ERC Recommendations Template

1. Which subcommittee is submitting this recommendation?
   Innovation

2. Please list the other subcommittees that support this recommendation:
   TBD

3. Which sector does this recommendation support?
   This recommendation supports innovation, business development and business scaling across the state.
   - What is the recommendation?

   The Governor announces a new initiative: “Welcome Home, to Innovationland” or “Innovate and Grow” - an initiative to promote innovation and entrepreneurship in Maine as a springboard to economic recovery. Its goal will be to drive innovation, new business startup, and small business growth in order to help drive an economic recovery that is robust and inclusive.

   It will include the following:
   - Innovate for Maine Mentors, a new initiative/platform to match individuals who wish to start or grow their business with volunteer mentors and existing pro bono business advisors (SBDC, Women’s Business Centers, etc.).
   - Innovate for Maine Fellows (an existing program operated by UMO) - pair current college students and recent grads to work with a Maine company for three months or one year. Pay on a sliding scale, with small companies paying little/nothing and large companies paying ¾ or all the salary.
   - A remote worker and entrepreneur attraction campaign led by the Governor through the Office of Tourism and Live and Work in Maine, promoting Maine as:
     - one of the safest states to visit and live
     - one of the best places to work remotely
     - a state with quality resources to start up and grow your company – investment capital and small business loans, R&D commercialization support, business advisory services
   - In parallel, a competitive process to fund upgrades to high-speed broadband in a dozen rural Maine communities, with a co-working space or library as an entrepreneurship hub, that can then advertise themselves as gigabit cities/towns. (Could explore complementarity with the
Working Communities Initiative, a collaboration between the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, the State and private foundations.)

- Ready, Set, Go! Allow laid off workers to access their UI benefits for the purpose of starting a small business, eliminating the requirement to search for a job while providing wrap around business development services through existing service providers, like SBDC.

- Diverse Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Promote and support entrepreneurship programs and community-based organizations that work with and provide business development assistance to diverse entrepreneurs – women, immigrants and refugees, people of color, rural entrepreneurs, etc. – who are underserved by the traditional entrepreneurship ecosystem.

- Capital for innovation and entrepreneurship. [Can be harmonized with other capital concepts that the committee comes up with.] Promote and provide capital along the business life cycle continuum, including 1) including an MTAF-like competition to support commercialization and scaling of production of new products and services with a “Beat COVID” category for innovations relating to the pandemic as well as 2) microloans for first-time entrepreneurs via banks, credit unions and CDFIs and 3) additional capital available through FAME and MVF for larger small businesses and high-growth companies.

4. Is this a quick-start, July 15 or Dec 1 recommendation?

July 15, with some pieces beginning this summer and others over the fall and winter.

5. What are the benefits of this recommendation?

This initiative will 1) marshal and build on what has been learned about supporting entrepreneurship and capacity that has been built in Maine over the past 20 years, 2) fill the gaps that have been identified where more needs to be done, and 3) supercharge the result with strategic resources and leadership.

6. How much would this recommendation cost to implement?

TBD.

7. When should implementation begin and when is an outcome realized?

Some elements can begin in the late summer while others will begin in the fall and early 2021.

8. Will any populations, communities, or industries be disadvantaged by this recommendation?

No.

9. Is there an existing model for this, in or outside of Maine?

Not in this form, though elements of this exist elsewhere and in Maine.
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<th>10. What additional data or information is needed, if any?</th>
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<td>Aligned proposals around broadband, K-12 school system reopening, childcare availability. Also, complementary workforce training initiatives in cases such as the Beat COVID capital competition, since some product or manufacturing innovation may require new skill-building.</td>
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10. Is there an existing model for this, in or outside of Maine?

Yes. This strategy is being piloted by the Northeast Workforce Development Board in collaboration with the Cooperative Development Institute.

11. What additional data or information is needed, if any?

Which companies are at risk of closing and would be suited for conversion to a worker-owned cooperative.

12. What else should be considered to evaluate this recommendation?

Due to the inherent business structure of worker cooperatives, employee owners are better protected from economic disruption caused by public health crises and other market fluctuations. Investment in this initiative could serve to avoid business closures to provide short-term benefits while creating more significant long-term benefits.
ERC Recommendation

1. Which subcommittee is submitting this recommendation?  
   Innovation Subcommittee

2. Please list the other subcommittees that support this recommendation:  
   None known

3. Which sector does this recommendation support?  
   All innovation sectors – attracting and retaining needed talent and population to Maine

4. What is the recommendation?  
   Ramp up the Governor’s Bully Pulpit around Maine as safest State in the nation and a perfect place for remote workers – “bring your job with you”

5. Is this a quick-start, July 15 or Dec 1 recommendation?  
   Quick-start

6. What are the benefits of this recommendation?  
   The recommendation takes advantage of two trends resulting from the COVID-19 shutdowns: 1) the broad acceptance of remote work as a viable and preferable option for innovation-driven work force; and 2) the desire of this work force to escape from hot spot cities along the East Coast. The recommendation can help Maine achieve the goal of attracting younger and highly skilled workers who want an alternative to their current urban locations.

7. How much would this recommendation cost to implement?  
   As a quick-start recommendation, it would not cost anything to implement but could then feed into a longer-term talent attraction and retention effort. Past the quick-start phase, we can look into the associated costs of a strong remote worker attraction program.

8. When should implementation begin and when is an outcome realized?  
   This could be implemented immediately as a communications and marketing effort. The outcome is likely to be realized over the next year and beyond, depending on many factors.

9. Will any populations, communities, or industries be disadvantaged by this recommendation?  
   Local municipalities will need to work to avoid unintended outcomes from this effort. An influx of wealthier citizens has the potential to displace incumbent, less affluent citizens from existing neighborhoods or communities by driving up property values too rapidly. In general, however, additional wealth within a community has important spill-over effects on the local economy and local businesses.
10. Is there an existing model for this, in or outside of Maine?  
   Many other geographies with similar assets to Maine’s have used similar marketing and messaging with some success, but often with the addition of financial incentives (VT, UT, CO). Maine also has some nascent efforts and work underway in this area that could be amplified and/or leveraged (Live and Work In Maine, Welcome Home program, local efforts in Eastport - TelecommuteMaine) Support for this idea is universal within the innovation networks providing input to the Subcommittee.

11. What additional data or information is needed, if any?  
   Continuing to gather data and information on remote workers already in Maine would be useful, but antecdotal data tells us this is already a compelling approach.

12. What else should be considered to evaluate this recommendation? While Maine can obviously promote some areas for remote work, our digital communications infrastructure must be upgraded ASAP for this to be a statewide strategy. In addition, we need to look carefully at assumptions about how and to whom we market Maine to broaden our welcome.