



**State Workforce Development Board
Q1 Meeting Minutes – March 20, 2026
Maine Department of Labor - Francis Perkins Room
45 Commerce Drive, Augusta, ME**

Approved by SWDB on June 12, 2026

SWDB Members Present: Michael Tyler, Sandy River Company; Dave Duning, S.W. Cole Engineering, Inc.; Aileen Huang Saad, Roux Institute; Janet Kelle, Maine Municipal Association; Catharine MacLaren, Northern Light Health; Christian Bartholomew, Andwell Health Partners; Pete Parazo, Sargent Construction; Gordon McAleer, Bixby Chocolates; Ally Coombs, Bath Iron Works; LuAnn Ballesteros, The Jackson Laboratory, Ryan Bushey, Huber Family Engineered Wood Products; Tuesdi Woodworth, Front Street Shipyard; Robin Wood, Reed and Reed; Corinne Watson, Tiny Homes of Maine/Hancock Lumber; Michelle Anderson, Junior Achievement of Maine; John Leavitt, Carpenters Local 1996; Melissa Tinan Hue, City of Portland; Jason Judd, Educate Maine; Grant Provost, Iron Worker Local 7; Jason Shedlock, Maine Building & Construction Trades Council; The Honorable Joseph Pietrowski, Kennebec County Commissioner; The Honorable David Marshall, Waldo County Commissioner; Kim Moore, MDOL-BES; Elissa Rowe, MDOL-BRS; Commissioner Laura Fortman, MDOL; Phoenix McLaughlin, DECD

SWDB Advisory Members Present: Joy Gould-DHHS; Dan Belyea, MCCS; Jen O'Leary, UMaine System; Bruce Noddin, DOC

Guests: Lee Umphrey, EMDC

Staff: Chris Quint, SWDB; Mary LoMonaco, SWDB, Daniel Estes, MDOL; Sam Dina, MDOL

Welcome, introductions, agenda review

- Vaughan Woodruff called meeting to order
- The December 20, 2025, SWDB meeting minutes were moved and seconded. The Board unanimously approved the meeting minutes of December 20, 2025.

Director's Update

- Commissioner Fortman announced Kim Smith's transition to the Acting State Budget Director role after 7 years as MDOL Deputy Commissioner.
- Chris Quint introduced Mary LaMonaco, the new SWDB Industry Partnership Program Manager.
- Chris Quint highlighted ongoing efforts to enhance WorkSourceMaine.com, including a successful marketing campaign with a 2.7% click-through rate, and plans for an employer-specific section to be launched in the coming months.

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Industry Partnership Program

- Employer Training Grant Program
 - Mary LoMonaco presented the Defense Industry Training Fund; a \$7.2 million grant program aimed at reimbursing employers 80% of training costs up to \$8,000 per employee. The funds are intended for both defense and advanced manufacturing sectors.
 - The program will be implemented using WorkSourceMaine.com as the virtual location for all the program details and requirements, with a planned 2026 spring launch.

Rural Health Transformation Program Overview

- Joy Gould provided an update to the Board on the Rural Health Transformation Program, a 5-year grant designed to transform healthcare delivery in rural areas of Maine. Joy outlined the program's strategies, including workforce development, marketing, and recruitment efforts, as well as partnerships with various stakeholders.
- The grant involves a cooperative agreement with CMS, requiring close collaboration and strategic planning.

Workforce Pell Grant Program

- The Board discussed the Maine Workforce Pell Grant program, which expands Pell Grants to short-term career-focused training programs. They reviewed the eligibility requirements and process for approving programs.
- The Board established an advisory committee to develop an implementation plan by July 1st. Corinne Watson and Eileen Huang-Saad were appointed as co-chairs of the committee.

Maine CTE Program Overview

- Dwight Littlefield, State Director for Career and Technical Education, presented an overview of Maine's CTE program, highlighting its growth to serve over 11,000 students across 27 CTE schools and 90 unique programs. He explained the difference between CTE centers and regions, and discussed challenges such as teacher recruitment, infrastructure limitations, and perceptions about CTE programs.
- Dwight also mentioned funding sources, including federal Perkins Act funding split between CTE schools and community colleges, and ongoing efforts to align CTE programs with graduation requirements.
- Dwight emphasized the importance of keeping programs relevant to industry standards and mentioned upcoming opportunities in clean energy and career pathways.



- Dwight addressed the role of CTE in workforce development and education, noting its flexibility for students to explore various career options. The discussion touched on pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs, with John sharing his experience as a graduate of such a program and emphasizing their value in helping individuals determine if a trade is right for them.

Maine WIOA Plan Modification

- Chris presented the elements included in Maine's WIOA Plan Modification, which need to be aligned with the five pillars outlined in UDOL's America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the including industry-driven strategies, worker mobility, integrated systems, accountability, and flexibility.
- The presentation highlighted Maine's progress in sector-based strategies and proposed expanding these approaches across various industries including defense, construction, and healthcare.
- Workforce Strategy Coordination Initiatives
 - Chris discussed the need for legislative authority to coordinate sectoral strategies across education, training, and deployment initiatives, while emphasizing the expansion of apprenticeship programs into new sectors and enhancing worker mobility through tools like myworkSourceMaine.com and WorkSourceMaine.com.
 - Chris highlighted the importance of coordinating navigator positions to ensure consistency across different locations and expanding partnerships with community organizations to reach individuals with barriers to employment.
 - The Board discussed challenges in recruiting candidates for municipal positions, with Janet Kelle noting difficulties in attracting people to public service roles.
 - Chris shared information about a Western Governors University apprenticeship program and a grant from the National Governors Association that connects service programs to employment opportunities.
 - The Board addressed the importance of staying responsive to future labor market changes, particularly in light of rapid technological advancements.
- Workforce Development and Adaptability Challenges
 - Chris emphasized the need to teach adaptive skills rather than focusing solely on traditional certifications.
 - The Board discussed how AI is transforming entry-level work and the need to prepare workers to manage AI systems, highlighting the importance of matching workers' interests to available jobs rather than just focusing on skills.
 - The Board discussed work authorization issues and the need for better connections between job seekers and employers.

SWDB Ad-Hoc Board Engagement Committee

- Vaughan asked for the Board’s approval of an ad-hoc Board Engagement Committee to examine ways in which we can strengthen the Board’s work. This subcommittee is expected to meet several times before our September SWDB quarterly meeting to discuss the structure of our soon-to-be re-formed subcommittees and to explore ways in which we can increase the visibility and influence of the Board’s work.
- The Board unanimously voted to approve the creation of the SWDB Ad-Hoc Board Engagement Committee.
- Vaughan will reach out to the Board prior to the June 12 meeting to ask for volunteers.

Public Comment

- Hunter Cropsey from the Immigrant Rights Coalition raised concerns about narratives of fraud targeting immigrant workers in DHHS contracts, highlighting the need for guidance and support from the state.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00pm.

The next SWDB meeting will be June 12, from 9:00am – Noon, in the Francis Perkins Room at MDOL, 45 Commerce Drive, Augusta.