



Work Source MAINE

2024-2027 Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Unified Plan

Executive Summary



Maine’s four-year (2024-2027) Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified Plan is the strategic and operational plan focused on enhancing Maine’s workforce. This plan is developed with the intent of continuing the success of Maine’s businesses and helping people whose employment barriers have kept them from thriving in this economy.

This plan, developed as a Unified Plan in accordance with the requirements of the WIOA, establishes the long-term agenda for Maine’s workforce development system and 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 State Workforce Board (SWB), the aforementioned programs and other stakeholders participated in facilitated sessions to develop the vision and priorities for the Unified State Plan and to collaborate on the development of an integrated, performance-based, employment and training system. Maine’s Unified Plan will result in:

- quality jobs for Mainers;
- employers matched with skilled workers; and
- a more efficient workforce development system.

10-Year Strategy Refresh

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.

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 WIOA 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.

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.

WIOA Unified State Plan

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. The Steering Committee’s role is to develop and monitor the implementation of Maine’s Unified Plan.

The SWB will coordinate implementation of, and Maine’s WIOA State Plan will focus on, Strategies A, B, and G.

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.



The eight recommended actions address the creation of an online job portal; expanding existing efforts in free community college, career exploration, and apprenticeships; creating career pathways; streamlining credentialing to support professionals who have moved here from other countries into the economy; and creating tools for people to easily see and access activities of the University of Maine System (UMS), Maine Community College System (MCCS), adult education programs, and other education and training institutions to meet these goals.

Strategy A Goals

- A1 - Expand Free Community College
- A2 - Develop a Job Portal
- A3 - Expand and Promote Registered Apprenticeships
- A4 - Strengthen Career Pathways
- A5 - Increase Equitable Workforce Participation
- A6 - Expand the Maine Career Exploration Program
- A7 - Support Graduates and Adult Learners
- A8 - Support International Trained Professionals

Strategy B: Attract New Talent

Maine experienced more in-migration in 2021 than it had since 1950, and in fact had the 7th fastest rate of in-migration among all 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.

Five 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 B Goals

- B1 – Build and Launch Maine’s Talent Attraction Campaign
- B2 – Highlight Career Pathways for New Mainers
- B3 – Match New England Students with Maine Employers
- B4 – Recognize Out-of-State (Occupation and/or Professional) Certifications
- B5 – Strengthen Maine’s Higher Education Brand

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.

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

Strategy G Goals

- G1 – Further Define Hubs of Excellence
- G2 – Connect Nonprofits and Academia to Communities
- G3 – Invest in Placemaking
- G4 – Initiate Pilot Hub Efforts

WIOA Performance

The WIOA core partner programs are as follows:

- Title IB - Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth
- Title II – Adult Education
- Title III - Employment Services (Wagner-Peyser)
 - The majority of participants receive only labor exchange services – matches job seeker to employer, i.e., Maine JobLink.
 - Over 10% of participants who have barriers to work are enrolled to receive employment services.
- Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

These core partner programs served more than 90,000 participants, representing \$57.418 million in public investment in FY 2023 (51 percent of which was federal, 26 percent state, and 23 percent was other).

MDOL oversees administration of the Title IB and Title III programs.

- In Program Year 2022 (PY22 – July 1, 2022, June 30, 2023), 712 adults, 138 dislocated workers, 367 youth were served under these programs. On average, 66.5% of participants found jobs.
- There were 6,778 participants in Employment Services

Maine Adult Education, part of the Maine Department of Education, administers Title II programs. Service providers are housed within nine educational programming areas (hubs) and consist of 67 local providers aligned with local school districts statewide.

- In FY 23, 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.

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 Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services through the 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 PY22, BRS had 3,182 new applicants and served 6,212 individuals through plans for employment.

Participant Demographics	ES	Adult	DW	Youth
Total Served	6,779	712	138	367
Female	45.8%	56.3%	54.3%	55.3%
Aged <16	0.02%	0%	0%	2.2%
Aged 16-18	1%	1.8%	0%	47%
Aged 19-24	5.6%	6.5%	2.2%	51%
Aged 25-44	39.6%	67%	42%	0%
Aged 45-54	21.3%	15%	22.5%	0%
Aged 55-59	12.4%	6.3%	23.2%	0%
Aged 60+	20.2%	3.8%	10.1%	0%

Caucasian	81%	70%	88%	76.3%
Black/African American	9.5%	22%	5.1%	15%
Native American	1.6%	2.8%	.7%	2.7%
Hispanic/Latino	1.3%	3.4%	.7%	4.4%
Asian	1.1%	1.7%	2.2%	1.9%
Low Income	37%	75.6%	37%	90%
English Language Learners	7.3%	30.5%	11.6%	49%
Single Parents	2.1%	21.5%	19.6%	8.7%
Individuals with Disabilities	9.2%	18.7%	13%	57.5%
Ex-Offenders	2.1%	26%	11.6%	7.6%
Long Term Unemployed	9.5%	35.8%	21.7%	41.4%
Homeless Individuals/Runaway Youth	1.7%	6.9%	1.4%	10.1%
Foster Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care	0.06%	0%	0%	3.5%
TOTAL SERVED - ES, ADULT, DW, & YOUTH	7,996			

****Chart Key: DW= Dislocated Worker, ES = Employment Services**