Maine Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029: A Focus on Talent and Innovation

Summary points for Education and Workforce Committee:

Baseline Workforce Info (prior to pandemic)

- 65,000 workers will leave the Maine workforce over the next decade
- 75,000 additional workers needed to meet demand
- 100,000 Mainers of working age currently not participating in the workforce

High-Level Talent Themes from Report:

- Branding/marketing effort to attract more people to the state to Live/Work/Learn
- Connect disengaged workers to workforce (100,000 mentioned above)
- Welcome immigrants and support their integration into the workforce
- Expand college debt relief programs (like Opportunity Maine) to attract and retain young workers
- Improve worker skills by increasing education attainment – goal of 60% of workforce with credential of value (currently at 44%)

High-Level Near-Term Talent Strategies:

1. Develop a system of **stackable, micro-credentials** that enable students to quickly and affordably obtain a credential of value, which can be used to **build toward other credentials and be transferred fluidly among Maine educational institutions**
2. Increase the availability of **online learning and other flexible programs** that are relevant to Maine employers and workers
3. Institute statewide programs through **higher education institutions that provide co-op experiences, internships, research experiences, and apprenticeships** for all Maine students.

High-Level Long-Term Talent Strategies:

1. Establishing Maine Career Exploration to help students and families to connect to Maine’s economy. This program will work with students on an age appropriate level to help them **explore career opportunities that are in line with their individual area of interest**. Workforce skill development will start at a young age and will grow to 100% of Maine students having an internship between their junior year of high school and one-year post high school graduation.
2. Better preparing of Maine students with the **knowledge, skills and abilities that are aligned to the growth of the digital economy**.
3. **Investing in educator preparation and professional development** to improve outcomes in pre-K through 12 education in Maine.
Detailed Talent Strategies from Report:

**Strategy A – Grow Local Talent**

**Action A1** Maine Career Exploration
- Begin career exploration in Kindergarten and continue through high school
- 100% of students have internship experience (Juniors and Seniors)

**Action A2** Web Portal Matching Students and Employers
- Create one-stop site for all internships and apprenticeships

**Action A3** Align Curriculum with Digital Economy Skills
- Provide students K-12 with necessary digital skills to be successful in the economy

**Action A4** Engage Today’s Workers in Continuing Education to Attain Career Credentials
- Work with public and private higher ed institutions to build stackable micro credential system to meet industry demands (can be used toward college credit as well – transferable)

**Action A5** Expand the Professional Preparation of Educators at All Levels (birth through postsecondary)
- Investments and advancements in educator prep programs

**Action A6** Improve the Quality of Care in our Early Childhood System by Supplementing Salaries
- Incent retention, professional development, and education attainment

**Strategy B – Attract New Talent**

**Action B1** Increase the Labor Force Participation of Existing Residents
- Provide necessary social, educational, and financial supports to reengage disenfranchised populations currently disconnected from the workforce

**Action B2** Support Governor’s Welcome Home Program
- Extensive marketing program focused on individuals living outside of Maine with some existing connection to Maine (grew up here, went to summer camp, vacation, etc.)

**Action B3** Expand and Simplify the Education Opportunity Tax Credit (Opportunity Maine)
- Improve and market the existing tax credit to attract and retain more young workers

**Action B4** Help New Americans and Other Newcomers Get Qualified to Work in Maine
- Promote Maine as a destination for foreign-born workers
- Provide supports for quick transition into the Maine economy

**Action B5** Promote “Quality of Place” Investments
- Invest in recreational, historic, art and cultural amenities to attract more people to live in Maine
Action B6 Supporting Learning

- Attract young families through marketing and expansion of NextGen 529 plans seeded through Alfond Scholarship Foundation