some combination thereof.**

Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services, directly employs staff for all Labor Exchange activities including staffing of the Maine JobLink, our public labor exchange system, and staff in local CareerCenters who connect job seekers and employers. Maine Department of Labor staff are all employed by the State of Maine as state merit staff.

**2. Describe how the State will utilize professional development activities for Employment Service staff to ensure staff is able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers:**

The Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment (MDOL, BES) services established a formal staff-development initiative for all new and existing Wagner-Peyser staff members several years ago and continues to improve and add to the content and accessibility of it. The five major staff development efforts listed below have been implemented to ensure a dynamic on-boarding/staff development system that promotes a high level of workforce development job knowledge including the system structure, enabling legislation, process, programs, partners, services, expectations, and customer service. It also includes education on ensuring equity and accessibility for all populations including those with disabilities, English language learners, those in recovery, those with criminal justice history, youth, aging adults, the LGBTQ+ community, and others. Due to the BES staff and UI staff both being under the same Department, Wagner-Peyser focuses on UI recipients, and with BES's renewed RESEA delivery, there is a very close working relationship with UI staff where peer-to-peer learning takes place. In addition, staff receive formal UI training at onboarding and subsequently as needed. Joint quarterly meetings with UI partners and BES staff are planned to train staff, share information, discuss opportunities for increased collaboration, and resolve any issues with UI services in the CareerCenters.

**Five major staff development efforts:**

1. Staff Development Coordinators: The BES has two half-time Staff Development Coordinators who work with management and supervisors to identify training needs, seek training opportunities to address those needs, and perform the logistics of training delivery.

2. On-demand Staff Training/Resource Dashboard: BES utilizes a centralized library of written and video training links available to all staff. The library consists of a large number of training aids on subjects including routine on-boarding such as our code of ethics and personnel policies to information on enabling legislation, accessibility guidelines, partner information and MOU's, program information and guidelines, DEIA, etc.. Supervisors select priority training sessions for staff and then receive notification when training has been completed. All staff are able to access the dashboard for refresher training or to find answers.
3. Monthly live training sessions: Program Managers provide live monthly sessions with program overview and question and answer sessions to assist new staff and refresh seasoned staff on services, expectations, performance goals and progress, and to trouble shoot any issues.
4. Certified Workforce Development Professional Course: The majority of our Career Consultants (67 frontline staff) completed the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals' Certified Workforce Development Professional Course (CWDP) with Dynamic Works Institute during the past year and are now nationally certified as competent in the following areas:
  - a. Customer Services Methodology
  - b. Diversity in Workforce Development
  - c. Labor Market Information and Intelligence
  - d. Principles of Communication
  - e. Workforce Development Structure, Policies and Programs
5. Apprenticeship Development: The BES is in the development of a registered CareerCenter Consultant apprenticeship program and hopes to launch the initiative in the near future.

**Strategies supporting training and awareness across core programs and U.I.:** Three of the core programs fall under the Maine Department of Labor which also houses the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation (BUC), Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, and the Bureau of Employment Services (BES), which includes Wagner-Peyser, Trade Act, the Veterans Program, and the State Monitor Advocate. The bureaus have a strong working relationship. Front-line employment services staff are housed in each one-stop and are fully trained on UI eligibility and UI issue identification. Staff providing Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) services have cross trained regular Employment Services staff who are able to stand in if an RESEA specialist is unavailable.

Designated one-stop staff are trained on how to navigate Maine's UI web portal and are experienced in assisting individuals with filing for UI and accessing their accounts through the portal. In addition,

Maine's BUC has five UI related videos on their website that one-stop staff have access to and are encouraged to view. The State conducts training to ensure one-stop staff members are familiar with UI basics, UI work requirements, and penalties of noncompliance. Training to ensure that UI workers are familiar with one-stop services and can make appropriate referrals at the time of initial or subsequent claims is also provided.

**One-stop provision of meaningful assistance in filing claims for unemployment compensation:** Maine meets the needs of customers requesting assistance with UI claims in a two-pronged approach. Appropriately informed one-stop staff provide unemployment claim information and assistance in the one-stop by answering basic UI questions, assisting customers with creating a ReEmployME account to file initial and continued benefit claims online, and filing weekly certifications via phone through Maine's interactive voice response system.

Additionally, one-stop staff explain how the individual can manage their UI account through the UI web portal. If an individual is unable to file a UI claim due to significant barriers (such as language or disability) that prevent the use of online tools, the customer will be assisted by one-stop staff or be directed to a phone line dedicated to serving the individual needs of UI claimants. The Bureau of Unemployment Compensation (BUC) has dedicated specific staff of the day who can be contacted through each one-stop to address a specific UI issue, and the BUC staff of the day contact the customer within 24 hours if not immediately available to address the issue.

**Strategy for providing reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals:** Maine seamlessly fulfills Reemployment Assistance requirements by actively engaging unemployed individuals in the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program. This strategic initiative is designed to decrease the length of unemployment, lower exhaustion rates, reduce improper unemployment compensation (UC) payments, and improve overall employment outcomes and earnings. The overarching objective is to attain a higher re-employment rate for individuals utilizing reemployment services through one-stop centers compared to those who do not. The RESEA program adopts a structured format to engage participants actively, facilitating the creation of individualized reemployment plans. Claimants independently update their MJL profile, and reemployment services consultants collaborate to address participants' needs. Upon completion, claimants acknowledge their needs and receive a comprehensive set of services, including an unemployment compensation eligibility review, personalized local labor market information, enrollment in Wagner Peyser Act-funded employment services, an individualized reemployment plan (IRP), relevant referrals to services and jobs, an introduction to CareerCenter services, enhanced job matching in Maine's JobLink, and participation in various reemployment services tailored to individual needs. Career services may include access to job hunting guides, tools for a successful job

search, information on skill assessments, online assessment tools, and coordination with other programs and services. Additionally, participants may receive career services like referral to training or workforce activities, information on in-demand industries, community-based or WIOA support services, financial aid resources, financial literacy services, and career readiness support such as resume writing and interviewing. Through well-coordinated efforts, Maine guarantees that its unemployed claimants gain early access to reemployment services and various workforce programs while receiving UC benefits.

A key focus of Maine's general employment services is dedicated to supporting the UI population. The collaboration between Maine's Bureau of Unemployment Compensation (BUC) and Bureau of Employment Services (BES) is committed to ensuring that individuals receiving unemployment benefits are treated not merely as claimants but as proactive job seekers. Claimants are required to register on Maine's JobLink (MJL), the state's labor exchange system. Upon filing an initial claim through the ReEmployME system, UI claimants are automatically registered with MJL through an interface connection if no prior registration exists. This streamlined process provides claimants with comprehensive access to diverse job opportunities, facilitating their job search and efforts to secure new employment. Through MJL, both claimants and other job seekers can develop a professional resume as part of their labor exchange registration. This printable resume becomes part of a resume bank accessible to employers seeking potential employees, ensuring claimants and job seekers begin their efforts with a polished resume and automatic exposure to employers in need of workers.

To enhance individual attention and service accessibility, Maine is implementing a common triage process at one-stop centers. This approach ensures that all visitors receive personalized attention, are informed about available services, and are directed to relevant information and services. Utilizing a standardized staff interview guide statewide, this process tailors responses based on gathered information, ensuring consistent and effective assistance to meet identified needs. MDOL ensures all customers are well-informed about the range of services available to them. This includes details on upcoming job fairs, job search workshops, tools for job hunting, self-employment opportunities, training and college options, apprenticeship programs, on-the-job training information, and referrals, as well as services tailored for veterans. Additionally, BES staff provide information on college financial aid and refer to FAFSA workshops, vocational rehabilitation, housing assistance, childcare services, unemployment compensation, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), preparation for Hi-Set exams, health care and Affordable Care Act details, and Maine General Assistance program information with relevant referrals.

The close collaboration between BUC and BES aims to facilitate the timely return of unemployed workers to employment, thereby reducing the duration of unemployment, minimizing exhaustion rates, decreasing improper unemployment compensation (UC) payments, enhancing overall employment outcomes and earnings. These concerted efforts also contribute to a higher re-employment rate for individuals receiving reemployment services through one-stops compared to those who do not. These collaborative initiatives ensure that Maine's unemployed claimants gain access to reemployment services and various workforce programs early in their receipt of UC benefits.

**Use of Wagner-Peyser funds to support UI claimants:** Maine requires all UI claimants to register for Maine's JobLink. Once registered, job seekers will receive notification of job matches, browse for jobs, upload their resume, and receive job referrals. In addition, JobLink registrants are sent email blasts notifying them of job fairs, special recruitments, critical need jobs, and other job search related information. UI call centers are regularly informed of job orders on the JobLink and use this information during claim calls to steer claimants toward immediate job openings and CareerCenters services.

Claimants visiting CareerCenters can partake of self-service activities by using resources such as computers and phones to conduct job searches, respond to employment opportunities, and manage their UI claim through Maine's UI portal. In addition to self-service options, claimants can also receive staff-assisted services, such as: job search workshops, assistance accessing and navigating Maine's JobLink and the UI web portal, individualized labor market information, referral to veterans' services, and referral to education, training, and supportive services.

BUC staff hold hours in CareerCenters on a weekly basis to address specific claimant needs and when they are not available, there is a dedicated UI phone in each CareerCenter that is monitored by UI staff and available to claimants to reach UI. Maine's CareerCenter workers provide most of the public face-to-face interaction for MDOL. Wagner-Peyser field staff provide a great deal of UI assistance such as: answering basic questions, supplying written UI information, assisting claimants in creating their UI web portal accounts, filing a claim, using computer or phone to contact the claims center, sorting out paperwork to send/fax to claims center, and providing hope and encouragement to claimants.

BES receives a weekly report of all claimants who are five weeks from exhausting their benefits. Center staff contact each individual on the list via email to introduce the CareerCenter and services as well as invite them to connect with local CareerCenter staff for assistance with their job search. If the job seeker has returned to work, placement information is documented and BUC is notified.

In addition, BUC and BES staff in the administrative and local offices are familiar with each other's programs and often communicate on strategies, program-specific issues, and questions. Select UI staff members have privileges to the staff-side of Maine's data management and public labor exchange, Maine's JobLink.

**Registration of UI claimants with the State's employment service if required by State law:**

Maine Revised Statutes Title 26, Chapter 13, Subchapter 6, Section 1192, sets requirements for UI claimants to be registered for work with the employment office as evidenced by the following excerpt from Statute:

"Has registered for work: The individual has registered for work at, and continued to report at, an employment office in accordance with rules the commission adopts, except that the commission may, by rule, waive or alter either or both of the requirements of this subsection as to individuals attached to regular jobs and as to such other types of cases or situations with respect to which the commission finds that compliance with the requirements would be oppressive, or would be inconsistent with the purposes of this chapter. A rule under this subsection may not conflict with section 1191, subsection 1.

The individual must actively seek work each week in which a claim for benefits is filed unless the individual is participating in approved training under subsection 6 or work search has been waived in accordance with rules adopted by the commission and provide evidence of work search efforts in a manner and form as prescribed by the Department of Labor. Failure to provide required work search documentation results in a denial of benefits in accordance with section 1194, subsection 2 for the week or weeks for which no documentation was provided unless the department determines there is good cause for the individual's failure to comply with this requirement."

**Administration of the work test for State UI system:** Claimants are required to register with the Maine's JobLink (Maine's labor exchange system). When a claimant files an initial claim for UI benefits through the ReEmployME system, the claimant will automatically be registered with the Maine JobLink (MJL) system through an interface connection if no prior registration exists. Claimants receive an email with their login details and information on how to proceed to their MJL profile to edit and add information.

Employment Services (ES) staff are trained in basic unemployment insurance (UI) requirements, including identifying work test issues such as ensuring that an individual whom a State determines

to be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits is able to work, available for work, and actively seeking work in accordance with 20 CFR §652.210, the State's unemployment compensation law, or 20 CFR §652.290 assisting in resolving UI claimant problems in coordination with UI partner team members. Able and available issues are reported timely and appropriately to Unemployment Compensation. Employment Services staff provide Job Finding and Placement Services to claimants. Staff understand acceptable work search methods and work to expand the claimants understanding of the many options to actively seeking work and encourage a robust job search that will result in new employment.

Active work search methods reviewed with claimants include; contacting an employer directly about a job, participating in a job interview, submitting a resume or application to an employer or to a job website, using a public or private employment agency, job service, placement firm, or university employment center, contacting a job recruiter or head hunter, placing or answering a job advertisement, and checking union or professional registers or seeking assistance through social networks and review of State and Federal job opportunities. In addition, claimants receive career services suitable to their reemployment needs including standard labor exchange-based job matching and referral services. Provision of referrals and assistance with access to and education programs.

All customers visiting the one-stop centers have access to available resources including training and education. Information provided during orientation. Customers can also access printed materials stocked in information centers, links to online job getting resources, and documents available on public computers at the one-stops and Maine's CareerCenter website.

Core partner service providers collaborate on providing virtual orientation and information workshops that explain the resources available through Maine's workforce development system. A new triage process is being implemented that makes immediate referrals to services and asks the customer to register in Maine's JobLink. Currently, the JobLink registration uploads into the State's one-stop operating system and provides the beginning of a WIOA Title I application. Customers complete an initial application that registers them for Maine's JobLink labor exchange and case management systems. The system identifies the customer's potential eligibility for WIOA Title I and other training grant programs and results in creation of a resume or permits them to upload a completed resume. Orientation workshop curriculum explains how to access career services and how to get a referral to one-stop and other community services.

**Provision of referrals and assistance with access to education programs:** All customers visiting the one-stop centers have access to available resources including training and education.

Information is available in orientation packets passed out to customers, printed materials stocked in information centers, software, web-links, and documents available on information center computers and Maine's CareerCenter website. A new triage process is being implemented that makes immediate referrals to services and asks the customer to register in Maine's JobLink. Currently, the JobLink registration uploads into the State's one-stop operating system and provides the beginning of a WIOA Title I application. Customers complete an initial application that registers them for Maine's JobLink job bank and case management system, determines eligibility for WIOA Title I programs, and creates a resume. Workshop curriculum includes orientation to CareerCenter services and an opportunity for referral to one-stop and other community services.

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### AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP)

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Maine's Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP) details the activities planned for providing outreach to Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFWs), H-2A workers and agricultural employers and partners for 2024-2027. The goal of the AOP is to describe strategies Maine Department of Labor through Bureau of Employment Services will use to provide services to MSFWs through Maine JobLink and Maine CareerCenters that are quantitatively proportional and qualitatively equivalent to individuals who are non-MSFW's. Maine Department of Labor is committed to ensuring that domestic farmworkers and H-2A foreign labor workers understand their rights and how they are protected through Maine Labor Laws. Maine is identified by the US Department of Labor as a non-significant Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) state and is among states with a low estimation of MSFW activity. Individual CareerCenters can also be classified as either significant or non-significant based on MSFW activity and of the 12 CareerCenters across the state, all are classified as non-significant MSFW activity sites.

#### **Assessment of Need – (e)(1), (e)(2), (e)(3)**

Maine's agricultural sector is large and diverse, contributing significantly to Maine's overall economy. As the new Census of Agriculture has not been released, Maine looks to the data from the 2017 Census of Agriculture (<https://www.maine.gov/labor/docs/2023/mwaw/FullMaine2017AgCensus.pdf>) by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. The report lists 7,600 farms in Maine managing over 1.3 million acres and indicating a seven percent (7%) decrease in the number of farms since 2012. Most Maine farms are small family-operated enterprises employing few people beyond family members. The average size of farms is 171 acres, with forty-seven percent less than 50 acres in size. The 2017 census indicates 29 percent of Maine farms hire farm labor for a total of 9,324 workers (hired farm labor excluding contract workers). A total of 9,807 unpaid workers (agricultural workers not on the

payroll who performed activities or worked on a farm or ranch) reflect the number of family members working on farms. In 2017, 2,191 migrant workers, including contract workers, were hired.

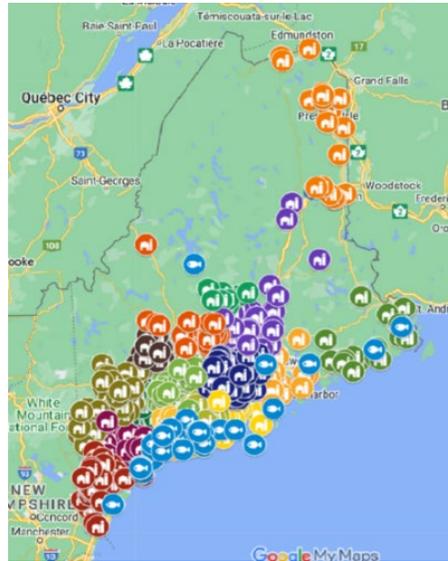


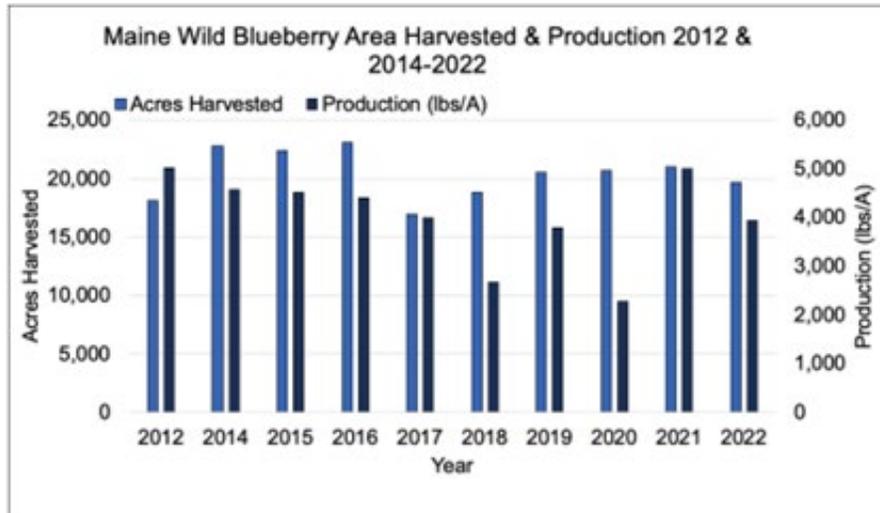
FIGURE 27: MAP OF MAINE’S FARM AND SEAFOOD PRODUCT DISTRIBUTION

*(The Interactive map above showing Maine’s Farm and Seafood product information is courtesy of Maine Cooperative Extension’s website and be found at <https://extension.umaine.edu/agriculture/farm-product-and-pickup-directory/>)*

Maine’s agricultural landscape includes a short production season, with most activity from June through the end of September/early October and includes crops such as blueberries in Washington County, potatoes, broccoli and cauliflower in Aroostook County, apples in Androscoggin and Oxford Counties, and other diversified fruits and vegetables that are positioned around the state. Several hundred MSFW’s work off season in production work for holiday wreath making in Washington County and seafood processing from November through mid-December. During this time, there is a focus on outreach and providing services to those locations by service providers and Maine Department of Labor. While Maine’s production season is relatively short, peak season in Maine is typically identified as mid-April, as employers begin cultivation to mid-October, when harvesting winds down.

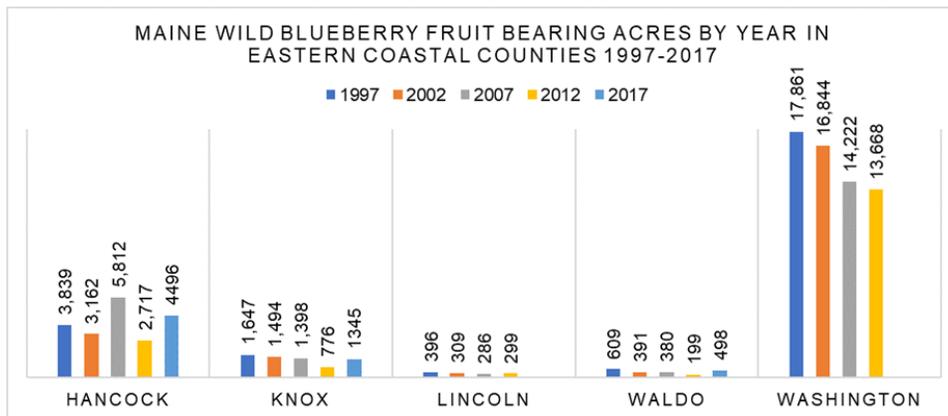
IN 2019, MAINE REPORTED THAT INCREASED MECHANIZATION AND REDUCTION IN MANAGED ACRES IN SOME AREAS OF THE STATE CONTINUES TO IMPACT THE ANNUAL NUMBER OF MSFW’S NEEDED BY THE BLUEBERRY HARVESTING SECTOR, SHIFTING

WORKERS TO THE FREEZING/PACKING PLANTS. FIGURE 28: MAINE WILD BLUEBERRY HARVEST AND PRODUCTION FOR 2012 AND 2014-2022



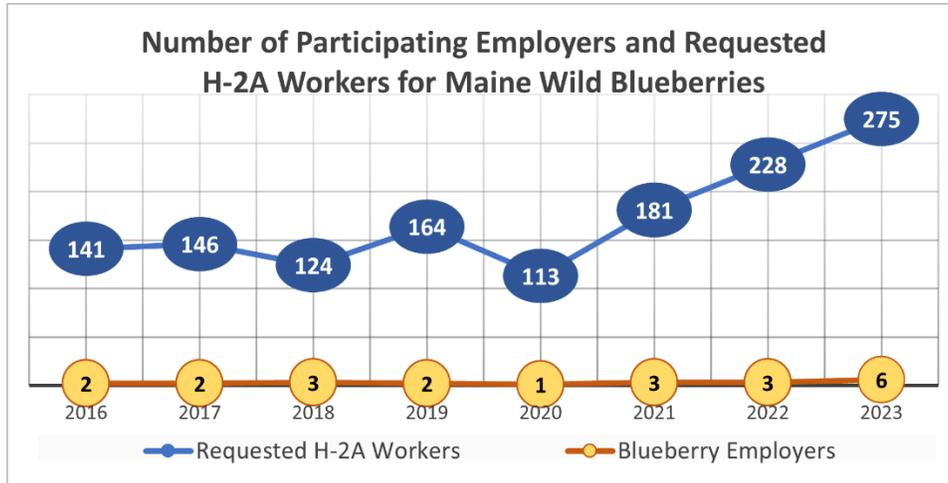
Both Figure 28 (above) and Figure 29 (below) are published on the University of Maine Cooperative Extension webpage found at <https://extension.umaine.edu/blueberries/factsheets/statistics-2/crop-production-statistics-2019/>

FIGURE 29: MAINE WILD BLUEBERRY FRUIT BEARING ACRES BY YEAR



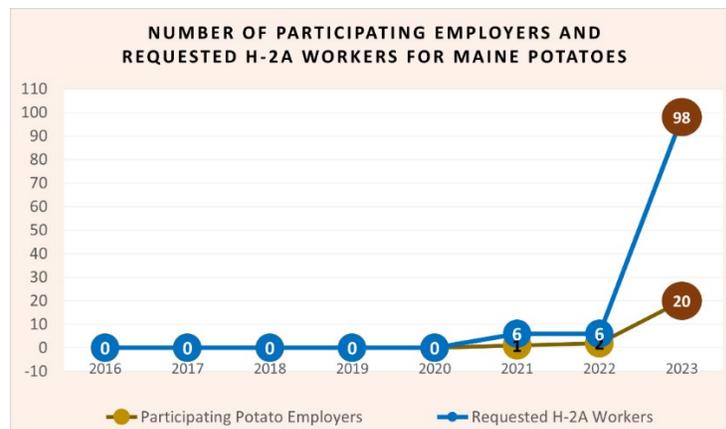
While we saw a dip in the number of requested blueberry workers through H-2A in 2020, the years 2021 through 2023 saw those same numbers more than double, as represented in Figure 30 below.

FIGURE 30: NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS AND REQUESTED H-2A WORKERS FOR BLUEBERRIES FROM MDOL



Broccoli producers have remained consistent since 2019, with two employers producing broccoli and cauliflower as their sole crop. Labor needs and requests for H-2A workers have increased from 142 in 2019 to 376 in 2023. From 2022 to 2023, potatoes saw a sharp incline in both employer crop diversification and the number of requested foreign labor workers to fill agricultural staffing needs, as shown below in Figure 31.

FIGURE 31: NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS AND REQUESTED H-2A WORKERS FOR POTATOES FROM MDOL



Apple orchards and other tree fruit employers have turned to ‘agro-tourism’ and ‘pick-your-own’ systems as a strategy for sustainability and the larger apple producers use the H-2A program for

harvest purposes and rely on returning local seasonal and permanent help in the packing houses. (Maine's Orchard Map courtesy of Maine Pomological Society website can be found at <https://www.maineapples.org/map/>). Farm operations are challenged to find local, domestic workers when so many alternative job opportunities exist for traditional seasonal and migrant workers looking to transition to a full-time, year-round position, which is feeding the growth in H-2A worker requests. Throughout the state, a number of growers of diversified crops, including fruits, vegetables, and nurseries, use foreign H-2A labor to supplement the available returning local seasonal field help.

The demand for farm labor remains consistent in an economic climate of low unemployment and a general shortage of workers overall across most industries, including agricultural employers. It is estimated that in Maine, there could be as many as 1,800 MSFW's in agricultural industries during peak season, including H-2A workers, with less than 200 during low season times. Migrant workers travel to Maine from Mexico, Haiti, Canada, Central America, Texas, Florida, and California with most workers arriving from Mexico. Many of them travel with their families, including small children, with most of Maine's MSFW's speaking Spanish or Haitian-Creole with limited or no English proficiency. While some MSFW's are from Spanish countries, they speak an indigenous dialect, other than Spanish. MSFW's are further challenged by little to no educational background and/or are illiterate. Often, they lack reliable transportation to and from the job site or to the next out-of-area job and often depend on contractor provided transportation or undependable personal vehicles in need of repairs or maintenance. Consistently, workers need support navigating employment and supportive services at the local, state, and federal levels and often lack awareness of certain services such as: general health, dental and eye care, mental health, basic education service, childcare for young family members or school alternatives, food and nutrition, safe and suitable housing, fair labor practices, wage or working condition issues, education and job training opportunities to assist the worker in securing full-time agricultural work or regular, stable non-agricultural employment.

In 2024, one of Maine's goals is to better capture demographics and language preference and use that data to increase access, improve services and ensure equity. Maine continues to see a gradual declining trend in the number of migrant workers that further exacerbates the labor challenge for Maine's farm operators. This has led to more than double the number of employers participating in the H-2A program since 2019 as shown in Figure 32 (below) and a considerable uptick of requested H-2A workers through the foreign labor program of more than 142% since 2019 as shown in Figure 33 (below). Maine projects a year-over-year demand for H-2A workers with increased applications submitted to USDOL to meet worker demand. This mirrors the national trend.

FIGURE 32: NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS PARTICIPATING IN H-2A FROM 2016-2023 FROM MDOL

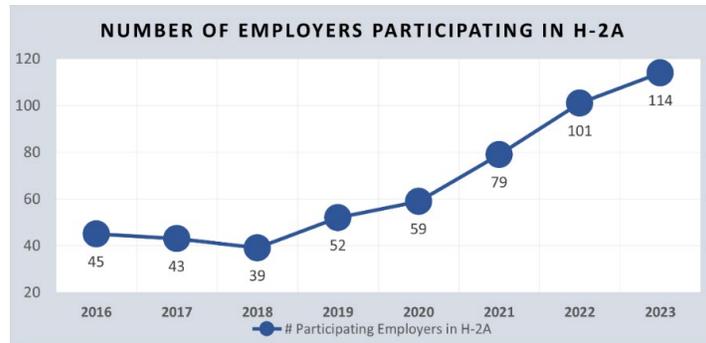


FIGURE 33: NUMBER OF REQUESTED WORKERS FOR H-2A FROM 2016-2023 FROM MDOL



**Structure of Maine’s Monitor Advocate System –**

The Monitor Advocate System ensures that Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs) have equitable access to career services, training and skill development, and workforce protections offered by Maine CareerCenters so they may improve their living and working conditions.

Maine employs one full-time, year-round, bilingual MSFW Outreach Worker, who is merit staff with no part-time MSFW Outreach Worker positions. The Outreach Worker who works with Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW’s) will conduct full-time outreach (40 hours per week) around the state during peak season and part-time outreach (20 hours per week) during non-peak times. Outreach activity conducted by the MSFW Outreach Worker is performed on a year-round basis regardless of peak or non-peak times as designated by Maine’s season.

In addition to the MSFW Outreach Worker, Maine employs one (1) Director of Job Services who oversees both the Migrant Seasonal Farmworker and Foreign Labor Programs (H-2A, H-2B, H-1B)

and one (1) State Monitor Advocate, who monitors compliance of employment services provided to MSFW's under the Wagner-Peyser program.

Both the MSFW Outreach Worker and the State Monitor Advocate are supported 100% by Wagner-Peyser funds, in accordance with the Wagner Peyser Act – 20 CFR 651.10, 20 CFR 653, 20 CFR 654, and 20 CFR 658.

### **Outreach Activities – (e)(4), (e)(4)(1)**

Employment Services' staff strives to “meet individuals where they are at” both literally and figuratively and the expectations of the MSFW Outreach Worker is no different. The outreach worker travels to agricultural employer sites, farmworker advocacy organizations and other locations where MSFW's gather to provide direct, on-site services. Outreach functions are tied to the service delivery areas where farm workers and agricultural employers live, work, and congregate. Service delivery strategies aim to assist farm workers' efforts to achieve integration and self-sufficiency.

The MSFW Outreach Worker is merit staff who locates and connects with MSFW's around the state. This position is classified as full-time, 40 hours per week and is centrally located in the state for minimal travel into rural communities and to maximize time conducting outreach. The primary delivery method for outreach is personal contact. The MSFW Outreach Worker coordinates planned outreach and travels to farms several days each week to meet with migrant and seasonal farmworkers in person. Outreach services can be provided to farmworkers at their living and gathering locations outside of the physical CareerCenters, which may include farm sites, labor camps, agricultural partner locations, grocery stores, churches, etc.

Outreach staff are provided a satellite-connected laptop and tablets that farmworkers can use in the field or in locations where Wi-Fi may not be available, allowing employment services including Maine JobLink and supportive services to be widely available throughout Maine. They are also supplied with mobile devices, making the Outreach Worker accessible to MSFW's even when they are not at the CareerCenter. Outreach staff carry identification that identifies them as a state employee. A multitude of resources are carried with the Outreach Worker to include packets of information relevant to:

- Worker rights, labor laws and protections under Maine and Federal law,
- Employment related services, including Unemployment Insurance,

- Supportive community services, such as healthcare, transportation, childcare, legal assistance,
- The Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System (Complaint System) as defined in 20 CFR 651.10, 658.411 and 658 Subpart E and how to file a complaint,
- Information on Pathstone and other organizations that serve MSFW's,
- Local CareerCenter information, and
- Outreach worker contact information

Packet information is available in several languages and can be tailored to meet individual needs and to provide specific information regarding workshops and training opportunities available at their local CareerCenter. A presentation is also available to provide farmworkers this same information by written and oral means and can be delivered in-person in English and Spanish by the MSFW Outreach Worker.

During peak season, this position spends 100% of their time on Migrant Seasonal outreach and other tasks as defined in 653.107(b) that directly benefit and support MSFW activity across the state.

Over the next year, Maine will focus on several areas involving expanded outreach, to include:

***Outreach to a larger percentage of MSFW's -***

The challenges faced over the past two years with MSFW Outreach Worker turnover and retention impacted the amount of outreach conducted to MSFW's across Maine. This was further compounded by difficulty finding candidates from MSFW backgrounds or who had substantial work experience in farmworker activities, along with the bilingual requirements. With success in recent hiring of a well-qualified MSFW Outreach Worker who speaks English and Spanish and has experience specific to this population, Maine is positioned to significantly improve outreach across the state.

As we continue to understand the full scope of Maine's MSFW population and areas of activity, Maine will strive to connect with the majority of Maine's MSFW population in the future. Maine will work on a phased approach as capacity increases and will conduct an annual assessment of numbers and locations of migrant seasonal workers in the state to adjust as necessary. Maine will continue to explore communication strategies and platforms that align with how MSFWs receive information

and use this to create opportunities for awareness of and referral to services and opportunities across the state.

### **MSFW Outreach Worker Technical Assistance and Training - (e)(4)(2), (e)(4)(3), (e)(4)(4)**

Training for the MSFW Outreach Worker starts during their first week with training on 20 CFR 653.107(b), that outlines the Outreach Staff's responsibilities under federal regulations. As a continuum to this training, an overview of 20 CFR 653.107(a) that highlights the State Workforce Agency's outreach responsibilities is discussed. To further expand on their foundation, the MSFW Outreach Worker is trained in the full range of CareerCenter services and resources to include basic career services, enrolling MSFW's into Maine JobLink, generating reports on MSFW demographics for outreach, knowing local area partners and how to make referrals to supportive services or employment, and the Employment Services and Employment Related Complaint System. Annual refresher training is required. CareerCenter Managers who have oversight of MSFW Outreach Workers further review how Outreach Workers can assist MSFWs in preparing applications or creating JobLink accounts, how to promote awareness of the compliant system to MSFW's in accordance with 20 CFR 658 Subpart E, best practices in assisting MSFW's in making appointments, arranging transportation, and how to work with MSFW's on follow up activities. Managers also receive training on the Employment Services and Employment Related Complaint System and 20 CFR 653.107 (a)(b)(c) so they can understand our regulatory responsibilities and best manage and guide their outreach staff with compliance.

The State utilizes in-house training to educate MSFW outreach staff on programs and services that are offered through the CareerCenters and partner agencies. They are also introduced to USDOL Workforce GPS tutorials including those specific to the Monitor Advocate System, MSFW's, agricultural farm work, case work and worker rights and protections, all of which align with the federal regulations. Training is conducted during initial onboarding and at least annually thereafter. Further training and/or education needs and opportunities are identified and addressed throughout the year including when new regulations or guidance are issued by Federal Department of Labor (USDOL). ES Managers, the Director of Job Services, and the State Monitor Advocate can provide further technical assistance and may include information or recommendations for training, upcoming conferences, or events (virtual or in-person), increased collaboration and referral activity with other organizations.

MSFW Outreach Workers receive training on core programs such as Unemployment Compensation. The Bureau of Employment Services (BES) and the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation (BUC) have a strong working relationship, as both are housed under Maine Department of Labor. All staff,

including the MSFW Outreach Worker, are trained on Unemployment Insurance (UI) eligibility and UI issue identification, along with the Maine JobLink system, which is the National Labor Exchange, demographic, record keeping, and case management system for Maine. This system is used to identify eligibility for programs, including Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW's), capturing demographics, language preference, any career service delivery, and referrals for supportive services. In Maine, individuals filing for unemployment are required to register for a Maine JobLink account for their job search activities. The MSFW Outreach Worker can use this knowledge in the field to educate and support farmworkers in need as well as have a network of BUC staff who hold hours in the local CareerCenters on a weekly basis, providing quick Q&A access or where they can refer the MSFW to for direct support.

In addition to in-house training, MSFW Outreach staff attend advocacy and farmworker organizational meetings, such as with the Farmworker Resources Network (FRN), to further understand where MSFW's are working and their worker needs, protections, and services. The FRN is a working collaborative of Maine's service providers to MSFW's to include: Mano en Mano, Pine Tree Legal Farm Unit, Maine Mobile Health Program, Maine Migrant Education Program, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title 1 Section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) Pathstone, US DOL Wage and Hour Division, Community Outreach and Relations Specialist (CORPS) and Maine Department of Labor to include the State Monitor Advocate and the Director of Job Services. Through the FRN, the group plans resources fairs, joint outreach activities and works to improve service delivery to MSFW's.

Goals for 2024 include an annual training calendar for the MSFW Outreach Worker and staff involved in MFSW services. In addition to training on outreach expectations and the complaint referral process, training will expand to include the following topic:

***Worker Rights and Protections –***

The Bureau of Employment Services will continue to offer regular training opportunities for both the MSFW Outreach Worker and Employment Service (ES) staff around worker rights and protections, apparent violations, human and labor trafficking, and the Employment Services and Employment Related Complaint System. This focus will ensure that there is year-round attention to the MSFW population and will promote practical knowledge for staff in spotting and responding to violations and concerns as well as ensuring worker protections and their knowledge of them.

### **Coordinating Outreach with the NFJP Grantee – (e)(4)(5)**

The MSFW Outreach Worker is expected to develop and maintain a working relationship with the WIOA Title 1, Section 167, National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee, who for the State of Maine is Pathstone. Over the past year, Employment Services through the MSFW Outreach Worker and Pathstone have coordinated outreach activities and shared booths at job and agricultural fairs across the state. The plan over the next four (4) years, is to continue to strengthen this relationship and look for ways to expand coordinated outreach activities between the NFJP and the MSFW Outreach Worker at job/agricultural fairs and events, to offer cross-training of programs and services between the Bureau of Employment Services (BES) and Pathstone so there is a better understand between all staff of what each organization can provide for MSFW's, to identify areas of opportunity for referrals between BES and Pathstone and train on the process for making referrals and necessary documentation.

In addition to the NFJP, Maine communicates on a regular basis with other public and private partners around the state who are engaged in farmworker agricultural activities and outreach, including those in the Farmworker Resource Network (Mano en Mano, Pine Tree Legal Farm Unity, Maine Mobile Health Program, Maine Migrant Education Program, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title 1 Section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) Pathstone, US DOL Wage and Hour Division, Community Outreach and Relations Specialist (CORPS) and Maine Department of Labor), Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Organization (MOFGA), University of Maine Cooperative Extension, and the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

In 2023, the State started conversations with farmworker advocacy organizations around strengthened communication, information sharing and coordinated activities that would improve outreach to MSFW's and provide opportunities of collaborative wrap-around services. Specific to H-2A, the state receives unredacted information well before foreign workers arrive in Maine and with agricultural employers. Information sharing of arrival dates and number of arriving workers will allow the Outreach Worker as well as partnering agencies to better prepare materials and better plan outreach. This will allow for more opportunity to coordinate activities, integrate services, and leverage resources for farmworkers.

### **One-Stop Delivery: CareerCenters and Employment Services Staff – (e)(5), (e)(5)(A), (e)(5)(B), (e)(5)(C)**

There are 12 CareerCenters located throughout the state, including urban and rural locations where there is agricultural activity. Each site has a Facebook page and is linked to the Maine Department of Labor social media to include Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Each Center is staffed with merit-

based Employment Services (ES) staff available to provide a full range of services to all individuals, including MSFW's who visit the CareerCenter. All CareerCenters offer services tailored to meet the customer's career goals. Individuals are encouraged to establish an account in Maine JobLink (MJL), our public labor exchange system. The account in MJL gives individuals access to thousands of jobs across the state and matches the job seeker with jobs matching their individual profiles. ES staff assist in setting up accounts, verifying demographic information, providing alternative access to job orders, such as on bulletin boards or in binders, and offering translation services to those with limited English proficiency (LEP).

Local offices engage in job-related outreach through job fairs, libraries, schools and partnering agency coordination. Staff strive to reach a wide customer range when promoting these events and activities. Job-related outreach is conducted both within the local CareerCenters as well as out in the community. Information is shared with local partners and among 500+ agencies and resources across the state who can assist in networking, broaden reach, and promote opportunities.

Staff are trained to work with individuals with unique needs including language translation, skill assessments, ADA accommodation, and other requested information or referrals to supportive services. They are also trained to assist with filing, accepting, and referring labor-related and non-employment-related complaints, in accordance with policy and regulations. In the event a field visit needs to be conducted with an employer, local merit based CareerCenter staff are prepared to respond. Additional training goals for 2024 are:

***Increased Training for Partnering Agencies and Farmworker Advocacy Groups –***

In 2024, the Director of Job Services or designee will provide expanded training on the Employment Services and Employment-Related Complaint System to agricultural partners and service providers. This will be provided at least on an annual basis and will be widely communicated and promoted to maximize attendance.

***Complaint System Portal –***

The Bureau of Employment Services is working on the design of a confidential complaint reporting portal that is compliant with all federal regulations. The portal will be hosted on the MDOL site and will be accessible by phone or computer. This would not replace the current method of filing complaints or alter the appearance of the form that is currently approved, but instead, would offer an additional method of filing complaints that would be accessible 24/7.

### ***Increase Regular ES Staff and Partner Training –***

A series of training is being developed on responsibilities to Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers and on the Foreign Labor program that will break down the requirements of each and will focus on providing services and access for MSFW's that are qualitatively equivalent, including higher-level staff services, supportive services, interagency referral processes, assessing community needs, and the Maine JobLink, Maine's public labor exchange, case management, and reporting system. Once developed, training will be offered to all Bureau of Employment Services staff on a regular basis so the purpose, requirements, and processes of MSFW and Foreign Labor are delineated and clearly understood. Further invitations for this training series will extend to service providers and the NFJP, Pathstone.

### ***Broaden Awareness of the Agricultural Recruitment System –***

The state will look at strategies to market the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) across CareerCenter staff and partnering agencies. Information sharing and collaboration with the ES Business services team started in 2023 and is resulting in improved visibility and awareness as well as access to resources. Maine CareerCenters offer many services to employers including recruitment of positions through Maine JobLink and social media, matching workers skills and experience to employer positions, and job fair and in-house recruitment opportunities. Training was conducted in January 2024 on ways the business services team can work with employers to recruit domestic labor. The goal is to expand the Migrant Seasonal and Foreign Labor website by the end of 2024 to include more definitions, data, resources, and links and to work with business services on expanding outreach to include agricultural employers.

### **Data Assessment and Assessment of Progress – (e)(6)(C), (e)(6)(D)**

The Department found recruitment and retention challenges over the last two years with the outreach worker position due to wage range, extensive travel, experience, and the bilingual/multilingual language requirements. The position was reclassified to better reflect requirements and skills needed which resulted in an increased compensation grade. Recruitment and retention have improved, however still poses a challenge.

The turnover during the past years significantly affected outreach numbers, however, we are now positioned to increase the number of MSFW's who participate in CareerCenter services and better assess the number of MSFWs during the year.

Maine's goals for 2024-2027 include:

### ***Improve Maine's Equity Ratio Indicators for MSFW's –***

- Ensure that the MSFW Outreach Worker and ES staff are providing services and access that is proportionate and equitable to other job seekers that access Maine's CareerCenters.
- Provide more detailed training to CareerCenter Managers on Maine JobLink and the corresponding reporting tool, Tableau to better understand the PIRL elements and requirements in defining and serving MSFW's. Implement reporting and assessment schedules to monitor and track equity of services, offer recommendations for adjusting services, and ensure there is regular documentation of services.
- Work with staff to provide additional training with Maine JobLink to ensure that all meaningful services are being properly entered into the system to include basic career services, job referrals, job development, supportive service referrals, etc. and that supporting case notes are included for enhanced knowledge of individual services.
- Create an emphasis on training by developing a training plan and associated schedule/calendar to cover essential learning and opportunities to best serve MSFWs.

### **Expand Data Collection on Preferred Language and Demographic Information –**

Maine will increase data collection specific to preferred language for MSFW's. This information will be used to expand language access to benefits, services, and training opportunities for those who have limited English proficiency (LEP). The use of this information will also be used to assess equity and ensure equal opportunity. In alignment with our Nondiscrimination Plan and language access requirements as defined under 29 CFR 38 and Section 188 of WIOA, Employment Services will use gender-inclusive language and plain language, where possible.

Maine DOL continues to expand language access opportunities and displays state and federal labor law required posters, and ES Complaint System information translated into several languages in all CareerCenters. This information is included in the outreach materials the Outreach Worker takes to the field. Bureau of Employment Services (BES) has begun to translate many programmatic and employment service materials into languages that represent the top languages spoken by our state population. BES is currently assessing all documents and identifying those of vital record to translate into seven (7) identified languages in addition to English – Spanish, French, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Somali, Lingala, and Arabic. Over the next four (4) years, BES will continue to take steps to ensure meaningful access to LEP individuals, to include oral interpretation or written

translation of materials. Maine DOL will review and assess language needs annually and determine if additional language translations and expansion of vital records is needed.

BES will continue to ensure staff are trained on how to use communication methods and tools so individuals with LEP are well served. This will include the use of translators and interpreters.

### **Other Requirements –**

The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) was provided the opportunity to review and comment on this Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP). Prior to the public comment period, this AOP was made available to the following groups and organizations were invited directly to share their input and comments:

- Pathstone Corporation – WIOA 167 NFJP Grantee
- Mano en Mano
- Pine Tree Legal
- Maine Mobile Health
- Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)

Both the SMA and MOFGA submitted comments which were reviewed for consideration. Several changes were made to the plan to incorporate their suggestions or provide clarification.

Additionally, the state solicited information and suggestions during the public comment period where the groups listed above as well as other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations could offer comment and suggestions.

MDOL operates under an executed MOU with Pathstone, the 167 Grantee for the NFJP. The Memorandum of Understanding between MDOL and Pathstone will facilitate the exchange of data pertaining to services provided to MSFWs. The State Workforce Agency (SWA) considered all comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP and informed all commenting parties in writing whether their comments were incorporated and if not, the reason why. These comments/recommendations and the Department responses were transmitted during the submission of the Agricultural Outreach Plan.

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## WAGNER-PEYSER ACT ASSURANCES

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**WP Assurance-1** Wagner-Peyser Employment Services are co-located with one or more partners other than veteran's services or unemployment compensation. Currently, vocational rehabilitation services are co-located with employment services in most one-stop centers. In many centers, employment services are also co-located with Title I-B service providers. In those where these two partners are not housed together, services are available via intermittent staff presence or technology. Employment services are made available through technology (Maine JobLink) to all affiliate sites.

**WP Assurance-2** The Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services, also referred to as the State Workforce Agency, is compliant with the requirements under proposed 20 CFR 653.111 as it does not have any significant Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) one-stop centers. However, Maine's one-stops do provide access to Spanish speaking staff and a multilingual service line in place to MSFW participants whenever necessary.

**WP Assurance-3** State of Maine statute identifies criteria pertaining to agency collaboration for individuals with disabilities receiving vocational rehabilitation services. Vocational Rehabilitation and Wagner Peyser services are both housed under the Maine Department of Labor. Maine Revised Statute: Title 26, Chapter 19, Section 12, Subchapter 2, Article 1, Section 1411-D articulates these requirements<sup>16</sup>.

**WP Assurance-4** Although recent guidance provides for flexibility now, the State will continue to utilize State, merit-based employees of the Maine Department of Labor to provide Wagner-Peyser Act funded services.

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<sup>16</sup> [Title 26, Chapter 19, Section 12, Subchapter 2, Article 1, Section 1411-D http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/26/title26sec1411-D.html](http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/26/title26sec1411-D.html)

## ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAMS

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### Overview

Maine Adult Education is best described as an education, life, and career pathways system that prepares adults for a productive life through postsecondary education/training and employment. Public school-based adult education is part of the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) and administered by the State Office of Adult Education. Over seventy providers located statewide offer courses in literacy and adult basic education, English language acquisition, citizenship, high school completion, college transition, career preparation and personal enrichment. These local programs provide services at a variety of locations, including correctional facilities; use a variety of instructional strategies, including face-to-face and distance technology; and are funded by a combination of federal, state and local dollars. Programs use these funds to leverage additional grants and contracts.

In support of the mission and purpose of Maine Adult Education, the following language is included in State Statute. “Since education is a lifelong process, it is declared to be the policy of the State to provide and encourage the growth of educational opportunities and, where applicable, to ensure career, citizenship and college readiness for all adults.”

According to State Statute “Adult Education” means an education program primarily operated for individuals beyond the compulsory school age that is administered by school administrative units through a career pathways and service system and includes intake, assessment, advising, instruction, and individual learning plans; is guided by data management and analysis, annual monitoring and annual professional development plans; uses appropriately certified staff; is designed to meet identified local needs; and makes use of partnerships and alignment with workforce development, postsecondary institutions and support services.

### (A) ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

*Describe how the eligible agency has aligned its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311 (b)(1)).*

Alignment of adult education curricula and instruction with state-adopted academic standards (the Maine Learning Results since 1997) is not new to Maine Adult Education. Providers that issue an adult high school credential must align with the required standards and learning outcomes of their corresponding high school. In 2011, the Maine Learning Results were updated to include Common

Core State Standards (CCSS) for English language arts and math and were implemented in the 2013-14 school year. This presented a challenge for adult education as the CCSS were not normed for adult learners.

In the spring of 2013, the U.S.D.O.E. Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) released the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) for adults. These research-based standards are drawn from those common core standards that are most relevant for adults to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century college and career readiness skills. Maine Adult Education adopted the CCRS and met its goal of statewide integration into instructional practice by SY2016-2017.

Beginning in the late summer of 2019, Maine Adult Education adopted the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELP) prepared in October 2016 by the American Institute of Research. These standards correspond to the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS). Training for instructors and administrators has begun and will be ongoing. Because the need to serve English language learners has been spreading throughout the state, steps are taken to train all teachers on meeting the needs of English language learners.

Maine provides ongoing professional development and technical assistance to local providers to support their implementation of the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education and the English Language Proficiency Standards. Ongoing training is provided to practitioners in the implementation of the CCRS and ELPS, and the State Office requires all practitioners to complete introductory trainings in the standards most relevant to their position. In 2023, Standards-in-Action 2.0 subject matter experts trained a team of local practitioners and the state professional development coordinator in the use of the English Language Arts/Literacy and mathematics curriculum review tools.

To receive state and federal funding, CCRS implementation must be apparent in lesson plans and instructional delivery. Maine Adult Education also requires local providers to contextualize instruction and make use of research-based best practices in all content areas, including mathematics and reading, and in the implementation of Integrated Education and Training (IET) and Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE). CCRS and ELPS training is ongoing for both veteran and new instructors.

The adoption and implementation of College and Career Readiness and ELPS Standards for Adults and other valid, research-based practices has enabled all WIOA and state literacy funded providers to meet both the state and federal requirements for research-based, rigorous instruction that prepares adults for postsecondary education, training and employment. Implementation of CCRS

and ELPS also maintains alignment with State-adopted K-12 content standards and clarifies for students, institutions of higher education, as well as employers, that Maine Adult Education is a research and standards-based pathway to postsecondary education, training and career.

Maintaining high standards of instruction resulting in improved learner outcomes includes rigorous, standards-based classroom instruction; distance, online, and blended learning instructional environments; dual enrollment in postsecondary; and project and community-based learning. The goals of these strategies combined with contextualized content relevant to learner needs should enhance learner engagement and attainment of goals.

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### (B) LOCAL ACTIVITIES

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*Describe how the State will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following adult education and literacy activities identified in Section 203 of WIOA, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content and organization of local activities.*

*Those local activities as noted in WIOA 203 are:*

*Adult education;*

*Literacy;*

*Workplace adult education and literacy activities;*

*Family literacy activities;*

*English language acquisition activities;*

*Integrated English literacy and civics education;*

*Workforce preparation activities; or*

*Integrated education and training that –*

- 1. Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both. Workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and*
- 2. Is for the purpose of educational and career development.*

The passage of WIOA in July of 2014 increased required outcomes for participants in Title II programs. The Maine state office recognized that the adult education system at that time consisted of many small providers with limited services, staff, and other resources necessary to successfully meet WIOA requirements. That long-established method of having many providers (at one point over 100) working independently of each other was not an effective use of resources or improving learner outcomes.

Input from literacy providers and various partners, and a review of performance data led the adult education state office to the concept of grouping area adult education providers into education and career development hubs. To optimize efforts for collaboration within the hubs, criteria required that each hub contain a local workforce board, at least one career center, a University of Maine system site as well as a campus of the Maine Community College system, local libraries, and if possible, not split counties.

The result was the creation of nine hubs located within the boundaries of the three local workforce boards. Each hub, consisting of 5-11 local adult education providers, vary in population density, economics, workforce priorities, number of WIOA eligible learners and distance between programs.

The establishment of the hubs shifted the local providers away from long established patterns of programs working independently and competitively. Hubs are an opportunity to:

- Enhance communication amongst local providers,
- Establish more efficient systems for maximizing resources, including staff expertise; expanding access for learners through use of technology for delivery of instructions and services to all programs within the hub, and developing authentic, reciprocal partnerships with multiple agencies,
- Expect high levels of instruction, advising and academic rigor in all programs throughout the hubs and the state,
- Promote an approach of collaboration and partnership amongst all current and perspective adult literacy providers by providing only one AEFLA grant per hub,
- Expand the hub concept to include the state funded Maine College and Career Access program

Section 231 (e)

Thirteen Considerations

As required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Maine Department of Education Office of Adult Education will conduct a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) to

award multi-year funding to eligible agencies for the provision of WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Section 231. The initial grant cycle is for FY25-27 (July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2026). Subject to continued availability of funding and demonstrated effectiveness as determined by outcomes, the Department may opt to renew the contract for two renewal periods, July 2026 through June 30, 2028 and July 1, 2028 through June 30, 2029.

Maine Adult Education state office will use the AEFLA FY25-27 Competitive Grant Application to require, and then ensure through ongoing desk and on-site monitoring, that WIOA fund recipients address the requirements of the 13 Considerations. As a result of compliance, adult learners throughout the state will have access to high quality, rigorous programming that encompasses the adult education and literacy activities included in Section 203 of WIOA.

Below are the requirements applicants for the 2025-2027 AEFLA RFP have to address. Successful applicants will be contractually obligated to:

1. **Be responsive to the regional needs identified in the local board plan and serve individuals identified as most in need of adult education and literacy services.** How funded recipients will address the needs of sub-populations with barriers to employment as identified in the local plan must be described.
2. **Serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities.** The processes and procedures in place to assess an individual's current needs and ability; the delivery of programmatic and instructional strategies to provide access and services to learners with physical, emotional, mental and learning disabilities as well as collaborations with other agencies where learners may be co-enrolled must be explained.
3. **Past Effectiveness.** A demonstrated effectiveness form must be completed that includes: performance data from the past two consecutive years related to improving the skills of the target population in English Language Arts, mathematics, English language acquisition and other relevant subjects; and outcomes of participants related to employment, attainment of a high school credential or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training. The form also requires evidence of past effectiveness serving eligible individuals who are basic skills deficient, and steps to be taken to meet the state targets each year of the grant.
4. **Extent the applicant demonstrates alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan as well as the activities and services of one-stop partners.** Alignment of activities and services with the strategies and goal of the local plan under WIOA Title I, section 108, as well as maintaining alignment with the activities and services of the one-stop partners must be described. The local adult education providers must focus on programs, activities and services that expand opportunities for education, employment, training

and supports for WIOA eligible individuals. Local boards will review the applicants' responses for appropriate evidence of that type of alignment. Local boards, local providers and one-stop partners must work together during the period of this plan to move the activities forward to meet plan goals.

5. **Demonstrate that the program is of sufficient intensity and quality and based on rigorous research so participants will make substantial learning gains as well as use instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction.** Grant recipients must describe the evaluative methods used to ensure instruction is of sufficient intensity and duration to be effective. A description of program design including strategies for outreach, recruitment, retention; evidence-based research used to inform instruction and instructional strategies used to achieve substantial learning gains and how the CCRS for Adults are incorporated into the curricula has to be included. How integrated academics, skills and knowledge learners need to transition successfully to career and postsecondary and steps for the consideration of addressing special learning needs has to be explained. Instructional practices employed to include essential components of reading instruction that takes into consideration diverse learning needs and NRS levels should be described. Examples of learning in real life contexts to ensure the learner has the skills necessary to compete in the workplace and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship are required.
6. **Deliver instruction in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics and English language acquisition that is aligned with the state-adopted College and Career Readiness Standards and based on best practices derived from the most rigorous research available.** The scientific research upon which instruction is based to improve literacy skills needs to be described. How the success of such practices will be assessed needed to be included as well as how CCRS and ELPS will be used to inform instruction, including how best practices will be integrated into classroom instruction.
7. **Describe activities that effectively use technology, services and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance.** How the provider will support and ensure the integration of technology *into* instruction, including how software and equipment will expand access to effective learning and increase a learner's digital literacy has to be described.
8. **Deliver activities that provide learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and**

**responsibilities of citizenship.** How the provider will design and implement an Integrated Education and Training (IET) model that combines basic educational, employability and occupational skills has to be defined; including the proposed IET activities that enable participants to acquire skills needed for success in postsecondary education and training programs, employment and citizenship..

9. **Ensure that activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors and administrators who meet the minimum state qualifications and certifications, where applicable, and how access to high quality professional development, including through electronic means will occur.** The number of employees, details regarding their duties, employment status (full or part time), weeks contracted to work, amount budgeted for position and location, certification and expiration date has to be provided. In addition, employees funded by WIOA had to be included in the applicant's plan for instructor and director professional development (PD). Applicants have to describe how PD participants will be identified, how information regarding PD opportunities will be disseminated, and how implementation of PD learning will be assessed. Applicants also have to identify the process for ensuring that each staff/instructor completes high quality professional development (in multiple delivery modalities) and how many hours of paid PD are provided.
10. **Coordinate activities with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce investment boards, one-stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways.** The coordination with local resources to develop partnerships needs to be described. The process used to ensure timely and seamless referrals between partner agencies; coordinating with the local one-stop center, local businesses and industry; fulfilling one-stop WIOA requirements; ensuring the transition of learners into Maine College and Career Access programming and/or to postsecondary institutions; and a description of academic and career related counseling and other support services to improve retention and learner success has to be submitted.
11. **Provide activities that offer flexible schedules and coordination with Federal, State, and local support services (such as child care, transportation, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs.** Examples have to be included of: how the needs of individuals, including those with disabilities and/or special needs

will be determined and addressed; how coordination for support services will take place to address their needs; how an advisor will be used to assist learners with career planning and in identifying career pathways based on learner interests and aptitude; how barriers to program completion will be identified and addressed; and how the referral process to support services to minimize barriers to learning will be implemented. Applicants also have to provide a sample of a flexible class schedule that enables participants, including those with special needs, to attend and complete programs and describe wrap around services to support participant success and increase completion rates.

12. **Maintain high-quality, accurate data of measurable participant outcomes (consistent with WIOA §116) in the state adult education managed information system and monitor program performance to demonstrate the ability to meet the goals outlined here through a variety of data sources, including academic assessment scores, attendance, and activity data.** The data collection process, quality controls, review of data procedures and how data will be used to improve performance, increase recruitment, and retention efforts has to be described.
13. **Deliver additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs in the local areas of demonstrated need.** How data is used to describe the population and needs of English language learners in their service area; their experience providing English language acquisition and civics education instruction and services; and how their program model leads to high school completion, postsecondary training and unsubsidized employment has to be explained.

Additionally, the Maine DOE has identified three priorities for AEFLA grant funding and encourages applicants to propose innovative strategies to meet one or more of these priorities as part of the AEFLA services:

- 1) Serving Multilingual learners
- 2) Digital Equity
- 3) Integrated Education and Training / Workplace Literacy Activities leading to Measurable Skill Gains (MSG's) based on academic and occupational learning progress and completions.

#### SPECIAL RULE

No eligible agency shall use any funds made available under this Title for adult education literacy services for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services,

or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

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(C) CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS

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*Describe how the State will establish and operate programs under section 225 of WIOA for corrections education and education of other institutionalized individuals, including how it will fund, in accordance with the requirements of Title II subtitle C, and of the following academic programs for:*

*Adult education and literacy activities;*

*Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;*

*Secondary school credit;*

*Integrated education and training;*

*Career pathways;*

*Concurrent enrollment;*

*Peer tutoring; and*

*Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release service with the goal of reducing recidivism.*

*Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for individuals within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.*

Maine Adult Education has a history of strong collaboration with correctional institutions. Programs and services are available in state prisons, county correctional institutions, local jails, youth facilities and reentry centers. Examples of these partnerships include recent efforts to not only increase educational and career pathway programs, but to also enhance collaborative planning and coordination. As a result of this integrated career planning process, adult education programs providing services to Maine correctional facilities have educational programs that are aligned, are using the same assessment tools, and are entering data in the State's adult education longitudinal data system, MaineSTARS. The inclusion of this learner data in the adult education data system facilitates the continuity of services should a learner be transferred to another or be released.

In the spring of 2024, Maine Adult Education will put forth a new AEFLA competition for the initial period of July 1, 2024-June 30, 2026 with the option of two renewal periods between July 1, 2026

and June 30, 2029. Beginning in FY18, the state established nine adult education and career development areas that were aligned with the boundaries of the three local workforce boards. To encourage innovation and maximize efficiencies and resources, local adult education providers within these geographic areas were formed into hubs. With only one award anticipated for each hub, interested applicants are encouraged to collaborate with other eligible service providers. While correctional facilities may be involved in the AEFLA competition as part of a hub, and collaborative planning takes place, Department of Corrections has chosen over the last several years to fund its own educational programs and services.

In addition to the AEFLA criteria of “eligible providers” (WIOA §203(5), 34 CFR 463 Preamble) applicants proposing to deliver corrections education and education for other institutionalized individuals have to provide evidence of demonstrated past effectiveness in delivering corrections education. An eligible provider can demonstrate past effectiveness by providing two consecutive years of performance data showing their effectiveness in serving eligible individuals in correctional institutions. *(state requirement)*

AEFLA funds are used to provide educational programming to eligible corrections learners in the following areas: adult basic education, literacy, English language acquisition, adult secondary school completion and high school equivalency preparation, concurrent enrollment, college transition, integrated education and training, peer tutoring, workforce preparation and transition services. Individuals expected to be released within five years receive priority of service.

To better serve incarcerated individuals, Maine Adult Education AEFLA recipients are committed to making the partnership with corrections even stronger by focusing efforts on:

- Increasing support and attention to reentry activities. Priority will be given to those who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program. For those in DOC facilities, 90 percent were sentenced to five years or less. When all sentences to DOC are averaged, the average length of incarceration is 18 months.
- Increasing capacity to serve low level learners. DOC facilities provide adult education services to all residents who lack a high school credential at intake.
- Enhancing access to College and Career Readiness educational opportunities and workforce preparation activities.
- Expanding access to support services that enable these individuals to transition to full, productive members of our communities.

Prisoners in Prerelease are served in five facilities that offer educational programming that include the opportunity to earn a high school credential. Depending on the facility, there are also a variety of vocational programs. Building on the successful integration of educational services, attention will now be given to increasing advising and career pathways services. The Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan funded Career Success Navigators work with correctional institutions to offer career planning/advising services and 28% of Career Navigation participants are justice involved individuals. As part of these career pathways services, WorkReady, a standards-based employment skills program leading to a state recognized credential is presently offered in the Maine State Prison, Maine Correctional Center, Bolduc Correctional Facility, and the Southern Maine Reentry Center as well as six county jails. To reduce recidivism, the goals of the adult education and DOC partnership include a continued emphasis on an integrated and aligned approach to program services and skills training opportunities to ease the stress of transitioning back into the community, and to create a *gentle handoff* approach.

Corrections personnel are invited to and attend adult education professional development programs offered by the state office. Topics have included training in College and Career Readiness Standards, Maine College Transitions, high school equivalency preparation, and use of MaineSTARS. The Department of Corrections has also contracted with local adult education programs to provide assessment services in two of its “unfenced” prerelease centers, with plans in place to contract for those services at the remaining centers. Corrections educational personnel also attend, and present at the Maine Adult Education Association Annual Conference.

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#### (D) INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION

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*Describe how the State will establish and operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs under Section 243 of WIOA, for English Language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries.*

Section 243 of Title II AEFLA focuses on combining Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education with integrated education and training activities.

Specifically, section 243 states:

(c) Goal. Each program that receives funding under this section shall be designed to— (1) prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency; and (2) integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

It is the purpose of Maine Adult Education under WIOA Title II Section 243 to provide Integrated English Literacy Civics Education (IELCE) and Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs, activities and services that also align with the Strategic Priorities in the Maine Unified State Plan for 2024-27. Specifically, **Strategic Priority #2. Create a system of lifelong learning and employment connection for Maine residents** includes employment goals for New Mainers. This strategy is especially relevant to the work of AEFLA 243.

As required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Maine Department of Education Office of Adult Education is conducting a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) to award multi-year funding to eligible agencies for the provision of WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Section 243, Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education/Integrated Education and Training. The Adult Education State Office followed all state policies regarding issuance of the AEFLA and AEFLA 243 procurement procedures. Announcement of grant availability was posted on the Maine Division of Procurement website and advertised in the Kennebec Journal for three consecutive days.

The initial grant cycle is for FY25-27 (July 1, 2024-June 30, 2026). Subject to continued availability of funding and demonstrated effectiveness as determined by outcomes, the Department may opt to renew the contracts for two renewal periods, July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2028 and July 1, 2028 through June 30, 2029.

Beginning in FY18, the Maine Office of Adult Education established nine adult education and career development areas that aligned with the boundaries of the state's three local workforce boards. To encourage innovation and maximize efficiencies and resources, local adult education providers within these geographic areas were formed into hubs. As a condition of this award process (state requirement), the Maine Office of Adult Education anticipated no more than one award per Adult Education and Career Development Hub (AECDH) with demonstrated need.

The applications will be reviewed and scored (using the state required consensus scoring model) by a team of adult education administrators who possess knowledge of Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education requirements. The appropriate local workforce board (LWB) will also review applications for alignment of proposed grant activities with the LWB plan.

Similar to the AEFLA application and award process, recipients of IELCE (243) funds are required to demonstrate their eligibility to apply, demonstrated effectiveness and need for IELCE/IET services to meet the demands of the grant. Demonstrated need is 50 or more individuals aged 18-64 in the service area whose English is a barrier to employment (*state requirement*). Applicants

determined to be ineligible because they did not meet the eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness requirements will not be considered for funding. Those applicants will be notified in writing that they were ineligible and have appeal rights as outlined in the AEFLA 243 application, PART V, F. Refer to PART V, A for the eligibility review process. Eligible providers are organizations who have demonstrated effectiveness in two consecutive years (*state requirement*) in providing adult education and literacy activities. Organizations eligible to apply include: local educational agencies; community-based or faith-based organizations; volunteer literacy organizations; institutions of higher education; public or private nonprofit agencies; libraries; public housing authorities; a nonprofit institution having the ability to provide adult education and literacy services to adults; and a consortium of agencies, organizations, institutions, and libraries described above; a partnership between an employer and an entity described in any of the categories listed above (WIOA §203(5)); and other organization types, even if not specifically listed above, to apply if they meet the demonstrated effectiveness requirement (34 CFR 463 Preamble).

Eligible providers can demonstrate past effectiveness in two ways:

- a. An **eligible provider** previously funded under Title II of the Act provides two consecutive years (*state requirement*) of performance to demonstrate past effectiveness in the areas listed below.
- b. An **eligible provider** not previously funded under Title II of the Act provides two consecutive years (*state requirement*) of performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals, including evidence of its success in achieving outcomes listed in the WIOA Title II AEFLA Federal Requirements. (*See WIOA Final Rules Subpart C, §463.24 and 29 U.S.C 3272(5)*)

Applicants are also asked to provide data specific to English Language Acquisition, Civics Education, Integrated Educated and Training (and similar programs) and/or other relevant activities. If such data was not available, applicants were required to provide data related to an overall ability to provide Adult Education and Literacy activities as such activities are defined in WIOA, the Maine Unified Plan and in the next paragraph.

Evidence of demonstrated effectiveness includes program performance data on its record to improve the skills of eligible individuals, in particular, individuals who are basic skills deficient in the content domains of reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to IELCE services, information regarding its outcomes for individuals related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training. (34 CFR 463.24); and enrollment of learners in integrated

education and training programs (and similar programs) and/or other relevant activities leading to industry-recognized credentials (*State requirement*).

In addition, funded applicants respond to the 13 Considerations with some adaptations in language to demonstrate how funds will be used to address the specific activities and programs required under WIOA Title II 243.

- Funded programs will be required to provide programming of sufficient intensity and quality for eligible participants to achieve substantial learning gains, build on their existing knowledge and integrate academics, skills and knowledge the learners need to transition successfully to career, postsecondary education and a productive life. Instruction must be delivered in real life contexts to ensure that an individual has the basic English language and workplace skills needed to compete in the workforce and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. This also includes describing all factors considered in developing an instructional model that maximizes the opportunities for learners, including those with degrees, professional certifications and work experience, to attend and make progress, and to describe how access to instruction and support services are provided.
- Funded programs also must describe how they will use the funds for expenditures that are allowable, reasonable and allocable as permitted by EDGAR, Uniform Grant Guidance, and by WIOA Title II, WIOA Title II Rule and Joint Rule. Funding must be used to support the development, planning, and operation of Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education/Integrated Education and Training programs to eligible individuals and across their adult education and career development hub (*state requirement*).

Integrated English literacy and civics education in combination with integrated education and training 243 funding should be used for:

(a) co-enrolling participants in integrated education and training as described in 34 CFR 463.35 and 34 CFR 463.36 that is provided with a local workforce development area from sources other than section 243 of WIOA; or

(b) supporting integrated education and training activities as described in 34 CFR 463.35 and 34 CFR 463.36.

Co-enrollment will be enhanced by funding recipients as they design programs in collaboration with the local workforce development board, CareerCenter staff and other one-stop partners.

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## (E) STATE LEADERSHIP

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*Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out the required State Leadership activities under section 223 of WIOA.*

### **(1) Required Activities**

The alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners, including eligible providers, including the development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities.

Due to Maine's geographic challenges and limited state and federal funding, educational, workforce system and support agencies rely heavily on collaboration, coordination and alignment of services. At the state level, adult education and postsecondary leaders recognize the role adult education can play in addressing the challenge of adult education completion. Adult education participates in the MaineSpark Adult Promise initiative supported by a coalition of organizations (schools and universities, nonprofits and foundations, government agencies and businesses). All partners, including representation from the Department of Labor, are working together to address the state goal of 60 percent of Maine's adults having credentials of value by 2025. Following work under a grant by the Lumina Foundation, the Adult Education State Office continues to work with providers and partners to focus on in-demand micro-credentials of value as a means of forming career pathways into Maine's employment sectors. These micro-credentials can be especially effective in engaging learners who need to earn their high school credentials; need to accelerate their academic pathway through contextualized coursework, especially for English language learners; and for adults with some postsecondary but no credentials. Literacy assessments often reveal the need to improve foundational skills in literacy and numeracy.

Maine has seen an increase in workforce development funding in adult education and across partner agencies and with that an increase in collaboration to align to the needs of the citizens and employers of the state. Much of this workforce funding is specifically to support populations and industries hardest hit by the pandemic. The Maine Job's and Recovery Plan has committed \$6 million dollars to address the workforce development needs of those disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Maine's Department of Education-Adult Education will help eligible adults and employment sectors recover from the stresses of the pandemic through a variety of academic and job training supports.

- Career Advancement and Navigator Supports

These adult education-based navigators serve primarily in geographic areas of the state with less access to post-secondary and other educational opportunities as well as support services. These areas include the counties of York, Kennebec, Androscoggin, Oxford, Lincoln, Waldo, Knox, and Sagadahoc.

- College and Career Success Coordinators

An adult education success coordinator has been placed on each of the seven community college campuses. Coordinators are responsive to the needs of current and prospective community college students who may need additional assistance with advising and career planning or in acquiring the academic skills needed to successfully complete college level work. Adult education students are also be provided with the assistance and supports needed to make a successful transition to community college.

- Education and Training Grants/English language acquisition

This federal funding, awarded through a statewide competitive grant process for adult education providers, has enable programs statewide to provide English language acquisition services to best meet needs appropriate for their communities and eligible employers. Barriers to employment and education faced by English language learners have severely impacted their recovery from COVID-19's financial impacts and are addressed by these grant opportunities.

Several funded partner agencies: the Maine Department of Labor, Department of Education-Adult Education, Department of Health and Human Services, Maine Community College and University systems, meet regularly to share best practices, resources and triage employer and individual workforce requests to ensure that employers, individuals, and training providers are receiving the correct support. The HealthCare for ME initiative is an excellent example of this combined effort to meet the critical healthcare workforce shortage in Maine using multiple funding streams and a coordinated recruitment effort. In addition, Adult Education received funding to expand the New Mainer Resource Center (NMRC) adding staff to the existing center and expanding to two additional. The NMRC serves foreign trained professionals in advising, credential translation and evaluation to create accelerated pathways to workforce participation. These activities are in alignment with Maine's Unified State Plan's goal: Maine's untapped labor pool will enter employment and advance into high-demand occupations of their choice through private and public investment in training, education, and supports.

Adult education representation on the State Workforce Board and on each of the three local boards also strengthens workforce development efforts. It facilitates communication by bringing decision

makers together to work on program development that meets the needs of the state and local plans. They also work with partner agencies in the development and honoring of MOUs to support learner transition to college, career and employment.

The establishment and operation of high-quality professional development programs to improve instruction provided pursuant to required local activities, including instruction incorporating the essential components of reading instruction as such components relate to adults, instruction related to the specific needs of adult learners, instruction provided by volunteers or by personnel, and dissemination of information about models and promising practices related to such programs.

The goal of Maine Adult Education's leadership efforts is to provide Maine's adult educators with the skills and supports they need to assimilate new learning and effectively implement new content/strategies that result in learner outcomes as associated with WIOA. This type of continual learning environment supports instructors, staff and administrators in their development of professional and leadership skills that in turn, maximize the potential for success of the adults they serve. Technical assistance that is intellectually stimulating, builds confidence, and values the attendees encourages participation. To make the most efficient use of leadership funds, a variety of professional development formats and delivery systems are utilized, including:

- Supporting a state office professional development coordinator who creates, delivers, brokers and shares professional development and training opportunities for both paid and volunteer instructional staff. Contract providers are brought in as needed to provide specific areas of expertise; Convening a statewide professional development advisory committee made up of adult education professionals from local providers to provide ongoing feedback on the professional development needs at the local level;
- Offering a variety of delivery platforms to address the geographic challenges of delivering statewide training in a large, rural, state. These include webinars, video-conferences, blended learning formats, asynchronous courses, and regional meetings.
- Developing pathways of professional development to ensure that practitioners at all levels of experience have access to high-quality, relevant professional learning; Implementing a teacher-trainer model that builds local capacity;
- Developing and supporting educational leadership in programs in order to build the capacity of administrators to effectively lead their staff and manage their programs;
- Utilizing Professional Learning , a web-based tool used to list professional development opportunities, register participants and serve as a repository for participant transcripts

Each year as part of the reporting process, local providers share the professional development needs within their program, and the State Office reviews performance data to assess the identified needs. The state office offers training in best practices to address areas of weakness evident from program monitoring and alignment with federal adult education initiatives.

Targeted professional development is planned to address CCR standards, implementation of English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards, integration of the central skills from the federal Teaching Skills that Matter initiative, digital learning and technology integration, supporting multilingual learners in and out of the classroom, Integrated Education and Training development, evidence-based instructional strategies, use of data for program improvement and decision making, college transitions, development of micro-credentials, Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education, , and employability skills.

- A) *The provision of technical assistance to eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities receiving funds under this title, including –*
  - i. *The development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on the most rigorous or scientifically valid research available and appropriate in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition programs, distance education, and staff training;*

Based on needs assessments of local program professional development needs, feedback from the statewide professional development advisory committee and compliance with federal and state requirements, Maine Adult Education will continue to offer training opportunities in rigorous and scientifically valid instructional practices and learning theories, data collection and management, assessment, academic and career advising, job skills, and college transition.

With the changing demographics of Maine, more local adult education programs are providing services to English Language Learners. For many programs this is a new area of work. The state team provides professional development to help programs and teachers serve them. These professional development opportunities help dedicated teachers of English language acquisition as well as content teachers who are finding an increasing number of multilingual learners (MLLs) in their classrooms. Professional development opportunities include a multi-day institute focused on supporting MLLs, including instructional strategies for English language acquisition, integrating technology into the ESOL classroom, cultural competency, advising strategies for working with MLLs, community resources, and developing workforce training for MLLs. Experts from the adult education field and community partners are used as presenters.

Additionally, practitioners have access to training in the English Language Proficiency Standards and courses in instructional strategies for English language acquisition.

Technical assistance is also planned in:

CCRS and ELPS implementation, including the curriculum review tool, as approved in Maine's CCR-SIA Sustainability Plan.

Research-based professional development in mathematics and reading instruction.

Maine will deliver trainings to mathematics instructors to build instructor content knowledge and to promote instructional strategies that focus on building conceptual understanding. The CCR mathematics standards and previous work with the Adult Numeracy Instruction trainings will form a foundation for this work. English language instructors will also have an opportunity to deepen their own understanding of math and how to integrate math and numeracy into ESOL classrooms. .

Maine will develop a sequence for reading instruction so that practitioners have access to professional development that meets the needs of all levels of learners. The LINCS reading courses, Teaching Adults to Read, will be used to introduce evidence-based instructional practices for teaching adults to read. Maine will continue to implement the Reading Apprenticeship Program (RAP), a research-based and research-proven instructional framework for improving adult reading. RAP trainings will include the 2023 updates to the framework that include practices for supporting digital learning. Providing supports through the LINCS courses and RAP, instructor capacity will be built in the essential components of reading instruction or the explicit and systematic instruction including the following: phonemic awareness; phonics; vocabulary development; reading fluency, including oral reading skills; and reading comprehension strategies Professional development in the federal *Teaching Skills that Matter* initiative. In 2021, Maine began providing training in the Teaching Skills that Matter project, including statewide trainings in the use of the toolkit and associated resources and the development of a community of practice for all practitioners. The TSTM central skills and the evidence-based instructional practices presented in the toolkit will continue to be a priority area for technical assistance. Practitioners will be able to participate in trainings in-person and online, access teacher-developed resources based on TSTM, view demo TSTM lessons, and participate in

a community of practice. The TSTM central skills will be integrated into other professional development opportunities, including standards trainings and content area trainings.

*The role of eligible providers as a one-stop partner to provide access to employment, education, and training services* – The core partners are committed to cross agency professional development efforts at both the state and local levels. Steps will be taken to ensure that staff at all agencies is informed of partner services and able to help adults seamlessly access employment and workforce services.

And

- ii. *Assistance in the use of technology, including for staff training, to eligible providers, especially the use of technology to improve system efficiencies.*

Maine Adult Education will continue to make use of technology to provide instruction and professional development. As part of the IDEAL consortium, the state office provides courses that allow programs to become familiar with the characteristics of a successful digital learning experience, learn about best practices for delivering digital education and develop a plan for how their hub/program will deliver digital learning. Professional development is regularly offered to support programs in choosing/creating accessible, engaging digital content and integrating digital literacy into instruction. Courses such as Learner Accessibility, Universal Design for Learning, and the IC3 Digital Literacy Credential provide teachers with concrete tools to create/evaluate digital learning. Instructors and staff are also provided with opportunities to enhance their own foundational digital literacy skills. This enables them to model, create, and facilitate successful digital learning.

- B) *The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of, and the improvement in, adult education and literacy activities and the dissemination of information about models and proven promises within the State.*

Maine Adult Education implements a Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process for evaluating adult education programs. The monitoring process consists of three key components: on-going, data-based desk audits; educational program reviews; and on-site program monitoring. Monitoring and evaluation are guided by the goal of deepening relationships and understanding between the state office and local programs.

*Annual Evaluations*

The state office reviews each program for compliance with the Maine State Legislature's definition (LD 1780) of adult education as well as WIOA requirements. Programs that score high on the risk analysis for such things as having a new director, consistent late or incorrect reporting, not meeting objectives, or fiscal irregularities become priorities for monitoring. Programs that are not meeting their responsibilities and/or objectives are provided with additional technical assistance to help them to come into full compliance.

#### *Data-based Desk Audits*

Student performance data and other program information are reviewed regularly by the adult education state office data coordinator. This data review guides ongoing conversations with local programs. All programs receiving AEFLA or state funds must enter student data at least monthly into MaineSTARS, an NRS compliant managed information system. Local programs must collect and document student information regarding student goals, educational functioning level, progress and achievements. Programs review data at least quarterly to ensure completeness, accuracy and to determine their standing regarding projected outcome targets. MaineSTARS generates annual reports on student performance measures for submission to OCTAE. The state data coordinator creates and distributes program specific reports which compare local program data with state targets.

#### *On-site Reviews*

The state office conducts on-site reviews at least every five years guided by a review instrument tailored to programs funded by AEFLA. The on-site program reviews provide an additional effective tool for continuous improvement. The key benefits of this monitoring strategy are:

- Self-assessment by local programs,
- Cross fertilization of information for best practices and strategies,
- Development of baseline for program improvement, and
- Staff development and technical assistance.

An on-site visit may also be triggered based on the Maine Adult Education Risk-based Monitoring System indicators.

#### *Permissible Activities*

- A) *The support of State or regional networks of literacy resource centers.*

Maine adult education leadership funds are used primarily to fund a state level professional development coordinator position and to implement the train the trainer model for required trainers. The state office has found this to be a much more effective system in terms of costs and use

of resources than the former centralized literacy resource center. The current model will continue as it has demonstrated effectiveness in building capacity. Local adult education programs are also grouped into regional hubs. The state office also provides customized technical assistance for needs within specific hubs.

*B) The development and implementation of technology applications, translation technology, or distance education, including professional development to support the use of instructional technology.*

Maine uses instructional technology as a conventional and standard modality for delivering professional development. Using an industry recognized learning management system, traditional professional development content is being translated into blended, synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities. The state office is modeling effective integration of instructional technology and supporting training for practitioners ready to incorporate this modality into instructional practice. The state office and local programs also partner with the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL), Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS).

*C) Developing and disseminating curricula, including curricula incorporating the essential components of reading instruction as such components relate to adults.*

. Because Maine is a local control state and educational statutes assert it is the right of local school units and not the state to develop and/or adopt curricula, the adult education state office does not disseminate curricula, but does make recommendations and provide high quality professional growth opportunities. Application of the Standards-in-Action curriculum review tool allows the State Office to provide recommendations of curriculum that are tightly aligned to the College and Career Readiness ELA/Literacy standards and provide adequate supports for multilingual learners.

*D) Developing content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways.*

Local programs are working with postsecondary partners and local workforce boards to determine appropriate alignment of educational pathways to career pathways. Their successes are shared with other providers. As part of the most recent AEFLA competition, each grant recipient is required to offer at least one IET. The State Office utilizes resources such as the federal Advance IET project for providing technical assistance on the development and evaluation of IETs.

*E) The provision of assistance to eligible providers in developing and implementing programs that achieve the objectives of this title and in measuring the progress of those programs in achieving such objectives, including meeting the State adjusted levels of performance described in section 116(b)(3).*

State assistance is provided to local programs to address required data elements and to implement best practices that will ensure measuring progress accurately. Monthly data office hours conducted by the state adult education data coordinator as well as regular in-person trainings address data professional development needs as necessary. Program monitoring is also conducted and includes local site visits and real-time desk audits. Required data reports identify problems as they arise to ensure timely assistance is given to eligible providers. Funding to eligible providers is based on program outcomes including overall educational gain percentages and employment and college placement outcomes as defined in WIOA section 116 (b)(3).

*F) The development and implementation of a system to assist in the transition from adult education to postsecondary education, including linkages with postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education.*

The Maine College and Career Access (MCCA) program addresses the attainment of skills necessary to prepare adults to enter postsecondary and/or employment or training programs. Learners receive the foundational skills they need as well as academic advising and career planning services, digital skill development, financial aid assistance, college planning and tours, and the World of Work Inventory (WOWI).

Local programs will continue to increase postsecondary collaborations, including the articulation of coursework, the ability to enroll in one free community college course, and the presence of adult education providers on higher education campuses through the College and Career Success Coordinators at each of the seven community college campuses.

*G) Integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skill training, including promoting linkages with employers.*

The role of adult education providers in preparing multilingual learners for the workforce is expanding. In addition to providing direct instruction and advising, local programs connect learners with other state and local service providers. Both the state office and local providers are much more engaged in meeting with employers, trade associations, and chambers of commerce to learn employer needs and develop appropriate programming. Multilingual learners are relocating to more areas of the state and workplaces. They arrive in Maine with a range of English language, academic and work skills. Some are highly educated professionals unable to gain meaningful employment due to a lack of English competency. Others need to start with the most basic introduction to the English language. Integrated English language, civics education, work skills and academic training help accelerate entry into employment.

As part of the Maine IELCE program, local providers are expected to integrate employability skills and those who receive 243 funds are to develop integrated education and training opportunities leading to unsubsidized employment.

*H) Activities to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities.*

Maine adult education has offered a Department of Education WorkReady certificate since 2000. This 60-hour standards-based curricula was developed in cooperation with local workforce boards and employers. The core curricula can be enhanced with the addition of hard skills to fit the needs of specific employers. The program is offered by trained facilitators at locations such as adult education programs, career centers, correctional facilities, high schools, career and technical education sites, and social service offices.

The next area of focus for the FY 2024 plan includes the integration of the new measurable skill gains (MSG) type 5 which allows programs to capture a MSG through the successful passing of occupational exams offered as part of an IET or Work Place adult education and literacy program. Additionally, Adult Education offers the IC3 Digital Literacy credential and will continue to focus on Digital Literacy and Equity as a partner of the Maine Connectivity Authority.

*I) Identifying curriculum frameworks and aligning rigorous content standards that –*

- i. specify what adult learners should know and be able to do in the areas of reading and language arts, mathematics, and English language acquisition; and take into consideration the following: state adopted academic standards; the current adult skills and literacy assessments used in the state or outlying area; the primary indicators of performance described in section 116; standards and academic requirements for enrollment in non-remedial, for-credit courses in postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education supported by the state or outlying area; where appropriate, the content of occupational and industry skills standards widely used by business and industry in the state or outlying area.

In 2014, Maine Adult Education adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) with the goal of statewide integration into instructional practices by SY2016-17. These standards focus on high-level reading skills, critical thinking, comprehension of concepts, and applications to real world situations. In mathematics, this looks like mastering underlying concepts, procedures, and applications of math to real world problems. Math lessons are coherent as students develop skills, building on previous knowledge. In ELA/literacy, CCRS manifests itself in teaching for complexity, evidence and knowledge with more complex tests,

confirming that students identify evidence in the text to support their ideas and responses. In English language acquisition, local programs are striving to support students in achievement of functional levels of literacy and numeracy that will enable them to gain employment and postsecondary training. Emphasis on sustainability of CCRS concepts so all teachers are trained and adept at integrating these standards into curricula and lessons will continue.

All local adult education programs in Maine are required to use CASAS tools for student assessment of educational functioning level and diagnostics. CASAS pretesting and post-testing are used to document educational gain as described in Section 116 as a primary indicator of performance. Additional assessments include the CASAS Employability, ACCUPLACER and HiSET equivalency test to provide specialized diagnostic information for college and career readiness and high school equivalency.

The Maine Unified Plan also points to new partnerships and activities between adult education and the Maine Department of Labor that will include cross agency professional development to enhance collaboration and alignment.

*J) Developing and piloting of strategies for improving teacher quality and effectiveness.*

. Maine is currently developing professional development pathways for adult education professionals that will provide role-specific content and will be relevant for professionals at varying experience levels. The state team is also working with the certification office to determine appropriate pathways to qualify teachers of adults to enter the field.

*K) The development and implementation of programs and services to meet the needs of adult learners with learning disabilities or English language learners, which may include new and promising assessments tools and strategies that are based on scientifically valid research, and identify the needs and capture the gains of such students at the lowest achievement levels.*

Partnerships are crucial in guaranteeing equal access to all learners and in providing high quality services to meet the needs of adult learners with disabilities and those at the most basic literacy levels. As core partners, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and Adult Education work closely to cross develop an effective referral system and train staff to use it appropriately. BRS has in the past and will continue to provide professional development for adult education providers.

The state office of adult education provides CASAS diagnostic training to help other eligible providers identify skill needs to determine targeted instruction and increase the academic gains of learners.

*L) Outreach to instructors, students, and employers.*

Due to its large geographic size and areas of low population density, Maine adult education will continue to expand its outreach to instructors, students and employers through increased uses of technology. Professional Learning, a web-based platform, provides one place where practitioners can learn about, register, and track their professional growth experiences.. The platform customizes the experience based on the user’s position in their program, and the State Office can send announcements to the network. Work has also begun on the establishment of professional development pathways to increase teacher expertise in various program areas.

In Case You Missed It (ICYMI) Newsletter , moderated by the state team, is a communication tool where upcoming events, professional discourse, and relevant news and articles are collected and distributed to practitioners. ICYMI is shared to Adult Education directors and staff.

The Maine Department of Education communications team regularly promotes the work of the State Office and local providers through the news room and on their social media channels.

Core partners continue to establish coordinated channels of communication to employers regarding common objectives. Local workforce development boards are key to coordinating the outreach efforts.

*M) Other activities of statewide significance that promote the purpose of this title.*

1. The state team Adult Education Director and workforce development coordinator sit on the one-stop centers service provider committee for each local workforce board. This step expands the partnership between the state office and the local workforce boards in sharing information and alignment of services on a statewide basis. This is in addition to the inclusion of a local literacy program director on the board of each local workforce area.

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(F) ASSESSING QUALITY

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*Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under Title II and take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA.*

Assessing quality of adult education and literacy activities happens at both the state and local levels.

The State Office encourages AEFLA sub-grantees to prioritize instructor engagement in at least 12 hours of professional development annually. To facilitate that happening, the state office provides

training opportunities year-round in multiple delivery formats and locations. In-person Meetings for local directors are held bi-annually and are monthly are held virtually. A series of trainings for new directors are conducted throughout the year. Webinars on special topics appropriate for administrators, instruction, and administrative staff are provided through technology and face to face. Though electronic means of delivery are relied on due to Maine's geographic challenges, there are still benefits of the state team going to the programs to meet with learners, observe classes and strengthen relationships.

The state disseminates professional development information in a variety of ways. On Maine's learning management system, Schoology, the State Office hosts topic-specific groups, such as CASAS, State Office Technical Assistance, Data, and Maine College and Career Access. These groups house resources for local providers, provide a channel for communication, and allow local providers to connect with other local providers. An annual calendar of high-quality professional development offerings to develop or enhance quality of instruction in the required, and many of the permissible leadership activities, is planned for FY 24 Local providers are also notified of upcoming trainings and resources through the ICYMI. Maine's Professional Learning platform is utilized to advertise, collect registrations for each training, verify number of professional development hours someone earns, and create transcripts. It is interesting to note that in addition to adult education practitioners, instructors from the K-12 and community college systems, as well as from partner organizations have been in attendance at many of the trainings.

To ensure the trainings meet intended outcomes, participants are required to complete an evaluation at the conclusion of each state sponsored professional development event. The evaluations are used to assess effectiveness and determine any necessary changes. The comments on evaluations often inform the state regarding topics for follow-up trainings.

The use of a learning management system assists in assessing quality. The system provides a means to gather information on instructor, staff and administrator participation in online resources, levels of engagement in facilitated communities of practice, and quality of outcomes. These communities provide the state with valuable information on areas in need of additional training. The ICYMI Professional Learning, and learning management system provide the means for widespread dissemination of information on proven or promising national, state and local practices.

In terms of assessing quality at the local level, providers are expected to meet the quality for instructional standards and outcome targets established in the AEFLA RFP. How well providers meet these expectations is determined through a variety of methods, including: participation in professional development; meeting performance goals; monthly expenditure reports to ensure

grant funds are only used for eligible activities and as allocated in approved budgets; timely submission of reports; and onsite and desktop monitoring. Annually, each local provider is required to submit a year-end narrative, data and budget report. Additionally, invoices are submitted quarterly and reviewed against the approved budget. Depending on the severity, budget reports that reflect inappropriate expenditures or variances from the approved budget will be requested by email or phone to make appropriate budget adjustments, renegotiate the budget, or have funding halted until the matter is reconciled. Quarterly reports that contain performance outcomes or targets that are below 90%, are taken into account through Risk Assessment and are monitored accordingly. Examples of targets include post-testing rates, transitions to employment/postsecondary and/or employment, advancement in educational functioning level, and data match percentage. Technical assistance is provided to each provider through monitoring.

As a follow up to monitoring the local provider will need to specify within 30 calendars how any findings will be addressed in a correction action plan. Once the plan is approved, the corrective steps can occur.

#### ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

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| 1. | The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;  |
| 2. | The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;   |
| 3. | The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;   |
| 4. | All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;   |
| 5. | A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan; |
| 6. | The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;  |
| 7. | The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and   |
| 8. | The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;  |

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| 1. | The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal require- |
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|    | ments under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement);   |
| 2. | The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;  |
| 3. | The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under Title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA; |
| 4. | Using funds made available under Title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.  |
| 5. | The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303).  |

### **GEPA Section 427**

Maine Adult Education strives to ensure that efforts are made by the state office and local providers to determine the existence of possible barriers that may prevent current or potential students, teachers or others from accessing our federally funded offerings. These barriers include, but may not be limited to gender, race, national origin, color, disability and/or age.

The Maine GEPA plan consists of the following:

1. State office will conduct a GEPA awareness training annually for all local providers administrators and staff.
2. Local providers will be required to do the following annually:
  - a) Bring some staff and students together to identify any of the possible barriers to be addressed by GEPA.
  - b) Analyze program data to identify possible underserved populations, why, who isn't completing, lack of enrollments in certain populations, drop outs, etc.
  - c) Determine root cause of the identified barriers.

- d) Describe the steps taken to identify potential/existing barrier(s)
- e) Identify barrier type (gender, race, national origin, color, disability, age, other)
- f) Describe the potential/existing barrier(s)
- g) Describe how the local provider will mitigate the barrier(s) identified
- h) Indicate how Title II AEFLA funds will be used to support the activities in g. above
- i) Any additional notes (optional)

Each provider will document the above process and submit the findings and next steps to the state office for review and approval.

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## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

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State plans for the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) are publicly available at the links provided below. A public hearing was held on January 25, 2024 and public comments accepted through March 15, 2024. Input from the State Rehabilitation Councils was gathered as the state plans were developed and also through the public comment process. Responses to input were incorporated into the DBVI/DVR portions of the Unified State Plan.

[DBVI State Plan http://www.maine.gov/rehab/dbvi/state\\_plan/index.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/rehab/dbvi/state_plan/index.shtml)

[DVR State Plan http://www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr/stateplan/index.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr/stateplan/index.shtml)

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## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

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The Department of Labor is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA66, and its supplement under Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act67

As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the Department of Labor68 agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan69, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations70, policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;

As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported

employment services, the designated State agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan<sup>71</sup>, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations<sup>72</sup>, policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under Title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;

The designated State agency and/or the designated State unit has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.

The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.

All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.

The Commissioner has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;

The Commissioner has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;

The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

### **ASSURANCES**

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

#### **The State Plan must provide assurances that:**

Public comment on policies and procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement:

The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.

Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan: The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:

the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.

the establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (Option A or B must be selected):

is an independent State commission.

has established a State Rehabilitation Council.

consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.

the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3).

the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds, (Yes/No)

the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs, (Yes/No)

state wideeness and waivers of state wideeness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of state wideeness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? (No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan.

the descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections

101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.

all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.

the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.

the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.

the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities.

the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Administration of the provision of VR services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:

comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.

impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.

provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes)

determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.

comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.

comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act.

provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.

comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14€ of the Fair Labor

Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act. meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs with respect to students with disabilities, the State, has developed and will implement, strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25)).

Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:

The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.

The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under Title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.

The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act.

Financial administration of the supported employment program:

The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under Title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not

supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.

Provision of supported employment services:

The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The designated State agency assures that:

the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act, and an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with Title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and € of the Rehabilitation Act.

~End~

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

| <b>Acronym</b> | <b>Definition</b>  |
|----------------|--|
| ACAP           | Aroostook County Action Program  |
| ACCUPLACER     | Assessment to identify student academic readiness  |
| ACS            | American Community Survey  |
| ADA            | Americans with Disabilities Act  |
| ADATAC         | Americans with Disabilities Act Technical Assistance Center                                      |
| AE             | Adult Education; Maine Department of Education   |
| AEFLA          | Adult Education and Family Literacy Act  |
| AJC            | American Job Centers   |
| AJLA           | America's Job Link Alliance, makers of Maine Job Link (MJL)                                      |
| ALC            | All Learning Counts; Grant received by the University of Maine system from the Lumina Foundation |
| ANI            | Adult Numeric Instruction  |
| AOP            | Agriculture Outreach Plan  |
| <u>ARPA</u>    | <u>American Rescue Plan Act of 2021</u>  |
| ARS            | Agricultural Recruitment System  |
| ASPIRE         | Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment                                       |
| ATEC           | Aroostook Training and Education Coalition   |
| BES            | Bureau of Employment Services; Maine Department of Labor   |
| BRS            | Bureau of Rehabilitation Services; Maine Department of Labor                                     |
| BUC            | Bureau of Unemployment Compensation; Maine Department of Labor                                   |
| CASAS          | Competency-based Assessment System or eCASAS   |
| CAST           | Center for Applied Special Technology  |
| CCR-SIA        | College Career Readiness- Standards in Actions   |
| CCRS           | College and Career Readiness Standards   |
| CCWI           | Coastal Counties Workforce Board   |
| CDE            | Commission on Disability and Employment; a subcommittee of the State Workforce Board             |
| CEDS           | Community Economic Development Strategy  |

| <b>Acronym</b> | <b>Definition</b>  |
|----------------|--|
| CEO            | Chief Elected Officials; County Commissioners who sit on the Local Workforce Boards (LWB)                                    |
| CRA            | Complaint Resolution Administrator   |
| CTE            | Career and Technical Education   |
| CTE            | Career and Technical Education part of Maine Department of Education   |
| CWMWDB         | Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board  |
| CWRI           | Center for Workforce Research and Information; Maine Department of Labor   |
| DAFS           | Department of Administration and Financial Services  |
| DBVI           | Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired; part of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services in the Maine Department of Labor |
| DECD           | Department of Economic and Community Development   |
| DHHS           | Department of Health and Human Services  |
| DOC            | Department of Corrections  |
| DVOP           | Disabled Veterans Outreach Program   |
| DVR            | Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; part of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services in the Maine Department of Labor        |
| DWG            | Dislocated Worker grant  |
| EEO            | Equal Employment Opportunity   |
| EFL            | educational functioning level  |
| ELA            | English language arts  |
| EMDC           | Eastern Maine Development Corporation  |
| EPTL           | Education Provider Training List; list of providers approved to provide WIOA funded training                                 |
| ES             | Employment Services  |
| ESOL           | English for Speakers of Other Languages aka ELL. Replaces the term ESL (English as a Second Language)                        |
| ETA            | Employment and Training Administration   |
| ETPL           | Eligible Training Provider List  |
| FAFSA          | Free Application for Federal Student Aid   |
| FAME           | Finance Authority of Maine   |
| FLC            | Foreign Labor Certification  |
| GEPA           | General Education Provisions Act   |
| H2A            | Temporary work visa for migrant workers  |

| <b>Acronym</b> | <b>Definition</b>  |
|----------------|--|
| H2B            | Temporary visa which used primarily for seasonal workers   |
| HiSet          | High school equivalency exam   |
| HOPE           | Higher Opportunity for Pathways to Employment  |
| IELCE          | Integrated English Literacy Civics Education   |
| IET            | Integrated education and training  |
| INA            | Indian and Native American (programs)  |
| IRP            | Individualized Reemployment Plan   |
| IT             | Information Technology   |
| ITAC           | Information Technology Accessibility Committee   |
| JVSG           | Jobs for Veterans State Grant  |
| LIFT           | Leveraging Investments in Families for Tomorrow  |
| LVER           | Local Veterans Employment Representatives  |
| LWB            | Local Workforce Board  |
| MaineEARNs     | Maine Education and Attainment Research Navigation System  |
| MAP            | Maine Apprenticeship Program   |
| MCC /MCCS      | Maine Community College (system)   |
| MCCA           | Maine College and Career Access is a program offered by Maine Adult Education  |
| MCT            | Maine College Transition   |
| MDOL           | Maine Department of Labor  |
| MEMA           | Maine Emergency Management Association   |
| MEP            | Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnerships   |
| MIS            | management information systems   |
| MJL            | Maine Job Link system which is used as case management system by CareerCenters. Built by AJLA and replaced Maine's JobBank system. |
| MJRP           | Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan of 2021   |
| MOU            | Memorandum of Understanding  |
| MQC            | Maine Quality Centers a program of the Maine Community College System  |
| MSFW           | Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers  |
| NAMI           | National Alliance on Mental Illness  |
| NASWA          | National Association of State Workforce Agencies   |
| NCCER          | National Center for Construction Education and Research  |
| NEG            | National Emergency Grant   |
| NETAAC         | New England Trade Adjustment Assistance Center   |

| <b>Acronym</b> | <b>Definition</b>   |
|----------------|---|
| NFJP           | Farmworkers Jobs Program  |
| NIST           | National Institute of Standards and Technology  |
| NRS            | National Reporting System for Adult Education   |
| NVME           | New Ventures Maine  |
| NWDB           | Northeastern Workforce Development Board  |
| OCTAE          | Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education; US Department of Education               |
| OJT            | On the Job Training   |
| OSHA-10        | Occupational Safety and Health Administration training                                    |
| OWC            | Older Worker Committee; a subcommittee of the State Workforce Board                       |
| RAP            | Reading Apprenticeship Program  |
| RESEA /REA     | Reemployment Service and Eligibility Assessment   |
| RFP            | Request for Proposal  |
| RSA            | Rehabilitation Services Administration  |
| RSI            | Reemployment and Systems Integration  |
| SBE            | Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment  |
| SCSEP          | Senior Community Services Employment Program  |
| SMA            | State Monitor Advocate  |
| SNAP           | Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program   |
| SNAP E&T       | Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Program                 |
| SSI/ SSDI      | Social Security Insurance/ Social Security Disability Insurance                           |
| STAR           | Student Achievement in Reading training   |
| SWA            | State Workforce Agency  |
| SWAT           | State Workforce Assistance Team   |
| SWB            | State Workforce Board   |
| SWIS           | State Wage Interchange System   |
| TAA            | Trade Adjustment Assistance   |
| TAC            | Technical Assistance Circular document provided by USDOL to expand or clarify regulations |
| TANF           | Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; a DHHS program                                   |
| UI             | Unemployment insurance may refer to either the program and the agency                     |
| UMS            | University of Maine System  |
| USDA           | United States Department of Agriculture (federal)   |
| USDOL          | United States Department of Labor (federal)   |

| <b>Acronym</b>    | <b>Definition</b>  |
|-------------------|--|
| VETS              | Veterans Employment and Training Services  |
| VR                | Vocational Rehabilitation; could stand for either the agency Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or the service provided.  |
| WARN Act          | Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act  |
| WDQI              | Workforce Data Quality Initiative  |
| WDS               | Workforce Development System   |
| WEC               | Women's Employment Committee; a subcommittee of the State Workforce Board  |
| WIA               | Workforce Investment Act, predecessor to WIOA  |
| WIC               | Women Infants and Children program   |
| WINTAC            | Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center   |
| WIOA              | Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act   |
| WIPC              | WIOA Implementation Policy Committee   |
| W.O.R.K. Services | Workforce Opportunities, Referrals and Knowledge services is a software application connecting the systems of Adult Education, Bureau of Employment Services and Vocational Rehabilitation |
| WOTC              | Work Opportunity Tax Credit  |
| WOWI              | World of Work Inventory; career assessment   |
| WPRS              | Worker Profiling Reemployment Services   |
| YBA               | Youth Build  |

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**APPENDIX B: WIOA STEERING COMMITTEE**

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| <b>Member</b>  | <b>Affiliation</b> | <b>Position</b>   |
|----------------|--------------------|---|
| Kimberly Moore | MDOL-BES           | Director, Bureau of Employment Services                               |
| Dawn Mealey    | MDOL-BES           | Deputy Director, Bureau of Employment Services                        |
| Ginny Carroll  | MDOL-BES           | Division Director, Policy & Evaluation, Bureau of Employment Services |

| <b>Member</b>        | <b>Affiliation</b> | <b>Position</b>   |
|----------------------|--------------------|---|
| Megan Dichter        | MDOE-<br>Adult Ed  | Adult Education Workforce Development                                 |
| Libby Stone-Sterling | MDOL-<br>BRS       | Director, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services                           |
| Elissa Rowe          | MDOL-<br>BRS       | Director, Division for the Blind & Visually Impaired                  |
| Galan Williamson     | LWB                | Executive Director, Northeastern Workforce Development Board          |
| Erin Benson          | LWB                | Executive Director, Central/Western Maine Workforce Development Board |
| Antoinette Mancusi   | LWB                | Executive Director, Coastal Counties Workforce Inc.                   |
| Jillian Sample       | LWB                | Director of Operations, Coastal Counties Workforce Inc.               |
| Christopher Quint    | MDOL-<br>SWB       | Director, State Workforce Board                                       |
| Isaac Gingras        | MDOL-<br>SWB       | Workforce Development Program Coordinator, State Workforce Board      |

This group will meet monthly to monitor and review progress of the implementation of the plan, update necessary elements, and provide strategic support when required. Using a matrix of initiatives, the group can track the progress of elements as they move towards completion.

APPENDIX C: SWB AND DECD LISTENING SESSIONS

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September 21, 2023  
 Scarborough, Maine

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Katie Shorey    | Live and Work in Maine   |
| Thomas Nash     | Windham Raymond Adult Education - RSU#14 School District         |
| Mari O'Neil     | Retail Association of Maine/Maine Business Education Partnership |
| Linda Winton    | Bonny Eagle Adult Education                                      |
| Rob Klaiber     | Maine Dept. Labor - Bureau of Employment Services                |
| Tim Dunne       | Southern Maine Community College                                 |
| Jim Whitten     | Southern Maine Community College                                 |
| Eamonn Dundon   | Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce                            |
| Bill Kerbin     | Town of New Gloucester   |
| Marshall Archer | City of Saco   |
| Serena M Powell | Fedcap Inc. Serving Maine  |
| Brenda Downey   | SMCC   |
| Barb Conner     | Southern Maine Community College                                 |
| David Plumb     | Consensus Building Institute                                     |
| Mari O'Neil     | Retail Association of Maine/Maine Business Education Partnership |
| Keith McBride   | Sanford Regional Economic Growth Council                         |
| Joshua Reny     | City of South Portland   |
| Linda Greer     | Marshwood and Kittery Adult Education                            |
| Bill Kerbin     | Town of New Gloucester   |
| Cait Grant      | York County Community College                                    |
| Chris Burbank   | York County Community College                                    |
| Megan Dichter   | Adult Education, MDOE  |
| Melissa Hue     | City of Portland - Office of Economic Opportunity Director       |
| Kelly Flagg     | Associated General Contractors of Maine                          |
| Mari O'Neil     | Retail Association of Maine/Maine Business Education Partnership |
| Paul Johnson    | GPCOG  |
| William Mann    | City of South Portland   |
| Eva Shepherd    | City of South Portland   |
| Delilah Poupore | Heart of Biddeford   |
| Serena Powell   | Fedcap Inc.  |

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Allyson Coombs           | State Workforce Board member / GD Bath Iron Works                    |
| Antoinette Mancusi       | Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc.                                     |
| Jillian Sample           | Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc.                                     |
| Kyle Olson               | Coastal Counties Workforce Inc                                       |
| Melissa                  | City of Portland   |
| Jill Harlow              | Maine Coast Fishermen's Association                                  |
| Linda Winton             | Bonny Eagle Adult Education  |
| Tiffanie Bentley         | Southern Maine Community College                                     |
| Monique Coombs           | Maine Coast Fishermen's Association                                  |
| Eamonn Dundon            | Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce                                |
| Jim Whitten              | Southern Maine Community College                                     |
| Stephen Von Vogt         | Maine Composites Alliance  |
| Ashley Asselin           | Live + Work in Maine   |
| Allie Novicki            | Maine State Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)      |
| Linda Greer              | Kittery and Marshwood Adult Education                                |
| James Rather             | SMPDC  |
| Brie O'Malley            | ReVision Energy  |
| Paul Schumacher          | SMPDC  |
| Mahir Hasanov            | MDOL-BES   |
| Shelli Pride             | Gorham Adult Education   |
| Heather Johnson          | Commissioner, Maine Department of Economic and Community Development |
| Julia Trujillo<br>Luengo | Maine Department of Economic and Community Development               |
| Christopher Quint        | Maine Department of Labor – State Workforce Board                    |
| Isaac Gingras            | Maine Department of Labor – State Workforce Board                    |

October 3, 2023  
Damariscotta, Maine

|                   |                                    |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| Patricia Cloutier | Wiscasset Area Chamber of Commerce |
| Charlotte Nutt    | Midcoast Council of Governments    |
| Stacey Keefer     | Maine Marine Trades Association    |
| Mike Roughton     | Maine Manufacturing Association    |

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Stephen Von Vogt            | Maine Composites Alliance                                 |
| Kathryn Ference             | Maine Tourism Association                                 |
| Rosa Redonnett              | University of Maine System                                |
| Nikki Williams              | Children's Oral Health Network of Maine                   |
| Becca Matusovich            | Children's Oral Health Network of Maine                   |
| Kalie Hess                  | Children's Oral Health Network of Maine                   |
| Courtney Vannah             | MCD Global Health   |
| Jen Cushman                 | University of Maine at Augusta                            |
| Preston Thomas              | Four Directions Development Corporation                   |
| Sarah Alexander             | Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association           |
| Julian Baer                 | Maine DHHS  |
| LISA ARCHER                 | NEW VENTURES MAINE  |
| William Card                | U.S. Small Business Administration                        |
| Maxwell Johnstone           | Midcoast Council of Governments                           |
| Jennifer Kopp               | MaineHealth   |
| Katie Shorey                | Live and Work in Maine                                    |
| Mathew Eddy                 | Midcoast Council of Governments                           |
| Brian Dancause              | Midcoast Council of Governments                           |
| Sheila Muldoon              | Workforce Solutions                                       |
| Catherine Wygant<br>Fossett | Institute for Family-Owned Business                       |
| Rene Smith                  | Maine Department of Labor - Bureau of Employment Services |
| Derek Fassett               | HospitalityMaine  |
| Kathryn Ference             | Maine Tourism Association                                 |
| Hannah Greene               | Educate Maine   |
| Justin Cotta Holmes         | CCWI  |
| Katie Shorey                | Live and Work in Maine                                    |
| Jillian Sample              | Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc.                          |
| Rebecca Dansereau           | Maine DOL Apprenticeship Program                          |
| Betty Johnson               | Coastal County workforce Inc                              |
| Karen Claywell              | Fedcap Families Forward                                   |
| Libby Stone-Sterling        | MDOL - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation              |
| Julia Trujillo Luengo       | Maine Department of Economic and Community Development    |
| Samantha Dina               | Maine Department of Labor                                 |

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Isaac Gingras | Maine Department of Labor – State Workforce Board |
|---------------|---|

Lewiston, Maine

October 4, 2023

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Edmond Kabagambe      | Maine Labor and Resource Center                        |
| Trampas Hutches       | MaineHealth and CWMWDB BOD member                      |
| Josh Farr             | Kennebec Neighbors Adult Education                     |
| Bryan Brito           | MSAD52 Adult Education                                 |
| Kendra Wheeler        | Bangor Savings Bank                                    |
| Rene Smith            | MDOL - Bureau of Employment Services                   |
| Stephen Vose          | Maranacook Adult Education and Truck Driving School    |
| Chris Gepford         | Looking Ahead Clubhouse (Kennebec Behavioral Health)   |
| Kristine McCallister  | Maine Department of Labor - BES                        |
| Matthew Garside       | Town of Poland   |
| Larry Allen           | AVCOG/ATRC/LATC  |
| Tony Carter           | Oxford County Commission                               |
| Ben Tucker            | Office of US Senator Angus King, Jr.                   |
| Ethan Vinson          | AVCOG  |
| Carlene Tremblay      | US Senator Susan Collins                               |
| Betsy Libby           | Central Maine Community College                        |
| Stephanie Haskins     | Gray-New Gloucester Adult Education                    |
| Jonathan Delorme      | Educate Maine  |
| Andrew Osheroff       | University of Southern Maine                           |
| Mike Emery            | Lake Region & Fryeburg Area Adult Education            |
| Claude Rwaganje       | ProsperiryME   |
| Amy Scott             | Northern Forest Center                                 |
| Dan                   | Berger   |
| Julia Trujillo Luengo | Maine Department of Economic and Community Development |
| Kim Moore             | Maine Department of Labor                              |

October 18, 2023  
 Fairfield, Maine

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Jean Dempster       | New Ventures Maine/University of Maine at Augusta                              |
| Tom Fernands        | Eastern Maine Development Corporation  |
| Denise Ducharme     | Town of Madison  |
| Jessie Cyr          | KVCOG  |
| Alison Applegate    | Bar Harbor Bank & Trust  |
| Roger Felix         | Loring Job Corps Center  |
| Laurie J. Scott     | DHHS/Office of Family Independence/Whole Family Case Coordinator               |
| Kristina Cannon     | Main Street Skowhegan  |
| Stephanie Thibodeau | Fairfield Economic and Community Development Committee; Fairfield Town Council |
| Wendy Kostenbauder  | MDOL   |
| Eric Weidman        | Maine Apprenticeship Program, MDOL   |
| Korah Soll          | Rural Aspirations Project  |
| Elizabeth Fortin    | Kennebec Valley Community College  |
| Alec Rogers         | Maine Evergreen Hotel & Gallery of Maine Art                                   |
| Karen Nomandin      | Kennebec Valley Community College  |
| Elizabeth Fortin    | Kennebec Valley Community College  |
| Joe Musemeci        | Kennebec Valley Community College  |
| Erica Watson        | Maine Development Foundation   |
| Ben Hawkins         | Maine Health Care Association  |
| Karen Claywell      | Fedcap Families Forward  |
| Denise Ducharme     | Town of Madison  |
| Sally Dwyer         | Town of Madison  |
| Tenley Skolfield    | Main Street Skowhegan  |
| Jean Dempster       | New Ventures Maine at UMA  |
| Gabe Gauvin         | Central Maine Growth Council   |
| Joshua Farr         | Kennebec Neighbors Adult Education (MSAD11, Winthrop, RSU2)                    |
| Logan Johnson       | Maine TREE Foundation  |
| Jenny Kordick       | Maine Outdoor Brands   |
| Jessica Dubois      | Fedcap Inc. Families Foward  |

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Rose Barboza             | Black Owned Maine                                      |
| Tim Curtis               | Somerset County  |
| Peter Phair              | Waterville Area Habitat For Humanity                   |
| Bryan Belliveau          | Town of Skowhegan                                      |
| Susan LeClair            | CareerCenter Maine Department of Labor                 |
| Kathe Bolster            | Town of Benton   |
| Julia Trujillo<br>Luengo | Maine Department of Economic and Community Development |
| Christopher Quint        | Maine Department of Labor – State Workforce Board      |
| Isaac Gingras            | Maine Department of Labor – State Workforce Board      |

October 24, 2023

Northern Maine Community College, Presque Isle, Maine

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Roger Felix                   | Loring Job Corps                         |
| Paul Towle                    | Aroostook Partnership                    |
| Wendy Kostenbauder            | MDOL                                     |
| LaNiece Sirois                | Central Aroostook Chamber of Commerce    |
| Tim Crowley                   | NMCC                                     |
| Tony Levesque                 | Town of Fort Fairfield                   |
| Jane Torres                   | Greater Houlton Chamber of Commerce      |
| Todd Saucier                  | United Insurance                         |
| Galen Weibley                 | City of Presque Isle                     |
| Jennifer Buckingham           | TEMPO Employment Services                |
| Jeannie Tapley                | Maine Potato Board                       |
| Ryan Rogers                   | Dead River Company                       |
| Edward PeterPaul              | Mikmaq Nation                            |
| Micah Desmond                 | Aroostook Regional Transportation System |
| Kathy Williams                | Aroostook County Action Program          |
| Stacey Cyr                    | Valley Unified Continuing Education      |
| Suzanne Senechal-<br>Jandreau | New Ventures Maine                       |
| Kate Easter                   | Loring Job Corps Center/CSD              |
| Sarah Hemphill                | Fedcap Families Forward                  |

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Wendy Kostenbauder   | MDOL-Apprenticeship                        |
| Heidi Rackliffe      | ACAP                                       |
| Barbara Turner       | Northern Maine Development Commission      |
| Jason Parent         | Aroostook County Action Program            |
| Patty Cavagnaro      | Huber Engineered Woods                     |
| Joseph Siddiqui      | Northern Light AR Gould Hospital           |
| Melanie Junkins      | Maine Department of Education              |
| Johanna Johnston     | Southern Aroostook Development Corporation |
| Jocelyn Haley        | Northern Maine General                     |
| Victoire Liwanga     | Northern Maine Community College           |
| Gina Brown           | Houlton Regional Hospital                  |
| Griffin Goins        | Northern Maine Community College           |
| Nicholas Weeks       | Aroostook County Action Program            |
| Douglas Cyr          | Irving Forest Products, Inc.               |
| Jon Gulliver         | Northern Maine Development Commission      |
| Leah Buck            | NMCC                                       |
| Galan Williamson     | Northeastern Workforce Development Board   |
| Gina LeBlanc-Eggert  | Versant Power                              |
| Christopher Hinshaw  | Greater East Grand Economic Council        |
| Senator Trey Stewart | Maine State Senate                         |
| Christopher Quint    | State Workforce Board                      |
| Terry Theriault      | TNT Road Company                           |

October 24, 2023

Lubec, Maine

|                   |                                     |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Susan Mingo       | Washington County Community College |
| Nichole Sawyer    | Washington County Community College |
| Denise Cilley     | Sunrise County Economic Council     |
| Nichole Sawyer    | WCCC                                |
| Charles Rudelitch | Sunrise County Economic Council     |
| Mae Garvin        | Sunrise County Economic Council     |
| Heron Weston      | Sunrise County Economic Council     |
| Jessica Greeley   | SCEC and Maine APEX                 |

|                   |                                       |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Scott Beal        | Woodland Pulp                         |
| Dodie Emerson     | Sunrise County Economic Council       |
| Susan Hatton      | Sunrise County Economic Council       |
| Elaine Abbott     | Sunrise County Economic Council       |
| Monique Claverie  | St Croix Tissue                       |
| Amanda Smith      | Sunrise County Economic Council       |
| crystal hitchings | sunrise county economic council       |
| Brooke Hachey     | Sunrise County Economic Council       |
| Jen Peters        | Sunrise County Economic Council       |
| Michael L. Day    | Maine Department of Labor             |
| Katia McClellan   | Sunrise County Economic Council       |
| Geoffrey Lagat    | SCEC                                  |
| Sarah Strickland  | Greater East Grand Economic Council   |
| Saydee Plaster    | Eastern Maine Development Corporation |
| Ashley Dhakal     | Sunrise County Economic Council       |
| Katie Bragg       | Sunrise County Economic Council       |
| Matt Dana         | Sunrise County Economic Council       |
| Stanley Sluzenski | St. Croix Regional Technical Center   |
| Rachel Rubeor     | select person                         |
| Martha Howell     | Lubec Econ Dev committee              |
| Denise Rule       | Lubec Economic Development Committee  |
| Samantha Dina     | Maine Department of Labor             |

October 25, 2023

Bangor, Maine

|                   |                                       |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Molly Ginn        | Penobscot Job Corps Center            |
| Cherie Galyean    | Maine Community Foundation            |
| Thomas Grogan     | New Ventures Maine                    |
| Eric Weidman      | Maine Apprenticeship Program          |
| Shane O'Neill     | University of Maine                   |
| Benjamin Bussiere | Eastern Maine Development Corporation |
| Jennifer King     | EMDC                                  |
| Janet Smith       | Eastern Maine Development Corporation |

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Joanna Morrison  | Northern Light Health                                   |
| Greg Leavitt     | Bangor Adult & Community Education                      |
| Bev Uhlenhake    | Sky Villa Properties / NWDB board member                |
| Lisa Shaw        | Maine State Library                                     |
| COle Averill     | Eastern Maine Development Corporation                   |
| Susan Cerini     | Eastern Maine Community College                         |
| Tom Fernands     | Eastern Maine Development Corporation                   |
| Annie Sargent    | Ellsworth Adult & Community Education                   |
| Molly Ginn       | Penobscot Job Corps Center                              |
| Vicki Rusbult    | Eastern Maine Development Corporation                   |
| PATRICK LEWIS    | TOWN OF SANGERVILLE                                     |
| Mitch Stone      | Town of Orono   |
| Michael Burgess  | Penobscot Nation  |
| Kate Dickerson   | Maine Discovery Museum                                  |
| Lori Googins     | University of Maine at Augusta                          |
| Renee Doble      | City of Brewer  |
| Anne Krieg       | City of Bangor  |
| Zach Schmesser   | Congressman Jared Golden                                |
| Debora Rountree  | Eastern Maine Community College                         |
| Mike Donahue     | EMDC Board  |
| Terri Bruce      | Cooperative Development Institute                       |
| Liz Russell      | Eastern Maine Community College                         |
| Denise Buzzelli  | Piscataquis Chamber of Commerce                         |
| Tanya Emery      | Maine Connectivity Authority                            |
| Brad Wall        | Fedcap Families Forward                                 |
| Sara Devlin      | Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System (BACTS) |
| Edie Smith       | Office of U.S. Senator Angus King                       |
| Rick Bronson     | Town of Lincoln   |
| Chris Linder     | Cooperative Fund of the Northeast (CFNE)                |
| Linda Nelson     | Town of Stonington                                      |
| Gabe Rand        | EMDC  |
| EJ Roach         | City of Old Town  |
| Janna Richards   | City of Ellsworth                                       |
| Galan Williamson | Northeastern Workforce Development Board                |

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Amy Collinsworth           | Eastern Maine Development Corporation                  |
| Tanner Hanes               | EMDC   |
| Valerie Hamomnd            | Northeastern Workforce Development Board               |
| Galan Williamson           | Northeastern Workforce Development Board               |
| Amy Ryder                  | Town of Hampden  |
| D'arcy Main-Boy-<br>ington | City of Brewer   |
| Christopher Quint          | State Workforce Board                                  |
| Lori Googins               | University of Maine at Augusta (Ellsworth Center)      |
| Jaida Bolstridge           | EMDC   |
| Greg Piduch                | Hancock County Planning Commission                     |
| Alice Cockerham            | Hancock County Planning Commission                     |
| Kelly Cochrane             | Eastern Maine Development Corp.                        |
| Brianna                    | Lavin  |
| Benjamin Bussiere          | EMDC   |
| Kimberly Morrison          | Eastern Maine Development Corporation                  |
| James Fisher               | Town of Deer Isle                                      |
| Julia Trujillo<br>Luengo   | Maine Department of Economic and Community Development |

APPENDIX D: MAINE'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE  
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

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PUBLIC

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[Maine Community College System https://www.mccs.me.edu/](https://www.mccs.me.edu/)

- [Central Maine Community College https://www.cmcc.edu/](https://www.cmcc.edu/)
- [Eastern Maine Community College https://www.emcc.edu/](https://www.emcc.edu/)
- [Kennebec Valley Community College https://www.kvcc.me.edu/](https://www.kvcc.me.edu/)
- [Northern Maine Community College https://www.nmcc.edu/](https://www.nmcc.edu/)
- [Southern Maine Community College https://www.smccme.edu/](https://www.smccme.edu/)
- [Washington County Community College https://www.wccc.me.edu/](https://www.wccc.me.edu/)
- [York County Community College https://www.yccc.edu/](https://www.yccc.edu/)

[Maine Maritime Academy https://mainemaritime.edu/](https://mainemaritime.edu/)

[University of Maine System https://www.maine.edu/](https://www.maine.edu/)

- [University of Maine - Orono https://umaine.edu/](https://umaine.edu/)
- [University of Maine at Augusta https://www.uma.edu/](https://www.uma.edu/)
- [University of Maine at Farmington https://www.umf.maine.edu/](https://www.umf.maine.edu/)
- [University of Maine at Fort Kent https://www.umfk.edu/](https://www.umfk.edu/)
- [University of Maine at Machias https://machias.edu/](https://machias.edu/)
- [University of Maine at Presque Isle https://www.umpi.edu/](https://www.umpi.edu/)
- [University of Southern Maine https://usm.maine.edu/](https://usm.maine.edu/)

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PRIVATE

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[Bates College https://www.bates.edu/](https://www.bates.edu/)

[Beal College https://bealcollege.edu/](https://bealcollege.edu/)

[Bowdoin College https://www.bowdoin.edu/](https://www.bowdoin.edu/)

[Colby College http://www.colby.edu/](http://www.colby.edu/)

[College of the Atlantic https://www.coa.edu/](https://www.coa.edu/)

[Husson University https://www.husson.edu/](https://www.husson.edu/)

[Purdue Global https://www.purdueglobal.edu/](https://www.purdueglobal.edu/)

[Maine College of Art https://www.meca.edu/](https://www.meca.edu/)

[Maine College of Health Professions https://www.mchp.edu/](https://www.mchp.edu/)

[Maine Media College https://www.mainemedia.edu/](https://www.mainemedia.edu/)

[New England Bible College https://www.nebc.edu/](https://www.nebc.edu/)

[Saint Joseph's College https://www.sjcme.edu/](https://www.sjcme.edu/)

[Southern New Hampshire University - Brunswick/Winter Harbor https://www.snhu.edu/](https://www.snhu.edu/)

[Thomas College https://www.thomas.edu/](https://www.thomas.edu/)

[Unity College https://www.unity.edu/](https://www.unity.edu/)

[University of New England https://www.une.edu/](https://www.une.edu/)

APPENDIX E: DRAFT INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING AGREEMENT POLICY



STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
STATE WORKFORCE BOARD  
55 STATE HOUSE STATION

Janet T. Mills  
GOVERNOR

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0055  
[www.Maine.gov/SWB](http://www.Maine.gov/SWB)

Laura Fortman  
COMMISSIONER

| <b>MAINE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM</b> |   |                |                                   |
|---|---|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Subject:</b>                           | <b>Infrastructure Agreement</b><br><b>MOU Phase II</b>  | <b>Funding</b> | <b>Policy No:</b> <b>PY-19-04</b> |
| <b>To:</b>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State WDB</li> <li>• Local WDBs</li> <li>• Chief Elected Officials</li> <li>• WIOA Required Partners</li> </ul>  | <b>From:</b>   | State Workforce Board             |
| <b>Issuance Date:</b>                     | <b>June 12, 2020</b>  | <b>Status:</b> | <b>ACTIVE</b>                     |
| <b>Authority:</b>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WIOA (Pub. L. 113-128) Sections:121(b)(1)(B); 121(b)(2)(B); 121(h)</li> <li>• 20 CFR 678.400, 678.700 thru 678.760;</li> <li>• 34 CFR 361.400, 361.700 thru 361.760;</li> <li>• 34 CFR 463.400. 463.700 thru 463.760</li> <li>• TEGL 17-16; PM-OCTAE 17-03; RSA-TAC 17-03</li> <li>• Infrastructure Cost Sharing FAQs</li> </ul> |                |                                   |
| <b>Key:</b>                               | <b>CEO</b> = Chief Elected Official, <b>IFA</b> = Infrastructure Funding Agreement; <b>IFM</b> = Infrastructure Funding Mechanism; <b>LB</b> = Local Board; <b>PM</b> = Program Memorandum; <b>RP</b> = Required Partner; <b>SFM</b> = State Funding Mechanism; <b>TAC</b> = Technical Assistance Circular; <b>TEGL</b> = Training and Employment Guidance Letter         |                |                                   |

## Purpose

To provide guidance to Local Boards (**LBs**), Chief Elected Officials (**CEOs**) and Required Partners (**RPs**) regarding development and implementation of a local Infrastructure Funding Agreement (**IFA**). An IFA identifies how one-stop infrastructure costs jointly benefitting required partner programs will be equitably shared. This guidance also identifies: roles and responsibilities; timelines by which components of the cost-sharing negotiations process must be completed; requirements for documenting the negotiations process; and an overview of cost allocation methodologies based on proportionate use and relative benefit received.

## Background

WIOA requires that each entity that carries out a program or activities in a local area use a portion of its funds available to establish and maintain the local one-stop infrastructure. Local partners may also agree to negotiate cost sharing for other activities, such as shared staff who provide common functions. All required partners must provide access to their services from at least one comprehensive one-stop in each local area. With the agreement of Chief Elected Officials, WIOA directs local boards and required partners to work together to design and implement a streamlined, customer-centric, integrated system of services.

In collaboration, required partners, CEOs and LBs identify the types of centers that will make up the one-stop delivery system in each local area (comprehensive, affiliate, and specialized) and the partner services that will be made available through each. Once the service delivery design phase is complete (see *PY16-01 for MOU guidance* [https://www.maine.gov/swb/laws/policies/PY16-01 MOU Phase 1.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/swb/laws/policies/PY16-01%20MOU%20Phase%201.pdf) ) a second phase commences in which local boards and one-stop partners identify and determine how infrastructure and other costs will be shared, this phase is referred to as the **Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA)**. The infrastructure funding agreement portion of the overall MOU must be reviewed and renegotiated annually.

## Timelines

- **07/30/2020** - date local area must provide a notice of failure to reach agreement to MDOL
- **09/30/2020** - date local area must submit signed IFA, using either the LFM or SFM to MDOL
- **01/01/2018** - date US Departments of Labor and Education require IFAs be in place in local areas.

## Required Partners

A. WIOA title I programs (29 U.S.C. chapter 32):

- Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth formula programs;
  - Job Corps;
  - YouthBuild;
  - Native American Programs;
  - National Farmworker Jobs Program
- B.** Employment Services authorized by the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.) as amended by WIOA title III
- C.** Senior Community Service Employment Program, authorized under title V of Older Americans Act of 1965;
- D.** Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), authorized under chapter 2 of the title II of the Trade Act of 1974;
- E.** Unemployment Compensation (UC) programs;
- F.** Jobs for Veteran’s State Grants (JSVG) programs, authorized under chapter 41 of title 38, U.S.C.; and
- G.** Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) programs, authorized under sec. 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532) and WIOA sec. 169;
- H.** Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) program, authorized under WIOA title II;
- I.** Career and technical education programs at the postsecondary level, authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV); and
- J.** The State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 720 et seq.), as amended by WIOA Title IV;
- K.** Employment and Training Programs funded through the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- L.** Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) programs (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.); and
- M.** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, authorized under part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.), unless exempted by the Governor under 20 CFR 678.405(b), 34 CFR 361.405(b), and 34 CFR 463.405(b);

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Governor, through the **State Workforce Board** is responsible for creating the framework for infrastructure cost sharing that required partners and local boards must follow.

The **State Workforce Agency (MDOL)** is responsible for monitoring local area fiscal operations and ensuring the conditions of the MOU and IFA are implemented according to these requirements.

**Local Boards and CEOs** are responsible for:

- Working to achieve consensus on cost sharing between one-stop partners;
- Negotiating the IFA and/or implementing the SFM if unable to achieve consensus;
- Ensuring required partners adhere to the IFA/SFM guidelines;
- Providing technical assistance to partners to ensure they understand MOU/IFA requirements;
- Ensuring one-stop infrastructure costs are paid according to the provisions of the MOU/IFA; and
- Consulting with appropriate parties as directed under WIOA.

**Required Partner Programs** must provide access to their services through the comprehensive one-stop in each local area and must use a portion of its funds to maintain the one-stop delivery system, including payment of infrastructure costs. Required partners must work collaboratively and in good faith with LBs and CEOs to: enter into a memorandum of agreement that identifies the services to be provided in the local one-stop system; identify one-stop centers in the local area, including comprehensive, affiliate and if applicable specialized one-stops; and agree to methods of calculating the amounts each partner will contribute toward one-stop infrastructure costs.

### **Local Funding Mechanism (LFM)**

The LFM provides partners with the most flexibility in how they can leverage their resources and come to consensus on an Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA); consensus on the infrastructure budget and partner contributions must be reached by all partners for the local funding mechanism to work. If consensus cannot be reached, the State Funding Mechanism is triggered. Under the LFM, LBs, CEOs and required partners negotiate and agree to the methods to be used and the amounts each partner will contribute to one-stop infrastructure costs. The sharing and allocation of infrastructure costs are governed by WIOA sec. 121(h), its implementing regulations, and the Federal cost principles contained in the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal awards at 2 CFR part 200 and 2 CFR part 2900. WIOA requires that one-stop partner programs contribute to infrastructure and certain additional costs based on their proportionate use and relative benefit received. Partner contributions must be allowable, reasonable, necessary and allocable to the partner program, consistent with Federal cost principles set forth in the Uniform Guidance.

Under the LFM, there are no specific caps on the amount or percent of overall funding a partner may contribute, except that administrative costs may not exceed the amount available under each partner's authorizing statute. Cash, non-cash, and third-party in-kind contributions may be provided by one-stop partners, or by other agencies on behalf of one-stop partners, to cover their proportionate share of cost.

## **State Funding Mechanism (SFM)**

In the event the LB, CEOs and RPs in a local area do not reach agreement on methods of sufficiently funding infrastructure costs for a program year, the SFM will be used for that local area. Under the SFM, the Governor determines partner contributions and calculates the statewide caps by considering total partner program funding against the statutory caps specified in WIOA and regular funding distribution formulas. Each required partner must provide information on the total amount of funding they receive for the SFM calculation to be figured, local boards are responsible for gathering this data when calculating the local one-stop system operating costs and partner contributions.

## **Required Elements of an Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA)**

The IFA is a mandatory component of the local MOU, the IFA must include the following elements:

- A.** The timeframe the IFA is in effect, which may differ from the timeframe the overall MOU is in effect;
- B.** Identification of an infrastructure and shared services budget, which will be periodically reviewed and accordingly adjusted to ensure it reflects a cost allocation methodology that appropriately charges costs to each partner in proportion to their use of the one-stop center and the relative benefit received by their program; it is a component of the overall one-stop operating budget;
- C.** Identification of all one-stop partners, CEOs, and LBs participating in the IFA, including signatures of the individuals with the authority to bind the agreement;
- D.** Documentation of steps the LB, CEOs and RPs used to reach consensus, and if unable to reach consensus, assurance the local area has followed the SFM process;
- E.** A description of the process to be used by partners to resolve issues related to infrastructure funding during the IFA duration period; and
- F.** A description of the periodic modification and review process to be implemented to ensure equitable benefit among one-stop partners.

## **Steps for Developing an Infrastructure Funding Agreement**

- 1.** Identify full cost of operating the one-stop system in the local area, including infrastructure costs and additional costs;
- 2.** Create the one-stop operating budget that includes the infrastructure and additional costs budgets;

3. Develop reasonable cost allocation methodologies, including the identification of cost pools and allocation bases and select those that are to be applied;
4. Determine estimated partner contributions;
5. Allocate costs by each partner's proportionate use and relative benefit received and determine the method each partner will use to cover their cost;
6. Prepare and agree to the IFA(s) (*Note: you may want a single IFA for the comprehensive one-stop center and separate IFAs for affiliate centers*);
7. Identify how and how often (at least twice a year) a reconciliation will be conducted to be sure costs are allocated appropriately; and
8. Document and evaluate the negotiations process in full, including meetings, partners conferred with, meeting outcomes and final decisions.

### **One-Stop Operating Budget**

To provide a starting point for negotiating cost sharing, each local area must identify the total cost of operating the local one-stop delivery system and the resources that will support those costs. The one-stop operating budget acts as the master budget that contains sets of individual budgets for infrastructure costs, the cost of providing career services, shared operating costs, shared services costs, and additional costs related to the operation of the one-stop. The one-stop operating budget must be included in the IFA.

### **Infrastructure Cost Budget**

Infrastructure costs are the non-personnel costs necessary for the general operation of the one-stop center and which may include: facilities rental costs; utilities and maintenance; equipment (including assessment-related and assistive technology for individuals with disabilities); and technology to facilitate access to the one-stop center, including technology used for the center's planning and outreach activities. It may also include common identifier costs and the cost of supplies to support the general operation of the one-stop center. Non-personnel costs are all costs that are not compensation for program partner personnel. For example, technology related services performed by outside vendors or contractors are non-personnel costs and may be identified as infrastructure costs. Such costs would include service contracts with vendor or contractors of equipment and supplies.

Personnel costs include salaries, wages, and fringe benefits of employees of partner programs or their subrecipients, for example costs of partner program staff who use MIS systems to identify common performance and reporting outcomes would be personnel costs. The cost of a shared

receptionist is a personnel expense and would not be included in the cost budget for SFM purposes but may be included in the local area IFA if partners agree to include shared services costs.

Infrastructure costs may be funded through cash and fairly-evaluated non-cash and third-party in-kind partner contributions. Partners’ share of costs must be based on reasonable cost allocation methodologies that ensure costs are charged to each partner program in proportion to its use of the one-stop center and relative to its benefits received. Such costs must be allowable, reasonable, necessary and allocable.

The requirements that govern infrastructure costs apply to each one-stop center in the local delivery system, whether the center is a comprehensive, affiliate, or specialized center. Required partners must provide access to their services through at least one comprehensive one-stop center in each local area and as such must contribute to the infrastructure costs of the comprehensive center. Only those partners that participate in affiliate centers are required to contribute toward the infrastructure costs of those centers.

| <b>Types of Contributions</b>  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Cash</b>  | <b>Non-Cash</b>   | <b>Third-Party / In-kind</b>  |
| Funds provided to the LB or its designee by one-stop partners, either directly or by interagency transfer or by third party. | Expenditures incurred by one-stop partners on behalf of the one-stop center; and<br><br>Non-cash contributions of goods or services contributed by a partner program and used by the one-stop center. | Contributions of space, equipment, technology, non-personnel services or other like items to support the infrastructure costs associated with one-stop operations by a non-one-stop partner to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the one-stop in general</li> <li>• Support the proportionate share of a specific partner</li> <li>•</li> </ul> |
|  | Must be valued consistent with 2 CFR 200.306 to ensure they are fairly evaluated and meet the partners’ proportionate   |   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | share. Partners must fairly value contributions on a periodic and annual basis. |
| Examples of the above can be found in the guidance documents issued by US Departments of Labor and Education via the links in the Reference section of this document. |   |

**Funding Limitations**

Partner contributions are subject to that partner programs’ administrative cost limitations and restrictions:

- Native American programs may contribute to infrastructure costs, but are not required to;
- Job Corps may only use program funds toward shared infrastructure costs;
- Adult Education and Postsecondary Carl Perkins recipients may only use admin funds toward such costs;
- Wagner Peyser, Unemployment Compensation, Jobs for Veteran’s State Grant and Vocational Rehabilitation programs do not distinguish between program and admin funds; and
- Title IB, YouthBuild, National Farmworker Jobs Program, Senior Community Service Employment Program, Trade Assistance Act, and REO programs may use either admin or program funds to support shared infrastructure costs.
- Other partners carrying out employment and training activities with their funds (HUD, CSBG, etc.) must consult their authorizing documents;
- The Governor has excluded TANF from this requirement.
- Additional partners whose services are accessed through a one-stop must also participate in infrastructure cost sharing of the IFA but will not be subject to the State Funding Mechanism if it is triggered.

**Proportionate Use**

“Proportionate use” refers to a partner program contributing its fair share of the costs proportionate to:

1. The use of the One-Stop center by customers that may include reportable individuals and participants in its program served through that One-Stop center;
2. The amount of square footage occupied by the partner program in that One-Stop center; or
3. Another allocation base consistent with Uniform guidance.

## **Relative Benefit**

The “relative benefit” received from participating in the one-stop delivery system is another step in the cost allocation process. Determining relative benefit does not require partners to conduct an exact or absolute measurable benefit, but rather to measure a partner’s benefit using reasonable methods that are agreed to by all partners.

## **Cost Allocation**

Prior to determining the method of cost allocation, it is necessary to determine if the costs are direct or indirect. **Direct costs** are costs that are identified specifically with a cost objective and charged directly to that objective. Direct costs may be classified as assignable or shared. **Shared direct costs** cannot be readily assigned to a final cost objective but are directly charged to an intermediate cost objective or cost pool and subsequently allocated to final cost objectives. These costs are incurred for a common or joint purpose benefiting more than one funding stream. **Indirect costs** are costs that have been incurred for a common or joint purpose and cannot be readily identified with a final cost objective. A method of allocation must be used to distribute the indirect costs to the various direct activities that benefited. To distribute indirect costs equitably and consistently, a cost allocation plan must be developed. A cost may not be allocated as an indirect cost if that cost or any other cost incurred in the same circumstance and for the same purpose has already been assigned to the program as a direct cost.

## **Measuring benefit**

Measuring benefit is the critical requirement and central task to be performed in allocating costs. Costs are allocable to a cost objective based on the benefits received by that cost objective. When the direct measurement of benefit cannot be done efficiently and effectively, then it is appropriate to pool the costs for later distribution. The allocation base is the mechanism used to allocate the pooled costs to final cost objectives. Care should be taken to ensure that the basis chosen does not distort the results.

## **Allocability**

For a cost to be allocable to a cost objective, it must be treated consistently with other costs incurred for the same purpose in like circumstances. Any cost allocable to a grant or other cost objective under these principles may not be shifted to other Federal grants to overcome funding deficiencies,

to avoid restrictions imposed by law or grant agreement, or for other reasons. Costs that are prohibited by a funding source may not be paid or used as offsets under a pooled cost agreement.

### **Allowability**

To be allowable, a cost must be necessary and reasonable for the proper and efficient administration of the program. To reduce the risk of accumulating and being held accountable for disallowed costs, program operators should carefully review anticipated program expenditures, the terms and conditions of the award, and applicable regulations before any program costs are incurred.

### **Reasonableness**

For a cost to be reasonable under an award, it cannot exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the same circumstances. In determining the reasonableness of a given cost, consideration should be given to:

- Whether the cost is a type generally recognized as ordinary and necessary for the operation of the organization or the performance of the award.
- The restraints or requirements imposed by such factors as generally accepted sound business practices, arms-length bargaining, Federal and state laws and regulations, and terms and conditions of the award.
- Whether individuals concerned acted with prudence in the circumstances considering the responsibilities to the organization, its members, employees and clients, the public at large, and the government.
- Significant deviations from the established practices of the organization that may have unjustifiably increased the award's costs.

### **Cost Allocation Plan (CAP)**

Once pooled costs to be shared among partners are identified, a basis of allocation must be agreed upon that is: fair to benefiting programs, measurable, consistent, and supported by ongoing data collection. Different bases may allocate different pools. A cost allocation plan is required to document the allocation process and is to include at least the following elements:

- Organization chart that identifies all partners, types of services provided, and staff functions.
- A description of the type of services and programs provided by the One-Stop system.
- A copy of the official budget that includes all costs of the system.

- The methods used in allocating the expenses to benefiting cost objectives. This requires identifying the basis for allocating each type of pooled cost, and the documentation for supporting each basis of allocation.

### **Cost Allocation Parameters**

- Each partner must contribute its portion of pooled costs in addition to paying its own direct costs.
- The One-Stop system cannot deviate from existing federal, state, or local regulations. Costs that are prohibited by a funding source (federal, state, or local) may not be paid or used to cover costs identified under a pooled cost agreement.
- Components of the cost pool are limited to costs incurred during the period of operation.
- Required contributions are based on cost. In the case of staff, use actual salary and benefit costs in calculations, not number of staff and function performed. If different individuals will perform the function, then an average of their actual salaries and benefits may be used. Square footage will generally become the allocation basis for space. The cost per square foot becomes a pooled cost that is a direct charge to the partners.

Common costs must be divided up so that partners pay the share that is attributable to their program. Such costs must be allocated only to those programs that benefit and partners must agree to a method to divide up the common costs. Costs may be allocated using any methodology agreed upon by the partners and which reflect the best method of benefit received by the partner programs. Costs may be allocated:

- **In the aggregate.** A big picture-based methodology where the common costs of the center are totaled, and each partner pays their fair share of the total of all common costs. For example, all shared costs of the one-stop center are pooled and allocated using a cost per hour of operation basis.
- **On an activity basis.** Using this approach, the costs associated with a common activity are pooled (such as common intake) and the partners pay their fair share of the cost of that activity. The costs for each activity being allocated would be added together for the total shared costs by partner. For example, the costs of a combined intake and eligibility determination system could be pooled and allocated based on data bytes on common forms attributable to each program.
- **On an item of cost basis.** Using this methodology, each item of cost is allocated to the benefiting partner program using a separate allocation methodology. For example, using rent as a cost and allocating it among partners based on square footage.

- **On a combination basis.** Partners may also allocate costs on a combination of above bases by allocating some costs on an activity basis and other shared costs on an individual item of cost basis.

Whatever cost allocation methodology is used, it must be consistent with: the GAAP, applicable OMB Cost Principles, applicable administrative requirements, be accepted by each partner’s auditors and be supported by actual cost data. Cost allocation must not shift costs to a program that are not allocable to that program and/or do not benefit that program.

**Periodic Review and Reconciliation**

Partner shares must be periodically reviewed (no less than twice a year) and reconciled against actual costs incurred and adjusted to be sure actual costs charged to any one-stop partner are proportionate to the use of the one-stop center and relative to the benefit received by the one-stop partner, their programs or activities.

**Documenting the IFA negotiations process**

Local areas must document the process they used to reach agreement on infrastructure cost sharing; such documentation may include: meeting agendas and minutes showing who attended and what transpired; tools or forms created to facilitate the process and activities undertaken to reach agreement on infrastructure cost sharing so that the process is transparent to all involved parties.

**Shared Costs:**

Local areas may decide to include joint funding of other shared costs in the local IFA. In such cases, partners must identify what the shared costs are, the dollar values they represent, and how they will be funded by each partner. Centers with co-located partners that collaborate to provide up-front services, such as intake, orientation, assessment and service referral, may share the cost of staff providing those services on behalf of all co-located partners.

**Sample Cost Pools and Allocation Bases**

| <b>Cost Pools</b>   | <b>Allocation Bases</b>  |
|---|--|
| <b>Facilities:</b> building rent, maintenance costs, utilities, tenant improvements, or any other | Square footage occupied by each partner agency as compared to the total space, |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| similar costs related to the physical structure or housing the one-stop center.   | workstation usage by partners as compared to total workstations.   |
| <b>Telecommunications:</b> monthly telephone costs, telephone system equipment, data lines etc.   | Dedicated telephone units as compared to all units. Equal access to Internet for data costs.   |
| <b>Information Technology:</b> shared equipment, software, IT maintenance costs, Internet access, and other costs.  | Number of dedicated computers (including all necessary equipment) as compared to total.  |
| <b>Resource Center:</b> costs of shared equipment, displays, computer learning, specialized software for computer learning, furniture, copier, fax machine, may also include related staff costs. | Equal access by customers of all programs results in equal costs for each partner. Customer attributable by partner program. Number of customers receiving services within the resource center.                        |
| <b>Common Intake System:</b> cost of developing common intake data formats, preparation and interview of customers and similar costs.   | Use of common data formats and bytes of information for each program. Time study to determine amount of time required for specific program data compared to the time needed to complete the process for an individual. |
| <b>One-Stop Center Management:</b> cost of center director, receptionist, staff of the resource center.   | Number of customers eligible for or receiving specific program services. Direct costs by partner. Total costs by partner as compared with total of all partners.   |
| <b>Shared Equipment and Supplies:</b> staff copier, fax, associated supplies, furniture.  | Usage by staff of each partner program. Occupancy (square footage) basis; numbers of work stations.  |
| <b>Common Basic Services:</b> Staff and benefit costs   | Time distribution (time sheets). Number of clients eligible for specific program. Weighted participant numbers.  |

## Sample Budget Sheets

| Cost Item   | Cost Basis | Monthly Cost | Yearly Cost |
|---|------------|--------------|-------------|
| <b>Facilities</b>                                   |            |              |             |
| Rent  | Actual     | \$5,000      | \$60,000    |
| Utilities (electric, gas, water, sewer)             |            |              |             |
| Building Maintenance                                |            |              |             |
| Building Security                                   |            |              |             |
| <b>Operations</b>                                   |            |              |             |
| Telephone   |            |              |             |
| Data / Communications                               |            |              |             |
| IT Maintenance                                      |            |              |             |
| Shared Equipment (assistive tech, assessment tech)  |            |              |             |
| Copiers   |            |              |             |
| Fax Machines  |            |              |             |
| Computers   |            |              |             |
| Other equipment used to serve all center customers. |            |              |             |
| Equipment Maintenance                               |            |              |             |
| <b>Resource Center</b>                              |            |              |             |
| New AJC Signage                                     |            |              |             |
| Supplies  |            |              |             |
| Software  |            |              |             |

|                         |  |  |  |
|-------------------------|--|--|--|
| Hardware                |  |  |  |
| Printed Materials       |  |  |  |
| Other (List each cost)  |  |  |  |
|                         |  |  |  |
|                         |  |  |  |
| Common Staff (position) |  |  |  |

| <b>Summary of Total Infrastructure Costs to be Shared by Co-located Partners</b> |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| <b>Cost Category</b>   | <b>Total Cost</b> |
| Subtotal: Rental Costs   |                   |
| Subtotal: Utilities & Maintenance Costs  |                   |
| Subtotal: Equipment Costs  |                   |
| Subtotal: Technology to Facilitate Access Costs                                  |                   |
| Subtotal: Common Identifier Costs  |                   |
| <b>Total Infrastructure Costs for this AJC Network</b>                           |                   |

| <b>Proportionate Share: Infrastructure Costs this AJC Network</b> |                            |                                      |                       |                          |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Partner</b>  | <b>Compute Methodology</b> | <b>Partner Program Share in Cost</b> | <b>Source by Cash</b> | <b>Source by In-Kind</b> |
| #1  |                            | \$                                   | \$                    | \$                       |
| #2  |                            | \$                                   | \$                    | \$                       |
| # 3   |                            | \$                                   | \$                    | \$                       |

|                     |    |    |    |
|---------------------|----|----|----|
| <b>Total Budget</b> | \$ | \$ | \$ |
|---------------------|----|----|----|

**Sample Share of Other Costs**

SERVICES Optional partner agreement to share other AJC costs: initial intake, assessment of needs, appraisal of basic skills, identification of appropriate services to meet needs, and referrals to other AJC partners. This may include costs of personnel, technology, and tools that increase integrated service delivery through sharing of information and service delivery processes.

| <b>Line Item</b>   | <b>Budget Detail</b> | <b>Cost</b> |
|--|----------------------|-------------|
|  |                      | \$          |
|  |                      | \$          |
| <b>Total Budget:</b>   |                      | \$          |
| <b>Agreed upon cost allocation methodology to share these costs:</b> |                      |             |
|  |                      |             |

**Proportionate Share: Initial Intake, Assessment, Basic Skills Appraisal, Services, Referrals, etc.**

| <b>Partner</b>    | <b>Compute Methodology</b> | <b>Partner Share</b> | <b>Source Cash</b> | <b>by</b> | <b>Source by In-Kind</b> |
|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Adult             |                            | \$                   | \$                 |           | \$                       |
| Dislocated Worker |                            | \$                   | \$                 |           | \$                       |
| Youth             |                            | \$                   | \$                 |           | \$                       |
| Job Corps         |                            | \$                   | \$                 |           | \$                       |
| YouthBuild        |                            | \$                   | \$                 |           | \$                       |
| Wagner Peyser     |                            | \$                   | \$                 |           | \$                       |

|                  |  |    |    |    |
|------------------|--|----|----|----|
| Adult Education  |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Vocational Rehab |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| DBVI             |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| SCSEP            |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| TAA              |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| JSVG             |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| UI               |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |

**BUSINESS SERVICES** Optional partner agreement to share other AJC costs: Business Services, which may include costs related to a local or system business services team that has one or more partners or has delegated one partner to provide these services on behalf of the other partners.

| Line Item  | Budget Detail | Cost |
|--|---------------|------|
|  |               |      |
|  |               |      |
| <b>Total Budget:</b>   |               | \$   |
| <b>Agreed upon cost allocation methodology to share these costs:</b> |               |      |
|  |               |      |

| <b>Proportionate Share: Initial Intake, Assessment, Basic Skills Appraisal, Services, Referrals, etc.</b> |                     |               |                |                   |
|---|---------------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Partner   | Compute Methodology | Partner Share | Source by Cash | Source by In-Kind |
| Adult   |                     | \$            | \$             | \$                |

|                   |  |    |    |    |
|-------------------|--|----|----|----|
| Dislocated Worker |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Youth             |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Job Corps         |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| YouthBuild        |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Wagner Peyser     |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Adult Education   |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Vocational Rehab  |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| DBVI              |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| SCSEP             |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| TAA               |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| JSVG              |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| UI                |  | \$ | \$ | \$ |

**Please note:** the one-stop financial management technical assistance guide offers several other budget sheets, tools, and example allocation bases and scenarios; links to this and other good resources are printed below.

### **State Funding Mechanism (SFM) Appeals Process**

When the local area has informed the State that they are at an impasse regarding infrastructure cost sharing the State Funding Mechanism (SFM) will be applied. The SFM applies only to infrastructure costs.

Under the SFM, the Maine Department of Labor, in consultation with the chief elected officials, the local workforce board and the State workforce board, will determine each required partner's proportionate share of infrastructure costs for that local area, using guidelines pertaining to the

State Funding Mechanism, which will be put forth for the Governor's review and approval as a final determination.

A required partner may appeal the final determination because of a claim that:

- a. The Governor's determination is inconsistent with the infrastructure cost proportionate share requirements of 20 CFR 678.735;
  - b. The Governor's determination is inconsistent with the infrastructure cost contribution caps described in 20 CFR 678.738
1. An appeal must be made in writing within 21 days of the Governor's determination and must include specific evidence that the amount determined by the Governor is inconsistent with **a.** and/or **b.** above.
  2. Written appeals must be submitted to:

Appeals  
Maine Department of Labor  
Bureau of Employment Services  
55 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0055

3. The appeal will be reviewed by the executive committee of the State workforce board and within 30 days of receipt, the appellant will receive a letter either denying or accepting the appeal.
4. If the appeal is found to be without merit, it will be denied, and no further action taken.
5. If the appeal is merited, the executive committee will make a revised determination. The executive committee may consult with the chief elected official and local board to attempt to negotiate a mutually agreed upon revised determination. The revised determination will only pertain to infrastructure cost sharing and will be presented to the State workforce board for review and approval.

6. Upon full approval of the State workforce board, the revised determination will be considered final throughout the cost sharing agreement period of duration, until such time as local area infrastructure cost sharing is renegotiated.

**Resource Links:**

- FAQs Infrastructure Cost Sharing - USDOL: <https://www.doleta.gov/wioa/docs/FAQs-Infrastructure-Funding-Guidance-Dec-27-2016.pdf> ;
- FAQs Infrastructure Cost Sharing - USDE: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/rsa/wioa/one-stop-costs-faq.html>
- One-Stop Comprehensive Financial Management Technical Assistance Guide Part I (2002) [https://www.doleta.gov/grants/pdf/FinalTAG\\_August\\_02.pdf](https://www.doleta.gov/grants/pdf/FinalTAG_August_02.pdf)
- One-Stop Comprehensive Financial Management Technical Assistance Guide Part II (2011) [https://www.doleta.gov/grants/pdf/TAG\\_PartII\\_July2011.pdf](https://www.doleta.gov/grants/pdf/TAG_PartII_July2011.pdf)
- PM OCTAE 17-3: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-program-memo-17-3.pdf>
- PY16-01 Change 1: MOU Policy:
- PY17-03 SFM Policy:
- Resource Sharing for WIA One-Stop Centers: Methodologies for Paying or Funding Each Partner Program's fair Share of Allocable Costs: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2001-05-31/pdf/01-13426.pdf>
- RSA TAC – 17-03: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/rsa/subregulatory/tac-17-03.pdf>
- Sample Infrastructure Cost Tool Kit: [https://ion.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/03/23/13/30/Sample\\_MOU\\_Infrastructure\\_Costs\\_Toolkit](https://ion.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/03/23/13/30/Sample_MOU_Infrastructure_Costs_Toolkit)
- TEGL 17-16 Infrastructure Cost Sharing: [https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr\\_doc.cfm?DOCN=4968](https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=4968)

**Inquiries pertaining to this policy may be addressed to:**

State Workforce Board  
120 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0120  
207-621-5087 TTY users call Maine Relay 711  
[SWB.DOL@maine.gov](mailto:SWB.DOL@maine.gov)