



**STATE OF MAINE**  
**WIOA Annual Performance Report**  
**Program Year 2020**

December 1, 2021

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## Executive Summary

Activities referenced in this report are those that took place between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 the period that makes up program year 2020 (PY20). Implementation of the new four-year Unified Plan got underway this year. Ways in which workforce partners and State and Local Boards address the goals of plan are explained throughout this report. Millions of added workforce funds were awarded, including a grant to expand rural healthcare sector strategies awarded to Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc., and three USDOL funded grants awarded to the Maine Department of Labor to support the registered apprenticeship, to address the humanitarian needs and unique challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and to continue to address the opioid crisis.

Partners set up innovative ways to offer workforce development services despite ongoing challenges presented by the pandemic. Agencies expanded use of social media and email blasts to reach out to workers and employers in need of services. Employers and state agencies collaborated to address worker shortages by reinventing job fairs, raising wages, and offering bonuses to encourage workers to get back to work. A survey of unemployed individuals supplied new insight as to why workers are not returning to work despite pandemic-related unemployment benefits ending. Telework flexibilities prevented some pandemic-related job loss, but for jobs requiring direct customer contact (childcare, hospitality, tourism, retail, healthcare, social services) it was not an option resulting in significant employment gaps. Rapid response team members were joined by multiple agency partners to help 281 employers that had to lay off workers and aided 3,471 affected workers to access re-employment and training services and humanitarian resources.

Workforce service providers implemented new approaches to serving target populations hardest hit by the COVID and opioid disasters, including hiring and training members of those target populations to assist their peers to access and navigate services. Employment services staff received multiple customer service awards for live chat services and engaged in new strategies to link unemployed. Workforce service providers collaborated to supply information and resources to thousands of affected workers.

## Maine's Workforce Development System

### State Workforce Board

Maine was one of ten states selected receive a National Governor's Association Workforce Innovation Network (NGA-WIN) technical assistance grant to focus on the creation of new unified, virtual service delivery platforms, digital inclusion and skill development strategies, and equitable access to high-quality work opportunities. The State Workforce Board (SWB) represents the state as grant recipient and, in partnership with the Maine Departments of Economic and Community Development, Education/, Labor, and Health and Human Services, as well as the Maine Community College System, the University of Maine System, the Governor's Office of Policy, Innovation, and the Future (GOPIF), Local Boards, and other state workforce partner contributions, began gathering input on clear branding of Maine's full workforce system and creation of an accessible career portal, representing Maine's aligned workforce system from which workforce partners, students, job seekers, workers, and employers can access information and resources from the full spectrum of workforce agencies and providers in Maine.

A new subcommittee, the Immigrant Workforce Subcommittee, was established by the State Workforce Board to identify issues and best practices regarding the recruitment, retention, and employment of immigrants in Maine and to develop strategies to meet the needs of immigrant workers and Maine employers. Members of the committee include two current members of the Governor's Commission on The Status of Racial,

Indigenous, and Maine Tribal Populations. Other members hold positions in agencies that support immigrant populations in Maine.

### Three Local Workforce Areas

The **Northeastern** Workforce Development Board, directed by Joanna Russell, chaired by Nicole Fletcher of Bangor Savings Bank, and supported by Commissioner Peter Baldacci, oversees the largest, most rural geographic region which includes Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Washington counties.

The **Central Western Maine** Workforce Development Board, directed by Stacy Kilroy, chaired by Kelly Aho of My Talent Launch, and supported by Commissioner Robert Sezak, oversees Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, and Somerset counties.

The **Coastal Counties** Workforce Development Board, directed by Antoinette Mancusi, chaired by Denise Griffin of Griffin Law Offices, and supported by Commissioner Charles Crosby III, oversees Cumberland, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo, and York counties.

All three local areas administer the Title IB Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth formula programs, and portions of the Opioid Dislocated Worker Grant awarded to the state to address Maine's opioid crisis. Local area services in the Northeastern area are provided by Aroostook County Action Program and Eastern Maine Development Corporation. Workforce Solutions of Goodwill Industries NNE provides services in the Coastal Counties area and Eastern Maine Development Corporation serves the Central Western Maine area. Two local areas, Coastal Counties and Central Western Maine provide services to targeted individuals across the state whose employment was negatively impacted by the pandemic.

All three have implemented Memoranda of Understanding with workforce system partners that direct coordination and integration of services across and between programs. Program partners meet regularly to identify new and better ways to collaborate and share information and resources.

## Progress on State Workforce System Vision and Goals

### Vision:

Maine's residents and businesses will have economic opportunity and contribute to the growth of the state through a responsive, networked, and coordinated workforce development system across public and private sectors. As detailed in the [Unified State Plan](#), the system will integrate all services into a seamless continuum resulting in increased educational and employment attainment for residents with a focus on careers and support Maine's business sectors with skilled and qualified workers. To realize its vision, Maine has set the following goals:

### Partner and Respond to Business Talent Needs

- Align and coordinate with economic development efforts to anticipate and prepare for the next generation of talent requirements by executing a joint business engagement strategy and continual cross-agency communication on business needs and opportunities
- Work across state agencies to coordinate business marketing, outreach, and engagement efforts to streamline business access to services and talent
- Establish strategy for regular engagement with regional business groups, industry associations to ensure alignment of education and training services with employer demand, with a focus on priority industries in Maine

- Identify strategies to leverage private sector investment in training their workforce, including apprenticeships and other work-based learning approaches, advancement strategies, and an employer of choice designation for businesses offering quality jobs

### **Create a System of Lifelong Learning and Employment Connection for Maine Residents**

- Align all public programs and funding that support Maine residents to increase their skills and education into a seamless continuum of programs and supports, with a focus on career pathways for in-demand occupations
- Implement and expand best-in-class strategies to build worker skills and education and success through long-term engagement of residents, including: a) Career pathways that are employer-defined with clear handoffs and connections throughout b) Work-based learning, apprenticeships, incumbent worker training, and other strategies that support earning and learning together c) Work-readiness skill development throughout lifelong learning process and d) A concierge service across state agency, non-profit and higher education portals to create a “no wrong door” approach that networks existing capacity together
- Establish coordinated, networked and targeted strategies to engage untapped talent for high-priority populations with specific employment goals for each population including: a) Families, using a two-generation approach that prepares both the current and future workforce for success, b) Youth and young adults both in and out of school and work, c) Veterans, d) Individuals with disabilities, e) Residents recovering from opioids, f) Re-entering citizens, g) New Mainers, h) Rural Maine residents, including telecommuting and remote work strategies, and i) Older adults
- Recognize and integrate essential work supports with workforce system to support workplace success, including childcare, transportation, mental health, and other services; identify and address gaps in work supports

### **Build an Integrated Workforce Development Infrastructure Accountable to Residents and Businesses**

Creating a workforce development system that is accessible, data and demand driven and accountable to Maine residents and businesses will require an integrated and streamlined way of doing business. In a large geographic state with unique demographics and very limited resources, the workforce development system must be nimble, efficient, and effective to meet the needs of current and future employers. Working together, the core partners are committed to aligning and integrating their systems to ensure optimal access for Maine’s workforce and employers. Initiatives will be pursued that streamline customer navigation, data sharing and continuous improvement through evaluation, accountability, and data driven decision making. To achieve this objective, the core programs will employ a range of strategies that focus on alignment and integration of systems, services, and operations. Specifically, Maine will:

- Establish coordinated infrastructure across public and private agencies with education and workforce programs and align along career pathways and within sectors with a focus on high priority populations that is responsive to changing business and resident needs
- Re-brand and re-market the newly defined and expanded workforce system as a transparent and easily accessible system
- Utilize data effectively through a common set of metrics across state agencies and move to an integrated data system
- Leverage funding to expand the capacity of the workforce system through private sector investments, competitive federal procurements, and untapped funding sources; braid funds to support seamless service provision and partner with philanthropy to seed innovation

## State Workforce Board: Work in Progress

The State Workforce Board (SWB) has partnered with workforce partners on several key initiatives to help Maine employers and workers recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. In February 2021, the SWB was one of ten states to be selected to participate in the inaugural cohort of states in the National Governors Association-Workforce Innovation Network (NGA-WIN). The NGA-WIN grant focused on improving employment outcomes in response to the economic impacts of COVID-19, connecting job seekers to training, education, job opportunities and essential support services.

The SWB, in partnership with the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, the Maine Department of Education Adult Education, the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, the University of Maine System, and the Maine Community College System, developed an integrated implementation plan for strategy four of the Grow Local Talent section of [Maine's 10-year economic development plan](#): "Engage today's workers in continuing education to achieve credentials for career advancement." The implementation plan focused on the development of a Maine workforce system portal and a comprehensive branding and outreach program for Maine's workforce system.

Employment in industries across Maine was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic downturn, exacerbating what was already a challenging labor market for many employers. The SWB is leading the development and implementation of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funded Industry Partners Initiative, which seeks to identify, support, and help grow workforce intermediaries in strategic sectors of the state's economy. These intermediaries will be able to facilitate better designed, more coordinated, and more effective training programs due to their knowledge of the industry. By taking a sector-based workforce development approach that organizes industries in Maine disrupted by COVID-19 and that are vital to economic recovery, the SWB and MDOL will support those industries' recovery and enable employers and industries to leverage ARPA and other funds across Maine's workforce system to create pathways to quality jobs.

The SWB continues its work with the University of Maine System, Maine Community College System, Maine Department of Corrections and Maine Department of Education in the implementation of industry recognized micro-credentials and digital badges that additionally earn Learners college credits. These badges will help bring Maine closer to the goal of 60 percent of Mainers holding a credential of value by 2025. Maine has been making steady progress toward this goal and currently stands at 50.5 percent, up from just 43 percent in 2017.

## Promising Practices for Achieving State Vision and Goals

### Disability Boot Camp

The Maine Department of Labor (MDOL) was one of six states chosen to participate in a Disability and Employment Boot Camp, an opportunity for small state teams to address emerging needs as they serve people with disabilities and businesses during a period of economic recovery. This technical assistance opportunity offered by U.S. DOL, provided experienced coaches to support the teams to develop and test solutions for challenges impacting safe, accessible, services to adults and youth with disabilities with a goal of strengthening the capacity of CareerCenters to support individuals with disabilities to enter, stay in, or return to work.

Maine's team included experts on workforce and economic development and higher education as well as members of the State Chamber of Commerce. Maine's plan is to focus on employer outreach to coordinate the

existing disability employment initiatives, develop consistent messaging, and identify and fill gaps in employer services. The Boot Camp initiative was launched during the 75th observance of National Disability Employment Awareness Month October 2020 and continued through March 2021. The following key stakeholders participated, Maine Departments of Labor and Economic and Community Development, the Maine Community College System, the University of Maine System, Adult Education, Local Workforce Boards, workforce partners, employers, and participants.

Teams were asked to develop a vision/mission statement to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. While they identified that there are a lot of engaged and interested organizations and programs in the state, they also identified information silos and lack of awareness of resources and accommodations. They identified opportunities for revamping the state's economy and acknowledged the threat of the pandemic and that companies were being risk adverse.

The team learned about the benefits of and techniques for building empathy to collaborate with employers, how to identify patterns, and gained insights on how to inspire new opportunities for design. The team recognized that employers are used to being approached to make a hire rather than being approached by workforce professionals to determine what they need. Further, the team realized the need to capture the attention of employers with limited capacity through leveraging relevant resources. The team interviewed more than 20 employers and organizations.

The team identified potential methods for reaching employers such as creating a toolkit, an FAQ, or webinars to educate employers and sustain engagement. The team also agreed to include empathy building as a practice going forward to consistently listen to employers' needs. Employers interviewed included a large healthcare provider, an energy company, a technology company, and several small businesses. Business representatives interviewed included front-line managers and human resource professionals.

The resulting mission statement laid out the work for the team: "Develop a coordinated message promoting employment of individuals with disabilities which incorporates talking points for employers that highlight success stories and strategies. Develop a road map for support which identifies key individuals/point-people, across the state." The following solutions were identified:

1. Create an FAQ for employers hiring individuals with disabilities and accommodating current employees
2. Create a targeted resource guide for the employers'
3. Develop and implement a series of webinars for employers
4. Create a roadmap for hiring and supporting individuals with disabilities
5. Provide education to workforce professionals on how to speak to employers about employing individuals with disabilities.

The State Workforce Board agreed to continue to shepherd this work. Pilot trainings are already in draft form the first of which focuses on the basics of disability employment, scale of disability, overview of legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, business benefits and return on investment for employing individuals with disabilities and an introduction to accommodations. The second session focuses on specific strategies for partnering with employers in the hire and retention of individuals with disabilities to meet their workforce needs.

### Customer Centered Design

During the 2020 re-design of CareerCenter [Jobseeker](#) and [Employer](#) Services Resource Guides, the Bureau of Employment Services made customer voice and experience their number one priority. The revamped guides were developed through a collaborative process and focused on giving audiences our "best advice." Employer

and Jobseeker volunteers were engaged in a formal evaluation process, completing structured exercises to identify issues with usability and providing essential feedback regarding language, design, and flow. The resulting product was released to the public in February 2020. System partners have applauded the result as being an essential tool in their respective toolkits.

Customer Centered design and user feedback was also essential in the 2020 update and re-launch of Maine JobLink, Maine's State Job Board. Improvements include an updated, contemporary interface with fewer clicks, easier login and navigation, and improved responsiveness on phones and tablets. Jobseekers and employers also see more relevant information "at a glance" to quickly find their best matches. On the Employer side, users have appreciated clear instructions and improved notification, reduced data entry, and better keyword matching when searching for jobseeker resumes.

## MaineEARNs

The Maine Education and Attainment Research Navigation System (MaineEARNs) is a unique data system combining a variety of sources, designed to shed light on the effect of program completions and other economic events on earnings over time. This centralized repository for workforce outcome-matching is designed to produce actionable data for use by policymakers, service providers, and consumers seeking to maximize public and private investment, program performance, and enhance customer choice.

The Maine Department of Labor's (MDOL) Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI) developed MaineEARNs with grants from the U. S. Employment and Training Administration's Workforce Data Quality Initiative, the Maine Department of Education's Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and with General Funds allocated by the Maine State Legislature.

The MaineEARNs data system allows for the study of the impact of education and training programs on the employment and earnings of cohorts of individuals over time. The purpose is to improve program evaluation and help a wide range of stakeholders, including students, educators, administrators, parents, and policy makers better understand the relationship between workforce interventions and labor market outcomes. MaineEARNs partners include MDOL's Bureaus of Unemployment Compensation (BUC), Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and Employment Services (BES), the Maine Community College System (MCCS), the University of Maine System (UMS) and Husson University. The MaineEARNs organization is actively recruiting new partner organizations to provide more information for consumers and additional tools for program evaluation.

CWRI has used MaineEARNs to deliver reports to other organizations including the Department of Corrections, Adult Education, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Family Independence, Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc., Jobs for Maine Graduates, Husson University, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, and others. MaineEARNs was at the core of several reports in 2021; it was used to build the new [Post-Secondary Outcomes Report](#) connecting wage and employment records to public post-secondary institution records to display outcomes by programs or credential over time; available data includes the wages and employment by broad field of state, program and school, industries graduates enter, age at graduation and wages adjusted for inflation.

Additionally, MaineEARNs was the backbone for [new research](#) that follows the path of those who lost a job as a result of the pandemic and their subsequent employment outcomes rather than looking at aggregate numbers of jobs, providing insight for economic recovery efforts. MaineEARNs also assisted its partners including DOE, BRS, MCCS, DHHS, and Husson in fulfilling state and federal reporting requirements. The Maine Department of Labor seeks to improve and expand its current capabilities by increasing the breadth of available data and improving data quality to enhance and expand information for publication, research, and program evaluation.



## Progressive Employment

Progressive Employment is a business relations activity within the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). It is a team-based, dual customer (employer/job seeker) approach to connect interested job seekers with disabilities and other barriers to employment and Maine employers seeking their next generation of workers. Grounded in the belief “everybody is ready for something”, Progressive Employment includes biweekly meetings called “Jobsville” that bring together counselors, business relations staff, and employment specialists working in the community to present new clients, “popcorn” ideas and exchange labor market intelligence. Launched as a pilot for youth clients lacking in work experience in 2015 in the Maine Division for Rehabilitation Services (DVR) Portland and Lewiston offices, Progressive Employment has now spread, thanks to the Transition Work-Based Learning Grant, to Augusta and Bangor. In October 2021, DVR expanded Progressive Employment across the state, for both youth and adult clients – including those from the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Individuals engaged in Progressive Employment have completed hundreds of Progressive Employment activities where they are matched to area employers through activities, such as: Job Tours, Interviews, Job Shadows, Work Experience, and On-the-Job Training.

## Digital Literacy

Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc. (CCWI) is dedicated to continuous improvement and applying lessons learned from its implementation of grants to future opportunities. In the planning and initial implementation of the Rural Healthcare Grant, CCWI is employing a specific focus on digital literacy training due in part to lessons learned from the implementation of the TechHire grant. In implementation of the healthcare grant, CCWI worked with Workforce Solutions to implement a digital literacy and online training readiness assessment and is working in partnership with training providers to provide the support students need to succeed in hybrid and remote training modalities.

As part of CCWI’s local plan, one strategy highlighted was for the local area to prioritize cohort training projects to better serve priority populations and sectors. In the Maine Rural Healthcare Partnership, CCWI is proactively reaching out to training providers with the opportunity to fund cohorts of grant-eligible students in trainings for frontline healthcare occupations. Thus far, CCWI and Workforce Solutions have held meetings with Adult Education partners to plan for cohorts. The initial cohort, a Medical Assistant training, and a partnership between CCWI, Workforce Solutions, Gray-New Gloucester Adult Education, and Northern Light Health is underway as of November 2021.

## Resource Navigation Workshops

In its implementation of the COVID Dislocated Worker Grant, CCWI and Workforce Solutions launched a workshop series to augment individualized services in the region. Workforce Solutions is implementing two levels of workshops, one is a one-off workshop for the public, and the other is a four-part workshop for enrolled clients. Both workshops focus on resource navigation and are a tool to bring individuals into the program who are interested in learning about benefit systems and how to access services. These workshops were developed by Workforce Solutions in partnership with Maine Equal Justice Partners (MEJP).

Beginning in April 2021, the COVID DWG project launched its first cohort-style workshop series, designed for enrolled participants. To recruit individuals to participate in the cohort, the team published on the Maine Workforce Collaborative Eventbrite page and partnered with engaged community partners. The cohort consists of four workshops that cover the following topics:

- DHHS Services: SNAP, TANF, Emergency Aid, MaineCare
- State Housing vouchers, Foreclosure and Eviction Prevention, Statewide Subsidized Housing
- Free Education and Career Programs, Financial and Digital Literacy
- Free Medical and Mental Health Programs
- Programs to Support Basic Needs

During and after the workshop, the client can utilize their assigned Disaster Recovery Worker to help them with individualized needs. One quarter of workshop clients utilized one-on-one services after the cohort completed while the remaining three quarters have their needs met by the workshop alone. All workshop attendees are sent a survey to gather feedback on their experience. All participants are asked to rate their experience in each workshop, and to date, all participants have rated all workshops as *excellent* or *good*.

### Recovery Friendly Employer Initiative

In April 2021, the Northeastern Workforce Development Board (NWDB) launched the “Recovery Friendly Employer” initiative. The NWDB voted to endorse and create a network and support system for employers that are recovery friendly. The initiative is modeled after the New Hampshire “Recovery Friendly Workplace” model. This new initiative includes a formalized list of employers as well as access to tailored advice, workshops, and resource referrals. Joanna Russell, Executive Director of NWDB points out that addiction and the opioid crisis have hit Maine hard. People in recovery are struggling to find employment and businesses are feeling the impact of substance use disorder. To help turn the tide, employers can adopt a culture that openly supports recovery, which can improve employee satisfaction and better the community. A major goal of this project is to promote employer support of recovery friendly practices in their workplaces. Nicole Fletcher, NWDB Board Chair says: “We’re excited to see what our region’s businesses do and how the NWDB can support them.”

### Registered Apprenticeship

The Maine Apprenticeship Program (MAP) leveraged the expertise and commitment of WIOA workforce partners, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, and the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP) to provide referrals and supportive services to registered apprentices, while State General Funds provide tuition reimbursements. All federal apprenticeship resources have been aligned with State funds to develop apprenticeship opportunities across multiple industry sectors, including the construction trades, healthcare, manufacturing, green energy, and new and emerging industries.

The following chart represents partner engagement activities of the Maine Apprenticeship Program

Organization Name	Engagement Update
Department of Economic and Community Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchased statewide apprenticeship access to WorkHands App</li> <li>• Partnered with the Bureau of Human Resources, MDOL, and the Governor’s office to apply for a technical assistance grant to expand apprenticeship in State Government</li> </ul>
Bureau of Rehabilitation Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing partnership with MAP staff to expand apprenticeship programming for BRS customers</li> <li>• Registered the first BRS counselor identified sponsor</li> <li>• Participated in monthly meetings with VR related to project</li> <li>• Five BRS clients have been registered as apprentices</li> </ul>
Maine Dept of Corrections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registered as a new sponsor of Correctional Officers</li> </ul>
Maine Community College System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborated to offer no cost NCCER training to apprentices registered as laborers</li> <li>• Partnering with DHHS to develop a CNA to LPN apprenticeship</li> </ul>
Maine American Job Centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participated in virtual Job Fairs statewide</li> <li>• MAP staff engaged with business services team</li> </ul>
Local Workforce Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly engagement through WIOA statewide meetings</li> <li>• Provided updates of MAP activities to them</li> </ul>
State Workforce Development Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participated in a USDOL technical assistance grant to expand workforce opportunities for people with disabilities</li> <li>• Contributed to the development of Community College badge for workforce development professionals to earn to certify them as trained to discuss engagement with employers to encourage the hiring of people with disabilities.</li> </ul>
Veterans Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation to new veterans leads at MDOL and Bureau of Veteran’s Services</li> </ul>

Maine Health Workforce Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular engagement with Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) who leads the forum</li> </ul>
Maine Career & Technical Education (CTE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly meetings with Department of Education (DOE) leadership to integrate apprenticeship programming into CTE schools.</li> <li>• Vetting of a construction pathway beginning in middle school complete</li> <li>• Presented at their annual conference</li> </ul>
Associated General Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing, regular communications</li> <li>• Added six occupations this year.</li> </ul>
Educate Maine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fully engaged with them to expand apprenticeship opportunities for youth with technical assistance provided through a Jobs for The Future Apprenticeship grant.</li> </ul>
Manufacturers Extension Partnership (MEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Apprenticeship appointed to the MEP board of directors January 2020</li> <li>• Participation in quarterly board meetings</li> </ul>

**New Partners:** Educate Maine manages the Jobs-for-the-Future (JFF) grant, originally managed by the University of Southern Maine Cutler School. These funds are being used to modernize apprenticeship programs for opportunity youth in registered apprenticeships. The grant provides access to JFF youth apprenticeship coaches, nationwide peer learning, and technical support to ensure opportunity youth have access to apprenticeships. MAP is currently collaborating with the Maine Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Maine’s Bureau of Human Resources, JFF, Educate Maine, Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG), secondary Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, businesses, and workforce partners to expand high-quality, pre-apprenticeship programming. The goal is to provide a continuum of experiences beginning in middle school or earlier that include career exploration, job shadowing, work-based learning, and relevant classroom training to prepare youth for entry into paid apprenticeship opportunities that begin as early as the age of 16<sup>1</sup>. Ideally, youth apprentices earn credit toward high school graduation and college while earning a paycheck.

**Funding and Technical Assistance:** Maine was one of 15 states to receive a \$5.85M USDOL State Apprenticeship Expansion Equity and Inclusion (SAEEI) Grant, the four-year grant will:

- Focus on developing equitable and inclusive apprenticeship programming
- Expand apprenticeship opportunities in healthcare and infrastructure occupations
- Establish apprenticeship hubs in three comprehensive One-Stop CareerCenters and staff them with apprenticeship program navigators
- Fund the Maine Community College System to hire an apprenticeship navigator to connect high school, and MCCS programs to apprenticeship sponsors
- Fund an apprenticeship navigator to develop new apprenticeship opportunities for Maine Department of Labor Bureau of Rehabilitation Services clients
- Provide \$1,200 per new sponsor registered
- Provide up to \$1,200 in support services to new apprentices
- Incentivize the development of new occupations by providing \$1,000 per new occupation to existing sponsors
- Develop and deliver pre-apprenticeship boot camps for unemployed, underemployed and in-school and out of school youth

The MAP was also awarded a Council of State Governments (CSG) technical assistance grant to explore expanding apprenticeship opportunities (pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship) in Maine State Government (MSG). Like all Maine employers, MSG struggles to find the workforce necessary to fill open positions. By

<sup>2</sup> Linked Learning. (n.d.). About the Linked Learning Approach. Retrieved February 11, 2021 from <https://www.linkedlearning.org/about/linked-learning-approach>

choosing to engage with apprenticeship, MSG plans to become an employer of choice and lead by example in expanding apprenticeship opportunities for students and for job seekers.

**Vocational Rehabilitation and WIOA Staff Informing:** Focus continues to be placed on informing vocational rehabilitation staff and WIOA service providers statewide to develop a better understanding of how apprenticeship can be integrated with their programs and benefit their customers. When possible, co-enrollment of apprentices in other workforce programs will occur to provide necessary support services and to cover training costs.

**Industry Engagement:** As part of national apprenticeship week, employer spotlights were recorded and promoted through social media and then posted on [Maine Apprenticeship Program Web Page](#) to celebrate National Apprenticeship Week. As of June 2021, six industries, construction, health care and social assistance, administrative and support and waste management and remediation services, educational services and manufacturing employed 92.34% of apprentices employed in Maine.

**Apprentices Per Industry Sector in Maine**

Industry	Apprentices
Construction	44.86%
Health care and social assistance	17.64%
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	11.49%
Educational services	9.88%
Manufacturing	8.47%
Personal care services	2.52%
Correctional institutions	2.12%
Accommodation and food services	1.21%
Automotive repair and maintenance	1.01%
All other	0.81%

**Hire-A-Vet Campaign**

Despite the need to rapidly transition to a 100% virtual event series, this year’s Hire-A-Vet (MHAV) campaign was an overwhelming success. Diana Leblanc, military spouse of a transitioning service member and MHAV participant, described her experience in a short YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeDX9r-B8U>. Overall, 226 employers from 14 of Maine’s 16 counties participated in the Campaign to hire one hundred veterans in one hundred days. During this year's Campaign, 145 veterans were hired at an average wage of \$23.92 per hour. The Campaign team additionally delivered 14 educational and resource presentations to 172 Veteran and other non-Veteran job seekers as well as employer representatives in virtual settings. Presentation topics ranged from resume building to Veteran resources to Veteran hiring for employers.

The MHAV Team was also proud to announce that Guy Langevin, President of the Dead River Company and Jon Mason, HR Director of Bath Iron Works were awarded the 2021 Gold Medallion Award from the U.S. Department of Labor for promoting and hiring Veterans.

## National Dislocated Worker Grants

### Opioid Disaster DWG

The opioid disaster recovery grant received in February 2020, awarded \$6,281,891 to be released in three segments, a second increment of funding was released in July of 2021. The grant, referred to as Connecting to Opportunities, has served 472 eligible individuals to date who were either impacted by the opioid crisis or interested in occupational training in substance use disorder/recovery occupations and related fields.

**Coordination with Rapid Response Activities:** Maine's rapid response team in partnership with Title IB service providers share information about this grant opportunity with all dislocated workers attending rapid response sessions. Core partners are also encouraged to refer prospective clients and rapid response representative's follow-up with impacted workers and help make warm hand-offs to the service providers to ensure all workers are afforded the opportunity to access essential services.

**Co-enrollment and Integrated Service Delivery (ISD):** Co-enrollment and integrated service delivery are natural opportunities to ensure program or funding source service gaps are coordinated and filled with other WIOA program resources such as the dislocated worker program. Maine's DWG and WIOA service providers are one in the same entity and, as members of the Rapid Response team, work hand in hand to ensure that the dislocated worker/customer accesses and benefits from as well as maximizes resources available.

Eligible participants are co-enrolled in Title IB programs (Adult and Dislocated Worker) and many were also enrolled in the COVID DWG. Co-enrollment was essential for this grant as the funds were meted about one third at a time which created a gap in funding for some local areas. Local areas have established partnerships with recovery centers and community-based organizations serving individuals with substance use disorder to recruit participants, expand training, and brainstorm and implement innovative ways to address challenges such as stigma associated with those in recovery who are seeking employment.

**Disaster Emergency Management Activities:** The Connecting to Opportunities grant includes hire of disaster relief workers from the affected population to support the delivery of services. Relief workers, called **Peer Connectors** for this grant, work in each of the three workforce development areas. Their role is to help participants bridge the workforce and recovery systems and assist participants in accessing and navigating services. They collaborate directly with key community partners to coordinate and conduct outreach, expand awareness of the project, and facilitate referral and joint service delivery. They also play a vital role in providing on-going support to enrolled participants as they work toward their employment and training goals and are recipients of grant services themselves.

Fourteen individuals have been employed in the disaster relief worker role, four of whom are still working in that role. Of the ten that have completed their temporary employment, four have been hired by the service provider into permanent positions, three are working in the SUD/Recovery service delivery field and three have moved on to other pursuits. Several more peer connectors will be hired into these temporary positions during the final year of the grant.

### COVID Disaster DWG

The COVID disaster relief grant has served 225 affected workers to date. All of them have received career guidance services and been connected to humanitarian assistance programs. Targeted populations include individuals from industries most affected by the pandemic, such as retail, hospitality, and social services fields (childcare, health care) and particularly older workers, individuals with disabilities, immigrant workers with English language proficiency challenges, low income, single parents, and individuals lacking access to technology and the internet or lacking digital literacy skills.

Every participant of the grant has received career planning services and been connected to two or more humanitarian services. Secure housing has been identified as the greatest need of the populations targeted by this grant, followed by job search/job placement assistance, financial guidance, interview preparedness, connection to workforce training programs, clothing assistance, food assistance, unemployment benefit assistance, general assistance, heat and fuel assistance, mental health services, health care services, legal assistance, transportation and childcare assistance, TANF, vocational rehabilitation, and three formerly self-employed were connected to specialized business services.

**Coordination with Rapid Response and Co-Enrollment:** Most rapid response sessions held during PY20 have been in response to pandemic related downsizing, all rapid response participants are provided an option to receive services under this emergency grant. Core partners have been encouraged to refer prospective participants. A majority of those served under this grant have been co-enrolled into other partner programs, including employment services, adult, dislocated worker and/or youth programs, housing and rental assistance programs, vocational rehabilitation and programs offered through the Maine Department of Health and Human Services such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), MaineCare, and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

**Disaster Emergency Management Activities:** The funds from this grant are used primarily for staffing of service providers and disaster relief workers (DRWs) who function as peer navigators and are also recipients of grant services. DRWs have received significant training on how to apply for hundreds of subsistence and humanitarian services offered through DHHS and local and regional assistance programs such as community action programs/agencies, general assistance, immigrant services, unemployment compensation, housing programs, and others including community-based organizations that provide funds for necessities such as clothing, food, temporary housing for homeless individuals, and churches that have provided funds for washing machines, beds, mattresses, and other humanitarian needs not covered by CBOs.

Two DRWs have been hired by Workforce Solutions and promoted to program coordinator positions, a third accepted a position as a career advisor serving Title IB adult and dislocated worker program clients. One relief worker successfully transitioned into law school after serving the grant for 10 months. Two will continue providing disaster relief services to their peers through the end of the grant period June 30, 2022. One DRW, Birindwa Ruhamia, was recently highlighted at Coastal Counties Workforce Inc.'s annual event as the adult program client of the year. Birindwa's story can be viewed at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qwgr2b\\_uCdo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qwgr2b_uCdo).

**Outreach** to over thirty organizations continues to take place with those organizations making referrals to DRWs and other grant staff working directly out of the organization's location to recruit participants.

## Performance and Accountability

Maine met or exceeded the 90% threshold for negotiated performance measures. Despite significant job openings throughout 2020, the pandemic continues to impact the ability or willingness of workers to go back to work. Maine continues to see a drop in youth program applicants despite innovative virtual services programs and hiring platforms.

### Reportable Individuals

Reportable individuals are customers who self-access employment services through online registration with Maine JobLink or who access only general informational services from CareerCenter staff. Reportable individuals are not included in negotiated (Neg.) performance measures. During PY20, 149,592 reportable individuals accessed such services, 31,744 less than the prior year.

### Negotiated vs. Actual performance levels for program year 2020

MEASURE	Adult Neg.	Adult Actual	DW Neg.	DW Actual	Youth Neg.	Youth Actual	WP Neg.	WP Actual
Employed 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after Exit*	72.0	67.4	79.0	74.4	67.0	66.2	67.0	61.0
Employed 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. after Exit*	71.0	67.9	76.5	77.2	70.0	70.2	65.0	61.3
Median \$\$ 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after Exit	\$4,953	\$6,072	\$6,500	\$7,969	\$3,685	\$3,372	\$5,350	\$6,182
Credential Attainment	62.0	73.0	64.0	72.2	57.0	59.5	N/A	N/A
Measurable Skills Gain	45.0	48.4	50.0	47.3	35.0	43.2	N/A	N/A

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

### Demographics by Program

Demographic	Adult	DW	Youth	WP
Number of Participants	580	358	365	2,494
Female	65%	56%	58%	56%
Aged <16	0%	0%	0%	0%
Aged 16-18	.9%	0%	33%	.2%
Aged 19-24	9%	4.2%	67%	4.5%
Aged 25-44	65%	86%	0%	32%
Aged 45-54	20%	28%	0%	20%
Aged 55-59	7%	18%	0%	15%
Aged 60+	2%	9.8%	0%	28%
Caucasian	76%	91%	82%	87%
Black/African American	15%	2.6%	12%	4.4%
Native American	2.8%	1.1%	0%	1.3%
Hispanic/Latino	2.4%	3.4%	5.5%	.7%
Low Income	87%	42%	93%	38%
English Language Learners	29%	9%	42%	3.3%
Single Parents	29%	18%	13%	2.7%
Individuals with Disabilities	13%	9%	53%	11%
Ex-Offenders	22%	14%	13%	1.6%
Long Term Unemployed	38%	28.5	43%	11%
Homeless Individuals/Runaway Youth	5.5%	1.4%	13%	1.4%
Foster Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care	0%	0%	3.8%	0%

DW= Dislocated Worker, WP= Wagner-Peyser, \* includes placement in education

**Enrolled Participants:** Employment services (ES) are often imparted during a single visit to a CareerCenter but may include attendance at workshops or services provided individually over a series of visits. Employment services staff function as liaisons to the full spectrum of services and supports offered through the local workforce development system. As a result of initial assessment and an initial eligibility review, staff make informed referrals to appropriate services and supports.

Of the 3,645 who exited the WP program between 7/1/19 and 6/30/20, 2,222 (61%) were employed in the second quarter after exit, with median quarterly earnings of \$6,182. Of 4,165 who exited the program between 1/1/19 and 12/31/19, 2,553 (61.3%) were employed the fourth quarter after exit.

**Factors that may have impacted performance over the course of the year include:**

- The continued economic impact caused by COVID-19
- Adapting to a changing work environment (remote technology, temporary suspension of in-person services at CareerCenters in areas with greatest COVID 19 surges, staff and participant vaccination/safety requirements, and appointment-based service delivery)
- Need for expansion of broadband to all areas of the State
- The complete overhaul and implementation of the workforce MIS system Maine JobLink
- The creation of a new reporting system using Tableau
- Work to develop a local statistical adjustment model to adjust outcomes
- Alignment of WIOA programs which caused significant time spent on overhauling systems to meet new PIRL requirements, form changes, WIPS requests, and increased data validation research and corrections to policy.
- Expanded services through the OPIOID and COVID dislocated worker grants, a new H1B grant and two new Apprenticeship grants.

**Common Exit:** Maine’s common exit policy has been updated along with its co-enrollment policy. Common exit ensures a participant will remain enrolled in all common exit programs until 90 days have passed without a service from any common exit program the participant is co-enrolled in. Common exit occurs for participants enrolled in:

- Employment Services
- Jobs for Veterans State Grant
- Title IB Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs
- National Dislocated Worker Grants
- Trade Adjustment Act

**Locally Negotiated Performance Levels:**

<b>Northeastern WDB</b>	<b>PY 2019 Negotiated</b>	<b>PY19 Actual</b>	<b>PY 2020 Negotiated</b>	<b>PY20 Actual</b>
<b>Adult Program</b>				
Employment 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	73.0%	65.45%	71.5%	64.1%
Employment 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. after exit	72.0%	66.42%	71.0%	62.9%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	\$4,950	\$4,454	\$4,700	\$5,777
Credential Attainment Rate	58.0%	64.86%	65.0%	69.9%
Measurable Skills Gain	N/A	N/A	50.0%	47.4%
<b>Dislocated Worker Program</b>				
Employment 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	79.75%	85.53%	80.0%	72.5%
Employment 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. after exit	77.0%	85.48%	82.0%	74.3%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	\$6,400	\$6,636	\$6,665	\$7,269
Credential Attainment Rate	53.5%	90.63%	80.0%	75.0%
Measurable Skills Gain	N/A	N/A	50.0%	35.1%
<b>Youth Program</b>				
Employment or Education 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	70.0%	71.64%	64.0%	67.0%
Employment or Education 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. after exit	69.5%	66.67%	70.0%	71.6%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. After exit	N/A	N/A	\$3,800	\$3,033
Credential Attainment Rate	58.5%	52.08%	60.0%	56.4%
Measurable Skills Gain	N/A	N/A	35.0%	41.8%



<b>Central Western Maine WDB</b>	<b>PY 2019 Negotiated</b>	<b>PY19 Actual</b>	<b>PY 2020 Negotiated</b>	<b>PY20 Actual</b>
<b>Adult Program</b>				
Employment 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	76.0%	80.90%	72.0%	73.6%
Employment 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. after exit	72.0%	79.07%	71.0%	79.7%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	\$4,950	\$5,767	\$5,200	\$6,303
Credential Attainment Rate	61.0%	70.42%	63.0%	75.7%
Measurable Skills Gain	N/A	N/A	50.0%	45.1%
<b>Dislocated Worker Program</b>				
Employment 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	78.75%	100.0%	79.5%	62.5%
Employment 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. after exit	75.0%	72.41%	75.0%	88.5%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	\$6,800	\$6,526	\$6,400	\$7,844
Credential Attainment Rate	60.0%	60.00%	64.5%	78.9%
Measurable Skills Gain	N/A	N/A	50.0%	54.7%
<b>Youth Program</b>				
Employment or Education 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	71.0%	71.11%	70.0%	64.7%
Employment or Education 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. after exit	71.0%	84.21%	72.0%	73.2%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	N/A	N/A	\$3,700	\$2,931
Credential Attainment Rate	49.0%	50.00%	54.0%	64.3%
Measurable Skills Gain	N/A	N/A	35.0%	25.9%

<b>Coastal Counties WDB</b>	<b>PY 2019 Negotiated</b>	<b>PY19 Actual</b>	<b>PY 2020 Negotiated</b>	<b>PY20 Actual</b>
<b>Adult Program</b>				
Employment 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	70.0%	73.02%	72.0%	68.2%
Employment 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. after exit	69.0%	65.31%	71.0%	67.0%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	\$5,100	\$5,708	\$5,200	\$6,656
Credential Attainment Rate	60.0%	60.00%	60.0%	75.0%
Measurable Skills Gain	N/A	N/A	50.0%	52.7
<b>Dislocated Worker Program</b>				
Employment 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	78.5%	80.00%	80.0%	88.3%
Employment 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. after exit	76.0%	83.91%	78.0%	75.6%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	\$6,600	\$7,380	\$6,700	\$8,913
Credential Attainment Rate	55.0%	64.00%	57.0%	60.9%
Measurable Skills Gain	N/A	N/A	50.0%	52.1%
<b>Youth Program</b>				
Employment or Education 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	69.0%	73.97%	70.0%	66.0%
Employment or Education 4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. after exit	69.5%	71.01%	69.0%	67.4%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. after exit	N/A	N/A	\$3,800	\$5,043
Credential Attainment Rate	45.5%	67.65%	59.0%	61.3%
Measurable Skills Gain	N/A	N/A	36.0%	49.0%

## Effectiveness Serving Employers

Core partners use the Maine JobLink system to enter and track services to employers. Maine opted to report on two measures “Employer Penetration” and “Repeat Business.” Maine did not establish additional measures but exceeded last year’s penetration rate by 1.2% and saw a reduction in repeat business of 0.4%.

Service Categories	Establishment Count
Employer Information & Support Services	2,576
Workforce Recruitment Assistance	2,187
Engaged in Strategic Planning	5
Accessing Untapped Labor Pools	208
Training Services	88
Incumbent Worker Training Services	0
Rapid Response/Business Downsizing Assistance	143
Planning Layoff Response	35
Employer Penetration	Rate
3,506 companies received services out of a total of 56,171	6.2%
Repeat Business Customers	Rate
1,879 businesses out of a total of 5,971 businesses served over the last three years were repeat customers.	31.5%

**Data Element Validation:** The Maine Department of Labor implemented a new process for validating data elements. A Data Element Validation (DEV) manual was developed in 2019. The new DEV process requires program managers to validate eligibility documentation at the time they approve each title IB enrollment. Additionally, each service provider conducts data element validation on a small sample of files each quarter and submits a report identifying validation failures and explaining how these will be addressed going forward. Local board directors and lead managers from each of the service provider agencies participated in an information session regarding the new process. An annual training module on DEV requirements with a focus on areas that have failed during file validation is offered to provider staff. The performance team is in the process of incorporating all data elements identified in TEGl 23-19 into Maine’s DEV manual.

## Customer Satisfaction

CareerCenter consultants 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 job search promotes informal feedback through which staff can gain insight on the effectiveness of services provided. Each in-person customer is asked to complete a customer satisfaction survey before they leave. In-person survey numbers are low due to limited in-person visits caused by the pandemic.

Thirty-seven Virtual Hiring Events (mostly industry-specific) were held between September 2020 and June 2021 with 534 employers and 3,547 jobseekers participating. Industry-specific events included Hospitality and Food Service; Retail, Wholesale, and Customer Service; Construction; Healthcare; Logistics, Supply Chain, and Commercial Driving; and Manufacturing. Hiring events focused on work environments including remote work-from-home and part-time/flex opportunities were also provided. Safe in-person venues were available but virtual options expanded during the height of the pandemic. Drive-thru and parking lot events were offered and eventually, multi-employer and well-designed indoor events were offered.

Virtual hiring event surveys went to 304 employers and 2,781 jobseekers with 16% employer return rate and a 36% jobseeker return rate. Surveys asked participants to rate events on a scale of 1 (highly disagree) to 5 (highly agree).

49 employers responded with the following ratings:

Staff were organized and courteous	4.83
The hiring event was easy to access	4.73
Facilitators provided adequate time for questions and answers	4.78
The hiring event was easy to register for	4.76
Recommend these hiring events to other employers	4.64

1,007 job seekers responded with the following ratings:

Staff were organized and courteous	4.86
The hiring event was easy to access	4.86
A good mix of employers and jobs were available	4.49
Facilitators provided adequate time for questions and answers	4.79
Recommend these hiring events to other job seekers	4.80

Surveys were also provided through post-event emails to employers which did not increase the return rate; however, surveys added to the attendance record of the jobseeker from the chat area increased visibility and the response rate. LiveChat customers were asked to rate the service on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (outstanding). Between 7/1/2020 to 6/30/2021, the LiveChat survey went to 2,786 chat users resulting in a 54.63% response rate from 1,522 users. The average rating for this period was 4.45 out of 5.0 and during the year, the CareerCenters received LiveChat Outstanding Customer Service Award 4 times.

Customers attending virtual workshops were asked to rate workshop quality statements on a scale from 1 (highly disagree) to 5 (highly agree).

105 workshop attendees responded with the following ratings:

The workshop objectives were clearly stated and met.	4.86
The workshop was well organized and easy to understand.	4.74
The information or skills were relevant and useful.	4.91
If applicable, were the pre-workshop materials helpful?	4.53
The facilitators provided adequate time for questions and answered them satisfactorily.	4.98
The facilitator was knowledgeable of the material presented.	5.00
The facilitator provided relevant examples during the workshop.	4.85
After attending, I would recommend this workshop to someone else.	4.93

Customer satisfaction surveys have resulted in improved service delivery, revised workshop content, and delivery of customer-suggested topics. Customers who provide low staff ratings are contacted to gather additional information that will guide improvements. Customer comments prompted the new product team to develop LinkedIn and professional-focused job search workshop sessions. Customer feedback also influenced decisions to adjust timeframes of in-person visits and appointment times. In the spring of 2021, new employer and jobs seeker guides were developed to help customers get quick, self-directed, access to services and referrals. Both job seeker and employer customers were provided copies of the draft guides and scheduled for

interviews to gather their feedback on the guide. The feedback was instrumental in ensuring the guide was written in easy-to-understand language, user-friendly format, and included customer-identified topics of interest.

Employer customers indicated desire for more hiring events and specific setup preferences, both were honored. Comments from job seekers were overwhelmingly positive and indicated a desire for more remote job opportunities. In response, a “remote job” hiring event was scheduled. Opportunities to provide feedback continue to be added to on-line and in-person contact points to ensure ease of customer response.

## Sector and Business Engagement Strategies

### Effects of the Pandemic

The pandemic led to unprecedented disruptions in the labor market and dramatically changed how and where jobs are performed, those in positions suitable for telework were able to transition to remote work from home. It affected certain sectors more severely. Unlike prior recessions, this one resulted in sharper job losses than any of the past recessions, but recovery began at a much quicker pace. The leisure and hospitality sectors were hit hardest, followed closely by retail, healthcare and social assistance services, manufacturing and other sectors requiring staff-to-customer interface or production staff to be on site. Some sectors have fully recovered. For a detailed analysis on how the pandemic has affected Maine’s economy and the labor force please see the full report by Maine’s Center for Workforce Research and Information at:

[https://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/publications/pdf/COVID19\\_Recession&Recovery2021.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/publications/pdf/COVID19_Recession&Recovery2021.pdf)

### Barriers Preventing Return to Work

In July 2021, the Maine Department of Labor circulated a brief survey to better understand the barriers faced in returning to work. This survey was distributed to unemployment insurance claimants as well as active jobseekers on Maine JobLink—in total over 44,000 individuals. Additionally, the survey was translated into French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, and Vietnamese to broaden accessibility. The survey was shared with worker advocate and other community partners to be distributed within their networks as well. In total, more than 2,600 individuals responded to the anonymous survey. The following outlines key takeaways and themes from this survey.

Survey respondents noted that there are several barriers preventing them from returning to work. The most cited barriers included a “lack of opportunities that match my skillset” (34%) and “COVID health risks or concerns” (31%). Additional reasons preventing return to work related to: - Job quality concerns regarding insufficient wages (29%), lack of benefits (15%), unpredictable schedule (13%) or lack of long-term positions (11%) - Inaccessibility of relevant opportunities including lack of relevant jobs in the local area (21%) - Lack of necessary social supports including lack of reliable childcare (15%) and transportation (6%). See the report at: [https://www.maine.gov/labor/docs/2021/Barrierstoemployment\\_Findings%20and%20Analysis\\_091321.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/labor/docs/2021/Barrierstoemployment_Findings%20and%20Analysis_091321.pdf)

### Healthcare Sector Focus

A significant portion of Title IB training funds are spent preparing workers for entry into healthcare sector jobs showing the highest demand such as nursing and medical assisting professions. Workforce service providers collaborate with employers and education and training providers to offer customized training to health sector employers to fill these high-demand jobs. Health sector employers have established formal registered apprenticeship programs continue education for registered nurses to advance skills in specialized health care such as pediatrics, cardiac, and surgical nursing.

Additionally, the State Workforce Board (SWB), Maine Department of Labor Bureaus of Employment Services and Rehabilitative Services, and Maine Department of Health and Human Services have been working on a comprehensive healthcare workforce plan focused on career pathways, benefits cliffs, and identifying barriers

to work in the healthcare field. Career pathways work will identify opportunities for upward mobility for health care professionals or transition to other career fields.

### Maine Rural Healthcare Partnership

In January 2021, Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc. (CCWI) received notice that it had been awarded a four-year, \$2.5 million H1-B Job Training Grant from U.S. Department of Labor to address healthcare worker shortages in rural areas. Through its service provider, Workforce Solutions, CCWI is deploying three healthcare career advisors throughout the six-county region to enroll unemployed and underemployed individuals into programming that connects them on career pathways in Nursing and Pharmacy. The grant has four occupations of primary focus: Home Health Aide, Nursing Assistant, Medical Assistant, and Pharmacy Technician. The grant pays special attention to the needs of remote and hybrid students, including the provision of digital literacy training and coaching, and support services that include required technology such as laptops and internet access. The grant will serve 480 participants, 432 of whom will be unemployed or underemployed individuals, the remaining 48 will be incumbent workers.

To support the administration of the grant, CCWI has convened a Grant Advisory Team, which includes representatives from education and training partners (Maine Community College System and State Office of Adult Education), employer partners (MaineHealth, Northern Light Health, and CVS Health), and state government (Department of Labor and Department of Health and Human Services). The quarterly convening is an opportunity to share program highlights and receive guidance on implementation challenges and ensure that this grant funding is efficiently and effectively invested to move the needle on the workforce shortage facing the healthcare sector.

### TechHire Information Technology Grant

Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc. successfully closed TechHire Maine, a \$4,000,000 H1B grant through the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration to highlight Maine's Information Technology (IT) industry and create a pipeline of skilled workers. Over five years, the TechHire Maine grant recruited, assessed, trained, and placed individuals in well-paying, middle- and high-skilled occupations in Maine's IT sector. To create pathways to the IT sector, CCWI developed innovative programming and partnerships with educational institutions.

In response to challenges such as unavailability of IT training programs in Maine and a mismatch between TechHire participants and the level of available online trainings, CCWI partnered with the State Office of Adult Education to launch 5 CompTIA A+ Academies to serve the needs of eligible out of school youth between the ages of 17-29 with an interest and aptitude for work in the IT sector. The CompTIA A+ Academies layered foundational digital skills, through the acquisition of the IC3 credential, with in-demand industry recognized IT training, through the CompTia A+ training and certification. This training, which incorporates foundational digital literacy skills and embeds the CompTIA A+ exams into the course, has proven to be the most successful in Maine and nationally. The model offers flexibility for different programs and instructors to integrate program elements and tailor programming to learners with varying needs. During the implementation of the CompTIA A+ Academies, CCWI regularly convened the Adult Education sites implementing the program to share updates, best practices, and challenges.

At the close of the grant, it was apparent that during the 5 years of TechHire in Maine, the number and availability of IT training pathways increased substantially and that local Adult Education sites were committed to continuing to offer IC3 and CompTia A+ and expanding offerings to include other stackable credentials in the IT sector.

## Waivers

Maine received approval of the following two waivers on May 5, 2021:

**Waiver requiring 75% of WIOA Title IB Youth funds to be spent on out-of-school youth** has been approved through PY21 which will allow the state and local areas to invest up to 50% of Youth funds on in-school youth. The goal for this waiver is to expand opportunity for in-school youth to participate in a meaningful paid work experience and to support those entering college with barriers to receive the necessary support to successfully complete their program and attain a degree or credential.

This waiver allows the Title IB youth program to come into alignment with the Maine Children's Cabinet goal that all Maine youth enter adulthood healthy, connected to the workforce and/or education with defined key indicators including that Maine high school youth receive some sort of paid work experience and an increased awareness of careers, career pathways, and access points to postsecondary education and training programs.

This waiver will also support development and expansion of quality youth apprenticeship programs, in collaboration with Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools and community colleges, that will provide youth with a paycheck and structured on-the-job learning that allows them to apply relevant and affordable classroom training that results in dual credit toward high school graduation and an associate degree.

The waiver has been in place for about six months but projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of this waiver include using work experience opportunities to address challenges of at-risk youth while still engaged in formal education and focus resources to address student retention and program engagement to assist them to transition directly to postsecondary education, meaningful employment, and/or the military. Additionally, it is expected the number transitioning to and successfully completing the first year of postsecondary education and gaining an industry-recognized credential will increase.

**Waiver of the limitation on use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for in-school-youth** attending college has been approved through June 30, 2022. The limitation on use of individual training accounts (ITAs) for in-school-youth who have applied for, or are attending, post-secondary education has created an impediment to ensuring the success of Maine youth with barriers who require significant supports to enter and succeed in post-secondary education.

Many Maine high school seniors register for but never actually enter postsecondary education and many of those who do enter leave within the first year due to lack of necessary supports. Flexibility on the use of ITAs for in-school-youth attending post-secondary education will permit service providers to better work with educational institutions to determine how federal financial aid resources and WIOA IB youth funds can be used. This flexibility will ensure youth with barriers to education and employment have the resources necessary to subsist, manage academic life, and succeed at completion of educational objectives that will result in attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials, degrees, diplomas, and occupational certifications.

State strategic goals and Department of Labor priorities supported by the waiver: We believe approval of this waiver request include expanded access for youth most in need to succeed in transition to and retention in post-secondary education and achievement of postsecondary credentials and which will support Maine's goal of ensuring 60 percent of Maine's workforce will hold a credential of value by 2025, increase access to and engagement of youth in need of education, training, and supports necessary to succeed in the labor market and meet current high-growth industry demand in Maine through acquisition of a degree or diploma.

Additionally, the ability to provide ITA's to in-school youth will support the alignment of the Title IB youth programs with other workforce system programs serving younger workers with barriers to employment in Maine. Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver include a commitment to continuing to serve youth with the greatest barriers, an increase in the number who will successfully

complete a program of study and achieve postsecondary credentials, better alignment with other workforce partner programs serving youth with barriers to employment in each age range, an overall expansion of the skilled labor force pool, increased competitiveness of both youth participants and Maine employers. Maine DOL will oversee and monitor the provision of ITAs for in-school-youth who are transitioning to and/or attending post-secondary education and training to ensure they have the resources to succeed in attainment of approved post-secondary credentials. Although this waiver was only approved for one year, it is expected measurable outcomes will be identified after June 2022.

## Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion Activities

The rapid response team assisted a total of 281 companies and 3,471 affected workers during PY20, which includes 222 companies and 2,001 workers affected by Covid-19 related temporary layoffs and 59 companies and 1,470 workers affected by permanent layoffs.

Maine's rapid response team includes Title IB and other one-stop partners. Rapid response services were offered virtually throughout PY20 to ensure laid off workers were made aware of available resources and assistance. Rapid response handouts have been revised to include WIOA training partner information in the event a session is not held this information is provided. At the first notification of a layoff, the Rapid Response staff inquire if the layoff is trade related, if this is determined to be a possibility the company is encouraged to submit a trade petition. We also encourage affected employees to submit the petition if we feel the company is not willing to and there is good reason for a petition to be filed; finally, rapid response staff may also submit a petition. The Maine JobLink system collects data from affected workers that identifies their eligibility for other workforce program services and staff assist customers to take necessary next steps for services.

Over the past year, Maine's Rapid Response team has taken a more active role promoting the Maine WorkShare (short-term compensation) program. We now do outreach to interested businesses and assist them with the application process as one measure to avert layoffs. Maine was also awarded a grant to update technology, increase promotion of Maine WorkShare, identify employers, and assist them with enrollment into the program. Rapid Response is in the process of hiring a staff person to initiate a marketing campaign to increase the number of businesses and workers enrolled in WorkShare. Sixty-eight employers and 913 claimants accessed Maine's WorkShare program during this timeframe.

Rapid Response team members are part of the Statewide business services team and participate regularly in meetings with other partners to address ongoing challenges such as connecting workers seasonally laid off by one industry to seasonal jobs opening in the opposite season in another industry. For example, Ski Resort workers could transition to summer tourism positions providing employers offer affordable housing options. Businesses outreach is one of the team's primary daily functions, they work to identify laid off workers and to prevent additional layoffs from occurring. It is the team's goal to assist affected workers to find new employment prior to their actual layoff date, which has been successful due to increased demand for workers.

In addition to virtual rapid response information sessions, team members assist affected workers with resume development and job getting strategies such creation of a LinkedIn account. Direct program to program referral is made on behalf of affected workers to connect them to training and individualized reemployment services that will get them back to work as soon as possible. A significant number of immigrant workers, referred to as New Mainer's, were laid off this past year and rapid response team members partnered with Title IB agencies to include disaster relief workers with ability to speak multiple languages to assist in the sessions, ensuing follow-up and one-on-one connection to services.

## Use of Wagner-Peyser and Set-Aside Funds

**Wagner-Peyser:** In addition to past practice of utilizing Wagner-Peyser ten percent to support CareerCenter access for speakers of languages other than English, funds were used to support staff development.

The COVID pandemic necessitated additional skill training for employment services team members. Training sessions were quickly put together by Bureau of Unemployment Compensation staff to prepare employment services staff to assist with the onslaught of claims and claimant questions generated by all COVID 19 related unemployment benefit programs. Wagner-Peyser funds were also used to train staff on the appropriate use of virtual technology, including Skype, TEAMS, and ZOOM platforms.

**Set-Aside Funds:** Maine is a small-funded state, as such set-aside funds are used to conduct required activities such as program and financial administration, monitoring, performance and reporting, maintenance and updating of the Eligible Training Provider List, provision of technical assistance to local areas, fund staff to the State Workforce Board, and maintenance and upkeep of the workforce management information system Maine JobLink.

## Planned Program Evaluation

**Purpose:** The purpose of this evaluation is to measure the long-term earnings outcomes of Maine's WIOA Adult participants who received training in entry-level healthcare occupations to identify if this investment launches them on a career pathway with opportunity for upward mobility over time. This study will focus on earnings of adult participants who have been exited from the program for a period of at least five years and will continue until at three full years of five-year exit data has been considered.

**Rationale:** Formula funding has declined over the last decade resulting in lower direct investment in two- and four-year post-secondary occupational training programs and increased use of Title IB staff-assisted career services such as career planning and guidance, job getting assistance, and paid work experience as a way to launch participants into employment or on a career pathway. Individual training accounts tend to be concentrated on high-demand, entry-level, healthcare occupations that require short-term, low-cost, training such as Certified Nursing Assistant, Medical Assistant, and other entry-level healthcare professions. Although there is a high credential attainment rate for this level of training, there is also a high rate of turnover in many of these occupations and most pay under \$18.00 an hour. This study will examine whether this level of training and career guidance is successful in launching participants on career pathways that offer opportunity for upward mobility and increased earnings over time. If this is not the case, a secondary outcome could be to use the data to promote more practical solutions to addressing how to fill high-demand, high-turnover, healthcare positions, such as requiring all associate or bachelor's degree programs to include experience as a certified nursing assistant as prerequisite for the nursing education trajectory. This would ensure a steady quantity of this very important level of healthcare workforce while also ensuring an upward mobility track for those who desire or other policy and service delivery adjustments that would support earnings gains for adult participant trainees over time.

**Method:** Long-term earnings data on graduates with associate degrees in nursing from the Maine Community College System will be examined in comparison to the earnings outcomes of adult participant program exiters who received entry level medical professional training. Data on Adult participant program exiters who received entry level medical profession training will be extracted from the Maine JobLink system from 2016 and subsequent years to review their long-term earnings outcomes. Adult participant exiters selected will include only those with similar education levels at time of enrollment (high-school diploma or equivalency) and with



no more than one barrier to employment. Additional selection criteria to create comparison groups will be implemented if necessary. The Maine Center for Workforce Information (CWRI) will be able to access data to begin conducting evaluation on at least one cohort of five-year exiters immediately. This will be repeated over the next three years.

Data captured by Maine Department of Labor's (MDOL) workforce reporting and case management system, the Maine JobLink (MJL), will be processed by CWRI through the Maine Education and Attainment Research Navigation System (MaineEARNs). The MaineEARNs data system allows for the study of the impact of education and training programs on the employment and earnings of cohorts of individuals over time. The purpose is to improve program evaluation and help a wide range of stakeholders, including students, educators, administrators, parents, and policy makers better understand the relationship between workforce interventions and labor market outcomes. MaineEARNs partners include MDOL's Bureaus of Unemployment Compensation (BUC), Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and Employment Services (BES), the Maine Community College System (MCCS), the University of Maine System (UMS) and Husson University. The MaineEARNs organization is actively recruiting new partner organizations to provide more information for consumers and additional tools for program evaluation.

CWRI acts as a neutral, centralized entity that collects data across agencies using a standard application to process the data. Currently, CWRI uses the MaineEARNs system to receive data from WIOA Eligible Training Providers on all-student outcomes to supplement the annual ETPL report. They have successfully completed a long-term study of earnings outcomes for the Maine Community College System and are working to develop a local statistical adjustment model to be used to adjust and negotiate local area WIOA performance negotiations.