



WIOA Annual Statewide Report Narrative for PY2024 submitted December 1, 2025

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
State Strategies	2
Strategic Vision and Workforce Goals	2
Transfer of WIOA Title II Program Funding.....	5
Waivers	5
Evaluations.....	6
Employment Projections.....	6
Teacher Compensation Report	7
Sector Analyses	7
RESEA Optimization	7
Monitoring and Performance	8
Training	8
Continuous Improvement.....	8
Analytics and Data Tools.....	9
Customer Satisfaction	9
Performance Accountability	10
Negotiated Local Area Performance Levels and Results	12
Rapid Response.....	13
Wagner-Peyser Activities	14
National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWGs)	15
State’s Best Practices and Needs	16
Conclusion.....	17



December 1, 2025

Dear Secretary Chavez-DeRemer,

Montana's Commissioner of Labor & Industry respectfully submits the Program Year 2024 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Annual Statewide Performance Report Narrative for Titles I–III to the U.S. Department of Labor. This report reflects Montana's commitment to building a modern, integrated workforce system that advances opportunity for workers and meets the evolving needs of employers statewide.

At the center of this year's report is Governor Greg Gianforte's 406 JOBS executive order, Montana's unifying workforce strategy built around Four Pathways to Employment, Zero Barriers to Work, and Six High-Demand Sectors. 406 JOBS provides the organizing framework for aligning programs, partners, and investments so that every Montanan can see a clear path into good jobs in priority industries that drive the state's economy. It also positions the State Workforce Innovation Board to lead with a sector-based, employer-driven approach that reduces fragmentation and focuses resources where they have the greatest impact.

In PY 2024, Montana invested significantly in strengthening performance and accountability across the WIOA system. The year marked the full implementation of the EmployMT case management and reporting platform, enhanced training for providers, and the addition of a dedicated Workforce Performance Analyst, all designed to improve data quality, sharpen performance management, and support continuous improvement. As a result, providers are better equipped to track outcomes in real time, target technical assistance, and ensure participants gain measurable skills and credentials that translate into long-term success in the labor market.

This report also demonstrates Montana's alignment with the nation's broader talent agenda—"America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age." Montana's efforts emphasize employer-led education-to-employment pathways, expansion of apprenticeship, and integrated administration of WIOA Titles I–III to simplify access for job seekers and employers. Montana also remains committed to fulfilling the spirit of the July 14, 2025, Interagency Agreement by advancing the transition to a combined WIOA and Perkins state plan, further unifying workforce and education strategies. These actions support federal priorities around upskilling, leveraging technology, and coordinating across agencies to build a resilient, future-ready workforce.



Montana is proud to be recognized as a workforce innovator, using policy, data, and partnership to test and scale new approaches. Through initiatives such as sector-based strategies, cross-system evaluation, and unified governance, the state continues to streamline services, reduce barriers to participation in the workforce, and respond quickly to emerging economic needs. The PY 2024 WIOA Annual Report details this work and affirms Montana's commitment to serving as a strong partner in advancing a cohesive national workforce strategy.

Thank you for your continued guidance and partnership in this work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Swanson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sarah R. Swanson
Commissioner
Montana Department of Labor and Industry

Introduction

Montana stands at the forefront of a new era for workforce development, pioneering integrated and outcomes-driven strategies that exemplify national leadership in the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) at the completion of program year 2024. In partnership with employers, educators, and communities, Montana has embraced innovation with expanded apprenticeships, executed key technology modernizations, and initiated groundbreaking public-private initiatives, placing opportunity and skills at the heart of the state's workforce system strategy.

These efforts unfold in alignment with President Trump's recent executive orders prioritizing workforce efficiency, accountable hiring, and the robust advancement of artificial intelligence. Montana's momentum mirrors the national "America's Talent Strategy," with its focus on upskilling workers, leveraging technology, and uniting stakeholders to create a flexible, future-ready workforce that ensures prosperity for all Montanans.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of Montana's workforce development achievements and innovations throughout Program Year 2024, reflecting on program strategies, measurable outcomes, and progress in serving job seekers and employers. Contents highlight WIOA performance, share best practices, and summarize ongoing efforts to align Montana's workforce system with the evolving needs of workers, businesses, and communities across the state.

State Strategies

Montana has made significant strides in advancing its workforce development goals as outlined in its WIOA Combined State Plan, with efforts centered on economic growth, employer engagement, and expanding career pathways. The state's PY2024 efforts provided critical momentum for the recently adopted 406 JOBS workforce strategy under Executive Order 5-2025 creating a unifying framework to coordinate these efforts statewide, driving progress across key focus areas.

Strategic Vision and Workforce Goals

Montana's State Workforce Innovation Board worked through PY2024 to develop a groundbreaking new workforce system strategy. The 406 JOBS framework aims to unify state workforce efforts under "Four Pathways to Employment, Zero Barriers to Work, and Six High Demand Sectors." These sectors are health care, construction trades, hospitality/recreation, advanced manufacturing and computing, education and childcare, and financial/professional services. While not launched during the program year, the foundational efforts of the State Workforce Innovation Board and contributing agencies during PY2024 were pivotal preparatory work. The framework is designed to ensure every Montanan can identify and pursue a career pathway, with a particular emphasis on re-engaging residents who have exited the labor force, upskilling existing workers, and closing workforce gaps through both public and private sector partnerships. 406 JOBS shifts and focuses the state's workforce strategy to nimble, employer-driven, and executed via a sector-strategies approach. This plan for statewide coordination helps minimize duplication of programs and puts greater emphasis on matching employer needs with a skilled workforce, in part through regular feedback and data analysis to guide policy and investments.

Sector Strategies and Career Pathways

In addition to the newly enhanced sector strategies approach to workforce development, the state has worked within MTDLI to prioritize outreach and center the voice of the employer. Business engagement

has expanded, with concentrated outreach and services: Montana’s Business Engagement team and Career Developer Teams engaged over 4,000 employers and provided enhanced business services to over 1,000 businesses. Efforts directly supported workforce challenges like labor shortages, skills gaps, and retention.

Montana’s Career Developer team at MTDLI leads efforts to expand high-quality career exploration and work preparedness by partnering with schools to support teachers, connect classrooms with employers, and bring real-world labor market information into K–12 settings. Through these activities, the team advances Montana’s 2024 WIOA State Plan focus on building clear education-to-employment pathways and strengthening alignment between secondary education, post-secondary training, and priority industry sectors so that more youth enter the workforce with relevant skills and credentials.

These efforts were further accelerated during Program Year 2024 with the passage of the Montana STARS Act, which tasked MTDLI with establishing a statewide credential registry that helps students, families, educators, and employers better understand the value, quality, and labor-market relevance of credentials, creating a more transparent and navigable pathway from education into stable, high-quality career opportunities.

Montana’s transitional jobs (WEX) programs similarly support the State Plan’s goals by providing adult, dislocated worker, and youth participants with structured, meaningful work experiences that build job readiness, support self-sufficiency, and create direct connections to employers. Together, the expansion of CTE and the continued implementation of WEX create a continuum of work-based learning and experiential opportunities envisioned in the 2024 WIOA State Plan, ensuring individuals at different life stages can gain practical skills, demonstrate work habits, and progress toward long-term employment.

[Apprenticeship Expansion and Work-Based Learning](#)

Montana Registered Apprenticeship Programs (MRAP) have continued to set records in both the number of active apprentices and employer sponsors, reinforcing their role as a core strategy for building a skilled workforce across the state. Efforts are underway to expand apprenticeship beyond traditional trades into fields such as K–12 teaching, childcare, and multiple healthcare occupations, as well as into a wide range of industries through pre-apprenticeship models that prepare individuals for entry into full registered programs. These expansions strengthen pathways into high-demand careers, support employers in addressing persistent talent shortages, and align with Montana’s broader goal of creating earn-and-learn opportunities that are accessible in urban, rural, and tribal communities.

Collaboration with school districts and educator preparation programs has produced innovative pathways, including new registered apprenticeships for K–12 teachers that are designed to create broader, more sustainable talent pipelines for local school districts. Groundwork for this registered apprenticeship was developed during PY2024 and will be fully launched by the start of the 2026-2027 school year. By combining on-the-job learning, mentorship, and related instruction, these teacher-focused apprenticeships help districts “grow their own” educators, particularly in rural and hard-to-staff areas, while providing clear advancement routes for paraprofessionals and other school staff. This collaborative model deepens the connection between education and workforce systems and offers a replicable framework for other occupations facing similar recruitment and retention challenges.

The state's Childcare Apprenticeship and Pre-apprenticeship programs provide another strong example of sector-focused innovation, creating structured routes to credential attainment and career advancement in a field that is critical to both family stability and employer productivity. Participants gain foundational skills, exposure to real-world childcare settings, and a clear bridge into full registered apprenticeship and higher-level credentials, improving both job quality and long-term retention in the sector. In PY2024 Montana added an infant designation to this opportunity as well to address industry demand. By strengthening this pipeline, Montana supports the availability of reliable childcare, which in turn enables more parents to participate in the labor force.

Perhaps the most impactful Registered Apprenticeship accomplishment in PY2024 was House Bill 336, which gave a major boost to the continued expansion of registered apprenticeship in Montana by formally opening apprenticeship as a route into 32 distinct licensed professions. By recognizing supervised, on-the-job training as a valid pathway to licensure in fields ranging from healthcare and construction to education, childcare, advanced manufacturing, and financial services, the law made it easier for employers to grow their own talent and for workers to enter high-demand careers without stepping away from the labor market. This connects directly to Pillar 2: It also reinforced Montana's broader "earn-and-learn" strategy by weaving apprenticeship directly into professional credentialing, which in turn encourages more businesses to sponsor programs, more individuals to participate, and a stronger, more responsive Registered Apprenticeship system statewide.

Business Engagement and Prevention of Job Loss

MTDLI's Business Engagement Team strengthened layoff aversion efforts through direct support to over 770 employers, partnering to address workforce shortages and retention challenges across multiple sectors. Key outcomes included the delivery of eleven hospitality and workforce trainings in nine Montana communities through Flathead Valley Community College's Workforce training initiative; the launch of a flooring installer pilot program at Great Falls College that progressed into a registered apprenticeship, expanding Montana's apprenticeship system and promoting earlier opportunities for businesses to connect with young people through pre-apprenticeships, and a Passenger/School Bus Endorsement training that directly helped fill critical transportation vacancies in rural Montana.

The team also expanded hands-on workforce expos with more than 1000 students participating statewide, including the first workforce expo on a Montana reservation. The Engagement Team also collaborated with education and industry partners to train high school CTE teachers, extending career awareness to hundreds of students annually. The team partnered with the Registered Apprenticeship office to advance the Child Care Pre-Apprenticeship Program, creating new avenues for credential attainment and career progression in a critical sector. Collectively, these efforts demonstrated tangible results in preventing job loss, expanding apprenticeship opportunities, and equipping Montana industries with the skills and workforce pipelines needed to sustain economic growth.

In summary, Montana's approach, led by the SWIB and the 406 JOBS initiative, is showing tangible progress in workforce development with expanded apprenticeships, innovative career pathways, and robust business engagement that enhances both economic growth and self-sufficiency throughout the state.

Transfer of WIOA Title II Program Funding from Montana’s Office of Public Instruction (OPI) to Montana Department of Labor & Industry (MTDLI)

During Montana’s PY2024 legislative session, three house bills laid the groundwork for an integrated, outcomes-driven workforce system. In a July 1, 2025 letter to the U.S. Department of Education, Governor Gianforte requested transfer of WIOA Title II program funding from OPI to MTDLI, allowing MTDLI to administer WIOA Titles I, II, and III. MTDLI completed the transfer of WIOA Title II into the Department, including the hiring of a program manager and assumption of performance reporting duties. Efforts to coordinate program implementation across WIOA titles I-III is underway. The change will be reflected in Montana’s State Plan amendment in spring 2026.

The transfer aligns closely with federal priorities from the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor to advance cross-agency coordination, improve accountability, and support data-driven workforce outcomes. Across the nation, both agencies have encouraged states to streamline administration of WIOA titles to create unified systems that better connect adult education with workforce training and employment services. Montana’s move positions the state to fully implement this integrated vision, strengthening continuity across Titles I–III and enhancing responsiveness to worker and employer needs.

Waivers

Montana currently has 4 waivers that have been in place for at least one program year.

Waiver #1: State Board Acts as Local Boards

This waiver permits Montana’s state workforce board to carry out the functions of local workforce boards in PY2024 and 2025. The State Workforce Innovation Board (SWIB) has acted as both the state and local board under WIA since January 1, 2006, and this structure continues to be reflected in the Combined State Workforce Plan. The goal of this waiver is to limit annual overhead and maximize funds available for direct services to individual and business customers. When initially implemented, the state saved the WIA program approximately \$1.2 million by removing the administrative overhead of maintaining multiple boards.

Continuation of this waiver has been successful in minimizing costs with only one board director required. In PY2024 Montana allocated over 75% of funding to direct client services across WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth, maximizing funding impact on the number of participants served and performance. Additionally, this waiver continues to allow for a unified approach to the state’s workforce development and more consistent and direct implementation of updated practices, guidance, and directives.

Waiver #2: One Comprehensive One-Stop Center

This waiver permits the state to have a single comprehensive one-stop center for the state in PY2024 and 2025. This waiver is in alignment with the state’s waiver to allow the state board to act as the local board with the goal of reducing administrative overhead and maximizing funding directed towards participant services. At initial implementation, the waiver prevented an estimated \$100,000 in administrative costs.

Continuation of this waiver has helped the state successfully minimize administrative burdens and allowed for improved community engagement and partnership through the eighteen Job Service Montana (JSM) offices serving as Montana's American Job Centers. This model keeps administrative costs down and ensures Montana continues to keep direct participant services at a high proportion of funding, with direct participant services at over 75% of total funding in PY24.

Waiver # 3 Flexibility in Funding to Increase In-School Youth Enrollments

This waiver adjusts the requirement of the percentage of Youth funds being used to provide workforce investment activities for Out-of-School (OSY) youth being no less than 75% down to 50%. The goal of this waiver is to increase Montana's WIOA Youth programs' ability to leverage opportunities for in-school youth where local school boards of trustees have created flexible course equivalencies and freed student seat time in favor of work-based learning leading to industry credentials. Additionally, this waiver will allow for greater levels of enrollment in Montana's geographically isolated communities. In conjunction with Waiver #4, which allows for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for In-School Youth (ISY), this waiver will create opportunity for more ISY to obtain certificates and credentials.

Under this waiver, Montana increased performance results in measurable skills gains and credential attainment, exceeding negotiated performance rates for both.

Waiver # 4 Use of Individual Training Accounts for In-School Youth

This waiver permits the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for In-School Youth (ISY), allowing these youth participants the same opportunities for support as OSY. The goal of this waiver is to create potential pathways for ISY to fully obtain credentials and certificates before completing high school, creating incentives to increase program participation for ISY, and improve rates of enrollment and outcomes. Additionally, the greater flexibility for use of ITAs among participants improves opportunities for collaboration between WIOA partners including local school districts and the Montana University System.

Under this waiver, Montana increased performance results this year in measurable skills gains and credential attainment, exceeding negotiated performance rates on credential attainment by over 16% and on measurable skills gains by nearly double the negotiated rate.

Evaluations

MTDLI updated its in-depth analysis of Montana Registered Apprenticeship Program (MRAP) participation trends and apprentice outcomes. By matching MRAP participation to Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records, the analysis looks at actual employment and wage outcomes for apprenticeship trainees. Results of the work show the strong program outcomes of MRAP, including above average rates of employment, retention in the workforce, and wage earnings. This work demonstrates the value of apprenticeship to potential trainees and as a workforce training model. Additionally, it provides information that can be used for continuous improvement within MTDLI. MRAP again reached record highs for active apprenticeships and the number of businesses utilizing apprenticeships to train their workforce in 2024.

Employment Projections

MTDLI published a set of employment projections for occupational job growth from 2023-2033 in the state. The employment projections are based on historical employment data, produced as part MTDLI's

Workforce Information Grants for State's (WIGS) work. These projections use the nationally recommended methodology for employment forecasts and the programs provided by the Projections Managing Partnership. The report and accompanying dashboard break down projections by occupation, educational requirements, and earnings levels, allowing workers and workforce providers to identify potential high-growth occupations for different groups. This includes the top-growing occupations with apprenticeships in Montana, helping workers identify where MRAP occupations have continued growth potential.

Teacher Compensation Report

MTDLI produced a report on teacher compensation to meet the needs of stakeholders working to improve starting teacher pay in Montana. The report analyzed how teacher compensation varies by district and educator characteristics, and the impact compensation has on teacher employment patterns in the state. Leveraging data on teacher compensation from Montana's Office of Public Instruction and verifying the data using UI wage records, the report summarized actual teacher wages across the state and revealed discrepancies across teacher and school characteristics. Findings from the report were used to inform Montana's STARS Act, passed in the 2025 Montana legislative session, which included historic investment of over 100 million dollars in teacher compensation in Montana. This work also supported establishment of Montana's first Registered Apprenticeship program for teachers, which will launch in the coming school year.

Sector Analyses

In early 2025, in coordination with the Executive Director of the SWIB, MTDLI began work on a series of reports for five sectors targeted by the state's 406 JOBS initiative which established a coordinated workforce strategy emphasizing six high-impact industries. These sectors include Advanced Manufacturing & Computing, Construction, Healthcare, Education & Childcare, Financial & Professional Service, and Hospitality & Recreation. Together, these target sectors account for over 60% of Montana's future anticipated job growth and create a valuable opportunity for workforce and economic development in Montana. The reports highlight recent workforce trends and demand for specific occupations and trainings that can inform the focus of WIOA programs and partners. In addition to this, MTDLI is also preparing to release a photonics sector workforce roadmap. This report provides a snapshot of the growing industry, capturing momentum in technology development and manufacturing capacity in the state. It highlights employment patterns and skills, and maps short- and long-term training needs across the industry. Publication of this roadmap and the five sector reports is expected in winter 2025-2026.

RESEA Optimization

During PY2024, in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, MTDLI worked to produce preliminary estimates of the results of a Randomized Control Trial (RCT) evaluation of new service delivery strategies in the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program. The RCT included a sample of over 3,000 participants for one year, with over 1,400 being asked to use new virtual tools as part of the program. Outcomes were tracked for four quarters after their RESEA participation to measure the impact of the new services on unemployment duration, wages, and employment outcomes, as well as continued participation in WIOA activities, such as further Wagner-Peyser participation or enrollment in the WIOA Dislocated Worker program.

Initial results of the RCT show that estimated impacts were not statistically significant, though point estimates were generally positive, and there was no evidence of a deterrent effect on attending the RESEA appointment because of being asked to complete the additional virtual services. Final results are

forthcoming as the remainder of the data being used in the analysis becomes available. Results from the RESEA RCT provided information about the ability to utilize virtual tools more broadly across all WIOA programs. The online resource for job seekers has been rebuilt and enhanced from our experiences with a virtual services evaluation, targeted quick tips videos, and eSkill assessments. It also offers a new approach to delivery service: workforce agents introduce the course to clients, providing a tour of its features.

The above-mentioned works for which a completed and published report is available are included in this list:

- MT Apprenticeship Report: https://lmi.mt.gov/docs/Publications/LMI-Pubs/Special-Reports-and-Studies/24_ApprenticeshipReport_Final.pdf
- Employment Projections: https://lmi.mt.gov/docs/Publications/LMI-Pubs/Labor-Market-Publications/2023-2033ProjectionsPub_Final.pdf
- Montana Teacher Compensation Report: https://lmi.mt.gov/docs/Publications/LMI-Pubs/Labor-Market-Publications/24_TeachersPayReport_Final.pdf

Monitoring and Performance

In PY2024, Montana conducted monitoring through remote and on-site visits to evaluate participant records, validate data, and provide reports to service providers. All service providers were monitored during the program year. The Workforce Performance Analyst role (created in PY2023) continued working in partnership with the reporting analyst and program managers to monitor and improve performance in MTDLI's workforce programs. This individual assures contracted providers meet both internal and federally negotiated performance expectations. Additionally partnering with MTDLI's economist team for monitoring tools, they lead technical assistance efforts and keep program managers, agency leadership, and Montana's SWIB informed of any performance challenges or areas of risk.

Training

MTDLI further expanded its training repository to incorporate additional training on WIOA programs and in particular, performance metrics. Trainings on the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs were expanded while specific trainings on performance measurement topics of measurable skills gains and credential attainment metrics were created. These new trainings further support Montana's ability to implement WIOA programs effectively and provide accurate data on participant outcomes. Special focus was placed on how the use of the state's new management information system, EmployMT, ties to the language and elements of WIOA reporting and program outcomes, helping staff to understand how the information they enter feeds into overall program operation.

Continuous Improvement

MTDLI applies a continuous improvement approach to strengthen service delivery for businesses and job seekers by turning research and experience into actionable learning. By examining outcomes from childcare, teaching, and apprenticeship initiatives, the department uses evaluation to identify what works and expand those practices. For instance, insights into the benefits of apprenticeship training and the growing demand for accessible childcare have led to increased use of apprenticeship models in that sector. Building on this success, MTDLI is developing a Registered Apprenticeship program for teachers to create a more streamlined path into the profession. This same model has proven effective in other areas as well; through the National Dislocated Worker Grant supporting individuals affected by mining

industry layoffs, the department integrated short-term and apprenticeship training to help participants quickly reenter the workforce with new, marketable skills.

The state's largest continuous improvement effort included a full evaluation of all 18 Job Service Offices to identify inefficiencies, strengths and best practices, and standardize service delivery. Lessons learned from that evaluation are being implemented in PY2025 and include new client intake processes, service team specialization, and modernization efforts to reach populations who are out of the workforce but not utilizing services.

Analytics and Data Tools

MTDLI continued to provide staff access to program-related data across multiple formats. MTDLI's performance analyst delivered technical assistance to providers of Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs regarding credential attainment, measurable skills gains, and employment outcomes. In doing so, the performance analyst developed new reports to visualize provider-level performance data to allow for targeted training and technical assistance as needed. The data and economist teams distributed research and reports to the WIOA core programs, providing presentations and question-and-answer opportunities for program managers and service providers so that the information could be understood and applied to serve Montanans more effectively. MTDLI also continued to maintain data dashboards and data visualization tools to support the use and accessibility of the information created in this research. These tools provided visual analytics of labor market information and program activities to inform managers, workforce consultants, and other staff making decisions. Easy access to downloadable data on program activities assists monitoring and auditing, information sharing, and management decisions. The agency also maintained a set of dashboards tailored to the needs of the SWIB, assuring the board had easily accessible information about both local and statewide labor market information to inform their strategic work. These resources can be accessed at <https://lmi.mt.gov/>.

By strengthening program alignment, performance monitoring, and staff capacity, these evaluation efforts ensure participants receive more responsive services, better support in achieving educational and employment goals, and improved long-term outcomes in Montana's workforce system.

Customer Satisfaction

Surveys

MTDLI collects information about customer satisfaction by surveying participants in Title I and III programs. Responses from participants are requested via email, in PY24 a total of 4,532 customer satisfaction surveys were distributed. Additionally, signage is prominently displayed in all Job Service Montana offices to encourage customer participation at any point in the process. Through these efforts, MTDLI received 226 responses for an overall response rate of approximately 5 percent. An additional survey is distributed at program exit, with this survey yielding a 13% response rate. In the survey, customers are asked to rate their overall satisfaction with service on a 1-5 scale, with 5 being the highest. In PY24, the overall customer satisfaction was 4.5.

Some examples of responses gathered through the surveys included:

- "Job Service representatives were very efficient, knowledgeable, polite and always willing to assist. For those above reasons I'm so thankful that I know where to go for employment related issues if it should ever come up again;"

- This program was a great help to get the certification I needed for employment as I had to change careers due to lack of employment in my field;” and

Other responses showed customers expressing that awareness of services could be improved. These included “publicize all the services available” and “more advertising that they are a resource in the community.” As a result of feedback like this, MTDLI is working to improve communication strategies and increase levels of stakeholder engagement to increase awareness of the services available through AJCs, WIOA, and other workforce programming.

Beyond refining survey methods, Montana is advancing broader engagement strategies to strengthen connections across the workforce system. Efforts include redesigning the state’s Assistance for Business Clinics, conducting statewide stakeholder engagement to guide technology modernization, and increasing the visibility and strategic role of the State Workforce Innovation Board to more effectively position industry at the center of workforce system development

Continuous Improvement

Montana continuously seeks opportunities to enhance our processes. With the implementation of EmployMT, both surveys were automatically deployed to customers at times deemed optimal by our subject matter experts, thereby improving our understanding of customer experiences and their thoughtful responses. We have adjusted the timing and content of our surveys, leading to an increase in response rates over the past year. This year, the WIOA survey was revised based on customer suggestions to capture better insights from individuals who utilized WIOA services.

Performance Accountability

MSGs and Credential Attainment

During PY2024, MTDLI continued efforts to improve all negotiated performance rates. MTDLI placed a specific priority on two specific performance measures; measurable skill gains (MSGs) and credential attainment. These measures were chosen as priorities because of an identified need to improve in these performance categories and an emphasis on ensuring participants exit programs with in-demand skills and credentials.

Efforts to improve performance results in these categories included quarterly meetings with individual providers to review performance results and provide tailored technical assistance in areas of deficiency and knowledge gaps. Additionally, performance measurement and data collection were incorporated into training, both in-person and on-line, further emphasizing the need for high quality performance results.

Data Quality

MTDLI made improvements to data collection for Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) reporting in the new EmployMT case management system for the Title I and III programs. The EmployMT system, launched in August 2024, streamlines data collection processes and enforces requirements that reflect current PIRL guidelines. These improvements improved data collection and simplified performance tracking for Montana, contributing to better results. In PY24 MTDLI met or exceeded negotiated performance targets for all five performance measures in the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. The Youth program saw improving results, with 3 of 5 performance categories exceeding negotiated rates.

MTDLI placed a high priority on improving WIOA reporting and performance outcomes. Montana's new management information system, EmployMT, was designed to streamline reporting through improved and updated data collection that is flexible across program enrollments. Additionally, the new system improved processes for monitoring enrollments, case manager documentation of MSGs, credential attainments, and employment outcomes. These improvements allow for better in-time intervention and application of technical assistance with providers.

With the rollout of EmployMT, MTDLI technical support staff, WIOA program managers, and the Workforce Performance Manager provided case managers with technical assistance on how to track and enter training and educational program services, MSGs, credential attainments, and employment outcomes. Staff developed a new MSG/Credential Guide and conducted both online and in-person training on the performance measures, allowing Montana to effectively prioritize performance improvement.

MTDLI also added a Workforce Performance Analyst to the Data and Operations team, a position focused specifically on WIOA performance metrics and improving provider service delivery. This individual collaborates closely with workforce program managers to support the Workforce Services Division's (WSD) process improvement efforts, including development of policy and operational guidance to improve program implementation and the analysis of performance indicators to determine areas of risk and training needs. The Performance Analyst works closely with all funded providers to assure data quality, effective program implementation, and workforce outcomes for participants. Impact from this role and the state's focus on training around MSGs in particular led to a near doubling of measurable skill gains.

During PY2024, MTDLI did not engage in Pay-for-Performance contracting.

The state's common exit policy:

Montana utilizes common exit for participants enrolled in multiple partner programs. Montana's common exit applies to the following programs:

- WIOA Adult;
- WIOA Dislocated Worker;
- WIOA Youth;
- Wagner Peyser Employment Services;
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA); and
- National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWG).

Common exit occurs when a participant has not received countable services under one of the applicable programs for 90 days. At the point of exit, the exit date is retroactive to the last date of service, and is not delayed, postponed, or affected by self-service or information-only services or activities.

Negotiated Local Area Performance Levels and Results

Table 1: WIOA Title I Youth Program (PY2024)

PY2024 Local Board Code (likely NA for MT)	Measure	PY2024 Negotiated Target	PY2024 Actual Result	PY2025 Negotiated Target
N/A	Employment Rate – 2 nd Quarter after Exit	63%	56.3%	63%
	Employment Rate – 4 th Quarter after Exit	58.6%	52.1%	58.6%
	Median Earnings – 2 nd Quarter after Exit	\$4,100	\$4,589	\$4,100
	Credential Attainment	30%	35%	34%
	Measurable Skill Gains	38%	75.6%	42%

Table 2: WIOA Title I Adult Program (PY2024)

PY2024 Local Board Code (likely NA for MT)	Measure	PY2024 Negotiated Target	PY2024 Actual Result	PY2025 Negotiated Target
N/A	Employment Rate – 2 nd Quarter after Exit	71%	72.2%	71%
	Employment Rate – 4 th Quarter after Exit	69%	72.9%	69%
	Median Earnings – 2 nd Quarter after Exit	\$7,350	\$11,076	\$7,350
	Credential Attainment	53%	59.6%	53%
	Measurable Skill Gains	56%	70.3%	56%

Table 3: WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker Program (PY2024)

PY2024 Local Board Code (likely NA for MT)	Measure	PY2024 Negotiated Target	PY2024 Actual Result	PY2025 Negotiated Target
N/A	Employment Rate – 2 nd Quarter after Exit	75%	74.7%	75%
	Employment Rate – 4 th Quarter after Exit	73%	84.1%	73%
	Median Earnings – 2 nd Quarter after Exit	\$10,800	\$11,881	\$10,800
	Credential Attainment	57%	64.5%	57%
	Measurable Skill Gains	50%	72.2%	50%

Table 4: WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Employment Services (PY2024)

PY2024 Local Board Code (likely NA for MT)	Measure	PY2024 Negotiated Target	PY2024 Actual Result	PY2025 Negotiated Target
N/A	Employment Rate – 2 nd Quarter after Exit	67%	61.7%	67%
	Employment Rate – 4 th Quarter after Exit	67%	66.3%	67%
	Median Earnings – 2 nd Quarter after Exit	\$7,400	\$8,066	\$7,400

Data Validation and Data Integrity

During PY2024, MTDLI conducted monitoring activities for WIOA Title I and II programs listed below.

- WIOA Adult;
- WIOA Youth;
- WIOA Dislocated Worker; and
- Non-Core Programs:
 - NDWG
 - Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG)
 - Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)
 - Monitor Advocate System – all requirements for Wagner-Peyser Employment Services apply to this system.

These monitoring activities followed MTDLI’s Monitoring and Audits Policy, which provides monitoring protocols consistent with 2 CFR 200.328 to ensure program staff follow written procedures. Program data, including programmatically required elements and their supporting documentation, was reviewed. MTDLI also reviewed monitoring tools to ensure consistency with updated program procedures following the transition to MTDLI’s new management information system, EmployMT.

MTDLI’s procedures also included the following:

- Record retention time frames based on the primary indicator of performance exit date, not the date that the participant stops receiving Veteran, Wagner-Peyser, and WIOA services.
- The monitoring team provided a written report of identified errors or missing data and a request to correct the inaccuracies to each service provider and to MTDLI program managers.
- Program managers and the reporting analyst provided technical assistance and clarified operational guidance to support data entry and data integrity.
- Service providers responded in writing and provided additional documentation to correct all inaccuracies and inconsistencies.

Monitoring activities also included exit calls after formal monitoring, serving as an opportunity to discuss data validation policy and procedures and ensure service providers’ comprehensive understanding of data validation requirements and expectations while also working through any monitoring findings.

Statewide Governor’s Reserve Funds

During PY2024, MTDLI did not fund any statewide activities using the Governor’s Reserve Funds.

Rapid Response

During PY2024, MTDLI’s Rapid Response program provided timely and coordinated assistance to over 2,500 individuals impacted by layoffs or closures across 40 businesses and organizations statewide. The

program delivered reemployment services and transitional resources through in-person and virtual events and information sessions. In doing so, Rapid Response staff coordinated closely with employers, unions, and community leaders to schedule worker information sessions prior to separation dates. Services emphasized seamless transition from Rapid Response into individualized workforce services, including WIOA Dislocated Worker, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs. Local partners (training providers, economic development organizations, and veteran service agencies) were included to provide wraparound support services.

In September 2024, Sibanye-Stillwater Mine announced a significant reduction of approximately 700 workers at its mining operation, representing about 40% of the company's Montana workforce. The layoffs had a substantial economic impact, accounting for an estimated 13% of total payroll jobs in Stillwater and Sweet Grass counties. These were among the highest paying jobs in the state, with average annual wages exceeding \$100,000. Job Service Montana offices partnered with the United Steelworkers Local 11-0001 and local government leaders to mobilize Rapid Response activities, supporting affected workers and their families. Services included on-site worker information sessions, unemployment insurance claim assistance, reemployment workshops, and connections to training providers. A mining-specific Skills Matching Tool was also developed to help displaced workers and their families identify transferable skills and pursue new employment opportunities.

To improve access to services, temporary job service sites were opened in Columbus, Laurel, and Livingston, providing convenient locations for dislocated workers and their families to receive individualized career services. These sites allowed Rapid Response teams to maintain a local presence in the communities most impacted by the layoffs. In December 2024, Montana received a \$3.5 million National Dislocated Worker Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to provide additional employment and training services, including retraining programs, short-term credentials, and supportive services. Community-based career fairs in Columbus and surrounding areas connected impacted miners with regional employers.

In early 2025, layoffs at federal agencies across Montana, including the U.S. Forest Service, were responded to with a coordinated statewide Rapid Response event on March 12, 2025, leveraging all eighteen JSM offices. The event provided immediate access to unemployment insurance filing assistance, reemployment workshops, veteran transition services, and connections to training programs for more than 300 individuals. The innovative approach assured all impacted workers received the same quality information and guidance, followed by tailored support from JSM staff.

Wagner-Peyser Activities

In PY2024, MTDLI served nearly 21,000 Wagner-Peyser participants. Performance targets were exceeded for the Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit measure. The year involved significant changes to the program, largely due to the implementation of a new management information system, EmployMT, for record management. The first phase of EmployMT focused on implementing a cloud-based staff portal built on the ServiceNow platform, updating the program registration and referral process. The new process improved performance data collection standards and reporting and standardized the workflow for registration across all Job Service Montana Offices.

The second phase of the EmployMT project, launched in May 2025, introduced two new public-facing portals to improve access to services. One portal, designed for individual customers, makes it easier to communicate with case managers, submit registration details and documentation when requested, and schedule appointments with career coaches directly through the system. The second portal was designed for employers and training providers. The portal added functionality for training providers to apply for Montana's ETPL and for business, employer, and community partner customers to register their organizations with MTDLI. Finally, it enabled businesses to access further tools including online WOTC application filing.

Finally, updates were made for Wagner-Peyser participants entering the program through the RESEA program. Functionality was incorporated to integrate Wagner-Peyser registration into the RESEA appointment process to allow for easy delivery of the required UI eligibility assessments and record other important program activities including the delivery of customized LMI services and appointment attendance. Incorporating RESEA into the EmployMT system also allows for easy referral of customers to a local Job Service Montana Office for further Wagner-Peyser program services to be provided.

National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWGs)

In PY2024, Montana was awarded two National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWGs) to support workers affected by large-scale layoffs. These funds were implemented in close coordination with the state's Rapid Response teams and delivered primarily through JSM offices, ensuring access to reemployment and training services.

The **Montana Lumber Mill Employment Recovery NDWG** (\$800,000; July 7th, 2024 – July 7, 2026) supported workers dislocated from Pyramid Lumber in Seeley Lake and Roseburg Forest Products in Missoula. Rapid Response services were deployed on-site, with program staff available to enroll participants into the DW program and connect them to training and individualized career services. Partnerships with local economic development groups and training providers enhanced opportunities, while Reverse Job Fairs emerged as a particularly effective reemployment strategy. As of September 2025, 50 participants have been enrolled to receive services under the grant.

The **Montana Sibanye-Stillwater Mine Recovery NDWG** (\$3,500,000; October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2026) addressed layoffs at the Sibanye-Stillwater mine. Rapid Response events held at the Stillwater County Civic Center provided counseling, unemployment assistance, apprenticeship information, and career services for both workers and their families. Job Service Montana staff provided immediate Dislocated Worker/NDWG program enrollment, allowing participants access to training, reemployment, and relocation support as needed. As of September 2025, 82 participants have been enrolled to receive services under the grant.

Both grants were fully integrated with the Dislocated Worker Program and the state's co-enrollment policies, ensuring that workers received timely, individualized services along with the wraparound supports needed for successful reemployment. By aligning NDWGs with Rapid Response activities and leveraging strong partnerships with training providers, employers, and community organizations, Montana has strengthened its workforce and emergency response system to support workers' long-term economic stability.

State's Best Practices and Needs

In PY2024 MTDLI identified a number of promising practices while also addressing challenges in the development and launching of EmployMT, the system replacing the aging MWorks system for WIOA case management and performance reporting.

Technology Modernization Best Practices

The new EmployMT system launched in August 2024 and incorporated new features to capture and validate all required PIRL reporting data while streamlining the participant intake and enrollment processes across Title I and III programs. The first phase and initial launch incorporated internal staff side functionality, while the second phase and subsequent deployment added a customer-facing portal for job seekers and organizations to access self-service features. Some best practices identified during this process include:

- A phased development approach allowed for faster deployment of initial features, shortening time between project start and initial deployment while creating room for enhancements to follow initial build. In doing so, enhancements could be designed based upon user experience with the new system.
- A multi-faceted training approach, including in-person training sessions, instructor-led virtual trainings, self-service online training courses, and technical assistance through “office hours” contributed to a successful deployment. Users were supported with the resources needed to successfully use the system, minimizing user error and resulting delays.
- Throughout development, choices to include fields, define valid values, and structure workflows were done with reporting requirements in mind. The result is a system that successfully generates the required data for the WIOA PIRL and minimizes manual intervention effort during the quarterly and annual reporting processes.

Technology Modernization Challenges

Despite the successes experienced launching the new system, challenges did arise through the transition that require acknowledgment. Data conversion created significant challenges. Significant effort was required to maintain continuous reporting between the two systems. Though the updated system produced data of a high quality from information native to it, reporting on data converted from the retired system was onerous and required significant effort to successfully generate and submit performance reports.

Lessons Learned

Montana's comprehensive review of all 18 Job Service Montana (JSM) offices underscored both promising practices and important areas for improvement in serving employers, communities, and individuals with barriers to employment. The evaluation confirmed that staff across locations are committed to connecting jobseekers to opportunities, including work-based learning and Registered Apprenticeships, but also revealed two critical gaps: early-career professionals are not receiving sufficiently tailored support, and the consistency of services varies too widely from office to office. In response, Montana identified the need to move beyond a one-size-fits-all, “generalist” approach and instead build teams with specialized skillsets—such as youth and young adult services, employer

engagement, and work-based learning—so that each location can draw on deep subject-matter expertise rather than relying solely on staff who must cover every topic.

The state also recognized the importance of incorporating more targeted service and outcome metrics disaggregated by demographics (including age, geographic location, and specific WIOA-defined barriers) to ensure services are relevant to young people and individuals with barriers to employment. Going forward, Montana will leverage its modernized technology platforms to knit these specialized teams together statewide, so that no matter where a customer lives: rural, tribal, or urban, they can access the full breadth of the state’s workforce expertise, consistent high-quality services, and clear pathways to strong careers.

Promising Practices and Success Stories

One of Montana’s most promising practices is building robust, employer-led partnerships that directly address workforce gaps and open new doors for young people and jobseekers facing barriers. Whether through execution of career expos for youth, connecting employers more directly with schools to begin career exploration early, or simply making sure all the right people were at the table to address workforce challenges, Montana raised the bar in PY2024. A partnership in PY2024 with Bozeman Deaconess Hospital exemplifies this focused approach. When the hospital faced over 400 job vacancies, including many entry-level positions, the Job Service team responded by connecting the hospital with local schools, Gallatin College, apprenticeship programs, and career specialists. Through these efforts, the hospital expanded talent pipelines and lowered its hiring age for some roles to 16, successfully reducing its vacancies from 406 to 216. By leveraging connections across schools, colleges, apprenticeship programs, and career specialists, the Job Service team helped the hospital reduce its vacancies by nearly half, while expanding access to employment for local youth. This targeted collaboration shows how strong local partnerships and a strategic approach to talent pipelines can make a measurable difference for both employers and jobseekers

Conclusion

Montana’s workforce system experienced transformational growth and innovation in Program Year 2024, setting new benchmarks for programs, partnerships, and participant outcomes. Through the foundational work of 406 JOBS development, expansion of registered apprenticeships, technology modernization, and expanded public-private partnerships, Montana demonstrated its commitment to developing a future-ready workforce. Strategic investments such as House Bill 336’s expansion of apprenticeship pathways, the launch of a statewide credential registry, and strengthened alignment between education and training to high-growth industries have not only addressed immediate labor market needs but also laid the foundation for lasting economic resilience. Collectively, these efforts have positioned Montana as a leader in creating responsive, data-driven workforce solutions that equip workers, meet employer demands, and support thriving communities statewide.