

MAINE WIOA

ANNUAL REPORT

Program Year 2023



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Maine's non-partisan 10-year economic development strategy set out to grow and diversify Maine’s economy by fostering collaboration among the public, private, non-profit, and education sectors. In the 2023 update, Maine celebrates significant accomplishments made over the last five years and makes the adjustments necessary to sustain progress and keep Maine on track to meet its updated 2030 goals. Workforce development is integral to success across all seven strategies, and Maine’s WIOA state planning process was intentionally tied to further achievement of these goals.

Through industry partnerships, sector-focused career specialists, virtual services, focused outreach beyond the doors of Maine’s CareerCenters and more- Maine is heavily invested in serving those who are hardest to serve and connecting them with pathways to “good jobs.” Maine’s 2023 WIOA Annual report is intended to both celebrate the initiatives and innovations undertaken by the workforce development system in the past year and to provide insight into the work that is to come.

STATE PLAN ACHIEVEMENTS

Overview

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 state in New England 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 five 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. Maine needs to do more to ensure that everyone shares the benefits of growth – Mainers of all regions, races, physical abilities, and sexual orientations. The update reaffirms the vision and seven 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 initiated in the last few years. While the work has started it needs to be sustained to achieve long-term goals.

Maine's Vision for the 2020-2029 Economic Development Strategy and the 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 State Workforce Board (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 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 was to monitor the implementation of the State's workforce plan.

The result of this refresher process was a realigned vision that focused on seven strategic areas of need.

- Strategy A: Grow Local Talent
- Strategy B: Attract New Talent
- Strategy C: Promote Innovation
- Strategy D: Build Connections (Broadband Expansion)
- 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 seven strategies. The process used was also recently highlighted as a best practice for aligning economic growth and workforce development by the National Governor's Association.

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. 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 workforce system partners 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 Maine Apprenticeship Program expanded significantly over the past year, with industry taking the lead on promoting the benefits of apprenticeship as an occupational training pathway. High school youth participated in pre-apprenticeships resulting in industry recognized credentials documenting readiness to enter registered apprenticeship programs in the construction trades.

Strategy B: Attract New Talent

Maine experienced more in-migration in 2021 than it had since 1950, and in fact had the seventh fastest rate of in-migration of all states. Marketing the Maine brand, expanded broadband, the opportunity for remote work, and the resettlement of immigrants all played a role. Even so, Maine will still 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.

Work Source Maine

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. 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 2023 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 2024 the SWB released a Request for Proposal soliciting competitive, responsive proposals to build a multi-agency education, training, and career planning platform called MyWorkSourceMaine.com.

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 training, 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 training and job openings.

A vendor, Portland Webworks, was selected to build the site and kicked off the work in November of 2024. The site is meant to coordinate with the Maine Virtual American Job Center project funded under the Comprehensive and Accessible Reemployment through Equitable Employment Recover dislocated worker grant, to ensure a seamless experience between the two sites. The same vendor was selected for both projects.

Maine Employer Summit

In May of 2024, the State Workforce Board, Maine Department of Labor, and the Maine Department of Economic and Community development hosted the second annual Maine Employer Summit, titled, *Engaging Today and Tomorrow’s Workforce*, which had an added emphasis on engaging with youth in the workforce. The summit was a one-day event for employers looking for resources and solutions to reach workforce goals. More than 500 individuals registered for the event with more than 300 employers and over 100 young people and school staff. The keynote panel included a group of young people discussing what they are seeking in employment from attending employers. At the end of the panel, two employers pitched their job opportunities in a “Shark Tank” inspired segment where the panel could ask questions of the employers to learn more about the careers.

The Summit was an excellent opportunity to promote best practices that could help an employer including information on modifying job descriptions to be more inclusive, accessing childcare reimbursements, creating cohorts for employee support, and connecting with local adult education providers to connect with New Mainers and other potential workers. There was also an exhibit hall where attendees and young people could network with employers, attend mock interviews, and test out new skills such as welding.

Maine Apprenticeship Summit

The Maine Department of Labor hosted the Inaugural Maine Apprenticeship Summit in November of 2024 to celebrate National Apprenticeship Week. The day-long summit featured a keynote address, breakout sessions, and networking opportunities. Prospective sponsors heard from Apprenticeship Program sponsors about how they run their programs and some tips and best practices for implementing apprenticeships. There were also advisors on site to meet with anyone hoping to learn more about the workforce development program.

PERFORMANCE

Maine has not identified any additional state-specific performance measures. Performance levels improved from the previous year. Factors contributing to improved performance include:

- Improved outreach and regular labor market data reports provided by the Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI).
- Improved data collection for the Local Statistical Adjustment Model (LSAM).
- Creation and implementation of a revised Data Validation Policy.
- Improved Local Performance Negotiations through policy procedure changes, increased communication and Local Statistical Adjustment Model data.
- Increased number of Tableau reports to better enhance managers ability to research, anticipate issues, manage day-to-day operations, conduct outreach and follow up, and trace the effects of performance over time.

An ongoing challenge pertains to high staff turnover at the State and local levels and ensuring new staff are aware of how to document performance in the MIS system and make appropriate referrals to core and required partners.

Reportable Individuals

Customers who use self-access employment services through online registration with Maine JobLink or who access information-only services from CareerCenter staff and referred to as Reportable Individuals are not included in the performance report. The number of reportable individuals who accessed services during PY23 was 42,536, an increase of 4,534 over the year before.

State Negotiated and Actual Performance Levels for PY 2023:

MEASURE	Adult Neg.	Adult Actual	DW Neg.	DW Actual	Youth Neg.	Youth Actual	WP Neg.	WP Actual
Employed 2 nd Qtr. after Exit*	70.0%	72.26%	74.5%	75.0%	68.0%	66.2%	56.0%	65.44%
Employed 4 th Qtr. after Exit*	67.5%	69.89%	77.0%	70.41%	71.0%	72.68%	58.0%	63.6%
Median \$\$ 2 nd Qtr. after Exit	\$6,750	\$8,748.08	\$8,000	\$8,900.45	\$4,050	\$5,336.41	\$6,000	\$7,785.67
Credential Attainment	68.5%	65.18%	66.5%	64.86%	57.5%	51.35%	N/A	N/A
Measurable Skills Gain	48.0%	52.16%	56.0%	53.25%	51.0%	55.34%	N/A	N/A

Key: DW=Dislocated Worker, WP=Wagner-Peyser, Neg.= Negotiated, * includes Youth placement in education.

Enrolled Participants

Participants of the Employment Services (ES) program generally receive needed services during a single visit to a CareerCenter, those with greater barriers to employment may receive several services over one or more quarters, many attend virtual and in-person workshops. Employment Services staff act as liaisons to the full spectrum of career,

training, and supportive services offered through each local workforce development system. As a result of initial assessment and an eligibility overview, ES staff can make informed referrals to services provided by numerous partners.

During PY23, **9,655** ES participants received one or more basic career services of those:

- Of **6,265** exited the ES program between 7/1/22 and 6/30/23 and **4,100** (65.4%) were employed in the second quarter after exit, with median quarterly earnings of **\$7,785.67**.
- Of **5,145** who exited the program between 1/1/22 and 12/31/22, **3,372** (63.6%) were employed in the fourth quarter after exit.

Participant Demographics by Program

Demographic	Adult	DW	Youth	WP
Total Served	590	135	421	9,655
Female	57.8%	51.1%	47.0%	43.8%
Male	42.0%	48.1%	48.2%	55.3%
Aged <16	0%	0%	3.6%	.06%
Aged 16-18	1.7%	0%	49.2%	1.1%
Aged 19-24	7.3%	4.4%	47.3%	6.6%
Aged 25-44	65.8%	45.2%	0%	43.9%
Aged 45-54	16.9%	19.6%	0%	19.3%
Aged 55-59	4.4%	20.7%	0%	11.2%
Aged 60+	3.9%	10.4%	0%	17.8%
Caucasian	66.1%	87.4%	72.3%	73.8%
Black/African American	26.1%	6.7%	17.1%	17.1%
Native American	2.5%	.7%	3.3%	1.5%
Hispanic/Latino	2.9%	1.5%	4.5%	1.9%
Asian	2.7%	.7%	2.4%	1.2%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	.7%	0%	0%	.5%
Low Income	69.3%	30.4%	89.8%	32.7%
English Language Learners	32.7%	17.8%	39.0%	14.0%
Single Parents	25.3%	16.3%	5.5%	1.8%
Individuals with Disabilities	19.3%	8.1%	63.0%	9.5%
Ex-Offenders	18.3%	8.9%	7.4%	3.0%
Long Term Unemployed	29.0%	14.1%	38.5%	14.2%
Homeless Individuals/Runaway Youth	3.9%	2.9%	9.9%	1.8%
Youth in Foster Care or Aged Out of System	0%	0%	2.9%	.1%

Adult Program

During PY23, a total of **590** individuals actively participated in training and/or career services. Of the **483** who exited between 7/1/22 and 6/30/23, **349 (72.3%)** were employed in the second quarter after exit, with median quarterly earnings of **\$8,748.08**.

Dislocated Worker Program

During PY23, **135** individuals actively participated in training and/or career services. Of the **88** who exited between 7/1/22 and 6/30/23, **66 (75.0%)** were employed in the second quarter after exit, with median quarterly earnings of **\$8,900.45**.

Youth Program

During PY23, a total of **421** youth actively participated in youth services. Of the **216** who exited between 7/1/22 and 6/30/23, **143 (66.2%)** were employed in the second quarter after exit, with median quarterly earnings of **\$5,336.41**.

Common Exit Programs

Maine’s common exit policy pertains to the following programs:

- Employment Services (Wagner-Peyser)
- Jobs for Veterans State Grant
- Title IB Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs
- Trade Adjustment Act

Local Negotiated Measures for PY2022 and 2023 are outlined in the following tables:

NORTHEASTERN WDB	PY 2022 Negotiated	PY22 Actual	PY 2023 Negotiated	PY23 Actual
Adult Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	67.0%	72.6%	70.0%	65.19%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	66.0%	68.31%	67.5%	67.13%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$6,550.00	\$6,407.00	\$6,700.00	\$7,421.41
Credential Attainment Rate	68.0%	57.95%	69.0%	55.38%
Measurable Skills Gain	47.9%	56.64%	48.0%	45.98%
Dislocated Worker Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	72.0%	75.0%	73.0%	68.75%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	74.5%	74.24%	76.0%	53.13%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$7,300.00	\$8,051.00	\$7,500.00	\$8,664.00
Credential Attainment Rate	66.0%	67.44%	66.5%	44.44%
Measurable Skills Gain	55.5%	51.43%	56.0%	47.06%
Youth Program				
Employment or Education 2 nd Qtr. after exit	68.5%	74.55%	69.0%	66.67%
Employment or Education 4 th Qtr. after exit	70.5%	74.49%	71.0%	67.8%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. After exit	\$4,000.00	\$4,932.00	\$4,100.00	\$3,915.00
Credential Attainment Rate	56.5%	44.44%	57.5%	48.39%
Measurable Skills Gain	48.0%	50.0%	49.5%	44.23%

CENTRAL WESTERN MAINE WDB	PY 2022 Negotiated	PY22 Actual	PY 2023 Negotiated	PY23 Actual
Adult Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	69.0%	65.41%	70.0%	80.0%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	67.5%	62.75%	68.0%	68.09%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$6,400.00	\$8,326.00	\$6,650.00	\$8,747.57
Credential Attainment Rate	66.0%	62.9%	67.5%	65.85%
Measurable Skills Gain	48.0%	57.41%	49.0%	58.16%
Dislocated Worker Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	75.0%	72.92%	75.5%	80.65%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	76.5%	85.71%	77.2%	77.14%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$8,000.00	\$8,512.00	\$8,200.00	\$7,224.25
Credential Attainment Rate	72.0%	78.18%	72.1%	80.0%
Measurable Skills Gain	56.0%	63.89%	56.0%	62.5%
Youth Program				
Employment or Education 2 nd Qtr. after exit	66.1%	74.42	67.0%	67.11%
Employment or Education 4 th Qtr. after exit	70.2%	71.43%	71.0%	84.62%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$4,100.00	\$5,808.00	\$4,100.00	\$5,313.85
Credential Attainment Rate	57.1%	62.5%	58.0%	38.71%
Measurable Skills Gain	48.0%	40.74%	49.5%	46.81%

COASTAL COUNTIES WDB	PY 2022 Negotiated	PY22 Actual	PY 2023 Negotiated	PY23 Actual
Adult Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	71.5%	79.69%	72.0%	72.37%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	67.4%	71.32%	67.5%	74.17%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$6,850.00	\$7,237.00	\$6,900.00	\$9,605.65
Credential Attainment Rate	68.0%	67.42%	69.0%	72.73%
Measurable Skills Gain	47.9%	55.38%	48.0%	51.85%
Dislocated Worker Program				
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	75.0%	78.0%	75.0%	76.0%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	78.2%	74.12%	78.5%	80.65%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$8,200.00	\$7,650.00	\$8,400.00	\$10,107.20
Credential Attainment Rate	60.0%	64.91%	61.0%	72.73%
Measurable Skills Gain	55.0%	61.11%	56.0%	33.3%
Youth Program				
Employment or Education 2 nd Qtr. after exit	68.1%	63.92%	68.1%	65.17%
Employment or Education 4 th Qtr. after exit	70.7%	67.01%	71.0%	68.67%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$3,900.00	\$3,692.00	\$3,950.00	\$5,820.32
Credential Attainment Rate	56.0%	58.82%	57.0%	61.22%
Measurable Skills Gain	54.0%	61.06%	54.0%	61.69%

Ensuring Data Integrity Through Data Validation

The Maine Department of Labor continues to follow the new process for validating data elements on programs funded through the U. S. Department of Labor. A Data Element Validation (DEV) manual was first put into place in the first quarter of PY19. Since then, a revision was made to incorporate the additional elements and requirements under TEGL 23-19, Change 1. However, a newer TEGL was rolled out by US DOL as 23-19, Change 2 meaning the current process needed to be reviewed. In the fall of 2023, Maine regrouped and started a project to overhaul the entire process again with input this time from partner agencies and their respective quality assurance teams. This led to a new process that meets both the requirements of the TEGL and is effective in implementation. The process has been in place for PY23 and will be reviewed at the start of PY24 to see where improvements can be made.

The new manual outlines policy and instructions for the work sheets now contained in a separate excel file that combines the required data elements in addition to the procedures laid out within the manual. The following programs - Wagner Peyser, TAA, and Registered Apprentice were added to the data validation manual. In addition, Maine incorporated DocuSign into its MIS system to better document and validate participant forms and attestations.

The data validation process is conducted on a quarterly basis. A percentage of files per program are pulled randomly by the State for review. The excel file called the DEV Quarterly Report File is filled out by program noting pass or fail to all required data elements and then sent to the Bureau of Employment Services for review and record keeping. A new scoring system was incorporated to ensure a baseline for how well the system is functioning.

NATIONAL DISLOCATED WORKER GRANTS

QUEST DWG

The Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy and Training (QUEST) two-year grant was awarded to the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL) in September 2022. This \$7,023,439 grant seeks to redress adverse effects on the labor market resulting from the pandemic. Service delivery is performed through collaboration between the Maine Department of Labor, the Local Workforce Boards, and the WIOA Title 1B service providers. Each local area collaborates with community-based organizations to serve dislocated workers who have yet to return to a job equal to their pre-pandemic employment, as well as historically marginalized populations disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and its continuing aftereffects.

The primary purpose of QUEST is to assist participants in obtaining “Good Jobs” that pay livable wages, offer benefits, and opportunities for upward mobility. A secondary goal of the QUEST grant is to build Maine’s resiliency against future disasters by focusing on creating awareness of, build skills for, and create connections to employment in the

strategic industries of Infrastructure, including construction and manufacturing, Clean Energy, and the Care Economy, including a range of healthcare roles.

As of June 30, 2024, QUEST served 549 participants. Enrollments included 313 long-term unemployed, 162 English language learners or individuals with low literacy rates, 218 with justice involvement, and 196 racial or ethnic minorities. More than 10 percent of participants were homeless at the time of enrollment. While enrolled, participants in the program are connected to workforce system resources and supported to address any barriers to success they may face to enable them to reach their employment and training goals. Planned outcomes include serving 774 participants with more than half entering formal occupational classroom training and an additional more than 8% entering employment through on-the-job training or apprenticeship.

CAREER DWG

The Comprehensive and Accessible Reemployment through Equitable Employment Recovery grant permitted states to provide comprehensive employment services and/or develop new digital service tools to expand the reach to individuals most adversely affected by the pandemic. Maine chose the latter and although some challenges occurred with new processes required by state procurement offices, with the tremendous help of Region One ETA staff we are now in the final stages of user acceptance testing and promotion of the new Virtual AJC. Maine ensured those without direct internet access can use the application on their cell phones which is expected to extend the reach of AJC services to those who live in the most remote parts of Maine. Testing of the application will be conducted with actual end users from the target populations the project is focused on including individuals who are blind or visually impaired, individuals with little to no computer skills, and those with English literacy challenges along with employers and partner agencies.

The application provides a link to all partner program service providers, access to live chat five days a week, and linkage back to Work Source Maine a site that represents the whole of Maine's Workforce Development System. The site also offers numerous events, including virtual job fairs, workshops, and virtual breakout rooms with employers. Once testing is complete the application will be promoted through numerous venues from PSAs, social media, mass mailings and more. Maine deeply appreciates the availability of these grant funds to extend the reach of services to so many more residents – the platform has the ability to analyze types of users and user locations.

RAPID RESPONSE and LAYOFF AVERSION ACTIVITIES

The rapid response team provided rapid response information to 408 companies and WorkShare information to over 1,500 companies during program year 2023. Of the companies contacted, 74 employers laid off 1,592 employees for which rapid response services were provided.

During this program year, Maine's Rapid Response team used the initial unemployment claims report, identifying companies with five or more employees filing initial unemployment insurance claims. The team requests contact information on new claimants from certain companies to reach out and provide additional Rapid Response assistance. Rapid Response services are offered virtually and in person to ensure laid off workers are made aware of available resources and assistance. The team continues to remain a strong partner with agencies serving New Mainers to provide Rapid Response services in a variety of languages. There is a strong connection and representation at all Rapid Response events by our local Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services team and Title IB service providers. All Rapid Response staff either work in a local CareerCenter or provide staff coverage to connect with local workers on-site. Rapid Response team members actively engage with local town offices, Chambers of Commerce, and Maine Emergency Management to provide Rapid Response Program and Workshare information as a layoff aversion strategy.

Maine continues weekly Rapid Response check-ins with Title IB WIOA providers, CareerCenter staff, Rapid Response representatives, peer navigators and unemployment insurance staff to ensure preparedness for layoff events. The check-ins provide a quick summary of current layoffs/closures and requests for additional information from the group.

Trade coordination occurs at the first notification of a layoff, Rapid Response staff research when a layoff is trade related, if Trade Adjustment Assistance is determined to be a possibility the company is encouraged to submit a Trade petition or team staff will complete the petition process. During this past year's Trade program reversion, the focus continued to be on identifying Trade eligible workers from past and recent layoffs to ensure full utilization of unused Trade resources. Rapid Response lead staff provide training to CareerCenter staff including RESEA and Veteran's program staff.

The Maine JobLink system collects data from affected workers and Rapid Response staff identify and track layoff events through data entry of plant briefs captured through Tableau reports. Rapid Response staff also use the employer contact tracking system in Maine JobLink to document Rapid Response and WorkShare information provided to employers. The tracking system has been expanded to allow for Limited Access Employer Accounts so we can track employer outreach contacts as well.

Over the past year, Rapid Response staff were part of the Statewide Business Outreach Team participating in bimonthly meetings and attending job fair events to explain Rapid

Response and WorkShare program services to employers. Staff work with business groups and trade associations as well as individual businesses to provide this information. Rapid Response staff are trained to assist employers in the completion of the WorkShare application form now available online.

The full statewide Rapid Response team and CareerCenter managers are invited to monthly virtual meetings which include speakers from various business service groups, speakers this year included: the Maine Education Opportunity Center, Employee Benefits Security Administration from the regional Federal Department of Labor, and the Finance Authority of Maine. The meetings are designed to expand staff knowledge of all services available to businesses and laid-off workers.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI) collaborated with the Maine Bureau of Employment Services (BES) to evaluate the long-term earnings outcomes of participants in Maine’s WIOA Adult program who received a variety of services, to identify earnings outcomes and upward mobility of participants over time by services received, demographic characteristics, and occupation-specific skills training. Results were presented to and shared with WIOA partners including the State Workforce Board, Local Workforce Boards and staff that directly serve WIOA participants.

Now CWRI analysts are expanding this program evaluation by applying this framework to the Youth program, studying the outcomes of youth participants since 2016, their long-term employment and earnings outcomes, and incorporating newly available outcome data.

EFFECTIVENESS SERVING EMPLOYERS

Although for program year 2024 Maine will only be required to report the percentage of individuals who retained employment with the same employer during the second and fourth quarters after exit, the state will continue to track services to employers using the five service types listed below. Maine requires employers that receive training funding to establish an account in Maine JobLink, so this report is one way to validate this occurring. Additionally, the system permits all core partners to identify when a staff person from a service provider agency has visited an employer and shows the type of service provided, which relieves the employer from too many visitors and supports cross agency approaches to providing workforce services to Maine employers.

PY23 Effectiveness Serving Employer Report

Service Type	Number
Employer Information and Support Services	3106
Workforce Recruitment Assistance	2035

Strategic Planning and Economic Development	2
Untapped Labor Pools	148
Training Services	145
Incumbent Worker Training	0
Rapid Response Business Downsizing Assistance	362
Rapid Response Layoff Planning Assistance	17
Retained Employment Same Employer 2 nd & 4 th quarter after exit	N: 2487 D: 3969 = 62.66%
Employer Penetration Rate	N: 3915 D: 65007 = 6.02%
Repeat Business Customers	N: 2484 D: 7338 = 33.85%

Key: N= Numerator, D= Denominator

SECTOR STRATEGIES

Industry Partnership Program

In 2022, to meet the needs of those industries disrupted by COVID-19 the State Workforce Board (SWB) launched the Industry Partnership Program. The \$3.7 million program, part of the Governor’s workforce strategy and a key priority for Maine’s long-term economic growth, funded six Industry Partnership initiatives, which included businesses, industry associations, education and training providers, and community-based organizations. The projects were funded in 2022 with the bulk of the projects starting work in 2023. Five of the six projects applied for contract extensions and will continue efforts beyond the original end-date of December 31, 2024.

The Industry Partnership Program is focused on recruiting, retention, and career advancement of workers in meaningful, good-paying careers. Through the program, the State Workforce Board (SWB) has supported sector-based approaches to identify each sector’s most important workforce needs and work with training and educational organizations to provide training necessary to develop skilled workers to meet those needs, promoting pipelines of workers through structured career pathways. The projects have helped to define where the SWB plans to go next to help develop the space.

Industry Partnership initiatives:

Maine Development Foundation/Forest Products Sector:

The goal of this partnership is to build a resilient and diverse forest products sector workforce by creating workforce and education pathways, mitigating obstacles and misperceptions, expanding education and training, and creating recruitment and retention strategies for future workforce development. In November 2023, Washington County Community College launched The Business of Maine's Forest Products Sector program. The first course resulted in 94 individuals receiving a credential. The college will use industry and workforce partnerships to link Mainers with jobs, support resources, education and industry experts.

The FOR/Maine <https://formaine.org/> collaborative has partnered with New Ventures Maine to host high school students to engage their interest in and teach them about engineering and forest product sector jobs that are available.

Maine Tourism Association/Hospitality & Tourism Sectors:

The goal of this partnership is to connect students, parents, and job seekers to jobs in hospitality and tourism. The initiative will develop training for current industry employees with a focus on retention of valuable staff and highlight the opportunities for growth within the hospitality & tourism sectors. The Maine Tourism Association held a second annual Tourism Workforce Summit in October of 2024, which brought together business leaders, associations, service providers, and others for a full day to discuss workforce issues that impact the industry. Breakout sessions discussed topics such as hiring individuals with disabilities and hiring veterans. Content was created on social media and YouTube, showcasing careers in tourism and hospitality in Maine. TourismforME also highlights tourism careers in Maine, including work that takes place in restaurants and for the Portland Sea Dogs, the minor league baseball affiliate of the Boston Red Sox.

Maine Business Education Partnership/Retail Sector:

The goal of this partnership is to recruit, train, and explore best practices that will enhance the professional development of new hires and upgrade the skills of incumbent workers in the retail sector. The program will introduce the “Retail Career Pathways Partnership” to students, assisting them in achieving a positive career trajectory at 50 recruitment events and field trips for high schoolers interested in the retail sector. Currently, over 350 individuals enrolled in or already completed RISE Up training that provides nationally recognized credentials in the retail industry and over 150 students have received one of these credentials. The Maine Business Education Partnership has 22 Maine retail companies engaged in their work.

Children’s Oral Health Network of Maine/Oral Healthcare Sector:

The goal of this partnership is to drive a significant expansion of the oral health workforce statewide by creating a new entry point on the career pathway and training new workers to support the needs of the sector and the patients they serve. The training for the Oral Health Navigator position is in the final stages of development and review with an anticipated rollout in 2024. Children’s Oral Healthcare Network also worked with the University of Maine at Augusta to develop a course to help address the need for dental hygienists. The program is designed for Independent Practice Dental Hygienists who would then be able to practice in rural communities experiencing gaps in service. The initial course resulted in 29 individuals receiving this training.

Northeastern University, The Roux Institute/Healthcare Sector:

The goal of this partnership is to develop a pilot program that connects pre-clinical, post-baccalaureate students with front-end healthcare opportunities in Maine and to convene healthcare providers in the state to identify critical job openings. There were 23 individuals

hired into the first cohort of participants in this program across five different employers. There are 31 individuals enrolled in the second cohort of this program.

Maine Labor and Resource Center/Healthcare & Social Services Sectors:

The goal of this partnership is to bring together 22 health and welfare-related community-based nonprofit organizations and small businesses to form a sustainable partnership in the healthcare and social service sectors. The partnership will focus on elevating jobs within these sectors by working directly with employers to build clear career pathways to advancement, and to recruit and support immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in these roles, as well as providing ESL classes. The Maine Labor and Resource Center completed a significant amount of work setting up infrastructure and making connections with businesses and non-profits in the Lewiston-Auburn region. They have connected nearly 70 New Mainers to trainings and assisted them to develop resumes to connect them to work in Maine as well enrolling them in industry-focused English Language classes.

The State Workforce Board recently hired an Industry Partnership Program Manager. The role was designed to help build out strategy around the development and implementation of industry partnerships around the state. One of the initial goals is to reconstitute the Maine Industry Partnership collaborative. The collaborative will support existing partnerships to promote sustainability, innovation and growth, and provide infrastructure and support to foster new partnerships.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Central Western Maine Workforce Board Hosts WIOA Partner Event

The Central Western Maine Workforce Board (CWMWDB) hosted an event attended by numerous required and other workforce system partners. The event opened with a Bridges Out-of-Poverty Training, followed by presentations from each partner program about services they offer, eligibility, and more. Seating arrangements ensured separate partner agencies were represented at each table. Table teams worked collaboratively on a case scenario to identify how the partner agencies could assist the client. Partners from the following agencies attended the event and discussed services they could offer and ways their resources could be braided on behalf of the client in the scenario: Multiple Adult Education Centers, Employment Services, Several Community Action Programs, Title IB Service Providers, TANF programs, the Maine Community College System, the Maine Housing Authority, the Maine Re-Entry Network, Maine Immigrant and Refugee Services, Job Corps, Department of Health and Human Services, Unemployment Compensation, Bureau of Rehabilitation's Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind and Visually Impaired, the National Farmworker Jobs Program, and the Senior Community Service Employment Program.

Green Energy Ambassadors

In order to ensure a workforce for the green energy economy, the Bureau of Employment Services and Workforce Solutions, the service provider for the Coastal Counties Workforce Board, hired Green/Clean Energy Ambassadors to conduct outreach to companies in the clean energy sector in Maine and help job seekers interested in the industry to navigate training and employment resources and opportunities. Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc. worked with the Governor's office to ensure they included workforce training needs of targeted companies when administering the Green Jobs for ME grant and the QUEST grant which is also focused on skill development required by this sector.

Partnerships with YouthBuild and Job Corps for Title IB Youth

The Northeastern WDB youth service provider Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP) committed to co-enrolling Job Corps participants from the Loring Job Corps center who are about to complete their training and want to stay and work in Aroostook county. ACAP provides paid work experience for Job Corps completers in the industry sectors they have trained in, allowing prospective employers to try out the students with an intent to hire them at successful completion of the work experience.

The Coastal Counties WDB youth service provider Workforce Solutions has embedded a Title IB staff person into the YouthBuild program offered in Portland Maine, by Learning Works. The Title IB youth staff provides classes on career exploration, labor market information, resume development, interview practice and more. In some instances, the staff person will set up a paid work experience for a youth that is about to graduate from the program.

Hiring Staff With Lived Experience

Service providers from all three local areas and the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Employment Services continue to expand the practice of hiring staff from representatives of target groups being served. This practice was adopted during the Opioid grant with the hire of individuals in substance use recovery who could act as navigators and provide evidence of success to other participants in recovery. The practice has expanded to include re-entry peer navigators to assist in serving justice involved participants re-entering the workforce.

Likewise, the State of Maine has incentivized recruitment of multilingual staff, and the Bureau of Employment Services prioritizes multi-lingual skills in their recruitment process. Many staff members are primarily immigrants with excellent English-speaking skills who are able to provide employment services to English language learners. Staff of the Portland one-stop have combined ability to speak fifteen different languages.

Promoting Restorative Practice for Serving Justice Involved Adults and Youth

The Northeastern Workforce Development Board has taken steps to launch a new approach to serving justice-involved adults and youth. Title IB staff will receive training in how to utilize restorative practices for customers reentering the workforce after incarceration, one of the QUEST grant target populations. The practice will eventually be expanded to ensure job retention of reentry customers placed in employment. With assistance from a restorative practice leader staff will work directly with the employer and customer to address circumstances that might impede job retention.

The Bureau of Employment Services CareerCenter Veteran's Program staff participate in Veteran's Court where veterans facing incarceration for certain offenses are given choice of incarceration or working with CareerCenters on career exploration, job readiness, and job search skills. The Veteran's Program staff attends the court proceedings to meet with the justice involved veterans who accept the Judge's offer so they can start working with them on employment plans and next steps.

Employment Services For Youth

Employment Services staff from the Augusta CareerCenter engage with students from local area schools, such as the Waterville Senior High School, to provide career exploration, labor law and labor market information, job search tips, and resume development skills during the school's Career Focus day.

The staff have also begun working with the Alford Youth and Community Center, part of the YMCA which recently launched a workforce readiness program through a grant funded by the U.S. Department of Labor. Staff help by providing information to underserved youth about career readiness and skill development opportunities through programs like WIOA and Registered Apprenticeship.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Methods for Evaluating the Satisfaction of Employment Services Customers

CareerCenter Consultants of the employer services program are encouraged to develop relationships with customers that extend beyond one visit or service point, which sets the stage for follow-up contacts. Offering continued CareerCenter support throughout their service term promotes informal feedback through which staff can gain insight into the effectiveness of services provided. The Bureau of Employment Services (BES) receives feedback from job seekers and employers in multiple ways.

BES surveyed 1,384 employers regarding satisfaction with services and 604 responded, a 44% response rate. Feedback indicated an overall satisfaction with services; however, many comments regarding recruitment events indicated disappointment in the number of job seekers responding/attending.

BES surveyed 31,905 job seeker visitors netting 3,307 returned, a rate of 18 percent. An overwhelming number of job seekers rated their overall experience as good or excellent. Of note are the consistent comments regarding friendliness, helpfulness of staff, and the value of the services they received. There were few negative comments and those that were offered centered around their frustrations with being unemployed and the process of filing for unemployment.

3,336 Live Chat customers were presented with a satisfaction survey at the end of their chat session. 499 customers completed the survey, a 15% completion rate showing an average rating of 4.6 on a 5-point scale. The Maine CareerCenter has received 44 consecutive monthly Best Customer Service Awards for their live chat services.

Best Practices Resulting from Customer Feedback

There were many constructive comments made in the previous year that prompted process changes, so this year did not net many suggestions for improvement. BES responded to employer comments on making hiring events easier to attend by scheduling them on diverse days and times and offered a mix of focused and general events. There continues to be a challenge with the number of job seekers attending recruitment events even though promotion of the events has been expanded significantly. The Bureau continues to adjust outreach efforts to draw more candidates to the hiring events and continues to listen to job seekers' need to be met where they are. CareerCenter Consultants hold office hours at recovery houses, jails, the Maine State Prison, probation and parole offices, immigrant centers, libraries, town halls, community colleges, high schools, DHHS offices, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, veteran resource centers, and other CBOs and ECBOs.

In response to the increasingly diverse needs of customers the Bureau has increased the number of bi/multi-lingual staff and ensures materials are printed in multiple languages. The Bureau is about to offer workshops in different languages in the most diverse location (Portland) an office that has initiated schedules for longer, more intensive one-on-one sessions for customers needing more intensive attention, including those who are English language learners.

Surveying Satisfaction of Title IB Customers

Workforce Solutions, the Title IB service provider serving the coastal counties local area, conducts two web-based customer satisfaction surveys per year with every active participant. The average response rate is around 10% and results are reviewed by the team. The responses affirm service delivery is right on track with no major issues identified, the process also opens an opportunity for the customer to speak directly with a manager if they wish to discuss their customer experience further. The survey for youth participants is a simple question asking them to tell them how they are doing. Workforce Solutions is

exploring new tools using Artificial Intelligence that can analyze freeform responses to survey questions versus using 1-5 rating schemes.

Survey efforts are not as robust for employer customers, but they do survey employers that provide work experience opportunities and on-the-job training. Additionally, staff communicate directly with employers involved with these services on a regular basis to ensure the client continues to be successful.

WAGNER-PEYSER SET-ASIDE FUND USE

Wagner-Peyser ten percent funds continue to support CareerCenter access for speakers of languages other than English and staff development. The New Mainer population who are English language learners continues to grow, the ten-percent funds are used to hire bi/multi-lingual staff, provide outreach activities to immigrant centers and other ECBO's, and provide translation and interpretation services for the growing number of diverse languages spoken by Maine's customer base.

WAIVERS

Maine requested and received a waiver of the requirement to spend 75% of youth funds on out-of-school youth for program year 2023. The waiver request identified the following goals:

- Increase high school students' successful entry into employment, registered apprenticeship, or post-secondary education
- Increase services to youth at risk of dropping out of high school
- Increase the overall number of WIOA youth served per program year
- Increase Maine High Schools' awareness of WIOA services available to eligible high school students
- Decrease the number of disconnected youths by connecting youth with paid work experience, pre-apprenticeship, and extended learning opportunities before they drop out or detach from the school system.
- Increase involvement of Maine employers, apprenticeship sponsors, schools, and workforce system partners in activities that ensure high school youth successfully transition to employment and/or advanced training.

The focus on providing more high-school youth with paid work experience aligns with the goals of the Maine Children's Cabinet as a method for improving long-term outcomes for Maine youth, particularly those at risk of dropping out of school and/or disconnecting from the workforce afterward.

The number of in-school-youth participants expanded during program year 2023 and it is expected to continue to increase as schools become accustomed to working with WIOA staff to serve eligible students. This year saw increased numbers of high school students enrolled in pre-apprenticeship programs, for which the Youth program funded the work experience component. Registered apprenticeship sponsors provided the classroom component and each student who successfully completed the program received an industry recognized credential. These pre-apprenticeship programs prepare students for direct entry into registered apprenticeship or related employment.

Maine intends to continue to request the 75% expenditure requirement waiver for the next two program years (PY2024 and PY2025). Title IB service providers have made it clear that the waiver needs to span at least two years in order to document expected outcomes and ensure the high-school juniors and seniors served enter into employment or post-secondary education.

CHALLENGES

High Staff Turnover

Because high quality jobs are abundant in Maine, job seekers have the opportunity to jump quickly to the next job resulting in significant staff turnover at every level of the system. While the amount of time it takes to recruit, hire, and train new staff is a challenge in itself, due diligence regarding assurance of accurate data entry into complex MIS systems, and appropriate service delivery to customers has become an everyday concern. Local service providers of Title IB services and Employment Services have instituted Quality Assurance teams to regularly review how services are documented and whether data is accurately captured for performance reporting purposes. Service providers are taking stride to explore why staff are leaving and ensure new staff feel welcome and appreciated.

Sunsetting Funds

With the influx of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and state and local area attainment of National Dislocated Worker Grants, H1B grants and other grants, the last few years have been replete with funding. The influx of additional funding resulting in greatly expanded services to traditional workforce development system customers will soon be sunseting and that along with the decreasing amount of WIOA funds Maine receives each year presents the state and local areas with the challenge of sustaining such levels of service and newly implemented best practices. Additionally, proposed changes identified for the reauthorization of WIOA will take a significant toll on states that receive minimal funding.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS

Maine would benefit from more **up-to-date tools to conduct subrecipient fiscal monitoring** both at the local board level and for local boards at the service provider level. Region staff mentioned that ETA was in the process of updating financial technical assistance guides; a current but simple fiscal monitoring tool would be most useful.

Similarly, there are no **current tools or guidance on certifying one-stops** on workforceegps. The site does provide some tools used during WIOA but nothing since then. Current processes in Maine are extremely time consuming and weighty. It would be greatly appreciated if ETA could identify some of the best tools for one-stop certification and provide technical assistance on how states are reviewing and scoring continuous improvements.