



northeastern
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Strategic Plan

2021 – 2025

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Introduction

The Northeastern Workforce Development Board (NWDB) serves Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Washington Counties. NWDB is one part of a workforce development system that includes a variety of partners and stakeholders. This network of partners presents opportunities to leverage additional resources and more effectively provide services to all customers.

As the Board works to develop new and reinforce existing partnerships, the goal is always the same: more effectively provide services to job seekers and employers, address skill gaps impeding economic growth, and develop career pathways that support the efforts of workers to access higher wages and more skilled employment.

Core Partners for NWDB and their corresponding WIOA Titles are:

- WIOA Service Providers – WIOA Title IB - Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs
 1. Aroostook County Action Program
 2. Eastern Maine Development Corporation
- Adult Education – WIOA Title II
- Wagner-Peyser – WIOA Title III – Maine Career Centers also known as American Job Centers
 1. MDOL's Bureau of Employment Services
- Vocational Rehabilitation – WIOA Title IV
 1. MDOL's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
 2. Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired
 3. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Eight stakeholder meetings were held, with representatives of each of the five counties, Board members, and providers in attendance. These meetings included with One Stop Partners, Young Workers Advisory Committee members and stakeholders, NWDB stakeholder meetings, and participation in the regional Comprehensive Economic Development (CEDS) strategic planning meetings.

The meetings focused on these provider groups of the workforce system. Topics discussed included system changes, initiatives they would like to see the Board engaged in, and the resources they need to be successful.

Linking the regional and workforce planning efforts while both were in the process of update and renewal ensured that goals and priorities were aligned. NWDB worked collaboratively with



Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) to circulate a Business Services Survey that addressed economic and workforce development topics. A total of 211 were completed and returned from businesses situated across the state. Each survey was designed to gather relevant information about barriers, opportunities, and workforce topics. A Youth Survey was shared by NWDB, with more than 300 surveys completed and returned by current young job seekers and those in education and training programs. The results of both surveys are shared in the appendices, and outcomes have been addressed in the strategic plan.

Three interview sessions were scheduled on the following topics: Bureau of Employment Services, Adult Education & Literacy, and One Stop Partners. Participants were asked to identify systemic changes, new services and partnerships, barriers experienced by job seekers, opportunities, and assistance for people with disabilities, veterans, and priority of services.

This Plan is meant to be a “living process” and will be used in an ongoing manner by the NWDB and its Core Partners to guide the implementation of strategies and actions. It will be tracked and monitored regularly so that progress can be communicated to partners and stakeholders, and adjustments to strategies and actions made as appropriate.

The NWDB Plan aligns with the overarching vision and goals of the State of Maine -2020-2023 Unified Plan- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The State Plan is based on the following premise: “The success of Maine’s economy will ultimately be determined by the strength and quality of its workforce and the ability of employers to fill their need for skilled labor.” The State Plan lays out the following 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. 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 will:

- *Partner and respond to the talent needs of Maine employers*
- *Create a system of lifelong learning and employment connection for Maine residents*
- *Build an integrated workforce development infrastructure accountable to residents and businesses*

To fulfill this vision, the following goals were developed as set forth in the State Plan:

- Maine’s untapped labor pool will enter employment and advance into high-demand occupations of their choice through private and public investment in training, education, and supports. In addition to three primary industries (Healthcare, Manufacturing, and Technology), NWDB will address emerging industries and associated job opportunities, such as solar and wind technicians.



- Current and future workers will be equipped to meet industry talent needs, with the goal that 60 percent of Maine’s workforce will hold a credential of value by 2025.
- Create a networked, aligned and demand-driven workforce system across public and private partners and fosters the growth of Maine’s economy while supporting equitable, safe, productive employment opportunities.

The Northeastern Workforce Development Board has produced a new Strategic Plan for 2021-2025 that shares the vision and goals set by the State of Maine.

Executive Summary

The Northeastern Workforce Development Board (NWDB) is a workforce development system network that includes a variety of partners and stakeholders. This network of partners presents new opportunities to leverage additional resources and more effectively provide services to all customers.

As the Board endeavors to develop new partnerships and reinforce existing ones, the goal is always the same:

- To effectively provide services to job seekers and employers;
- Address skill gaps impeding economic growth; and
- Develop and share career pathways that support the efforts of workers to access higher wages and more skilled employment.

It is in this spirit that the NWDB and its Partners engaged in a process for the completion of this consolidated regional plan.

The following is an executive summary of the NWDB Plan. The summary focuses on the big picture vision and strategies of the NWDB and the related findings upon which they are based.

Vision: The Northeastern Workforce Development Board, as an active member of the region’s overall economic, educational and social service network—and together with our One-Stop Partners, regional partners, State partners, and community stakeholders—effectively identifies and responds to workforce development changes and needs of businesses and workers alike as they strive to create and expand economic opportunities within the region’s high wage, high growth industries. This action reinforces the direct alignment with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plan by regional economic partners.

Our goal continues to focus on the cultivation, convening, management, and participation in successful partnerships that bring traditional and non-traditional—and public and private—partners together to address economic and workforce challenges. The Board approaches the building of these partnerships with the view that we can accomplish our mutual goals more effectively—and that the region, as a whole, is more successful—by working together.



Through the engagement of workforce development service delivery partners, the consensus was that the overarching goals for job seekers have not changed significantly since 2016. What has changed is the need to redefine those goals to include economic shifts (e.g., increasing technology to support remote work and industry technology shifts). Responding to the post-pandemic world will have significant impact to the delivery of training and education and responding to shifting industry demand for jobs. Communication will be key to reach the potential clients including job seekers (adult and youth), employers, and program partners to create a shared vision and delivery plan.

The NWDB is constantly engaged in developing and enhancing new and existing relationships and partnerships. A recent example includes partnership with regional recovery organizations, such as the Bangor Area Recovery Network (BARN), Portland Recovery Community Center (PRCC), and Aroostook Mental Health Center (AMHC), as well as others, helping to employ those in recovery from substance use disorder. Work has also expanded to support individuals leaving the prison system, seeking training and job opportunities. The Board recognizes a wealth of new opportunities to collaborate more broadly as it now represents five counties while maintaining programs, initiatives, and resources that meet the unique needs of the different parts of the region.

Equity and cultural sensitivity have also become a growing priority in the region. Efforts will focus on diversity and cultural sensitivity training for Adult Education and Literacy educators, staff, and programmatic providers. Programming to assist immigrants, diverse gender identities, and New Mainers will be available, and partnerships with partners including Literacy Volunteers of Maine and the regional chapters will be supported. Our partnership with the Maine Multicultural Center will support these efforts.

The strategic-level goals of the NWDB and its partners are outlined below:

Key Priorities

- Communication
- Upskill job seekers to meet employer needs
- Improve coordination and seamlessness of workforce system for customers and partners
- Grow labor force to meet demands for replacement jobs and new emerging opportunities
- Assess, Adapt, & Administer

Key Priority 1: Communication

- Increase brand recognition and awareness of resources the NWDB represents for job seekers, employers, educators, and providers
- Increase awareness among employers of workforce development resources and value of hiring through the workforce system



- Dispel preconceived perceptions and bias about clients coming through the workforce system (adult, youth, disabled, those formerly incarcerated, people in recovery, immigrants, and minorities)
- Market workforce services to job seekers to increase pool of workers and emphasize the jobs, careers pathways, and wages to which training can lead
- To meet job demand, encourage job seekers to earn digital badges and other micro credentials
- Educate employers on the value of digital badging and other micro credentials
- Train employers and board members to serve as advocates of workforce system and speak to civic and business organizations, reducing misinformation about workers (Adult and Youth) and their desire to work
- Utilize social media to disseminate information about workforce services
- Continue to improve visibility and drive access to NWDB website through search engine optimization
- Share and utilize common set of data regarding employment and occupations, and entrepreneurship
- Include workforce participants on committees

Key Priority 2: Upskill job seekers including the unemployed and underemployed to meet employer and job seeker needs

- Communication: market training opportunities and careers and career pathways in high-demand occupations – emphasize the benefits of training (career prospects, future wages, etc.)
- Provide training opportunities through apprenticeships, work experiences, on-the-job training, job shadowing, transitional job opportunities and internships in partnership with employers, with emphasis on supporting targeted industries and in-demand occupations
- Promote incumbent worker training by directly engaging employers and using employer advocates
- Continue to enhance and provide WorkReady and other essentials training to improve skills required with employment
- Leverage suite of partner resources to not only provide training but also to provide “wraparound” services to help participants overcome barriers to employment, education, and training to complete programs

Key Priority 3: Improve coordination and seamlessness of workforce system for customers and partners

- Communication: improve communication among partners by developing collateral that explains partner resources and priorities, by engaging in regular meetings, and by creating opportunities for training and updates



- Utilize the One Stop Partner Memorandum of Understanding (OSP MOU) as a road map and instruction to all partners, services, and resources, assuring universal access
- Implement improvements to common intake system to increase seamlessness of referrals and co-enrollment
- Increase communication among partners to increase trust and awareness of resources
Could take the forms of annual (or more frequent) meetings for all partners, webinars, or newsletters
- Incorporate workforce training into partner new staff orientation so they understand the resources and partners in the region
- Engage partners in Regional Partnership Advisory Groups (RPAGs)

Key Priority 4: Grow labor force to meet demands for replacement jobs and new emerging opportunities

- Communication: market training and career opportunities to youth, veterans, individuals with disabilities, immigrants and minorities, students who have left the region, and older workers to increase the labor force size
- Conduct outreach to graduates of Maine colleges and universities to make them aware of career opportunities in the region
- Engage with Maine students before graduation to connect them to internship and job opportunities
- Encourage co-location on college campuses to directly provide career services to students
- Identify best practices from the “Ticket to Work” to continue to help individuals with disabilities access employment opportunities
- Offer training to senior citizens to help them transition into new careers
- Increase partner awareness of supportive services to help participants complete training programs and stay employed
- Support addiction recovery programs to allow participants to recover and access employment when ready
- Support programs supporting persons exiting from incarceration to access wrap-around services and employment when ready
- Reduce barriers to employment (childcare, transportation, technology, housing, stigma against individuals in recovery and justice involved individuals)
- Adapt to a pandemic and post-pandemic economy and workforce

Key Priority 5: Assess, Adapt, and Administer

- Revisit strategic plan annually at minimum to ensure priorities and strategies are still relevant
- Regularly reassess targeted industries to determine if any should be added or removed
- Assign committees to track implementation of initiatives, measure success, and report to Board on progress



- Conduct Board orientation for all members to ensure they understand the workforce system and their responsibilities as board members

It should be noted here that the NWDB capitalized on a unique opportunity in early 2021 to collaborate with Eastern Maine Development Corporation as the new Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plan was updated to reflect current economic conditions. The shared analyses have helped amplify the economic challenges of the region and the impact of workforce development on regional goals and strategies. An important fact is that nearly one-fourth of adults have reported that they are worse off in 2020 as compared to one year earlier, demonstrating the impacts that continue to grow as a result of the pandemic (Federal Reserve Board Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2020, released 2021).

During this process, the CEDS project performed a SWOT analysis to identify conditions (good and bad) faced by Eastern Maine:



The SWOT analysis framed the parameters to identify the primary goals of focus for the next five years. Four primary goals have been chosen as high priority through the CEDS process which include:

CEDS Goal Areas

- Broadband
- Transportation
- Climate Resilience
- Workforce & Education

Within this framework, regional CEDS stakeholders have developed key objectives and strategies for Workforce and Education that align with the strategies and goals of the NWDB:

Workforce & Education: Develop, Retain & Attract Talent



1. **Objective:** Increase Collaboration Between Educational Institutions & Businesses
 - a. **Strategy:** Develop Ongoing Survey to Determine Training Needs & Skills Businesses Seek
 - b. **Strategy:** Promote Educational & Training Opportunities for Projected In-Demand Industries
 - c. **Strategy:** Encourage the Increase of Micro Credentialing & Certification Programs
2. **Objective:** Improve Digital Literacy of Individuals & Businesses
 - a. **Strategy:** Develop Survey to Gauge Digital Literacy Skills
 - b. **Strategy:** Provide Digital Literacy Skills Training
3. **Objective:** Attract Workforce
 - a. **Strategy:** Promote & Increase Regional Assets & Amenities
 - b. **Strategy:** Increase Jobs Available

Summary

The Board recognizes that it cannot succeed in addressing the various challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities within the region's economy and workforce system without the assistance of partners. The Board serves as the convener of these partners and as a facilitator that identifies challenges and aligns resources to address them. A summary of the strategies that will be implemented by core partners to achieve the strategic vision are summarized below:

- Continue facilitating robust meetings among groups of partners – including meetings focused on the One Stops, Adult Education, and the implementation of other Core Programs
- Develop committees on an as-needed basis to address new challenges or capitalize on new opportunities and initiatives
- Encourage the “cross pollination” of board memberships by encouraging partners to serve on the NWDB and NWDB representatives to serve on partner boards
- Improve mechanisms of communications to ensure that all partners are operating efficiently through awareness of all the resources in the region that can support job seekers and employers while avoiding duplication of services
- Engage with businesses regularly and meaningfully to understand their projected workforce needs and current challenges. This engagement may also take place through robust communication with intermediaries, such as chambers and economic development organizations, who already have strong engagement with employers
- Recognize emerging industry opportunities that lead to job opportunities (e.g., clean energy, climate change, changing technologies)



- Capitalize on new program initiatives to engage employers and develop new training initiatives while working towards piloting new ideas and strategies that may be applied to other industries
- Collaborate with partners and employers to develop a deep understanding of career pathways and utilize that information to develop better training programs and help job seekers, both unemployed and underemployed, to make informed decisions. Appendix 14 includes three sample occupation data profiles within the NWDB Targeted Industries of Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Information Technology. This data was provided by the Eastern Maine Development Corporation for this project through their JobsEQ data subscription. These profiles can be completed for any 5-digit Occupation Code.
- Cross sharing information with state, regional, and local partners to support entrepreneurship and business/job creating including Small Business Development Center, start-up initiatives, and services through the higher education system
- Strengthen collaborations with workforce service providers to ensure access for all individuals with barriers including formerly incarcerated, youth, long-term unemployed, and individuals with disabilities.



The Northeastern Workforce Development Board (NWDB) Plan

The NWDB Plan aligns with the overarching vision and goals of the State of Maine Unified Plan and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. To facilitate review, we have maintained the section labeling and descriptions in accordance with guidelines. They are contained in shaded boxes in this plan.

Our efforts to update the NWDB Strategic Plan address the local area strategic planning elements by assessing the Northeastern region's weakness and barriers to growth as well as opportunities and approaches that will lead to success.

As noted in the Unified Plan, the expansive but sparsely populated Northeastern region represents nearly 60 percent of the state's land and 24 percent of the population. The region has 22 percent of the jobs in the state with relatively high concentrations in natural resources, government, and retail. The Northeastern region also has the lowest share of manufacturing jobs. Many companies in this sector downsized or ceased operations, displacing thousands of workers over the years.

Section 1: Strategic Planning / Regional Analysis

- A. An analysis of the regional economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations, the employment needs of businesses in in-demand industry sectors, and identification of Local area priority-industries identified via employer and stakeholder input and other data tools and methods. Plans must describe the data tools and methods used to attain the information used in this analysis:

A summary of regional economic and workforce data analysis is provided in this Section. The full data analysis along with findings are contained in Appendix 1 - Economic and Workforce Data. This summary and the data appendix include data on socio-economic indicators, employment, wages, establishments, and occupations within the Region. Data is summarized for the NWDB, which includes the Counties of Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Washington.

Replacement Demand will drive workforce demand over the next ten years and as a result will be an important focus of regional workforce strategies.

It is important to state that while there will be some growth in healthcare and some industry sub-sectors, workforce demand will be driven largely by the demand for replacement workers (workers retiring or otherwise leaving the workforce). This has significant implications for the



workforce system as a whole and will drive the responses of education and training programs as well as institutions and employers alike.

Overall Business Demand by Industry Sector

In 2019 there were a total of 139,881 jobs (compared to 146,348 in 2016) in the NWDB region. In the past five years, the region has experienced an increase in unemployment, similar to increases in unemployment in Maine and the US. Additional decreases are expected with the COVID-19 impacts in 2020 and 2021.

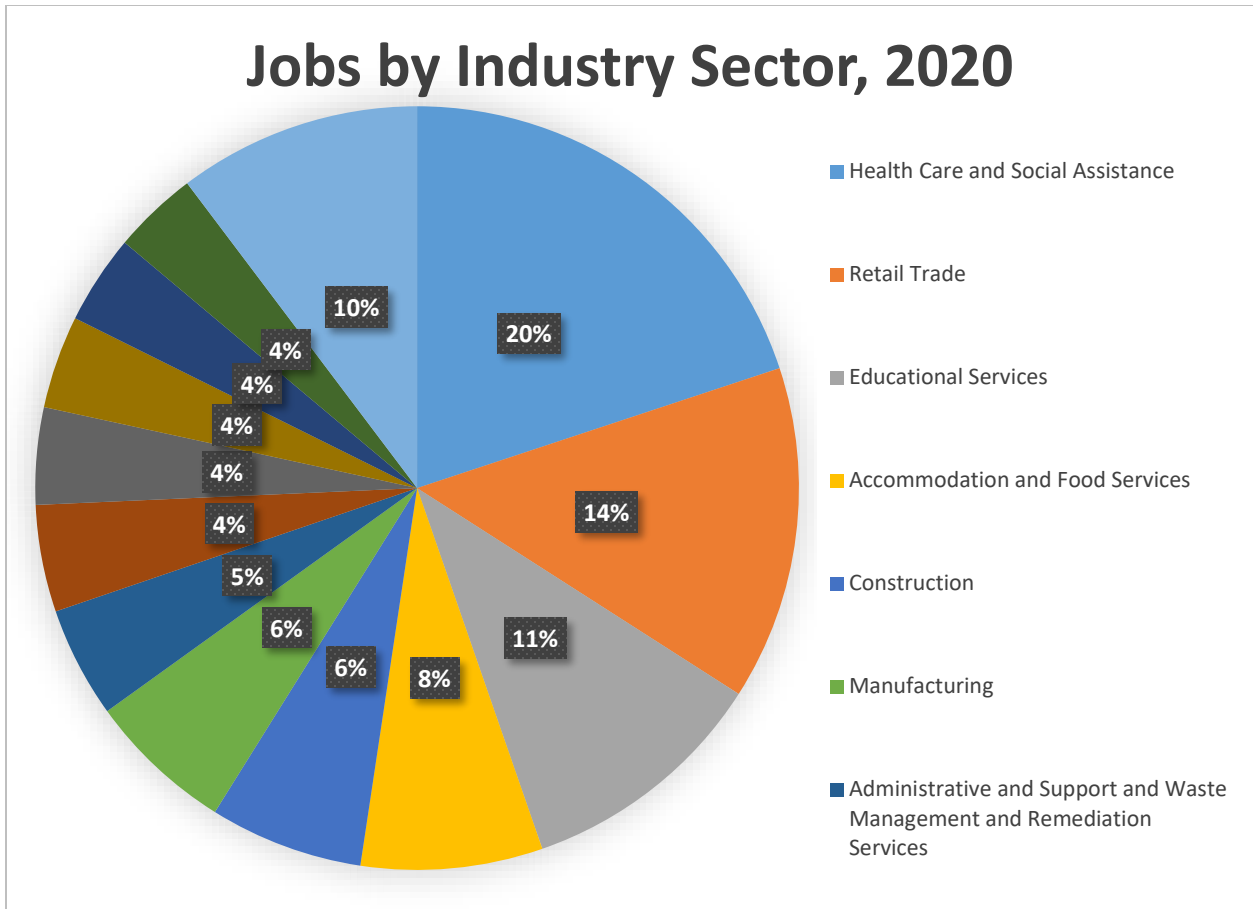
Over the next ten years, the NWDB region is projected to experience a .9% annual decrease in total employment. However, there will still be a need for workforce development resulting from replacement demand (demand resulting from retirements and persons leaving the workforce), which will create the need to fill 140,315 jobs over the course of the next ten years.

Health Care & Social Assistance, along with Retail Trade, are the two largest industries within the NWDB region, providing over 26,711 jobs and nearly 21,277 jobs, respectively. Health Care and Social Assistance is projected to grow at an average annual growth rate of 0.2% which is the only major industry class projected to grow. Other industries that represent considerable portions of jobs in the region include: Educational Services (12,146 jobs), Accommodation and Food Services (14,791 jobs), Construction (7,641 jobs), and Manufacturing (6,902).

Retail, though the second largest sector, is both projected to decline by more than 1.6% jobs and pays lower than average annual wages. It therefore may not be a strong sector to target. Additionally, the sector is experiencing recent and projected future transformations, including digital technologies and reduction of big box, brick and mortar stores making it susceptible to further employment declines.

Both Health Care and Social Assistance, along with Retail Trade industries have a location quotient (LQ-measure of the degree to which a region has a concentration in an industry) of 1.35 and 1.38, respectively showing these industries are slightly more concentrated in the NWDB region compared to the United States. Note: a LQ of 1.0 indicates equal concentration to the U.S. as a whole, with greater numbers indicating a higher concentration and lower numbers indicating a lower concentration. Other industries in which the NWDB region exhibits a greater than average concentration (above average LQ) include Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting (2.87); Education Services (1.30); Utilities (1.14); and Construction (1.10).





In Demand Industries

Based on a combination of existing employment, projected employment, replacement demand, and industry concentration the key industries for future workforce demand in the region are:

- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Retail Trade
- Educational Services
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Construction
- Manufacturing

Self-Employment and Emerging Sectors

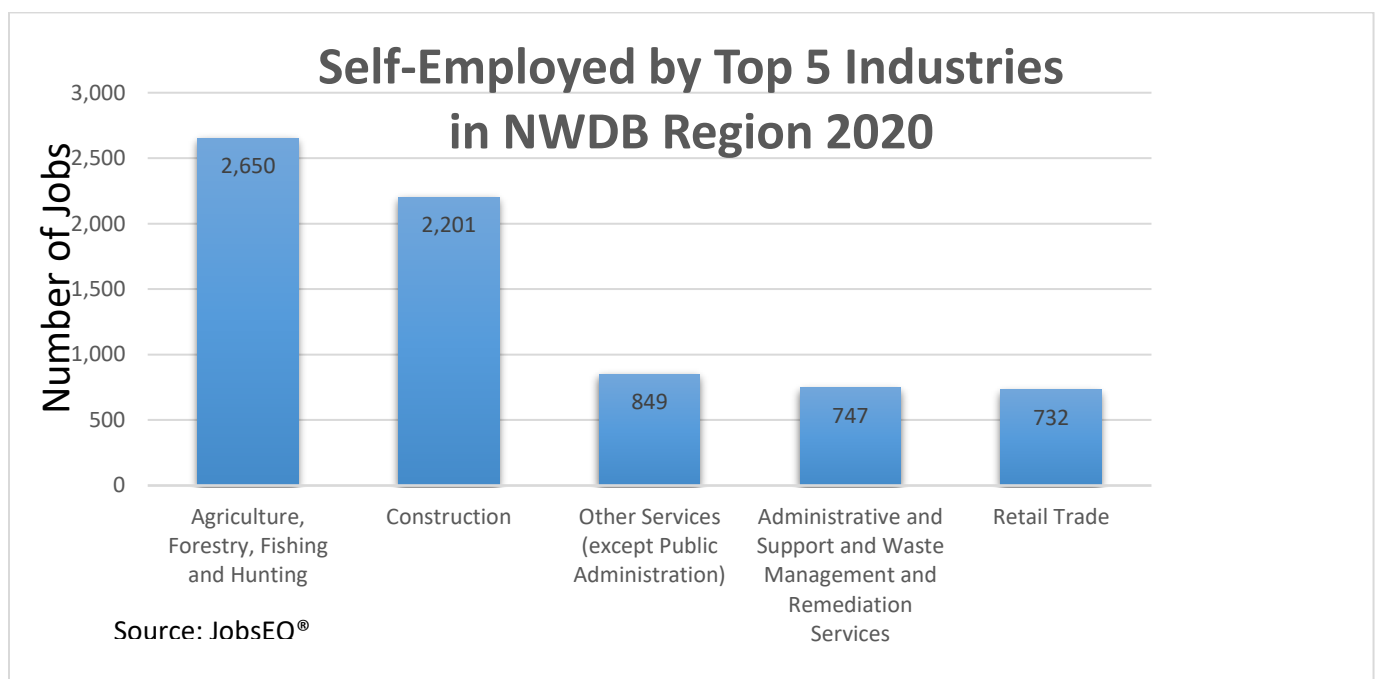
In addition to the traditional industry alignment in the region, the NWDB region has a vital entrepreneurial sector of an estimated 10,908 total self-employed persons, which represents approximately 8% of total jobs making self-employment a group among the top five industry sector groupings in terms of size. These persons earn an average \$31,651 annually. Within the entire NWDB region, the industries with the most self-employed persons are in Agriculture,



Forestry, Fishing and Hunting with 2,737 self-employed and Construction and Extraction Occupations with 2,259 self-employed. Sales and Related Occupations is next, with 751 self-employed or about 7% of total jobs.

This trend is consistent in Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Washington Counties, where the highest number of self-employed lay within the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting Industry, followed by Construction.

Overall, within the NWDB region, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting self-employed have an average annual wage of about \$35,915, whereas self-employed within the Construction industry see a much lower average annual wage at \$29,232.



Emerging industry opportunities will also be an additional focus for supporting job seekers in our region. Clean energy represents a growing industry, with the State of Maine estimating that 30,000 new jobs will be added by 2030. Solar and wind technicians have been projected as the fastest growing jobs in the U.S. It is anticipated that new training programs and industry sector initiatives will emerge in the next few years to build the skilled workforce that will be needed to fill these jobs.

It is critical that the regional workforce strategies include the development of partnerships and collaborations for provision of technical assistance, information, programs, and services to support these entrepreneurship and business/job creation opportunities.



Occupations and Employment Demand

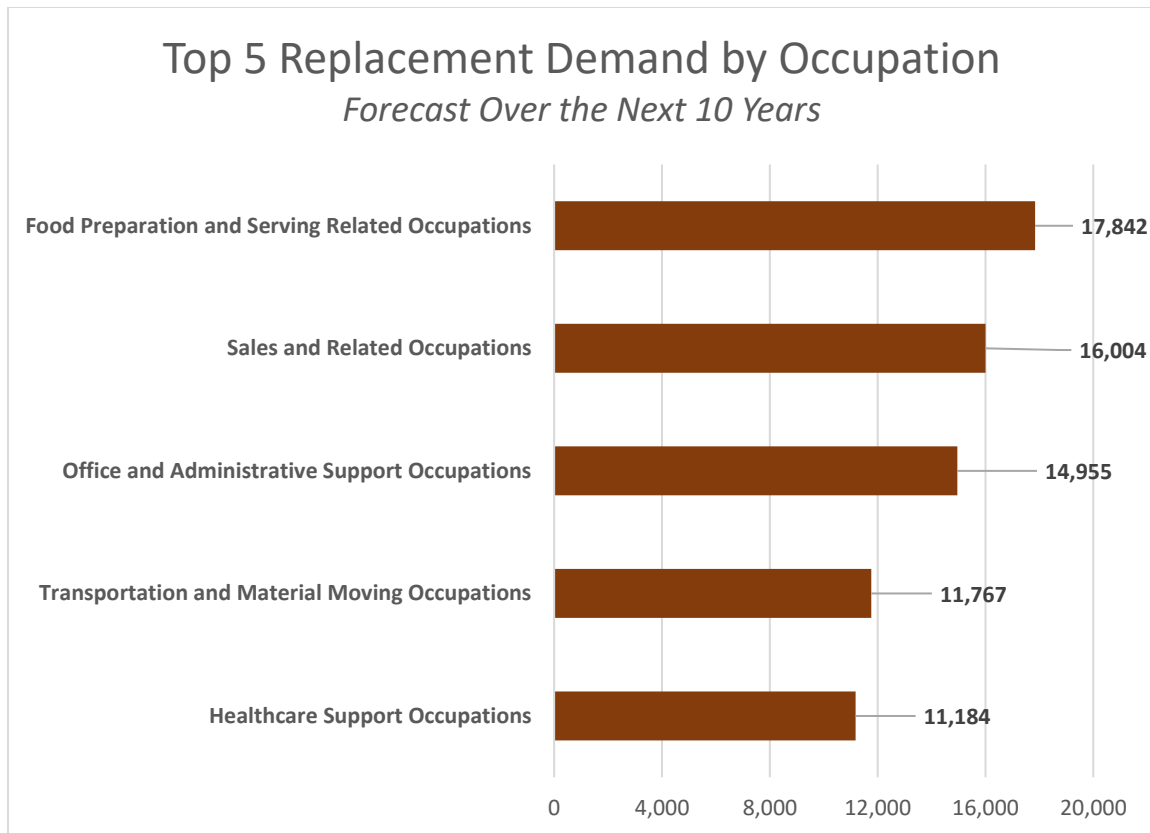
In terms of occupations, of the region's 139,881 jobs, Office and Administrative Support have the highest number of jobs with 16,365. This is followed by Sales and Related with 13,452, Transportation and Material Moving with 10,983, Food Preparation and Serving with 10,981, Healthcare Practitioner and Technical with 10,621, Education, Training, and Library with 9,912, and Management with 9,819.

Growth in occupational demand due to industry growth (new jobs) in the next ten years is projected to be driven by healthcare occupations and to occur with the occupations of Healthcare Support (677 jobs) followed by Community and Social Service (190 jobs). All other sectors are expected to retract.

At the more detailed 4-digit SOC occupational level, Home Health and Personal Care Aides has the most jobs with 6,214, followed by Cashiers (6,043), Retail Sales Persons (5,144), and fast Food and Counter Workers (4,974). Of those jobs, Home Health and Personal Care Aide is the only occupation projected to grow over the next ten years.

As depicted in the chart below it is projected that replacement demand will drive the need for 140,315 at positions with the highest occupations being Food Preparation and Serving (17,842 jobs), Sales and Related Occupations (16,004 jobs), Office and Administrative Support (14,955 jobs), Transportation and Material Moving (11,767 jobs), and Healthcare Support Occupations (11,184). Regional workforce strategies should include information, programs, and services to support industry and interested job applicants, both employed and underemployed, in filling this replacement demand.





Source: JobsEQ

Important Note: When the 2017 Strategic Plan was created, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) used an entirely different formula in order to Replacement Rates. BLS has developed a new method that they believe is a more accurate measure for this type of occupation demand. BLS has reported on average results are over four times larger. More information regarding this definition can be found at <https://www.bls.gov/emp/documentation/replacements.htm>.

Targeted Industry Sector Based on Employer Demand

The regional CEDS process has identified industries perceived to have the greatest impact, both in economic growth and job retention/creation in the NWDB region. Those industries include:

- Accommodation & Food Services
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Education Services
- Administrative, Support, Waste Management & Remediation Services
- Healthcare & Bioscience
- Professional, Scientific & Technical Services
- Retail Trade



- Transportation & Warehousing

As reported earlier, the regional comprehensive economic development strategic plan will focus on activities that support the industry growth of the identified sectors. The workforce development strategic plan follows a similar path by building a workforce trained and ready to respond to job opportunities.

The region has targeted three primary industry areas for detailed workforce strategy focus, namely Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Technology.

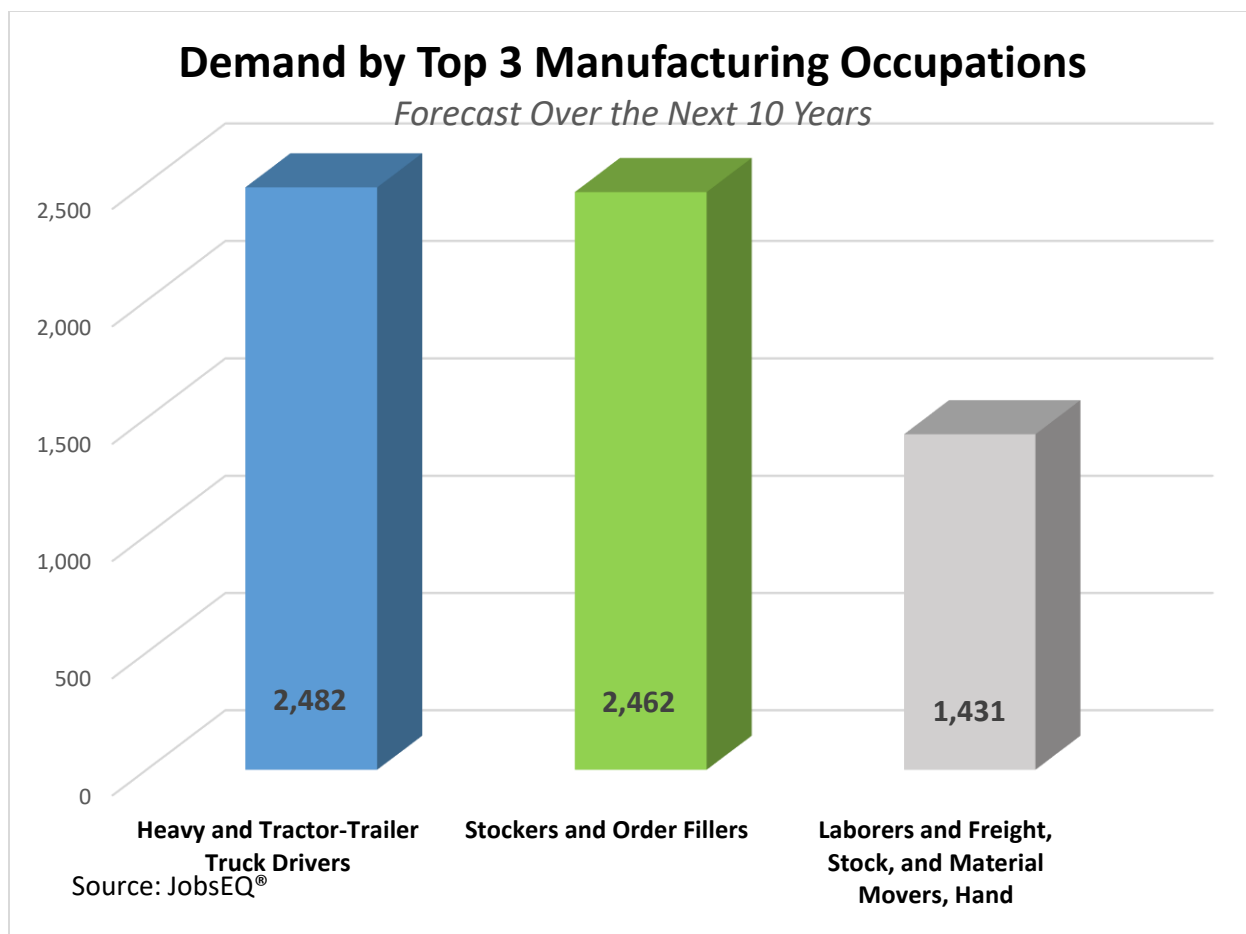
Based on the data analysis, NWDB and its partners will also continue to track and provide information, programs, and services at some level for Transportation and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting sectors as well.

Manufacturing

The Manufacturing industry sector has nearly 8,658 jobs within the region, representing 6.2% of the region's 139,881 total jobs. While this sector has shown decline over the past 5 years, shedding over 1,000 jobs at an average annual rate of decline of 2.2% the size of the sector, the high annual wages, and the accessibility of jobs within the sector and the potential for re-generation of these jobs in the region's less urbanized communities make the sector a key focus of the workforce system as a whole.

Within the Manufacturing industry sector, the highest number of jobs can be found in Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers with over 2,482 jobs, followed by Stockers and Order Fillers at nearly 2,462 jobs, Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand at 1,431 jobs, and Light Truck Drivers at 1,176. Adding to these top demand areas are Passenger Vehicle Drivers at 922, Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators at 465, Team Assemblers at a rate of 438, and Driver/Sales Workers at 400.





Despite the projected decline of total employment, workforce development to fill jobs created for replacement demand due to persons retiring or otherwise leaving the workforce. Over the next ten years its replacement demand for manufacturing jobs is projected at 6,630 jobs.

Healthcare

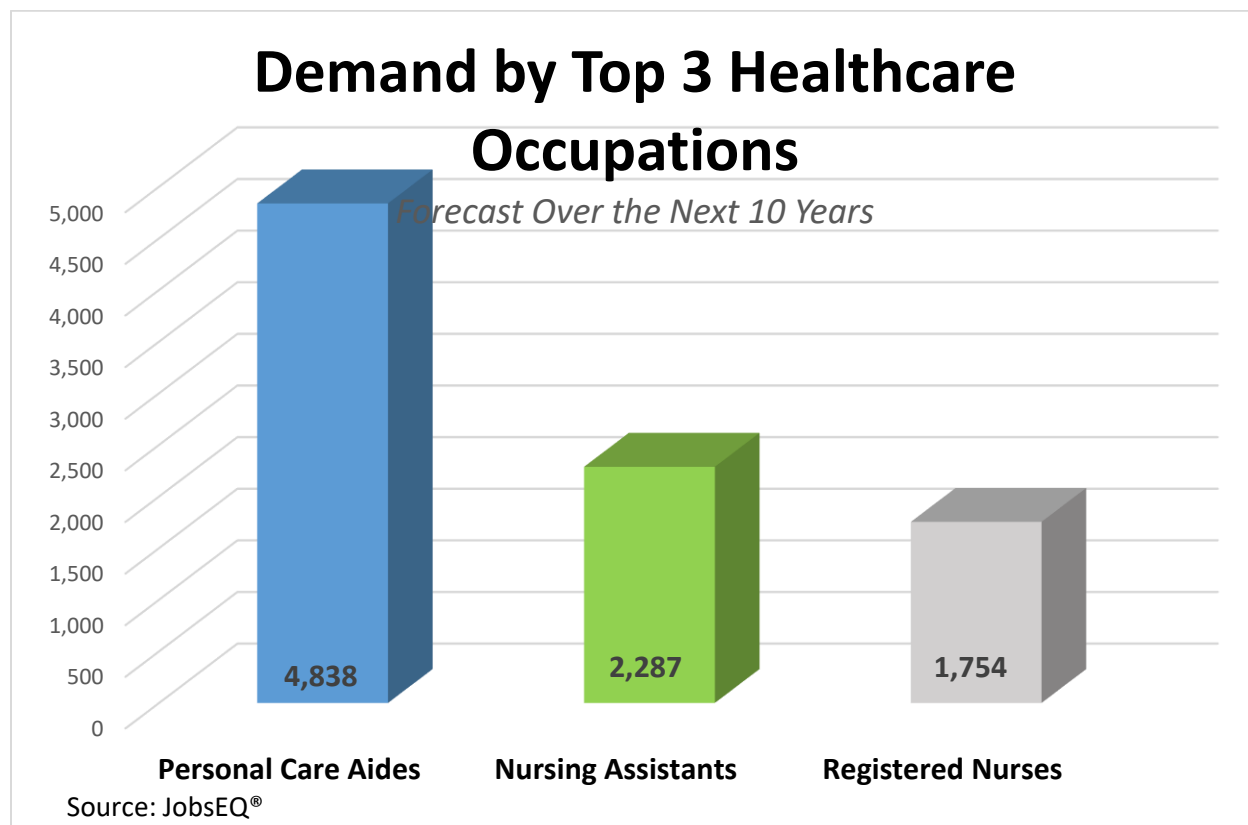
The Healthcare industry sector has over 18,964 jobs within the NWDB region, representing 13.5% of the 139,881 total jobs across all industries in the Region.

The sector has shown growth over the past 5 years adding nearly 552 jobs, which is an average annual growth rate of 0.6%. The Healthcare industry is projected to continue growing over the next 10 years at an average annual rate of 0.1%. However, the major opportunity in healthcare derives from the demand for replacement workers which is projected to be require an additional 7,670 workers in Healthcare industries over the course of the next ten years.

Within the Healthcare industry sector, the highest number of jobs can be found in Personal Care Aides with 4,838 jobs, followed by Nursing Assistants (2,287) and Registered Nurses (1,754).



Personal Care Aides is expected to grow by 1.7% (682 jobs) while a decline in Nursing Assistants (-0.8%) and Registered Nurses will decline by (-0.7%) is anticipated.



The average annual wage for workers in this specific sector of \$60,500. This wage is heavily influenced by those working at a doctorate level. The range of earnings starts with Home Health Aides and Personal Care Aides averaging \$26,400 per year up to Surgeons with average annual earnings of \$285,100.

The top occupations within the Healthcare industry sector are Personal Care Aides; Nursing Assistants, and Registered Nurses having 4,838, 2,287, and 1,754 jobs, respectively. Personal Care Aides are projected to grow by 2.0% over the next 10 years and contribute to replacement demand. The other two occupations are expected to have less than 1.0% decline.



Occupation Snapshot – Health Care Support Occupations

Occupation	Empl	Avg Mean Wages	LQ	3-Year Empl Change	Annual Demand	Forecast Ann Growth
Personal Care Aides	2,771	\$26,500	1.21	176	466	2.0%
Nursing Assistants	2,270	\$29,300	1.73	-191	231	-0.7%
Home Health Aides	972	\$26,500	1.21	-374	136	2.0%
Medical Assistants	935	\$34,300	1.43	26	109	0.5%
Dental Assistants	270	\$43,100	0.90	-23	28	-0.5%
Phlebotomists	166	\$31,400	1.37	4	18	0.5%
Veterinary Assistants and Laboratory Animal Caretakers	132	\$33,700	1.43	6	22	0.3%
Psychiatric Aides	129	\$28,900	2.60	27	15	0.2%
Medical Equipment Preparers	124	\$35,500	2.33	-3	13	-0.7%
Healthcare Support Workers, All Other	118	\$30,800	1.41	-17	12	-0.5%
Remaining Component Occupations	385	\$43,000	0.92	-25	48	0.2%
Healthcare Support Occupations	8,272	\$29,900	1.33	-393	1,102	0.8%

Source: JobsEQ

Health Care Support Occupations Wages

Occupation	Mean	Median	Entry Level	Experienced
Physical Therapist Assistants	\$51,800	\$52,700	\$41,300	\$57,000
Massage Therapists	\$50,600	\$45,700	\$28,300	\$61,800
Occupational Therapy Assistants	\$48,300	\$47,600	\$38,300	\$53,300
Dental Assistants	\$43,100	\$43,100	\$34,800	\$47,300
Medical Equipment Preparers	\$35,500	\$33,800	\$27,300	\$39,600
Medical Assistants	\$34,300	\$34,300	\$28,600	\$37,200
Medical Transcriptionists	\$34,100	\$34,100	\$27,100	\$37,500
Veterinary Assistants and Laboratory Animal Caretakers	\$33,700	\$31,500	\$26,400	\$37,300
Occupational Therapy Aides	\$33,100	\$28,200	\$25,200	\$37,100
Phlebotomists	\$31,400	\$30,700	\$26,900	\$33,600

Source: JobsEQ



Technology

For employment within Technology specific companies:

The Technology industry sector has just over 1,953 jobs within the NWDB region, representing 1.4% of the 139,881 total jobs across all industries in the region.

Technology industry sector has expanded over the past 5 years, adding 27 jobs at an average annual growth rate of 0.3%. The Technology industry is also forecasted to contract over the next 10 years at an average annual rate of .5%. The total demand over the next ten years is 1,303 jobs, with the loss of 100 jobs forecast. Demand for replacement workers is projected to be require 1303 workers in IT specific occupations over the next ten years.

Within the Technology industry sector, the highest number of jobs can be found in Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers with 398 jobs. This occupation has grown over the past 5 years, adding 25 jobs at an average annual increase of 1.3%. It is also projected to continue growing over the next 10 years at an average annual growth rate of .4%.

The average annual wage for workers in this specific sector is nearly \$70,000, which higher than the average annual wages for all industries in the region at \$46,600.

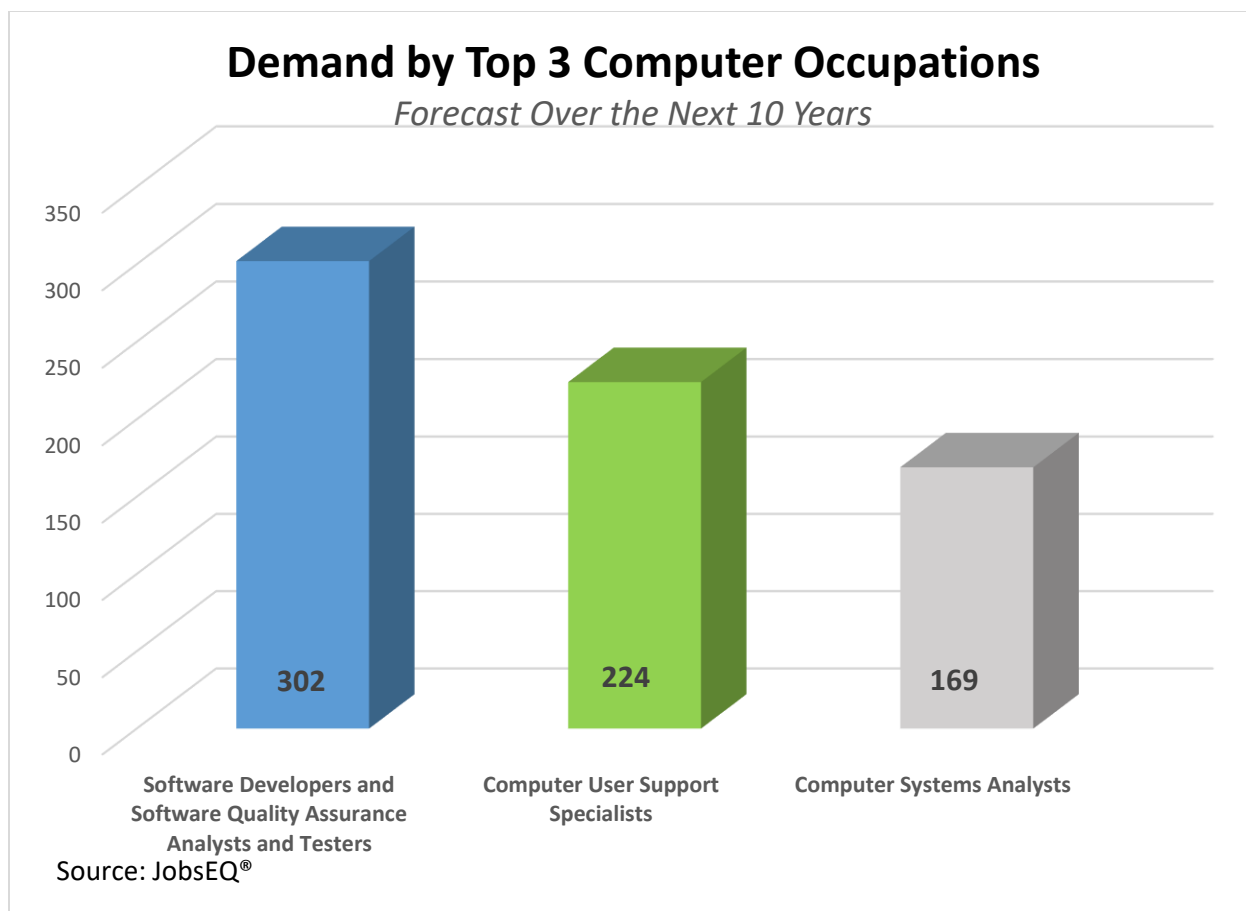
Regarding Technology Occupations in the Region Across All Industry Sectors:

There is a total of 1,953 occupations in the region across all industries. Among these the most numerous jobs are Software Developers and Programmers with nearly 398 jobs, followed by Computer User Support Specialists with 317 jobs, Computer Systems Analysts with 283 jobs, and Network and Computer Support Specialists Analysts with 189 jobs. Software Developers and Programmers and Computer and Information Analysts are projected to slightly grow over the next ten years in the region, while the others are projected to experience a slight decline.

While overall a slight decline in total employment is projected for all Computer Related Occupations in the region in the next ten years, there will be a demand for replacement workers of 321 jobs.

Driving the need for NWDB's focus on technology is the high demand for technology expertise across all industries. Entry-level jobs at traditional industries require a basic knowledge of computer technology. Strategic plans for the State of Maine (10-Year Economic Plan), the EMDC regional CEDS strategic plan, and the NWDB have all identified technology supporting remote jobs/offices as a high priority to compete nationally and open job opportunities. This includes jobs requiring high school equivalency. Recognition of the expanding need will require an increase in training and skills development through the NWDB programs.





Many growing occupations in the NWDB region are found across industries and are difficult to capture by analyzing one occupation or industry alone. It is important to note that technology-related jobs are spread across multiple industries, not just within IT companies. The skills associated with IT are critical for future industry and workforce support as well as growth across the Region. Therefore, the region will continue to include IT Industry and Workforce within its targeted priorities. Related to the IT industry is the increasing demand for remote workspaces which require an adeptness with technology.

Business Composition in the NWDB Region

Another element of the analysis of the regional economy and employment opportunity landscape is the composition of the businesses in the region. As typical of the Maine economy most businesses in the NWDB region are small with 82% having fewer than 10 employees and a mere 1% having 100 or more employees. The number of business establishments in the region by key industry sector can be seen below:



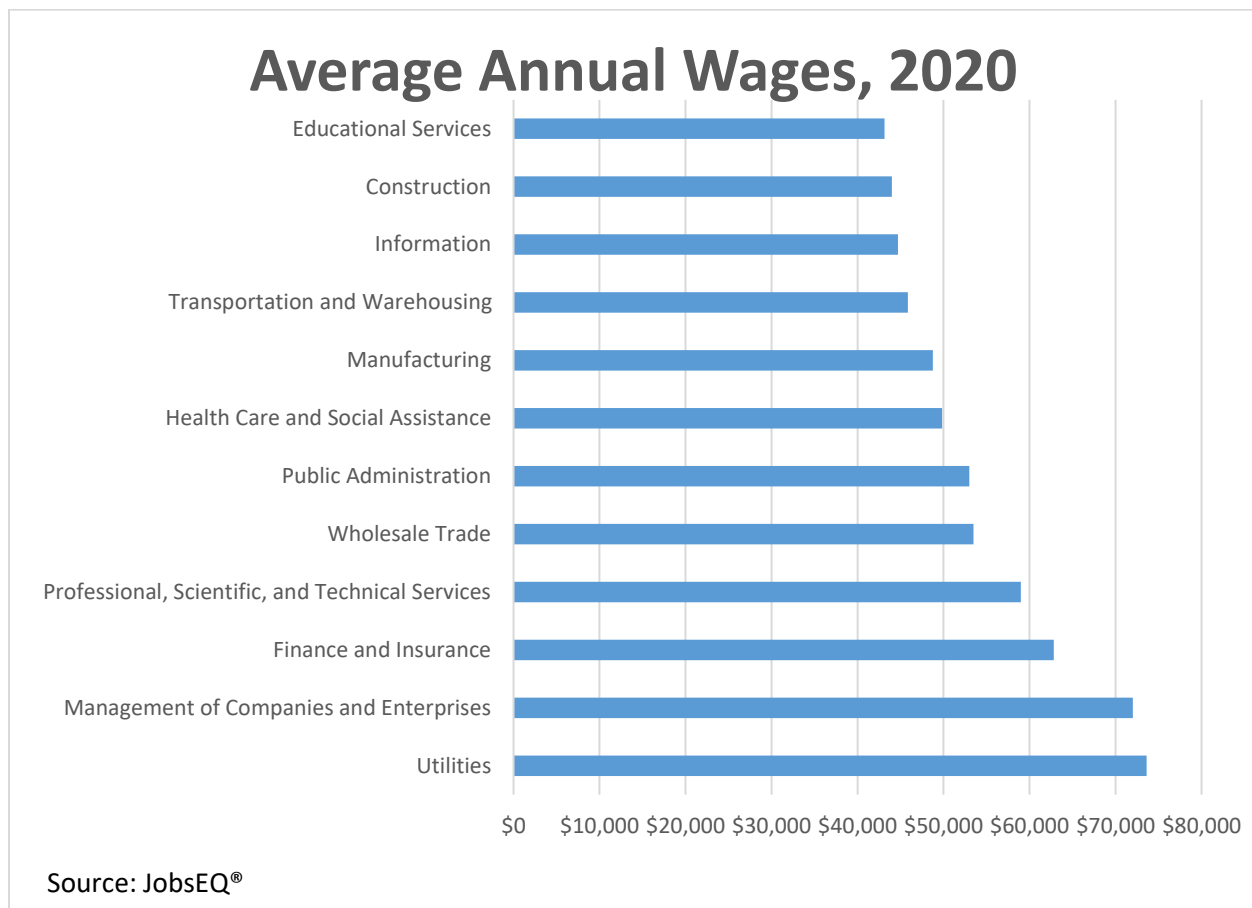
Establishments by Industry within the NWDB Region, 2020

NAICS	Industry	Establishments
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	585
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	9
22	Utilities	97
23	Construction	1,198
31	Manufacturing	426
42	Wholesale Trade	437
44	Retail Trade	1,502
48	Transportation and Warehousing	628
51	Information	169
52	Finance and Insurance	397
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	348
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	811
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	106
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	591
61	Educational Services	343
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	1,105
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	231
72	Accommodation and Food Services	938
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	780
92	Public Administration	431
99	Unclassified	0
	Total - All Industries	11,130



Wages by Industry Sector

Wages and benefits are crucial ingredients for the overall health and vitality of the regional economy and of particular interest of the workforce development system when considering where to invest in training and education of workers. In 2020 wages for all industries in the region averaged \$42,872. Utilities had the highest average wages (\$73,621), followed by Management of Companies and Enterprises (\$72,000), Finance and Insurance (\$62,810), Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (\$58,982), and Wholesale Trade (\$53,476).



Summary of the Economic Analysis

The opportunities and challenges of the current regional economic conditions can be summarized as:

Opportunities

- Replacement demand will drive workforce needs over the next ten years
- Healthcare industry and occupations projected to increase
- Emerging industries in technology and clear energy are expected to drive new employment demands



- With high levels of self-employment in the region the outreach and engagement strategies with industry must include means to include small businesses and entrepreneurs along with the typical, larger employers
- Higher education assets spread throughout the region is a clear asset for meeting the workforce development demands of many occupations
- Higher-than-national/state percent of population with associate degrees making the region well-suited for middle skill jobs
- Underemployed population who can advance into higher skill, higher wage jobs through additional workforce, education, and training services
- Increasing numbers of immigrants and persons of color are moving to the region

Challenges

- Declining population, which is slightly older and less wealthy than the U.S. as a whole
- The percent of workers in the region who are over the age of 55 as an indicator of the impact of future retirements. Many industries, such as manufacturing, health care and social assistance, and government, in the region have high percentages of workers who are nearing retirement age and will likely need new workers
- Lower higher education attainment rates of existing population for bachelor's degrees or more
- Lower labor force participation rates than U.S. as a whole
- Low projected job growth resulting from industry growth
- Industries with highest average wages tend to be those without significant levels of employment in the region

This data was used to provide context for the NWDB Strategic Plan and identify opportunities, challenges, and issues for strategy development. Data for this overview was provided by the Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) through a JobsEQ subscription with Chmura Economics and Analytics. Analysis and findings from the Maine's Unified Plan, the State of Maine's 10-Year Economic Plan, and other recent reports on economic and workforce development in Maine have also been considered for this data assessment.

- B. An analysis of the knowledge and skills workers need to meet the employment needs of businesses in the local area, including those of businesses that make up in-demand industry sectors in the local area. Plans must describe the data tools and methods used to identify in-demand industry sector knowledge and skill requirements;

Anecdotally, employers continue to report having difficulty finding and hiring qualified talent. This gap shows that there are opportunities to more closely match the skills of the workforce with the skills employers need. Employers continue to report gaps in technical



skills as well as essential employability skills, such as critical thinking and communication. Below is an overview of the knowledge and skills developed that are needed to meet the employment needs of NWDB's in-demand, high-wage industries and occupations. These gaps can be seen in data for job posting for high wage occupation openings in the NWDB region below:

Top Skill Gaps for High Wage Occupations

Skill Name	Candidates	Openings	Gap
Microsoft Excel	134	183	-48
Keyboarding/Typing	20	49	-29
Change Management	18	46	-28
Microsoft Outlook	48	71	-23
Microsoft Word	56	79	-23
Microsoft PowerPoint	43	61	-17
Mathematics	25	42	-17
Budgeting	11	23	-12
Critical Care	14	26	-12
Presentation	29	41	-12

The skill gap analysis above is typical of the mismatch between the job opening requirements established by employers and the skills attested to by job candidates as reported in job posting data for a number of industry and occupational demands. This perceived gap demonstrates that there are opportunities to more closely match the skills of the workforce with the skills employers need.

The focus on local industry sectors and occupations identified in the occupational supply and demand analyses above identifies potential gaps that may continue to persist in lieu of increased efforts in skills preparation programs and supports of the NWDB's workforce system. The skills challenge is not only for existing industries and occupations but may impact efforts to develop new industries and employment opportunities in the future. For example, Governor Mill's goal to create 30,000 new clean energy jobs by 2030. This goal will double Maine's clean energy jobs, working to grow Maine's economy and equitably provide new opportunities to Mainers as part of the effort to fight climate change. Economic development, operations and supply chains in renewable energy and energy efficiency, that generate economic benefits, create high-quality jobs, and fight climate change will require a greater emphasis on the need for engineering skills will be in demand. Workforce development needs to collaborate with the State of Maine to meet the employment demands driven by the changing climate and energy environment.



Complementing this data, the Board sought the input of the NWDB stakeholders including service providers representing the State of Maine, Adult and Youth clients, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and immigrant/minorities on the question of what skills are needed to meet the needs of the local businesses. Several virtual stakeholder meetings were held to discuss current goals and recommendations for change. Using on-line tool Poll Everywhere, participants were asked to “Identify a new goal that you think should be considered for inclusion in the new strategic plan”. Many of the responses focused on the question of skills and need to improve the knowledge and skills of the workforce including:

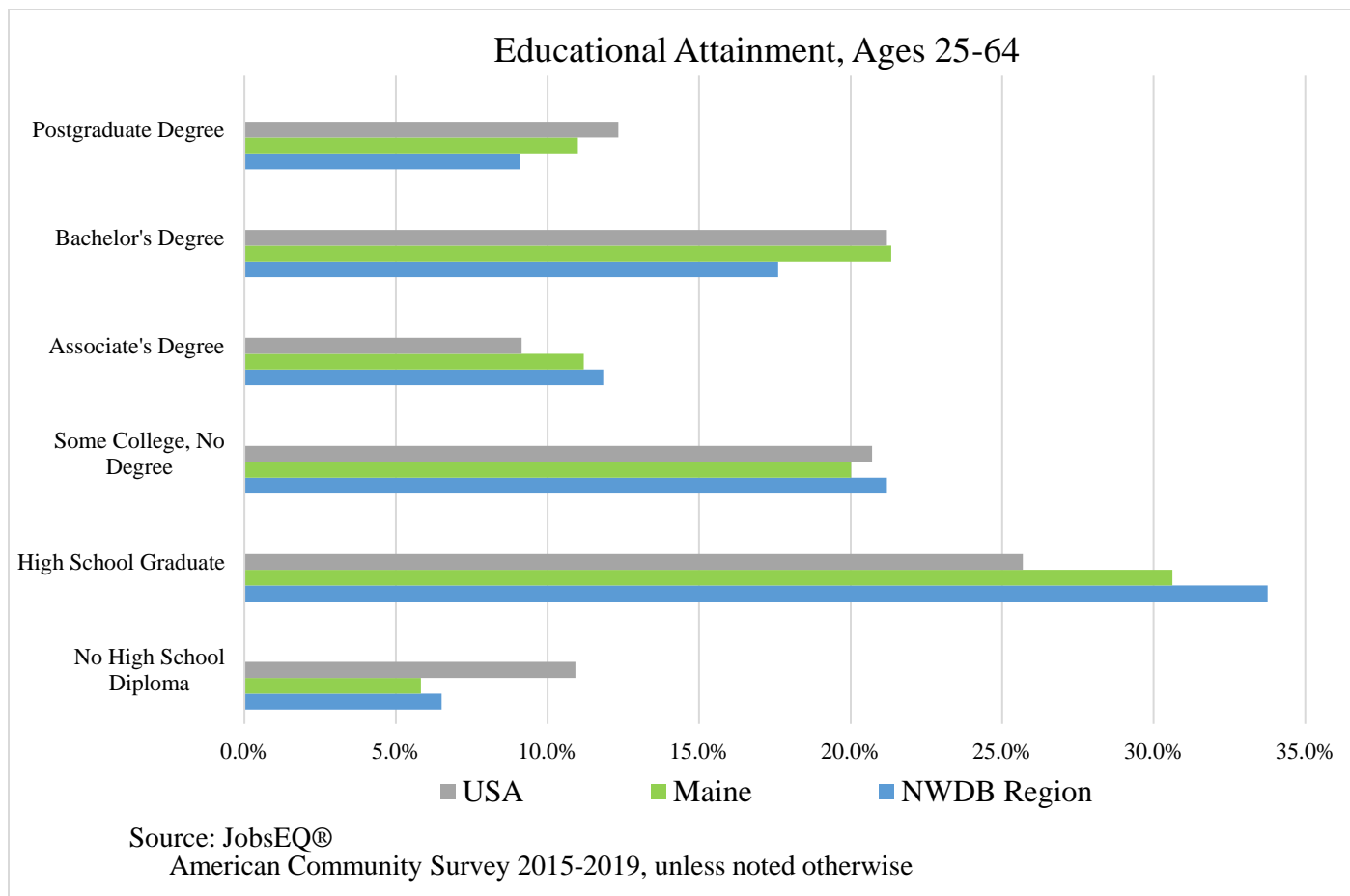
- Focus on entrepreneurship and skills needed to own and operate a business
- Support for students in apprenticeships and internships with employers
- Technology and digital literacy for a “mobile world”
- Communication and collaboration skills
- Funding allocated for short term training to address immediate needs
- Importance of trades training in our economy
- Ensure responsiveness for customers/potential customers
- Simplified approach to apprenticeship training and other work-based modes of skill training
- Short term training may need to be just a bit longer for new workers
- Share credentialing models - training across all partners
- Communication and soft skills expectations for both employers and employees, increased flexibility

C. An analysis of the workforce in the local area, including current labor force employment and unemployment data; information on labor market trends and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in the local area, including individuals with barriers to employment. Plans must describe the data tools and methods used to obtain such information.

The population in the NWDB region in 2019 was 322,511 and has remained relatively stagnant from 2015 to 2019. This lack of population growth is impacted by reduced birth rates for the region as a whole and is anticipated to continue. Population trends by age, as well as population trends by race/ethnicity within the NWDB region, are very comparable to the trends occurring within Maine. The population of the NWDB region and Maine are older and less ethnically/racially diverse.

Within the NWDB region, 26.7% of people between the ages of 25 and 64 have a bachelor’s degree or higher, which is slightly higher than that reported in 2017 (24%). However, the region reports lower than the rates of 32.3% in Maine and 33.5% in the U.S. A total of 11.8% within the NWDB region have an associate’s degree, which is higher than Maine (11.2%) and the U.S. at 9.1%. This makes the region best able to support businesses and occupations demanding middle skill jobs including those requiring more than a high school diploma but less than a 4-year degree.





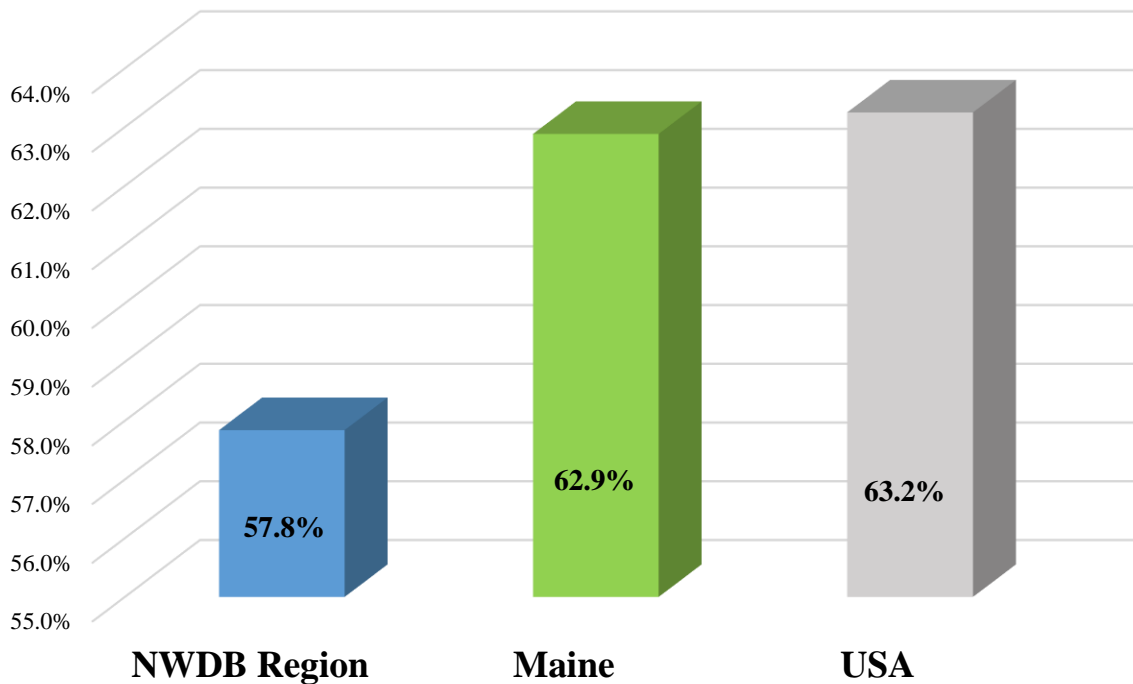
Unemployment and Labor Participation

The unemployment rate for the NWDB region was 6% as of March 2021 which is higher than the state average of 5.4% and lower than the national rate of 6.2% for this timeframe. Within the NWDB region, the civilian labor force is estimated at nearly 156,676 with a 57.8% labor force participation rate (2021). The participation rate in the NWDB is 5.1 percentage points lower than that of Maine (62.9%) and the U.S. (63.2%). This lower participation in the job market is both a challenge and an opportunity for the workforce system. A challenge in that underlying conditions of poverty, absence of affordable childcare and transportation, lack of education and skills, disability or other barrier may be keeping people from the labor force. The opportunity resides in the strategies that can be developed to alleviate these barriers and provide access to education and training or other employment supports that allow and encourage entry or re-entry into employment.



Labor Force Participation Rate and Size, 2019

(civilian population 16 years and over)



Source: JobsEQ®

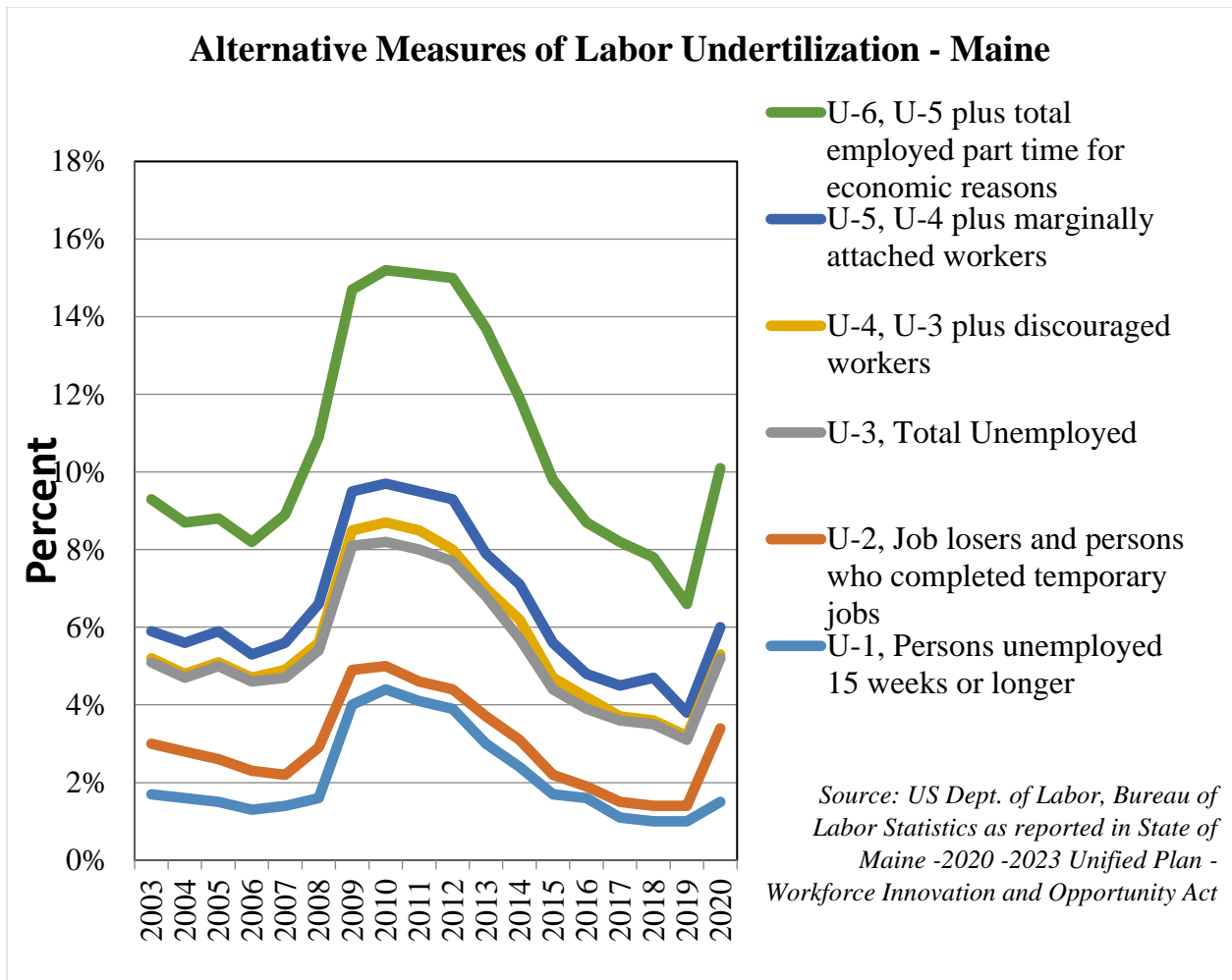
American Community Survey 2015-2019, unless noted otherwise

Census 2019, annual average growth rate since 2009

Adding to the workforce challenge is the number of unemployed persons who would like a job but are not actively seeking due to downsizing from impacts of COVID-19, becoming discouraged, those working part-time that would prefer full-time employment, and those that are underemployed. The unemployment rate is one of six measures of labor underutilization. It includes jobless people actively seeking and available for work. The broadest measure of underutilization, known as U-6, adds discouraged and other marginally attached workers who want a job but are not looking and those working part-time who prefer full-time work to the job seeking unemployed.

Though the most commonly reported unemployment rates have returned to pre-recession levels, U-6 remains more elevated, a full two percentage points higher than in 2007. Additionally, even the U-6 number doesn't fully capture underemployment, those in full-time positions who would prefer a position where they could utilize more skills for higher wages.





Other Demographic Factors: Income, Public Assistance and Housing

The median household income in the NWDB region is \$48,345, lower than that of both Maine and the US, at \$57,918 and \$62,843, respectively. Both the percentage of people below the poverty level as well as the percentage of households receiving food stamps are higher in the NWDB region than in Maine and the U.S. Having a poverty rate of 15%, compared to 11.8% in Maine and 13.4% in the U.S., and the percentage of households receiving food stamps at 17.3%, 3.8 percentage points higher than that of Maine at 13.5% and 5.6 percentage points higher than the U.S. at 11.7%.

The lack of financial stability impacts the employability of workers in many ways including inability to pay for education and training, the inability to pay for childcare and reliable transportation, the opportunity to afford decent housing, and the lack of health care. Participants in workforce training programs experience these challenges most acutely and often require support services as a precondition to engaging in education and training.



The findings as part of the NWDB Plan are consistent with key findings from the State of Maine Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Unified Plan -

https://www.maine.gov/swb/reports/state_plan/2020-2023_state_plan/index.shtml which are summarized as follows:

- Workforce conditions in Maine continue to improve, despite there being virtually no real economic growth for a decade. Underlying these seemingly contradictory statements is a rapidly advancing age structure of the population that is constraining growth and tightening the labor market at the same time.
- Growth is increasingly being constrained by the sharp decline in births since the 1990s. This leaves Maine with much smaller numbers of young people entering the labor force than baby boomers retiring.
- The size of the labor force will continue to decline through 2022, dropping from the 2013 peak by 12,000. If fertility and migration trends do not become more positive, the situation will become worse after 2022. Recent estimates indicate the labor force is declining more rapidly than previously expected. The reason is that the rebound in labor force participation that normally occurs as conditions improve in post-recession recoveries has been much less than usual among age cohorts under 55, at least through 2014.
- During the 2007-2009 recession, many workers were displaced from production, construction, administrative support and other types of jobs that required physical labor or routinized functions. These occupations are not rebounding as strongly as others. In fact, these functions represent a declining share of jobs today. Making matters worse, these displaced workers do not have the education or work experience to match the needs of hiring employers in growing sectors. Many individuals will require job training or educational intervention to gain marketable skills to reenter the workforce.
- In an environment in which the labor force is shrinking, Maine does not have the luxury of tens of thousands of people being less than fully engaged in the workforce. The State Board's committees for Older Workers, Women's Employment Issues, Younger Workers, Veteran's Employment, Apprenticeship and the Commission on Disability and Employment are charged with addressing many of these issues.

D. An analysis of the workforce development activities (including education and training) in the local area, including an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of such activities and services and an explanation of any limitations in capacity to provide activities and services necessary to address the skill and employment needs of the workforce in the local area;

The NWDB's workforce development system includes programs and services that prepare workers for employment, upgrade worker skills and certifications, increase earnings, and provides employment or retention services for workers and employers.

To facilitate increased integrated service delivery within the One Stop system over the past



several years, the NWDB has worked to improve efficiency of the employment and training system with a primary focus on meeting industry driven demand.

The NWDB's One Stop Partners group has a demonstrated capacity to help create an innovative and effective employment and training system designed to meet skill needs for businesses. The demonstrated value of these efforts includes:

- A depth and diversity of partnerships
- Experience and depth with Industry Sector initiatives
- Diversity and depth of work with a variety of training providers
- Success with placements of diverse and hard- to-serve job seekers

A key contributor to the One Stop Partners group efforts has been the education sector partners including the Community Colleges in the region, the Adult Education programs, and the Career and Technical Education partners. They provide a program of courses and learning experiences that begins with exploration of career options, supports basic academic and life skills, and enables achievement of high academic standards, leadership, preparation for industry-defined work, and advanced and continuing education.

Vocational-technical programs including three Community Colleges and two Job Corps Centers in the region provide job preparatory training leading to certificates of completion, programs that lead to associate degrees, related classroom instruction for apprenticeship programs, retraining for dislocated workers, and skills upgrade training for those already employed.

These education and training resources are also aligned with apprenticeship programs that combine on-the-job training with classroom instruction. Pre-apprenticeship programs provide individuals with basic skills, job readiness, and trade-specific training. Graduates are prepared to be more competitive for opportunities, particularly for openings in apprenticeships. The WANTO program delivered by ACAP is an example of pre-apprenticeship programs that targets women, youth, and the economically disadvantaged.

The NWDB will deliberately fuel the One Stop system by disseminating the OSP MOU throughout the region. The MOU serves as a detailed road map with direction and instruction on how to utilize services and resources provided by a multitude of partners and stakeholders. To further strength and communications, the board will develop and facilitate trainings to be delivered at the one stop partners' meeting.

The NWDB's One Stop partners meet quarterly to provide updates on the systems' integrated service delivery efforts and activities. Strengths and Weaknesses of these efforts include:

- Strengths:
 - Commitment and willingness among the core partners and other stakeholders to build a better workforce development system
 - Quality of service, programs, and operations



- Accessibility to stakeholders, business leaders and key decision makers—collaboration and partnering are core strengths of Maine’s WDS activities
- Weaknesses:
 - The NWDB’s large geographic size and dispersed population present challenges to the efficient delivery of services
 - Lack of coordination, communication, and alignment within the broader workforce development system. Maine has a variety of workforce development, education and training activities occurring within the state, but these programs and activities are typically governed by different federal agencies. This sometimes results in a lack of coordination and alignment among workforce development programs

E. A description of the local board’s strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment) to support regional growth and economic self-sufficiency. Plans must outline goals that support achievement of performance accountability measures identified in Section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA and formally negotiated with the State.

Vision: The Northeastern Workforce Development Board, as an active member of the region’s overall economic, educational, and social service network, effectively identifies and responds to workforce development changes and needs of businesses and workers alike as they strive to create and expand economic opportunities within the region’s high wage, high growth industries. This action reinforces the direct alignment with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) developed by regional economic partners.

Our goal continues to focus on the cultivation, convening, management, and participation in successful partnerships that bring traditional and non-traditional—and public and private—partners together to address economic and workforce challenges. The Board approaches the building of these partnerships with the view that we can accomplish our mutual goals more effectively—and that the region, as a whole, is more successful—by working together.

Through the engagement of workforce development service delivery partners, the consensus was that the overarching goals for job seekers have not changed significantly since 2016. What has changed is the need to redefine those goals to include economic shifts, e.g., increasing technology to support remote work and industry technology shifts. Responding to the post-pandemic world will have significant impact to the delivery of training and education and responding to shifting industry demand for jobs. Communication will be key to reach the potential clients including job seekers (adult and youth), employers, and program partners to create a shared vision and delivery plan.



The NWDB is constantly engaged in developing and enhancing new and existing relationships and partnerships. A recent example includes partnership with regional recovery organizations such as the Bangor Area Recovery Network (BARN) and others helping to employ those in recovery. Work has also expanded to support individuals leaving the prison system, seeking training and job opportunities. The Board recognizes a wealth of new opportunities to collaborate more broadly as it now represents five counties while maintaining programs, initiatives, and resources that meet the unique needs of the different parts of the region.

Equity and cultural sensitivity have also become a growing priority in the region. Efforts will focus on diversity and cultural sensitivity training for Adult Education and Literacy educators, staff, and programmatic providers. Programming to assist immigrants, diverse gender identities, and New Mainers will be available, and partnerships with partners including Literacy Volunteers of Maine and the regional chapters will be supported. Our partnership with the Maine Multicultural Center will support these efforts.

The strategic-level goals of the Board and its partners are outlined below:

Key Priorities

- Communication
- Upskill job seekers to meet employer needs
- Improve coordination and seamlessness of workforce system for customers and partners
- Grow labor force to meet demands for replacement jobs and new emerging opportunities
- Assess, Adapt, & Administer

Key Priority 1: Communication

- Increase brand recognition and awareness of resources the NWDB represents
- Increase awareness among employers of workforce development resources and value of hiring through the workforce system
- Dispel preconceived perceptions and bias about clients coming through the workforce system (adult, youth, disabled, those formerly incarcerated, immigrants and minorities)
- Market workforce services to job seekers to increase pool of workers and emphasize the jobs, careers pathways, and wages to which training can lead
- Share value of training badging to meet job demands
- Train employers and board members to serve as advocates of workforce system and speak to civic and business organizations, reducing misinformation about workers (Adult and Youth) and their desire to work
- Utilize social media to disseminate information about workforce services
- Continue to improve visibility and drive access to NWDB Website through search engine optimization
- Share and utilize common set of data regarding employment and occupations, and entrepreneurship



- Include workforce participants on committees

Key Priority 2: Upskill job seekers including the unemployed and underemployed to meet employer and job seeker needs

- Communication: market training opportunities and careers and career pathways in high-demand occupations – emphasize the benefits of training (career prospects, future wages, etc.)
- Provide training opportunities through apprenticeships, work experiences, on-the-job training, job shadowing, transitional job opportunities and internships in partnership with employers, with emphasis on supporting targeted industries and in-demand occupations
- Promote incumbent worker training by directly engaging employers and using employer advocates
- Provide WorkReady and other workplace essentials training to improve skills required with employment
- Leverage suite of partner resources to not only provide training but also to provide “wraparound” services to help participants overcome barriers to education and training to complete program

Key Priority 3: Improve coordination and seamlessness of workforce system for customers and partners

- Communication: improve communication among partners by developing collateral that explains partner resources and priorities, by engaging in regular meetings, and by creating opportunities for training and updates
- Implement improvements to common intake system to increase seamlessness of referrals and co-enrollment
- Increase communication among partners to increase trust and awareness of resources. Could take the forms of annual (or more frequent) meetings for all partners, webinars, or newsletters
- Incorporate workforce training into partner new staff orientation so they understand the resources and partners in the region
- Engage partners in Regional Partnership Advisory Groups (RPAGs)

Key Priority 4: Grow labor force to meet demands for replacement jobs and new emerging opportunities

- Communication: market training and career opportunities to youth, veterans, individuals with disabilities, immigrants and minorities, students who have left the region, and older workers to increase the labor force size
- Conduct outreach to graduates of Maine colleges and universities to make them aware of career opportunities in the region



- Engage with Maine students before graduation to connect them to internship and job opportunities
- Encourage co-location on college campuses to directly provide career services to students
- Identify best practices from the “Ticket to Work” to continue to help individuals with disabilities access employment opportunities
- Offer training to senior citizens to help them transition into new careers
- Increase partner awareness of supportive services to help participants complete training programs and stay employed
- Support addiction recovery programs to allow participants to recover and access employment when ready
- Support programs supporting persons exiting from incarceration to access wrap-around services and employment when ready
- Reduce barriers to employment (childcare, transportation, technology, housing)
Adapt to a pandemic and post-pandemic economy and workforce

Key Priority 5: Assess, Adapt, and Administer

- Revisit strategic plan at least annually to ensure priorities and strategies are still relevant
- Regularly reassess targeted industries to determine if any should be added or removed
- Assign committees to track implementation of initiatives, measure success, and report to Board on progress
- Conduct Board orientation for all members to ensure they understand their responsibilities as board members and the workforce system

The most recent negotiated performance goals are under Appendix 17.

F. Considering the analyses described in A-D above, explain how the local board will align the resources of and engage the entities that carry out the core programs in the local area in achieving the strategic vision and goals identified in E above.

The Board recognizes that it cannot succeed in addressing the various challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities within the region’s economy and workforce system without the assistance of partners. As essential role of the Board is as the convener of these partners and a facilitator that identifies challenges and aligns resources to address them. A summary of the strategies that will be implemented to carry out core partners and achieve the strategic vision are summarized below:

- Continue facilitating robust meetings among groups of partners – including meetings focused on the One Stops, Adult Education, and the implementation of other Core Programs



- Develop committees on an as-needed basis to address new challenges or capitalize on new opportunities and initiatives
- Encourage the “cross pollination” of board memberships by encouraging partners to serve on the NWDB and NWDB representatives to serve on partner boards
- Improve mechanisms of communications to ensure that all partners are operating efficiently through awareness of all the resources in the region that can support job seekers and employers while avoiding duplication of services
- Engage with businesses regularly and meaningfully to understand their projected workforce needs and current challenges. This engagement may also take place through robust communication with intermediaries, such as chambers and economic development organizations, who already have strong engagement with employers
- Recognize emerging industry opportunities that lead to job opportunities (e.g., clean energy, climate change, changing technologies)
- Capitalize on new program initiatives to engage employers and develop new training initiatives while working towards piloting new ideas and strategies that may be applied to other industries
- Collaborate with partners and employers to develop a deep understanding of career pathways and utilize that information to develop better training programs and help job seekers, both unemployed and underemployed, to make informed decisions. Appendix 14 includes three sample occupation data profiles within the NWDB Targeted Industries of Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Information Technology. This data was provided by the Eastern Maine Development Corporation for this project through their JobsEQ data subscription. These profiles can be completed for any 5-digit Occupation Code.
- Cross sharing information with state, regional, and local partners to support entrepreneurship and business/job creating including Small Business Development Center, start-up initiatives, and services through the higher education system
- Strengthen collaborations with workforce service providers to ensure access for all individuals with barriers including formerly incarcerated, youth, long-term unemployed, and individuals with disabilities.

NWDB findings are consistent with regional strategic planning efforts, with the industry focus and goals aligned either through targeted industries and/or efforts to enhance logistics and infrastructure. The Eastern Maine CEDS plan has listed four priority goals:

- Broadband
- Climate Resiliency
- Transportation
- Workforce and Education

The goals and objectives identified in the NWDB Strategic Plan align with these four goals which will support efforts to increase access to jobs and provide training and education to respond to industries of focus.



Section 2: Local Workforce Development System

Included in this section:

- A. A description of the workforce development system in the local area identifying all of the required partner programs that are included in the system and how the local board will work with each program entity in carrying out local workforce development initiatives. The description must explain how the local board will work to align and integrate programs and services to customers.*

The Northeastern Workforce Development Board is one part of a broad workforce development system that includes a variety of partners and stakeholders.

The core of the Board's work is to develop new and to reinforce existing partnerships, the goal is always the same: more effectively provide services to job seekers and employers, address skill gaps impeding economic growth, and developing and sharing career pathways that support the efforts of workers to access higher wages and more skilled employment. A summary of the Board's primary partners and its efforts to work more collaboratively with them follows:

One Stop Operator: The Board has contracted with three service providers, Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP), Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC), and Eastern Aroostook Adult and Community Education, RSU 39, to help manage the many partners through the One Stop Centers ensuring they are working collaboratively, and services are provided effectively and seamlessly. The Centers are more than "a place". They are the means for providing access to coordinated programs, and services through a network of staff, Partners, and stakeholders. Currently, this coordination occurs through regularly scheduled meetings between the Service Providers and the core partners. Additionally, the Service Providers regularly report to the Board, providing updates and documenting progress to reach performance goals.

WIOA TITLE 1B SERVICE PROVIDERS

Aroostook Community Action Program

Organizational Experience:

Aroostook County Action Program, Inc., (ACAP) is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit community action agency annually serving 14,000 Aroostook residents. Their WIOA and NEG programs serve



over 200 people each year in Aroostook. Many of their workforce customers are eligible for public benefits or are dislocated workers, and so they may access ACAP for multiple services as listed in Table I:

Table I. Programs Administered by ACAP in the Aroostook Region:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) ● Energy Crisis Intervention ● Case Management ● Kids Integrated Dental Services. ● Head Start; Early Head Start; Child Care Food Program ● Head Start Health Services ● Supplemental Food for Women, Infants and Children (WIC); Breastfeeding Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Affordable Care Act Navigator Program; Healthy Aroostook ● Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Programming ● National Emergency Grant to Assist Dislocated Workers ● Homeownership Program; Homeownership Support Counseling ● Lead Paint Inspections and Housing Rehabilitation Services
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ACAP has nearly 50 years of experience in successfully administering Federal, State, and private grant funding. ACAP receives grants from various funding sources, including directly from U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (such as Head Start) and as a pass through-grantee and sub grantee. The majority of ACAP's \$10,000,000 annual budget is from Maine Department of Health & Human Services. ACAP manages approximately 40 contracts each year from Maine State Housing Authority, Department of Corrections/Division of Juvenile Services, Department of Labor, Department of Agriculture, and more. Recent private donations have been provided by Maine Health Access Foundation, Stephen & Tabitha King Foundation, Anthem Foundation, Maine Community Foundation, and more.

In addition to receiving Federal, State, and private grants to administer programs and services, ACAP also subcontracts and provides fiscal agent services for other non-profit programs and services. Recent examples include a Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) federal grant for a Wabanaki Teleophthalmology Consortium Project, as the fiscal agent for the District Coordinating Council in Aroostook County for a Community Transformation Grant, and as a fiscal agent for a National Highway Transportation Administration (NHTSA) grant for an underage drinking program.

Special workforce projects for ACAP include supporting student Certified Nursing Assistants in trainings partnering with employers around the region, including the Aroostook Medical Center and Maine Veterans' Home; working with the Maine Motor Transport Association, area employers, Northern Maine Community College, and Fort Kent/Madawaska Adult Education to deliver a workforce-tailored CDL course in the St. John Valley, including a work experience-based module in off-road trucking for people going into the forest products industry; serving as part of the Ashland Area Economic Development Committee, which is working with employer



stakeholders to deliver WorkReady training, expand internships, and orient Adult Education offerings to workforce demand, as well as partnering with community development organizations to expand economic development in the Route 11 corridor area; and working with CEI and several food producers in Aroostook to implement the workforce and branding vision of the Quality Food Jobs Project in the region. Additionally, the Senior Manager of ACAP Workforce Development represents the agency on the Workforce Development Board, as President of the Aroostook Training and Education Coalition (ATEC), the Citizens' Trade Policy Commission of the State Legislature, and on the Advisory Board of the Next Step Employers' Initiative of the Maine Development Foundation.

MDOL's Bureau of Employment Services: The Bureau of Employment Services (BES) oversees and administers programs and services aimed at building the workforce of the state and connecting workers with employers. The Bureau aims to enhance economic success through workforce development. This includes working with businesses to build a competitive and skilled workforce while increasing access to quality employment opportunities for workers. This is accomplished through in-person and on-line self-directed and consultative worker services that include job placement, career guidance, education and training, and layoff assistance. For businesses, BES provides workforce consultation, recruitment, direct referral to resources, and access to training programs.

As a bureau within the Maine Department of Labor, BES services are funded through the State General and other special revenue funds, Competitive Skills Scholarship fund, federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and Trade Act funds. In addition to those accessing job matching services on-line, BES Washington County serves over 4000 walk-in customers seeking assistance and assists over 200 residents with training programs each year.

Eastern Maine Development Corporation: Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) is a 501(c) (3) non-profit, economic, workforce and community development organization established in 1967 and based in Bangor Maine. EMDC's service area covers almost 11,000 square miles in Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Waldo counties, and is the largest economic development district in Maine. EMDC has a rich and well-documented history of cultivating and convening successful partnerships that bring traditional and non-traditional and public/private partners together to provide resources and assistance to businesses, job seekers and communities, encouraging economic growth and prosperity in Eastern Maine.

EMDC have staff and resources located in each county and have worked with every one of the 135 towns, cities, plantations, and unorganized territories in the region at one time or another. EMDC professionals are trained, experienced and highly networked in critical areas of economic, community and workforce development and are widely recognized as experts in their respective fields. EMDC is involved in all aspects of the region's strategic development in the



areas of workforce development, industry sector/clusters planning, transportation planning, recreation and cultural development, downtown redevelopment, business development, port development, pollution and abatement projects, secondary and higher education planning, infrastructure planning such as water systems, renewable energy development, resource analysis, commercial fisheries and other similar activities that have direct impact on the region's workforce development.

EMDC receives grants from various funding sources, including directly from the U.S. Federal Departments, State Government, Local and County Government, Foundations and private sources of funding. Some of the current programs and services provided by EMDC include:

1. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act – Workforce services for Adults, Youth and Dislocated Workers
2. National Farmworker Jobs Program – Workforce services for migrant and seasonal farmworkers
3. National Emergency Grants – Workforce services for dislocated workers
4. Economic Development Planning – Community planning and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
5. Small Business Administration – Business financing services
6. Rural Development - Revolving Loan Fund services
7. Environmental Protection Agency - Brownfields services
8. Department of Defense Procurement and Technical Assistance Center – Assistance with government contracting
9. Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) - Support services for Maine DBE's to grow their businesses and work with Maine DOT

Vocational Rehabilitation: Counselors from Vocational Rehabilitation are available at the One Stops to meet with customers with disabilities to develop an individualized training and job search plan.

Veterans Programs: Veterans' programs are important partners in the One Stop CareerCenters, facilitating access to training and quality job opportunities for veterans and their spouses and helping veterans effectively sell their military skills and training to private employers.

Employment Services: The Maine Bureau of Employment Services supports One Stop efforts by supplying labor market information and by connecting job seekers and employers to the Maine JobLink. Additionally, the Bureau connects workers to unemployment insurance and job search resources.

Adult Education: Under WIOA, adult education partners throughout the region are an integral part of the inter-agency collaboration to assess the ability to increase access to the one-stop



system and the workforce system by providing literacy, adult basic education, career pathways, workforce training and college transitions programming as well as family literacy/early childhood education. Many adult education programs support at-risk in-school youth through alternative high school programming, drop-out prevention, credit recovery, homeschool and family literacy. This population is particularly vulnerable to generational poverty therefore education, employment training and postsecondary preparation must be supported and integrated across all partnering agencies. Adult education programs are often the first point of contact for clients and the hub around which services are coordinated.

By regularly engaging with adult education partners during both the strategy development and implementation phases, the Board can more effectively reach its goals of developing career pathways and in-demand, employer-driven training programs. Adult Education was included in the surveying and in-person strategic planning session help to prepare this plan. Adult Education representatives presented the Board about the priorities and resources of adult education organizations in the region.

Further, most Adult Education programs have students access the 100s of classes that are originated from all the university campuses using web-based technology. By using University College students living in the more rural areas can access college course work and, in some cases, complete their degree program.

Job Corps: Job Corps is a WIOA-funded, education and training partner in the Northeastern Region. Job Corps is primarily residential and offers youth (ages 16-24) a full complement of free services, for youth to reach their career and life goals. These support services include career counseling, drug and alcohol counseling, food services, basic health & dental, mental health counseling, and recreational activities. Career Systems Development Corporation operates the two Maine-based Job Corps Centers.

Job Corps is first and foremost a job training facility. The Loring Job Corps Center, located in Limestone, offers training opportunities in the following industry sectors and careers:

- Construction: Carpentry, Painting, & Masonry
- Health Care: Medical Office Support & Certified Nurse's Assistant
- Hospitality: Culinary
- Automotive & Transportation: Automotive Repair & Commercial Driver's License
- Information Technology: CISCO Networking

The Penobscot Job Corps Center, located in Bangor, offers training opportunities in the following industry sectors and careers:

- Construction: Carpentry, Advanced Marine Pipefitting, & Welding
- Health Care: Certified Medical Assistant & Certified Nurse's Assistant
- Hospitality: Culinary & Advanced Baking and Pastry



In collaboration with local, area high schools and adult education providers, both Centers offer students high school diploma options as well as the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) option. Additionally, both Centers offer a pathway to college through Memorandums of Understanding with the local community colleges, Eastern Maine Community College and Northern Maine Community College. Both Centers work collaboratively with other youth service providers in the Northeastern Region, including Eastern Maine Development Corporation, Aroostook Community Action Programs, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Maine Department of Labor Career Centers.

Community Colleges: The NWDB is fortunate to have several strong community colleges serving the region. The Board is regularly exploring opportunities to more closely partner with these education providers to develop or improve training programs that meet the needs of employers and by providing WIOA services to eligible students to help them complete their training. A representative of the region's community colleges is on the NWDB and relays information between the Board and the community colleges. Additionally, the community colleges regularly offer input on the strategies, priorities, and initiatives the board should pursue and how the workforce system can more effectively work together.

This strong partnership with the 3 community colleges within the NWDB has focused efforts on developing or identifying exemplary education and training programs that respond to real-time labor market analysis, utilize direct and prior learning assessment, ensure credits are portable and stackable, and offer both credit and non-credit training opportunities to align with industry demand in the local area.

The primary goals of the Maine Community College System are to create an educated, skilled, and adaptable labor force, which is responsive to the changing needs of the economy of the State, and to promote local, regional, and statewide economic development. (Public Law, Chapter 431) The MCCC goals fully align with the WIOA activities, including implementing innovative programs and strategies designed to meet the needs of business, including incumbent worker training, customized training and industry sector training. The 3 community colleges in the NWDB area have a long history of innovative educational opportunities that meet the in-demand industry sectors and occupations, offering industry-recognized credentials, and developing high quality training in a cost-effective manner.

University of Maine: The NWDB is fortunate to have a strong partnership with the University of Maine system which maintains an extensive combination of campuses, centers and other community access points throughout the region. As the University of Maine System's delayed viewing, video conferencing and online distance education organization, University College offers access through *Interactive Television (ITV)* to courses and programs from the seven universities at more than 40 locations and online at <http://learn.maine.edu/>. The region encompasses major campuses at the University of Maine at Orono, University of Maine at Machias, University of Maine at Presque Isle and the University of Maine at Fort Kent, as well as University College Center sites in Bangor, Ellsworth, East Millinocket, and Houlton. These



sites provide residents easy access to a wide range of postsecondary degree programs and professional certification programs encompassing all the target industry sectors. While it is rare that WIOA programs will fully support four-year programs at the bachelor's degree level, there are instances where WIOA participants can complete previously started programs that they couldn't complete earlier due to life circumstances or financial constraints. Also, in many cases participants can pursue additional certifications or credentials that allow them to update prior education to better fit present day employer requirements. The geographic distribution of University sites within the region and the extensive online and distance learning capabilities of the University has meant that workers and employers throughout the region, but particularly in rural areas that have been hard-hit by job loss and industrial dislocations, have better access to high quality and affordable education and training. The NWDB will continue to focus efforts on identifying potential collaborations with the University system to align these programs with other educational resources throughout the region to maximize education and training opportunities that align with industry demand in the local area.

Other Education and Training Programs: The Board also partners with apprenticeship/pre-apprenticeship programs, Career and Technical Centers, UMA in Bangor, Beal College, Husson University, and other higher education institutions in the region, and Northeast Technical Institute to provide comprehensive services at the One Stop Career Centers.

Economic Development Partners:

Eastern Maine Development Corporation: EMDC serves as the designated Economic Development District for Penobscot, Hancock, and Piscataquis Counties as well as the WIOA Service Provider for these same counties. In these dual roles, the organization is an invaluable partner to the Board's effort to understand and address the needs of local and regional business and employers. EMDC serves on the Board and participated in the strategic planning sessions during the development of this plan. Additionally, as a Service Provider, the organization regularly reports to NWDB, maintaining an open line of communication about the needs of businesses and job seekers and opportunities for improving services.

Northern Maine Development Corporation: The Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC) is a membership organization comprised of participating communities and counties in the Aroostook Washington Economic Development District. NMDC provides federal and state services at the regional and local levels. NMDC also provides management and support for Aroostook County Tourism (ACT), Aroostook Municipal Association (AMA), and Aroostook Partnership. NMDC is a crucial link between the workforce system and employers in the northern counties of the region.

Sunrise County Economic Council: The Sunrise County Economic Council (SCEC) initiates and facilitates the creation of jobs and prosperity in Washington County by working with a



consortium of community-minded businesses, not-for-profit organizations, municipalities and citizens.

SCEC was founded in 1993 by a group of business and community leaders and actively promotes a grassroots approach to economic and community development. By seeking common ground, working across traditional political, municipal, and economic boundaries, the Council is working with Washington County residents to build a brighter future. The Council helps link the workforce system to employers in Washington County. Additionally, the Council is known in the county as an innovative resource for services that help job seekers overcome barriers and access higher wage work.

Other Partnerships include:

- **Community Services:** The Board works directly with community-based organizations such as Penquis Community Action Program (CAP) and WHCAP, ACAP, Housing Authorities, local labor unions, New Ventures Maine and SCSEP—either in local collaborations, such as community transition teams, in CSBG program, and/or HUD employment and training services.
- **Special Populations Partners:** The Board and its service providers also work directly with special programs for welfare recipients, offenders, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, and other special population programs (including Native Americans), to provide direct services.
- The NWDB has worked diligently to develop a working relationship with the recovery communities, including The Bangor Area Recovery Network (BARN), the Portland Recovery Community Center (PRCC), and Aroostook Mental Health Center's (AMHC) recovery centers. The recovery centers offer addiction recovery support to local individuals while also standing with them as community allies to improve health, wellness, and quality of life. These community organizations, as well as others, have agreed to collaborate, provide referrals, and deliver services that connect recovery and workforce development, assisting individuals to move from treatment back into the workforce.

B. A description of how the local board, working with the entities that provide the programs identified above, will expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment, including how the local board will facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, and improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, and/or that is portable and stackable):

Through the strategic planning process, the NWDB has identified Maine's aging workforce and lower labor force participation rates as factors resulting in a shrinking labor force as a major



challenge facing employers. To address these challenges, the workforce system must prioritize bringing people into the labor force who are not currently participating at high levels, including veterans, individuals with disabilities, low-income adults, youth, individuals in recovery from substance use disorder, individuals re-entering from incarceration, New Mainers, immigrants, and residents with other barriers to employment. The use of training resources such as Recovery Works for ME will complement efforts to increase inclusivity. This largely aligns with the priority of service groups identified by the State's Unified Plan.

To target these groups effectively, the Board has tailored its services to meet the needs of members of each group, developed appropriate training opportunities, and leveraged its partnerships throughout the region. The Board through its Policy Committee annually revisits its supportive services and training policies to ensure that they meet the needs of job seekers in the priority groups while effectively stewarding public dollars.

Additional strategies include:

- By developing a common intake process and instituting a “no wrong door” policy, the Board directs customers to relevant resources including programs within the One Stop partnership and community partners that will help them complete training programs and enter the workforce. This approach has increased cross program co-enrollment strategies and program partnerships increasing participation rates of the most vulnerable and hard-to-serve populations.
- Additionally, through the Regional Partnerships Advisory Groups (RPAGs), the Board develops short-term, industry-recognized, stackable credentials that will help job seekers access quality employment opportunities, in partnership with Adult Education, community colleges, and other education and training providers in the region.
- The board will consider communicating effectively with job seekers, adapting practices including new technology platforms to engage those who are not already actively involved in the job seeking process.
- The Board has provided training to help workforce partners, community leaders, employers, and other interested parties learn more about substance use disorder (SUD) and recovery from SUD. The two main workshops used in 2020 and 2021 were Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery's [Recovery Coach Basics Training](#) and a newly designed workshop by the [Bangor Area Recovery Network](#) called Recovery Works for ME. The Board will continue to promote trainings to help all stakeholders learn more about the benefits and complexities of working with people in recovery and with a history of SUD.



C. A description of the steps taken by the local board to engage entities in the formulation of the local plan. Describe the processes the local board (*and any of its subcommittees*) used to convene workforce system stakeholders to assist in development of the local plan. Explain how business and industry, education, social service agencies, economic development partners and all WIOA required partners and other workforce system stakeholders participated in and contributed to the development of the strategic vision for and development of local plan strategies and objectives. Copies of meeting agendas, attendee names, and meeting minutes of each planning session must be available for review upon request.

To develop this plan, the Board met extensively with partners throughout the five-county region. The attached meeting log (Appendix 5) includes times and dates of all strategic planning sessions. Eight stakeholder meetings were held, with representatives of each of the five counties, Board members, and providers in attendance. These have included meetings with:

- One Stop Partner Committees (3/3/2021)
- Youth Council Stakeholders (3/25/2021, 4/12/2021)
- NWDB Stakeholders Meetings (3/11/2021, 3/29/2021, 4/9/2021)
- Regional Comprehensive Economic Development (CEDS) Meetings (3/11/2021, 4/1/2021, 4/22/2021)

The meetings focused on these provider groups of the workforce system. Topics discussed included system changes, initiatives they would like to see the Board engaged in, and the resources they need to be successful.

The NWDB worked collaboratively with Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) to circulate a Business Services Survey that addressed economic and workforce development topics. A total of 211 were completed and returned from businesses across Maine. Each survey was designed to gather relevant information about barriers, opportunities, and workforce topics. A Youth Survey was shared by NWDB, with more than 300 surveys completed and returned by current youth job seekers as well as those in education and training programs. The results of both surveys are shared in the appendices, and outcomes have been addressed throughout the strategic plan.

Three interview sessions were scheduled on the following topics: Bureau of Employment Services, Adult Education & Literacy, and One Stop Partners. Participants were asked to identify systemic changes, new services and partnerships, barriers experienced by job seekers, opportunities, helping people with disabilities, veterans, and priority of services.

The plan will be reviewed by relevant stakeholders, who will be offered the opportunity to make suggestions and revisions. See Appendix 5 for times and dates of all strategic planning sessions.



- D. A description of the strategies and services that will be used in the local area to:
1. Facilitate engagement of businesses, including small businesses and businesses in in-demand industry sectors and occupations, in workforce development programs;
 2. Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area;
 3. Better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development; and
 4. Strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system with unemployment insurance programs and other required partner programs.

To facilitate engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations, in workforce development programs:

The Board is developing a data-driven approach to engaging with employers - specifically employers that fall into three targeted industries: manufacturing, healthcare, and information technology. The NWDB will also incorporate upcoming initiatives as described through communication with Maine's government representatives to work proactively developing the workforce for new in-demand industries. The NWDB will focus resources and time linking in Hospitality, Tourism, and Construction. The primary vehicle for engagement with these five industries is the Regional Partnership Advisory Groups (RPAGs). Multiple RPAGs for each industry have been developed to focus on business engagement throughout the region. The goal of the RPAGs is to bring together businesses in targeted industries with service providers and education and training institutions to discuss industry needs and skill gaps and develop a plan to mitigate the challenges identified. In addition to speaking directly with employers, the RPAGs are seeking to understand hiring trends in these industries by reviewing detailed labor market information.

Over the past four years the RPAGs have initiated several industry roundtables and focused on understanding employer needs and developing strategies to address those needs. This approach has been used to engage employers in sector-based training programs for in-demand occupations. The program is designed to "meet job seekers where they are," by building on the skills they already have and address and provide remedial training as needed.

In addition to developing its own business engagement strategies, the Board understands that other partners in the region have strong relationships with employers. These organizations, such as the region's chambers of commerce and economic development organizations, interact with employers regularly and can be an important source of information about industry trends and challenges. The Board partners closely with these organizations to share information about the employment trends they are seeing. For example, several chambers and economic development organizations participated in the strategic planning sessions and were surveyed to solicit their feedback. The Board director meets with each chamber director in the region, and other members of the Board staff regularly participate in chamber events.



The Board conducts a thorough orientation with each new Board member. This orientation ensures all members on the Board, including business representatives, fully understand not only the Board operations but the entire workforce ecosystem. This orientation will help Board members to serve more effectively while also enabling them to fully utilize the workforce system for their own businesses and spread information about the workforce system to other employers.

The Board has recently begun developing a list of [Recovery Friendly Employers](#). This list enables the region to have a centralized database of employers who openly support recovery and recognize the critical relationship between being in recovery and having a job. This, in turn, will help job seekers know where to start during their job search. Additionally, this list helps employers formalize their support of recovery and deliberately review their practices to ensure recovery is in mind as much as possible. Lastly, the development of this list involves robust Board engagement with employers, both as a form of promoting the list itself and as a way for the Board to provide technical assistance as well as a meaningful introduction into the NWDB workforce system.

Finally, the Board is working to better market its workforce services to businesses. A summary of key marketing strategies includes:

- Release of the Board's revamped website, which offers a range of information about the workforce resources available in the region
- Training Board members (especially private sector members) as workforce ambassadors to speak at events and share information about workforce services to peers
- Joining chambers and other business/industry organizations and regularly attending events

To support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the Local Area:

As previously discussed, the primary vehicle for engaging with employers is the Regional Partnership Advisory Groups (RPAGs). These groups will provide a regular stream of feedback from employers that can be used to improve the workforce system and its business services.

Further, to supplement the information gathered from RPAGs, the Board leverages the business outreach conducted by its partners throughout the region, including chambers of commerce and economic development organizations. By soliciting information about business needs from these partners, the Board will be able to receive input from more businesses (including small businesses).

In addition to leveraging the employer feedback gathered by partners, the Board hopes to develop a more formalized process of aggregating and sharing the feedback received from employers by the range of partners conducting business outreach. This initiative would require all partners to be trained in the basics of workforce services for employers so they can represent the workforce system to businesses and make referrals to appropriate partners. Additionally, in



the future, the Board may be interested in developing a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that is shared by all partners conducting business outreach. The CRM would help coordinate business outreach in the region and ensure that all partners are most effectively using their business outreach resources. Specific services that support the needs of employers include:

- Work experience
- On-the-job training
- Incumbent worker training
- Customized training
- Discretionary grant training programs

The Board will pursue new grant opportunities, when possible, to secure funding for initiatives that meet the needs of employers and job seekers.

To better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development:

The Board has begun the process of collaborating more closely with economic development entities. Separately from the strategic planning process, the NWDB director meets regularly with the leaders of all chamber and economic development organizations in the region to discuss how the groups can collaborate more closely. Furthermore, chambers and economic development organizations were an important voice in the development of this plan, with many attending and participating meaningfully in the many discussions. Several chambers and economic development organizations also serve on the Northeastern Workforce Development Board.

The Board also benefits from its relationship with the Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC), which provides One Stop services in four of the five counties of the NWDB region. While the Board recognizes that EMDC does not represent the whole region, the close collaboration between the NWDB and EMDC as well as EMDC's engagement in One Stop Operations has helped bridge the communication gap that sometimes separates economic development and workforce development. The two organizations are more aware of the intersecting goals, vocabulary, and restrictions of economic development and workforce organizations, which helps them work more closely and will also help as NWDB develops stronger ties to other economic development organizations. Further, EMDC supports NWDB with access to robust labor market data and information. This data is essential to NWDB making informed decisions as to how it should prioritize its initiatives, which sectors to focus on, and the training gaps that may exist in the region.

In addition to inviting input from chambers and economic development organizations into the workforce development process, the NWDB is also partnering with economic development entities to offer input into economic development initiatives. The Board plans to have representatives of the NWDB serve on economic development boards and participate meaningfully in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) process and advisory committees. The CEDS process will determine the goals, priorities, and strategies of



economic development organizations in the region. By participating in the process, the NWDB can help ensure that workforce development is a cornerstone of the economic development strategy and can represent the range of workforce development partners in the process.

Improving communication among partners is a major priority in this plan. The NWDB strongly believes that, in addition to the efforts outlined above, collaboration between workforce and economic development will also be encouraged by a more thorough understanding of the resources and priorities of the two groups. The NWDB's website has been developed to focus on providing information about the Board so partners are aware of its resources and more likely to collaborate when needs and priorities overlap. These resources also function as a virtual "Workforce 101" training to new staff at partner organizations, including economic organizations, to make them aware of workforce resources, priorities, and opportunities for collaboration.

To strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs:

Representatives of Maine's Department of Labor (MDOL) serve on the Board, offering input into the strategy, direction, and decisions of the NWDB. Representatives of the MDOL are also regularly onsite at One Stop Centers, assisting job seekers access unemployment resources and other MDOL resources.

A major opportunity for collaboration between MDOL and the NWDB is encouraging the utilization of the Maine JobLink. While some employers may not be aware of the resource, Maine JobLink can both help employers hire qualified workers while helping job seekers MDOL serves access quality employment opportunities. When possible, the Board will promote the Maine JobLink in its meetings with employers and partners and incorporate it into new training and hiring initiatives.

E. A description regarding how the Local area will utilize work-based learning approaches through such programs as registered apprenticeship (RA), on-the-job training (OJT), customized training (CT), industry sector strategies, integrated education and training strategies, career pathways initiatives, utilization of business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies designed to meet the needs of businesses and workers.

In 2017 the NWDB developed and launched a new approach to developing Regional Partnership Advisory Groups (RPAGs) that bring together employers from targeted industries and other workforce stakeholders to address the challenges facing the region's targeted industries. Depending on the needs identified by these groups, the RPAGs have implemented strategies, such as apprenticeships and customized training, to address the needs of employers. As industry-focused groups, the RPAGs identify and work to address industry-wide challenges that affect multiple companies. This industry-wide approach leads to a more effective and efficient



allocation of workforce resources. Over the past several years RPAGs have begun meeting in several counties to identify opportunities and challenges and to develop action plans. The focus of these groups is employers, but the subsequently planned initiatives could not be implemented successfully without the collaboration of local and regional partners and other business intermediaries.

Additional strategies to develop work-based learning approaches that meet the needs of employers:

- Work more closely with chambers, economic development organizations, and industry groups (such as Maine Manufacturing Association) to understand the needs of businesses and market workforce resources to employers.
- Work with employers directly to understand career pathways within their industry and develop information about career pathways that can be shared with job seekers and educators.
- Market incumbent worker training to employers and workers to help entry-level workers and those that may be currently underemployed move up the career ladder and create opportunities to backfill jobs.
- Maintain and disseminate current and robust data resources to better understand the most in-demand occupations and skill needs.
- Assess job seekers to determine their eligibility for work-based training opportunities
- Connect current students to internships and other direct experience opportunities as they are completing degrees.
- Develop career lattices (wrap-around support services designed to overcome unemployment and underemployment challenges) to provide workers and job seekers with supportive services.

F. A description of how the local board will coordinate workforce development activities carried out in the local area with economic development activities carried out in the local area to promote entrepreneurial skills training, microenterprise services and training, and placement of participants;

As the economy continues to transform, entrepreneurship has become an increasingly important component of the workforce development system. Depending on the skills and resources of a job seeker, creating a job may be more feasible and lead to higher wages than taking a job. While the Board does not have the resources in-house to help job seekers start a business, it does identify job seekers who may have the right skills to become entrepreneurs and connect them to appropriate resources within the region. In particular, the Board will work to ensure that customers have access to entrepreneurship resources and counseling on how to market themselves and how to learn other business management skills. The Board will also promote short term trainings that result in Badges and/or micro-credentials including pathways to



entrepreneurship relative to skill trades occupations. The Board also acts as a conduit of information and referrals, including:

- Providing education and information that enables individuals to assess their interest and capacity to start their own business
- Referring customers interested in entrepreneurship and business ownership to state, regional, and local partners for small business and entrepreneurship support, including Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), Maine Centers for New Ventures Maine, startup initiatives, entrepreneurship programs at regional higher education institutes, the Department of Economic and Community Development, Maine SCORE, and local chambers and economic development organizations
- Marketing workforce services to SBDCs and other organizations that work with small businesses so they can share information about workforce services to their small business clients and direct them to the workforce system for assistance training and hiring new workers
- Partnering with SBDCs, Maine Centers for New Ventures Maine, and Department of Economic and Community Development, Maine SCORE, Start-up initiatives, entrepreneurship programs at regional higher education institutes, local chambers, and economic development organizations to provide entrepreneurship training and small business workshops. Co-location or office hours with these organizations should be explored
- In partnership with organizations in the region, providing workshops that provide instruction, tools, and assistance to people interested in entrepreneurship and business ownership
- Supporting special events and conferences that support business ownership and entrepreneurship
- Collaborating on grant proposals that promote entrepreneurship and small business support

G. A description of how the local board will leverage and coordinate supportive services in the delivery of workforce development activities carried out in the local area, including how the local board will work with other community partner providers to deliver supportive services to job seekers;

Goal: provide job seekers with the support required to complete training and/or retain a job by leveraging both WIOA resources and the resources of partners in the region.

Process:

Through the intake process, an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) is developed for customers. The strategy reviews participant needs and identifies gaps and appropriate resources to help fill those



gaps. One Stop staff then assist the customer to access those resources using WIOA funding or leveraging resources in the community, as appropriate.

In addition, customers may need services as they transition into new employment after training. This may include anything from transportation and childcare to job coping and soft skills training. Employers hiring workers with barriers should also be informed about potential challenges, strategies to overcome challenges, and services and incentives available to support the transition of the new workers.

Strategies:

In addition to using the ISS to identify needs, the NWDB will also engage in the following strategies to ensure customers beginning a job or completing training have access to the resources they need:

- Conduct follow up meetings with the program customer either in person or via telephone/video conference to assess the customers' needs and to identify the resources most appropriate at that time.
- Request grades at appropriate intervals during the training program to validate their progress.
- Develop success stories to demonstrate how job seekers leveraged supportive services to complete training programs and/or ease the transition to a new job
- Regularly communicate with training providers and when appropriate employers to assess the participants' progress.
- Explore opportunities to develop a single portal for job seekers and clients to enter information that can be used by all service providers to identify needs and corresponding resources in the region.

H. A description of how the Local board intends to promote a greater business voice in the delivery of workforce development activities carried out in the local area. This description should include how the board will engage businesses on decisions regarding the type and content of training activities required of the local workforce;

See Section 2D for more detailed information. A summary of strategies to engage businesses are below:

- NWDB staff conduct orientations for new Board members to ensure they understand the workforce system and expectations of Board members. With this information, they can contribute most effectively to developing the strategies and priorities of the Board.
- NWDB staff engage directly with employers by participating in chamber events, collaborating with economic development organizations, and partnering with industry groups. Additionally, the Board's website and social media strategies are designed to continuously communicate emerging workforce trends, issues and opportunities helping



to inform and support employers in real time with resources and assistance. The Board also has asked private-sector Board members and employers to speak at events and promote workforce resources within their companies and industries.

- Additionally, by engaging closely with chambers and economic development groups, and other strategic planning processes such as the CED's and other efforts, the Board will learn what feedback they are hearing from their business partners and use that information to develop new programs and strategies.
- The NWDB is business-friendly with an engaging approach to providing a simple explanation of the workforce system and the benefits it offers employers and job seekers that encourages businesses to engage with the Board and its partners to solve their problems through direct recruitment, hiring and training initiatives.
- The Board has and will continue to engage with employers through focus groups and sector-based coalitions to better understand their challenges and develop programs that address their needs. Using on-line surveys, specialized employer focused trainings and seminars that address critical workforce needs including hiring and retention of at-risk populations the Board is continuously championing efforts to broaden the opportunities for those workers and to help employers solve day-to-day problems.

I. A description of how the local board will promote and cultivate industry-led partnerships and career pathways in delivery of workforce training opportunities;

Goal: Create industry groups that can provide information about challenges and develop industry-led training programs and other initiatives that address these challenges

Regional Partnership Advisory Groups (RPAGs)

The Board has developed a series of Regional Partnership Advisory Groups (RPAGs) as industry-led partnerships. Over the past several years RPAGs have been developed around 3 industry groups: healthcare, manufacturing, and information technology – in some cases, more than one RPAG may be developed per industry to serve different labor market areas within the region. Industry employers have been recruited to join the RPAGs by soliciting suggestions from Board members and partners in the region.

The goals of the RPAGS are to discuss the major challenges facing employers and identify new strategies and initiatives to address those challenges. To accomplish these goals, the RPAGs bring together a range of stakeholders, including employers, education and training providers, adult education, and other service providers and public services, as necessary. The RPAG employer roundtables are designed to lead to specific solutions, including new or updated industry-led training and credentials. As the partnerships continue to meet and develop a stronger rapport, the Board has seen the results of these engagements ranging from simple changes to the way employers address hiring needs and challenges to more complex initiatives, such as developing industry career pathways and related programs and training initiatives.



While the RPAG initiative is relatively new, to date, the Tri-County Healthcare RPAG has identified a range of primary needs among healthcare employers, including:

- Better understanding workforce resources
- Labor market information
- Healthcare academy

Additionally, RPAG Manufacturing meetings in Aroostook County resulted in a career and education fair at the local high school. This fair served as an opportunity for local mills, among other employers, to discuss job opportunities at the mills and the working conditions that could be expected.

The RPAGs will be further supported by regularly sharing labor market information with both employers and partners. This information will provide additional insight into the economic, occupational, and hiring trends facing businesses in industries in the region.

J. A description of the role of faith-based or community-based organizations in the local one-stop system.

Community and faith-based organizations are an important component of the One Stop System. These organizations can often bring resources that complement those of the NWDB and its other partners, including funding for supportive services that may help a job seeker access training or a new job. Additionally, these organizations can be important partners in recruiting job seekers into the workforce system, especially immigrants to the state who may have language barriers or may not be aware of workforce resources. Community and faith-based organizations can also help address the needs of groups with barriers to employment, such as those recovering from addiction but connecting them to workforce resources and educating workforce professionals and employers about working with those recovering from addiction.

Recognizing the importance of these organizations, the Board surveyed community and faith-based organizations during the prior strategic planning process. Through these surveys, organizations defined their priorities and strategies and identified how the organization and workforce system can more closely partner to achieve shared goals.

While the opportunity to partner more closely with community and faith-based organizations is great, there remain some obstacles, including the splintered nature of this sector. There are many community and faith-based organizations in the region and engaging with each one to understand how NWDB can partner more closely with them may be challenging for an organization with limited time and resources. Strategies that have been implemented to engage community and faith-based organizations include:

- Marketing information about the workforce system to these organizations, preferably through intermediaries such as chambers



- Leveraging existing lists of resources (sometimes maintained by local or county governments) to identify organizations with missions and resources that complement that of the workforce systems
- Developing a list of needs that can be presented to community and faith-based organizations that will help them understand how collaborating with the workforce system can assist job seekers
- Engaging with community and faith-based organizations in one-on-one or small group meetings, prioritizing those that serve individuals with barriers to employment

Overall, the Board believes that leveraging the networks and knowledge of partners is essential to identifying community and faith-based organizations that are in the best position to support the work of NWDB and its partners.

Section 3: Local One-Stop Delivery System

- A. A list of all the one-stop centers in the local area, indicating those that are comprehensive and affiliated;

Existing One Stop Centers located at:

Comprehensive One Stop CareerCenter

1. Bangor CareerCenter (Comprehensive)

45 Oak St # 3

Bangor, ME 04401

This Comprehensive Center is:

- Accessible to the general public during regular business days, and physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities
- Portal site for electronic access
- Provider of career services (basic and individualized) and training services
- Provider of business services
- Representation of Core partners (WIOA Titles I-IV)
- Additional related employment and training resources

Affiliate One Stop CareerCenters

2. Calais CareerCenter (Specialized)

1 College Dr

Calais, ME



3. Machias CareerCenter (Affiliate)

53 Prescott Dr
Machias, ME 04654

4. Presque Isle CareerCenter (Affiliate)

66 Spruce St
Presque Isle, ME 04769

5. Katahdin Higher Education Center (Affiliate)

1 Dirigo Drive
East Millinocket, ME 04430

6. Penquis Higher Education Center (Affiliate)

50 Mayo Street
Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426

All Affiliate Sites are:

- Accessible to the general public and physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities
- Portal site for electronic access
- Provider of basic career services
- Representation of one or more mandated partners
- Additional related employment and training resources
- Established working relationship as part of an integrated system of other One Stop partner sites

B. A description of the customer flow process used in the local area. This description should include eligibility determination, assessment, individualized employment plans, training plans, case management and post-exit follow-up and must include an explanation of the flow of customers connected through co-enrollment or coordinated referral.

The NWDB One Stop system promotes a “no wrong door” policy to ensure customers have access to all relevant resources.

All partners are trained to ensure that both old and new customers are directed to determine their eligibility and direct them to the most relevant resources available.

Upon entering the One Stop, customers are immediately directed into one of two tracks: Track 1 is for new customers (or those who have not been to the Center in over 90 days) and Track 2 is for return customers. The two tracks are described in more detail below. The full One Stop Operations flow chart is attached to the plan for further information.



Track 1:

A. Initial Triage:

- a. Customer fills out a career center form to help determine possible services and appropriate referral. If customer is seeking information around Unemployment Insurance, they are provided an option to meet with someone. Those looking for all other services are directed to a service orientation. If customer seeks services through the virtual chat they are assessed of their needs and referred to appropriate services.
- b. Maine JobLink setup: If necessary, help customers that are inexperienced on computers and review the created profile for efficiency.
- c. Orientation (for new customers and returning customers that are interested). The orientation is a shared presentation by participating partners. Partners discuss next option once orientation is complete.
- d. Initial assessment: CareerCenter staff holds a conversation with customer to determine how best to address customer needs using initial interview outline as guide. This same assessment could be completed by a career center partner.
- e. Referral to appropriate program or service.

B. Intake/Application: determination of eligibility with one or more WIOA partners (Vocational Rehabilitation, WIOA Provider, Adult Education, BES, Others)

C. Develop individual service strategy (ISS) that identifies employment, training, and supportive service needs, as applicable. If it is determined the customer may be eligible for multiple programs, representatives from each program meet with the customer together, discuss goals, leverage resources, and identify a lead partner to act as a main point of contact with the customer.

D. Comprehensive assessment by appropriate program

Track 2:

- Customers on Track 2 are provided with more freedom to conduct self-directed activities, such as looking for and applying for new jobs.
- Staff discusses the needs of customers on this Track to determine if additional assistance is needed. If additional assistance is required, Track 2 customers are re-directed to Track 1.

C. A description of how the local board will ensure meaningful access to all customers including individuals with disabilities or for whom English is not their primary language.

The NWDB will ensure that meaningful access is afforded all customers in the following ways:



- The NWDB will work with Vocational Rehabilitation to ensure all American Job Center services are available to individuals with disabilities in all OneStop partner locations in the region.
- The NWDB will partner with other organizations in the region to ensure a range of services are available to customers that help them overcome barriers to job training and access to support services by providing space and other resources to those organizations to provide services to participants.
- Utilize technology and other resources to offer virtual services whenever possible to enable individuals living in the more rural areas to access career development, job training, and support services at the same level of quality and consistency afforded all job seekers.

D. A description of the process the local board will use to solicit and competitively select a one-stop operator as required under Section 107 of WIOA;

To solicit and competitively procure One Stop Operator(s) for the region, the Board will engage closely with its Board and partners to develop an RFP. The RFP will include specific requirements for the operator and the kind of initiatives and outcomes the Board would like Operator(s) to engage in.

Subsequently, the RFP will be posted in local newspapers, the Board's website, and may be sent to national entities, such as the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) to encourage a diverse range of responses.

All responses that meet the criteria set out in the RFP will be assessed by a procurement committee and scored. Based on these scores, the NWDB will begin negotiations with the chosen One Stop Operator(s).

E. A description of how the local board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services throughout the system and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of local businesses, workers and job seekers;

Goal: Work with partners and training providers to ensure that the highest quality services are being provided to workers, job seekers, and employers by providing oversight, facilitating partnerships, and ensuring all partners are aware of emerging labor trends and employer needs.

The One Stop system participated in a comprehensive certification process including meetings between partners to consider current methods of communication, service delivery, accessibility, outcomes, assessments, and co-enrollments. The NWDB reviewed findings, coordinated assessment of the One Stop center and affiliate sites and recommended actions to enhance the customer experience and accessibility of services. Recommended actions include a combined menu of services for all programs, cross-training for accessibility and interpretation tools to



improve access for individuals with disabilities and non-English speaking customers. Further recommendations include assessing service delivery post COVID-19 to ensure inclusive delivery to all customers.

Collaboration with One Stop Partners

The One Stop is the primary method of interaction with customers ranging from employers to job seekers. Many workforce services are provided through the One Stop, either by the One Stop Operator or by one of the many One Stop partners. One of the simplest ways for the Board to develop a framework for constant improvement in the operation of One Stops is through a thoughtful One Stop Operator Agreement and One Stop Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with partners in working in the One Stop.

The Board uses its One Stop Operator (OSO) Agreement as one tool to meet its performance requirements, develop new solutions to customer challenges, and collaborate effectively with partners to deliver services efficiently. The NWDB will procure its WIOA contracts in 2021. The new Adult and Dislocated Worker contract will include the OSO responsibility. The goals of the OSO will continue to be the foundation upon which the OSO agreement is built.

In addition to the agreement with the One Stop Operator, the has developed an MOU governing the One Stop partners. The MOU document specifically outlines the contributions of One Stop partners and expectation of partners. This document is also used to facilitate constant improvement at the One Stop. As the One Stop Operator and One Stop partners must work together to effectively serve One Stop customers, all benefit when standards improve. The One Stop MOU mandates regular meetings among the partners and the One Stop Operator to ensure that any challenges or bottlenecks are mitigated, and operations are improved. Additionally, these regular meetings serve as a valuable opportunity for partners to share information about their resources, priorities, and feedback they have received from employers and job seekers.

Finally, One Stop and other workforce partners in the region have been an integral part of this strategic planning process. Representatives from the Department of Labor, Vocational Rehab, Adult Education, community colleges and others were included in the planning process, including stakeholder meetings, interviews, and two surveys.

As these partners have been and will continue to be included in the strategic decision making of the Board, the priorities of their organizations and the Board will be more closely aligned and their resources will be better understood, leading to more opportunities for collaboration and better outcomes. Additionally, One Stop Partners have agreed to regularly present updates to the Board, informing Board members of their resources and strategies to ensure the Board is in alignment and offer an opportunity for questions, suggestions, and feedback from Board members.



Assessing Eligible Training Providers

- Training providers are regularly assessed in accordance with the established ETPL requirements.
- WIOA service providers assist in connecting training providers for ETPL list consideration of new programs to fill workforce needs.

Conduct Annual Monitoring

The Board and One-Stop Partners will utilize customized surveys, visit professional meetings, and conduct WIOA participant interviews to determine the effectiveness of the current configuration of One Stops in our local area. The Board will also consider how quickly the regional partners can mobilize and react quickly to respond to an economic crisis. The Board will also solicit feedback from economic development, chambers, and private sector partners to solicit feedback about the effectiveness of the One Stop system.

Finally, the Board will develop and implement a data analysis framework, or scorecard to measure how the system is functioning and evaluate how well the One Stops are performing against various performance measures. Once developed, the scorecard will be used to assess how the Board and its partners are performing and what adjustments should be made to improve performance. Findings will be shared with the One Stop Operator, One Stop and other partners, and the Northeastern Workforce Development Board.

In addition to program monitoring, financial monitoring will also be conducted annually. This monitoring will review spending and outcomes to determine that program goals are being met and appropriate follow-up is being conducted. The review of finances and accounting system is conducted by an outside firm while the Board is responsible for monitoring for financial and programmatic compliance of sub-consultants and funding recipients.

Findings from this monitoring will be shared with partners and the Board, and a plan to address any findings and improve performance will be developed.

- F. A description of how the local board will facilitate access to services for those who live in rural and remote areas using technology and other means;

The Board offers workforce services through four One Stop centers located throughout the region, and services and programs are networked and coordinated by staff, and partners. By working with partners to institute a “no wrong door” policy, customers can enter the workforce ecosystem by accessing Adult Education and community college partners throughout the region, further increasing the reach of workforce services. One Stop staff utilize space and technology at adult education centers throughout the region to meet the needs of customers removed from the One Stop centers.



The NWDB website will serve as a portal for job seekers to connect with workforce resources. The website will have concise descriptions of available services that job seekers and other customers can access.

Job seekers and employers can also access the workforce system through the updated Maine JobLink. This provides a virtual portal to a wide array of workforce and employability services providing job seekers with real-time access to support information and materials; access to resources to look for and apply for jobs without being required to enter a One Stop Center; and tools and links to a wide array of related community and educational resources. Businesses may also use the Maine JobLink remotely to post jobs and interact with job seekers.

The Maine Bureau of Employment Services (BES), an essential One Stop partner, is also using technology to improve access to its services for rural customers. The Bureau now offers some Unemployment Insurance (UI) workshops using Zoom. The Zoom technology enables users to participate in the workshops remotely while continuing to hold UI participants accountable for participating. The BES requires the first workshop to be attended in-person while the second UI workshop can be attended using Zoom. BES also collaborates with the Board to offer its resume workshop remotely.

Both the Board and many of its One Stop partners are also embracing social media as a platform to communicate with its business and job seeker customers. Using social media, service providers can let job seekers know about One Stop services, upcoming workshops, and resources that can assist them in accessing higher quality jobs.

The board recognizes that its region is geographically large in scope. The distance for rural community members can create barriers to education and employment. All NWDB partners are encouraged to collaborate and work together whenever possible to assure that transportation resources are available to allow job seekers in the outlying areas to participate and attend events, workshops, and job training classes when appropriate and necessary.

A new Virtual Office Hours idea has been implemented to build a stronger bridge with referrals. The virtual offices hours are an on demand virtual office where the public will have access to staff who can provide information and assistance through zoom technology. A zoom link is provided to the public and when you enter you will be greeted by a staff person who serves as a receptionist. This person then assigns the individual to one of the open breakout rooms which has a staff person in waiting to meet people. Individual job seekers as well as community members and partners have an opportunity to either come in to ask questions or refer someone for assistance. This allows anyone from anywhere to meet with workforce staff.

Finally, the Board is committed to transparency and public engagement. While most Board meetings are conducted in person, the Board provides a link to participate in the meeting via Zoom. This allows both partners and members of the public to listen to and participate in Board meetings from anywhere in the 5-county region or the state.



- G. A description of how entities that make up the one-stop system, including one-stop operators and partners, will comply with Section 188 of WIOA, and the applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials, for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities;

Goal: Ensure individuals with disabilities have equal access to One Stop services and can participate in job search, preparation, and training.

The Board recognizes that individuals with disabilities can face barriers to employment not encountered by other workers. However, when connected to the appropriate employment opportunities and with the right support, workers with disabilities can contribute to a work environment and bring value to the business. To ensure that individuals with disabilities can access these employment opportunities, the Board is committed to ensuring they have access to the full array of One Stop services, and that all participants in the workforce system have access to training for working with individuals with disabilities, are aware of resources available to support them, and know of best practices in serving individuals with disabilities.

One Stop Coordination and Program Services

The One Stop Centers in the region are all equipped to serve individuals with disabilities. Additionally, with the physical presence of representatives of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Centers have an invaluable resource when working with job seekers with a disability. Vocational Rehab counselors are able to take referrals from One Stop center staff when a disability is indicated in the initial intake and provide more comprehensive services to serve that individual.

Through past and ongoing efforts including the implementation of the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grant, the OneStop system staff has a better understanding of the needs of individuals with disabilities and how to best connect them with employment and training opportunities. Additionally, the One Stop partners have worked with the Maine Department of Labor to provide training for frontline staff to help better serve individuals with disabilities. With this training, all One Stop Staff are prepared to provide basic services to individuals with disabilities while being sensitive to their needs.

The Board has also worked to increase the number of people with disabilities that are being served by WIOA and Wagner-Peyser programs.

Board Engagement

The Northeastern Workforce Development Board is also committed to understanding and addressing the needs of job seekers with disabilities. Representatives of organizations serving individuals with disabilities serve on the Board and offer insight into the challenges faced by



individuals with disabilities and strategies to address those challenges. Additionally, the strategic planning process, including stakeholder sessions and focus groups, has included organizations representing individuals with disabilities. By including these organizations in the planning process, the Board is ensuring that individuals with disabilities are given considerable consideration when new strategies and initiatives are developed by the Board.

The Board has also participated in board training targeted at informing and educating employers about resources and tools made available for people with disabilities to allow them to effectively work in the marketplace and contribute directly to a business's bottom line. These training programs will be expanded and provided across our partner groups.

H. A description of the roles and resource contributions of the local one-stop system partners;

A new MOU has been developed and agreed to by all OneStop partners. Through the MOU the NWDB, together with all partners including the leaders of higher education systems within the region, have affirmed a strong commitment to maintaining positions as stakeholders in the workforce system and directing resources and maximizing financial and program resources and investments under this plan. This commitment will include a cost sharing agreement outlining the financial contributions to the OneStop system and the service collaborations that will underpin the efforts of all system partners in the areas of education, training, and skill development.

I. A description of how the board will use individualized training accounts (ITAs) to address high-demand, difficult to fill, positions identified within local priority industries as stated under Section A;

The Board's efforts to utilize ITAs will be intertwined with its priority sector initiatives, including RPAGs and sector-based training initiatives (described in more detail in Section 2I). By engaging with employers through these initiatives, the Board will become more aware of the in-demand skills and occupations in priority sectors. Additionally, engagement with employers will lead to a clearer understanding of the types of training employers find to be most beneficial for new workers. The RPAG initiatives may also directly create new training programs that specifically address the needs of employers in priority sectors, which may be opportunities for ITAs. Finally, through its partnership with EMDC, the Board will be regularly updated on labor market trends, including the wages of various occupations, the fastest growing occupations, and any training gaps that may exist in the region.

In addition, the Board will support ITAs through the following strategies:



- The NWDB will maintain a list of training providers throughout the region. This list will be updated regularly to ensure that training providers are providing quality outcomes for customers.
- One Stop staff will work with the customer to analyze labor market information, discuss in-demand occupations, and the different careers and wages that are possible with different training programs. Through these discussions, staff will help the customer make an informed decision about training. Once a decision has been made, the customer and staff will make a training plan and discuss other unmet needs that may warrant additional supportive services.
- One Stop staff will work closely with employers to help them identify workforce needs. Information gathered from local employers will be used as a form of outreach to individuals. One Stop Staff can utilize the information to help bring job seekers attention to the job openings. If additional training is needed to fulfill the needs of employers, collaboration with local education provides will be sought to help design specific training programs that address the local needs.

J. A description of how the local board will provide priority of service that conforms to the State plan and Policy PY15-03 Adult Priority of Service. This segment should include a description of any additional local requirements or discretionary priorities including data to support the need and how the local requirement or priority will be documented and implemented for the adult program;

The NWDB will establish policies and implement practices that ensure priority of service for recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, individuals who are basic skills deficient, and veterans are followed in the delivery of WIOA services throughout the workforce area.

The local policies and practices will be aligned with the State Unified Plan and policies regarding Priority of Service for specific populations. As adopted by the State Workforce Board and as specified in WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(E), the provision of individualized career services and training services funded with WIOA Title I Adult funds, requires that priority of service must be given to:

- Recipients of public assistance;
- Other low-income individuals; or
- Individuals who are basic skills deficient.

The NWDB will ensure that priority for training services will be given to those adult program customers (other than those who are being served through dislocated worker funding) who meet the above Priority of Service criteria. Particular focus will be on assisting adults who are either economically disadvantaged (below the yearly LLSIL guidelines) or on public assistance.



In addition to these targeted groups the NWDB will identify other at-risk populations in the local area who are not low-income, basic skills deficient, or recipients of public assistance, but who are individuals documented as having other barriers to employment. These include:

- Veterans and eligible spouses who receive Priority of Service for all workforce program services administered by Department of Labor (DOL),
- Individuals with disabilities,
- Immigrants, including non-native English speakers,
- Offenders,
- Out-of-school youth, and
- Older workers.

We anticipate that these priority groups will require services beyond education and skills training including English language programs, developmental and basic education, work-based services and readiness training, supportive services such as transportation and childcare and other employment supports. To better support the needs of these groups, the NWDB will ensure that its local supportive services policy and practices are adapted to take into account localized needs and conditions to allow for the customization of services to meet the specific needs of the customer.

The NWDB will require Service Providers to annually establish numeric goals for services to these priority groups based on local labor market and demographic data and to report performance results on a quarterly basis.

K. A description of how the local board will utilize funding to create incumbent worker training opportunities to avert layoffs or assist employees to retain jobs; and how the local requirement or priority will be documented and implemented for the adult program;

With its efforts to market to businesses, the NWDB will provide information about incumbent worker training, layoff aversion strategies, and Rapid Response services. Through these marketing efforts, the Board will develop interest in these services and ensure that businesses are familiar with services that can help in the event of a layoff. Additionally, the RPAGs provide valuable information about the needs of businesses and the types of training that will most assist them in retaining existing jobs and possibly adding new ones.

The Cooperative Development Institute recently conducted a survey of rural Maine business owners about their exit planning knowledge. Results illuminated the potential threat of business closures and lost jobs. Research by USM School of Business estimates there are over 10,000 small businesses in Maine, employing over 100,000 workers, where the owner wants to retire in the next several years. Nationally, 79% of business owners want to retire within 10 years, 57% in less than 5 years, and 33% in less than three years. According to CDI's rural Maine data, 68%



of business owners want to retire in less than 5 years, and 27% are trying to plan an exit within 1 year.

Nationally, fewer than 1 in 5 business owners have a written exit plan. In rural Maine, only 16% have a written exit plan, and of those who do 21% are planning to liquidate and close, 25% envision a family transition, and 39% hope to sell the business on the open market. Assuming their kids will take over or someone else will buy the business is a risky proposition, though, since only 15 percent of businesses successfully transition to the next generation within the family, and only 20 percent of commercial listings actually sell. As a result, too often the default option becomes liquidation and closure, and the smaller and more rural the business, the greater the likelihood of that outcome. Because of this, the largest single source of avoidable job loss over time is from business closure due to owner retirement.

Nationally, half of all business owners are over 50. In rural Maine, 71% of business owners are over 50 and 48% are over 60. Given existing pressures, the region cannot afford the additional threat of widespread business closures and resulting job loss that would result from the oncoming wave of aging business owner retirements. This slow-moving crisis has been termed the “Silver Tsunami”, a wave that has already started to crash on our region.

That is what we were facing in “normal times”, but COVID-19 impacts have made the situation more dire. Small business bankruptcies and closures skyrocketed early in the pandemic. For example, 25% of independent retailers in the flooring and interior finishes sector have permanently gone out of business in the wake of the pandemic. In rural Maine, efforts have been made to develop the tourism and outdoor recreation sector, but this sector is one of the hardest hit by the pandemic and has some of the highest rates of closure. Older business owners, already thinking about retirement, are the least likely to take on the debt and make the effort needed to rebuild and are the most likely to “throw in the towel”.

A recent (pre-pandemic) study in the state of New York demonstrates the challenge. An estimated 3,700 businesses closed each year due to owner retirement, leading to a loss of 13,260 jobs annually. As more and more aging business owners look to retire, those numbers will only grow.

The most plausible option for sustaining many of these businesses and jobs is often a worker buyout. The workers whose jobs are at stake are also the best positioned to “keep the lights on”. While a larger group of workers could form a cooperative to buy the business, it may require only one or two entrepreneurial employees willing to take over with the right support. This strategy could save many businesses in the short term and offer those workers an opportunity to improve incomes and build wealth through ownership over the longer term, all while deepening local ownership and control of our businesses and making our rural economies more resilient.

The workforce system comes into direct contact with many business owners. It would take a small amount of training and coordination to prep the system to be able to engage business owners on questions of exit planning, offer starting guidance on process and options, and direct



them to relevant resources that can assist. For our region, aging business owners are an “at risk” category for business closures and job losses.

To address this risk, we would use WIOA Rapid Response funds for a comprehensive program of outreach, feasibility assessment, and incumbent worker training in business and financial skills and worker-owner readiness to facilitate more worker buyouts that save jobs and businesses. In line with existing allowable uses of WIOA Rapid Response funds, our program will do the following (below highlights existing WIOA authorized uses):

- 1. Research and information gathering through data and business surveys**
 - a. Partnering or contracting with business-focused organizations to assess risks to companies, propose strategies to address those risks, implement services, and measure impacts of services delivered.
 - b. Engaging in proactive measures to identify opportunities for potential economic transition and training needs in growing industry sectors or expanding businesses.
- 2. Outreach and education of business owners**
 - a. Ongoing engagement, partnership, and relationship-building activities with businesses in the community, in order to create an environment for successful layoff aversion efforts and to enable the provision of assistance to dislocated workers in obtaining reemployment as soon as possible.
- 3. Assist eligible and interested businesses and employees to determine feasibility of employee ownership transition**
 - a. Funding feasibility studies to determine if a company’s operations may be sustained through a buyout or other means to avoid or minimize layoffs.
- 4. Training program for a group of workers in the eligible and interested company on the development of an employee buyout, including business and financial literacy, management training, customer service, etc. This incumbent worker training program can be replicable and can help avoid layoffs from firm liquidation and closure by owner who wants to retire.**
 - a. Developing, funding, and managing incumbent worker training programs or other worker upskilling approaches as part of a layoff aversion strategy or activity.

By focusing on strategy and being proactive in identifying and reaching business owners, there is an opportunity to support a wide number of employee buyouts, keeping the businesses from closing and the workers from being dislocated in the first place. Over the past year, NWDB has already taken some initial steps in this direction. Through a contract with CDI, we have:

- Provided initial education on exit planning and the worker buyout option to WDB partners
- Supported the survey research work described above



- Provided additional training and technical assistance to Northern Maine Development Corp, Sunrise County Economic Council, and other partners that has so far resulted in two businesses exploring feasibility of a worker buyout
- Produced an online exit planning tutorial that all partners can put on their websites and promote on social media

As part of our strategic plan, we will increase the collaboration and available resources to identify companies at risk of closure due to owner retirement and support feasibility assessment and training to support employee buyouts.

The NWDB will support a partnership between CDI and Washington County Community College to create a certificate program in worker ownership readiness that will cover entrepreneurship basics, business planning and development, business financial literacy and open book management, human resource development and cooperative ownership and management. This innovative, online learning format will address COVID-19 impacts on workforce training opportunities, allowing a group of workers anywhere to participate and earn a credential. Attainment of this recognized credential can become a benchmark in determining loan readiness, improving access to capital for employee buyouts. As this pilot program is perfected, other educational institutions and workforce programs will be able to replicate it.

Another initiative we want to support is also a partnership of CDI and WCCC to develop an Entrepreneurial Apprenticeship Program (EAP). With pilot funding from the Maine Community Foundation and the USDA, the EAP is another innovative option for exit planning that can save businesses and jobs. The EAP will recruit dislocated workers as well as existing WCCC students interested in business and entrepreneurship education and match them to local business owners looking to retire. It will then provide training and support through an introductory “apprenticeship” period and help secure financing for a possible buyout. The EAP is an example of creatively solving a major problem for rural exit planning - many rural small businesses have little chance of selling their business, their children have left the region and are not coming back, and often their workers are as old if not older than they are, making a buyout by existing workers impractical.

- L. A description of how the local board will train and equip staff to provide excellent, customer-centric, WIOA-compliant, customer service.

Through new employee orientation, the Board will provide staff with the information and training required to provide high quality, WIOA-compliant customer service. Additionally, through monitoring, the Board will identify any weaknesses in performance to appropriate remedies.

Through new employee orientation, the Board will provide staff with the information and training required to provide high quality, WIOA-compliant customer service.



Section 4: Title I - Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Program Services

A. *A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area;*

The delivery of adult and dislocated worker services provides job seekers access to a range of employment and training services, including:

Basic Career Services

- Eligibility determination and initial assessment
- Outreach, intake, and orientation
- Labor exchange services
- Referrals to coordination of activities and supportive services or assistance
- Workforce and labor market information
- Local one-stop performance information
- Assistance regarding filing UI claims
- Assistance in establishing financial aid Basic Individualized Services
- Comprehensive and specialized assessment
- Development of individual employment plans
- Group counseling and individual counseling and career planning
- Short-term pre-vocational services
- Internships and work experience
- Employment preparation activities
- Financial literacy services
- Out of area job search and relocation assistance
- English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs

Follow-up Services

- Follow-up services to help ensure that customers maintain employment

Training

- Occupational skills training and on- the-job training
- Incumbent worker training
- Programs that combine workplace training with related instruction as well as skill upgrading and retraining
- Entrepreneurial training and transitional jobs
- Job readiness training in conjunction with other training
- Adult education and workplace literacy provided concurrently or in combination with other training services
- Customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer(s) to employ



an individual upon successful completion of training. Training will occur in coordination with training partners/institutions (both public and private and apprenticeships), entrepreneurial services, and businesses.

In addition to the core partnerships with adult education, vocational rehabilitation, BES, ACAP and EMDC, the NWDB will work with additional local WIOA partners including the Community Colleges, Universities, Career and Technical Education providers, local community-based operations, DHHS, Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), unions, the Penobscot Job Corps, Loring Job Corps, the Penobscot Indian Nation, Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Abenaki Tribes, the multiple housing authorities within the five counties, economic development, and the higher education university/community colleges.

B. A description of how the local board will mobilize workforce development activities carried out in the local area in response to layoffs and in conjunction with rapid response activities, as described in WIOA Section 134(a)(2)(A);

The regional WIOA partners, Aroostook County Action Program, and Eastern Maine Development Corporation, are the first point of contact for displaced workers in Northern and Eastern Maine. This shift in entry point required a transition to new programming. They serve as that primary contact throughout the client's period of service (including follow-up after employment). At the onset of COVID-19, services at the CareerCenters moved to remote locations with telephone and on-line meetings serving as primary modes for communications. Over the last year, this delivery process has changed to be more inclusive and far reaching. Systemic changes include:

- Activation of a State-wide hotline to connect displaced workers with service providers. The newer live-chat system has served more than 50,000 clients, a significant increase over prior methods.
- Enhancement of reporting to adequately capture emerging data and assigned responsibilities.
- Moving Job Fairs to virtual events. Future events will be offered virtually as program expectations were exceeded during the COVID-19 pandemic. Adding virtual fairs as a permanent aspect of the workforce program will increase access and reduce historical barriers with transportation and availability for both employers and clients. The virtual platforms will be continued for workshops as well.
- Drive-through Job Fairs and outdoor events provide an alternative to in-person events impacted by COVID-19. These creative venues have increased options to job seekers and employers.
- A new outreach campaign is being developed to reach people receiving unemployment, with outreach methods customized to the customer. Resources across providers are shared, and different audiences are targeted depending on the identified need (for example, one week would focus on welders, the next week veterans, and so on).



- CourseSera supports targeted email communications about job openings tied to specific job training and upscaling skills. Since it was implemented, the number of applications submitted to fill open jobs tripled.
- Reemployment Services Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) is a new service that connects individuals with assessments and reemployment services through the American Job Centers. This was implemented as an effort to boost short-term and long-term employment and earnings.
- A partnership with substance abuse disorder and recovery networks expanded to serve job seekers who are undergoing or have completed intervention programs.
- Direct dislocated workers to active employer outreach efforts which include matching dislocated workers with employers who are currently hiring.

During the strategic planning process, participation in the regional comprehensive economic development (CEDS) strategic planning created a collaborative link between the assessment of economic drivers and opportunities to action steps. A SWOT analysis was performed to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Education and workforce development are recognized as one of four regional goals to spur economic prosperity. The four goals include:

- Broadband
- Transportation
- Climate Resiliency
- Workforce Development and Education

As work proceeds, NWDB and partners will be active participants in the strategies within each goal as it relates to all job seekers.

Our region recognizes the importance of leveraging multiple resources – including TAA and WIOA DLW. Whenever possible, the NWDB pursues co-enrollment strategies and agreements with other programs such as Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Vocational Rehabilitation, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), veterans’ training programs, and Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) to co-invest in training plans for adult and dislocated workers and avoid unnecessary duplication of services. All WIOA customers enrolled in postsecondary training are connected to financial aid counselors and are required to apply for financial aid packages, including Pell grants and other institutional aid.

Our regional work is administered through the various programs including ACAP, BES, EMDC, Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation Services. These services and resources are primarily accessed through the CareerCenter and at the various education and job training sites. The NWDB staff mobilize the One-Stop Partners and coordinate the partnership meetings and events. The meetings and events are used to execute the regional agendas and to implement the strategic plan. The NWDB has working relationships with additional WIOA partners including the local community-based operations, DHHS, Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), unions, the Penobscot Job Corps, Loring Job Corps, the Penobscot Indian Nation,



Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Abenaki Tribes, the multiple housing authorities within the five counties, economic development, and the higher education/community colleges. NWDB continues to advance the culture and commitment of work readiness in order to develop a consistently “WorkReady” region.

The Maine Department of Labor (MDOL) is responsible for developing components of statewide and local Rapid Response activities, which include: providing resources to deliver Rapid Response services at the local level, developing budgets, structuring the Rapid Response process, coordinating the development of National Dislocated Worker Grant Applications, negotiating alliance-based contracts that support Rapid Response capacity, and providing policy direction for Rapid Response delivery and its integration with Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and WIOA dislocated worker programs.

Rapid Response (RR) covers two areas of delivery to include Layoff Aversion and Rapid Response activity. They are defined as follows:

- **Layoff Aversion** – A service offered through the State Rapid Response Unit and may include skill upgrade and/or retraining of existing workers to assist an employer to transition to new products or services and retain the workers.
- **Rapid Response** – Respond to layoffs and plant closings by quickly coordinating services and providing immediate assistance to companies and their affected workers to ensure rapid reemployment and minimize the negative impacts of the layoff. These services can include job getting skills training, labor market information services, resume development, interview preparation and even specialized job fairs that connect affected workers with employers who are looking to hire workers with their skill set.

Regional Rapid Response services are coordinated by the Rapid Response Coordinator through the Bureau of Employment Services central office. At the local level, Rapid Response representatives along with staff from local CareerCenters and WIOA Service providers outreach to employers and workers affected by lay-offs and mass closures occurring throughout the state. The local Workforce Boards along with WIOA service providers are notified immediately once a RR event is identified.

In addition to provision of policy direction and functional oversight, the coordinator also provides statewide staff development and training. Local Rapid Response staff make initial and follow-up contacts with employers, provide referral services to economic development agencies, document visits and communicate them to appropriate local and State agencies, conduct reemployment orientations and workshops, and facilitate transition into training and job development activities offered by the local one-stop system.

Regional Rapid Response representatives are responsible for coordinating all Rapid Response sessions and ensuing transitional services for the affected workers. However, the full team of representatives may be called upon to act as a statewide team and respond in partnership on



behalf of any local area or region that requires expanded assistance with Rapid Response service delivery and initial worker adjustment services.

Maine has built an extremely effective communication system for identifying and responding to potential and actual dislocations. Several avenues exist for identifying companies that may be impacted by downsizing, including:

- A confidential list that identifies companies from which Bureau of Unemployment Compensation has documented 20 or more initial claims.
- Formal notices required by the WARN act or the Maine Severance Law that are submitted by the affected company to the Dislocated Worker Unit and the Bureau of Labor Standards.
- Websites that monitor and package information about mergers, downsizing, development, or investment in offshore facilities that affect the corporate parent companies of Maine subsidiaries are scanned on a regular basis, along with state and local press releases that provide similar information.
- Credible rumors and disclosures are routinely followed up on early information sharing from economic development and other business assistance entities at the state, regional, and local levels is also encouraged. They are usually the first to know when companies are facing issues that may result in job loss.
- WARN notices and credible rumors, or any information generated from the above sources trigger an immediate contact with the affected company by the local representative, who gathers information about the nature and size of the layoff.

State Rapid Response staff determines the mix of appropriate responses. Businesses are informed of layoff aversion services and information, and assistance is offered on such strategies as: employee buyouts, skill retooling where appropriate for layoff aversion purposes, and access to other business services available at the State, regional or local level. Private-sector local board members and elected officials could be asked to facilitate resolution of problems when there may be an opportunity to intervene to avert a lay off or shutdown. Information from the first contact is also provided directly to the Governor's office for similar reasons. Finally, the information is used to develop a customized package of services from Rapid Response orientations and workshops to training and then job development.

In addition to reemployment related services, it has been the custom of Maine's Rapid Response team to link with the local community to launch or participate in Community Transition Teams on behalf of the affected workers. Partners in these teams include representatives from: Maine Community College, University system, local elected representatives, town officials, workforce development partners, Adult Education, Local Workforce Investment Board, Community Action Agencies, etc. The activities of these teams include the following:

- Production of resource booklets that feature local community programs and services, printed and provided to each of the affected workers
- Coordination of resource fairs that



provide an opportunity for affected workers to access a range of services from heating and housing assistance to small business development assistance all in a one-stop location

- Coordination of fundraising events from dinners and barbecues to dances and auctions from which the proceeds can go toward an emergency services fund for affected workers
- Coordination of a variety of non-employment related workshops, such as consumer debt workshops offered by the regional credit union, to health clinics and stress management workshops offered by local health service providers

The NWDB and the State will be focused on generating the needed input and feedback from all customers and labor force participants toward identifying barriers and challenges to successful completion of education and training, as well as the obstacles preventing the dislocated worker from obtaining gainful employment.

C. A description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce development activities in the local area, including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities, which description and assessment must include an identification of successful models of local area youth workforce investment activities

Youth Services are provided by organizations ranging from service providers to economic development organizations to education and training providers. Many of these initiatives are coordinated through the Youth Committees in the region. These committees have the goal of bringing together partners serving youth throughout the region to ensure youth are served in an effective and seamless manner that prepares them for and connects them to training and quality jobs. In addition, these committees serve an important forum for discussing best practices that can be replicated in other parts of the region.

Two youth stakeholder meetings were held to inform the strategic planning process. More than 30 unique participants representing the five-county service area participated to discuss topics ranging from regional youth goals, LMI data and analyses, the regional economic development (CEDS) SWOT analysis, future priorities, and barriers to services. Poll Everywhere questions (an on-line program that supports real-time responses) were posed to identify regional priorities and trends:

- Emphasis on the trades as valuable and viable career paths, early vocational exploration, hand-on learning, internships, apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, and on-the-job training programs.
- Providing training and skills development that is aligned with the current and future work landscape.
- Increased use of credentials and badging, and methods to promote to employers
- Strengthening connections between youth job seekers and employers including high schools. Incorporating trial period hiring and improvement of communications between the two audiences.



- Promoting technology to support increased access – digital literacy, sufficient broadband capacity, access to software and hardware, and expansion of platforms to accommodate distance learning; alternate communication paths – social media, software applications, digital platforms (tablets, phone).
- Employment flexibility for work hours and remote workspaces, technology integration in career pathways.
- Access to transportation.
- Mentoring that incorporates job fulfillment vs. working for a paycheck, growth opportunities, and career options in the trades including technology, clean energy, emerging industries and connecting skills/education to livable-wage careers.

Supplementing the provider discussions was a comprehensive survey shared with the youth perspectives about the services, opportunities, and barriers to participation. A total of 312 responses from youth aged 14-24 were returned. Of those, 110 youth requested follow-up services. The survey results are provided in Appendix 18. A synopsis of the responses is provided below:

- 199 responders were enrolled in high school, 72 trade schools, 23 colleges/universities, 8 adult education, and 6 home school.
- Barriers include a lack of skills, fear of accumulating debt, lack of transportation, lack of technology, issues with in-person interactions, and an existing medical condition. Of note, 127 of the 265 did not feel they had barriers preventing them from employment or job training/education.
- Primary needs for assistance included job searches (65), financial help (62), college enrollment (48), work experience (48), job training/certifications (42), high school diploma (26), apprenticeships (23), entrepreneurship (14), and adult education (10).
- 67% would participate in virtual events.
- Using platforms familiar to youth including Microsoft Teams, Discord, Facebook, Instagram, Google Meeting, Lifesize, and Zoom will further encourage their program participation.

This input will be critical as we continue to provide relatable services that are beneficial to youth clients.

Description of Process: An overview of the process for engaging youth and helping them meet their employment and education goals is summarized below. Each youth works with a counselor to develop an individualized strategy that includes ongoing case management and follow up:

- Steps:
 - Recruitment: some clients come to the CareerCenter and others are referred to youth employment counselors from community partners
 - Assessment: collect basic demographic information, info about barriers, and educational status



- Enroll in WIOA
 - Assess more specific needs – including employment and education goals
 - Assess family and living situation, health and mental health status and concerns, substance abuse issues, language status and legal concerns
 - Educational status
 - Conduct additional assessments as needed (the World of Work Inventory (WOWI), the Transferable Skills Scale (TSS), Work Activity Matcher (WAM), or the O*NET Career Interests Inventory.)
- Individual Service Strategy: based on information collected in previous steps, youth counselors develop ISS in partnership with participant
 - Sets long-term career goals as well as short-term goals
 - Outlines action steps and support services that will be required
 - Setup review dates
- Case Management and Follow-Up:
 - Follow up is available to address on-going or new barriers
 - Check in with employers
 - WIOA enrolled youth are made aware of services offered by WIOA and through partner agencies
 - Youth Counselors address the 14 Youth elements through the ISS:
 - Activities leading to the completion of a secondary school diploma (or equivalent) or a recognized postsecondary credential
 - Alternative secondary school services, or drop-out recovery services
 - Paid and unpaid work experiences that have academic and occupational education as a component
 - Occupational skills training
 - Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster
 - Leadership development
 - Supportive services
 - Adult mentoring
 - Follow-up services
 - Comprehensive guidance and counseling
 - Financial literacy education
 - Entrepreneurial literacy education
 - Career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services
 - Preparation for and transition to postsecondary education and training



D. A description of how the local board will coordinate education and workforce development activities carried out in the local area with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services;

The Board regularly meets with education and training providers to coordinate services, share information, and avoid duplication of services. Adult education providers and local community colleges serve on the Board and participate extensively in the strategic planning process, as well as the follow-up small group meetings. These partners present to the Board to help members better understand the resources they offer and the important role they play in the workforce system.

Quarterly meetings are scheduled with providers to strategically utilize data to increase the numbers of trained participants by assessing best practices, reducing redundancy in services and resources with the goal to allocate a greater percentage of funds to training. The NWDB works collaboratively with the region's AmericanJobCenter managers, participating in management meetings as appropriate.

Outside of the Board and its relevant committees, the RPAG Initiative has proved to be one of the most important mechanisms to organize education and training providers in the workforce system. As discussed more thoroughly in Section 2I, the RPAGs bring together employers in priority industry groups with workforce system partners to address employer needs. The education and training providers collaborate with employers to develop comprehensive and coordinated responses to the needs presented by employers to ensure that the initiatives developed meet employers' needs while minimizing duplication of services. Ideally, the training associated with this initiative will take the form of short-term, industry recognized, stackable credentials.

As noted earlier, attention to shifting regional industry and emerging opportunities will focus on identifying the education and skill building platforms necessary to fill new jobs. With the example of clean energy, the growing need for solar and wind technicians presents an opportunity for youth and adult workers to enter a new field with expanding prospects.

Strategies to collaborate with education and training partners include:

- Coordinating tours of local businesses with teachers, guidance counselors, and students to encourage students to consider a career in priority industries; virtual tours will partner with job fairs and events to expand access remotely
- Provide remote access to remote learners to connect with guidance counselors and potential employers about the skills and training needed for specific positions
- Updated website that serves as a repository of information about workforce system
- Co-locating workforce staff at community college campuses for part of the week



- Integrating Adult Education programs more seamlessly into occupational training, as there are opportunities to both train a job seeker to receive a high school diploma and learn a skill that prepares the job seeker for work in an in-demand field.

E. A description of how the local board will coordinate workforce development activities carried out under this title in the local areas with the provision of transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate supportive services in the Local Area;

The coordination of supportive services has been identified as a major need by the NWDB during the strategic planning process. We recognize that access to transportation, child care, supplies, and emergency funding can often be the difference between completing a degree or certificate and dropping out to take a low-wage job.

Often, the challenge is not a lack of supportive services resources available in the region but an awareness that those resources exist. As part of its efforts to improve communication in the workforce system, NWDB will prioritize the increased awareness of the types and sources of supportive services that are available in the region. This is a feature of the website and other resources developed by the Board. The Board is working with partners throughout the region to identify what resources are available and refer customers to appropriate supportive services as needed.

- Examples of supportive services:
 - Transportation: As a largely rural region, transportation continues to be a challenge for many job seekers and those seeking to access training and education resources. The Board offers mileage reimbursements to customers. Additionally, the Board works with employers and regional economic development groups to look at innovative transportation solutions, such as busing workers to employers/industrial parks, rural public transit systems (such as a group representing Piscataquis and Penobscot counties), meeting transportation needs digitally, and developing carpooling opportunities for workers and trainees. These solutions will require the support of many different workforce partners, including employers. Additionally, regional transportation bus service, public transportation, and partner resources like school unit busing are accessed if available.
 - Childcare
 - Clothing/Uniforms, depending on need
 - Equipment and tools, depending on need
 - Medical expenditures, depending on need

F. A description how the local board will utilize adult funding, based on priority groups as identified in the State plan;



Training expenditures for the purposes of this policy include the following:

1. Occupational Classroom Training (tuition assistance): defined as occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment, skill upgrading and retraining. The primary intent of this type of training is to improve earnings potential and employability of workers.
2. Customized Training: Customized Training defined as training that is: designed to meet the special requirements of an employer (or group of employers); conducted with a commitment by the employer to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training; and reimbursed/paid for by the employer at not less than 50 percent of the cost of the training.
3. On-the -Job Training (OJT): OJT is a formal training activity in which an employer elects to hire an individual who would not otherwise qualify for the job, and commits to teach the skills needed to perform at the entry level for the position. The employer is compensated for the costs associated with training based on the expectation that there will be lower productivity of the employee during the training period.

See attached Appendix 16.

G. A description of how the local board will utilize dislocated worker funding;

Training expenditures for the purposes of this policy include the following:

- Occupational Classroom Training (tuition assistance): Classroom Training defined as occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment, skill upgrading and retraining. The primary intent of this type of training is to improve earnings potential and employability of workers.
- Customized Training: Customized Training defined as training that is:
 - Designed to meet the special requirements of an employer (or group of employers)
 - Conducted with a commitment by the employer to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training
 - Reimbursed/paid for by the employer at not less than 50 percent of the cost of the training.
- On the Job Training (OJT): OJT is a formal training activity in which an employer elects to hire an individual who would not otherwise qualify for the job, and commits to teach the skills needed to perform at the entry level for the position. The employer is compensated for the costs associated with training based on the expectation that there will be lower productivity of the employee during the training period.



H. A description of how the local board defines “self-sufficiency” for employed adult and dislocated worker participants;

The exact definition of “self-sufficiency” varies across the region. Most broadly, “self-sufficiency” is defined as when families are no longer reliant on public programs. The Board is exploring the development of a universal definition of “self-sufficiency.”

The Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) Program is intended to be “a comprehensive system of support services which promotes, empowers and nurtures families or individuals towards self-sufficiency.” Program participants achieve goals through the elimination of the barriers and removal of the causes of poverty. Self-sufficiency is achieved through “a case management methodology used to track and evaluate progress,” and “activities designed to assist families or individuals in preventing or addressing personal and situational problems by arranging and/or providing short-term assistance in developing long-range plans to meet multiple needs and emergencies that are preventing self-sufficiency.”

I. A description of the local boards definition of “unlikely to return to previous industry or occupation” when required for eligibility determination for dislocated worker services, if such policy is in place;

The determination of this eligibility requirement can be complex and based on a range of factors. Up-to-date labor market information as well as business intelligence from employer and economic partners are essential to making this determination. Additionally, the unique skillset of each worker is considered to understand the positions for which they may qualify with minimal impact to wages. While other factors can contribute to the definition of “unlikely to return to a previous industry or occupation” can vary, the major considerations are outlined below:

- The industry/occupation is declining statewide
- The industry/occupation is declining or not expected to see significant growth or replacement demand in the commuting region of the workers (such as that seen with the closure of six papers mills in NWDB’s region)
- The technological requirements of the industry or occupation have advanced beyond the skills of the specified workers and he/she would require additional training to continue in the position.

J. A description of how the local board will interpret and document eligibility criteria for youth “requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or secure and hold employment” for both in-school and out-of-school youth, as set forth in WIOA Sections 129(a) (1) (B)(iii)(VII) and (a)(1)(C) (iv)(VII);



Youth will be assessed against the 14 program elements to develop a training and/or work plan. Through this intake and assessment process, the Youth counselor will identify where additional training, education, or supportive services are required to help the youth client find success.

K. A description of the documentation required to demonstrate a need for training services;

Documentation of each client's assessment against the 14 program elements to develop a training and/or work plan is recorded and tracked. Co-enrollment in additional programs to address training, education, and supportive services is encouraged and tracked to identify program participation and success.

L. A description of how the local board will assess the need for and provide the fourteen required program elements for youth program design;

To determine the needs of youth, youth service providers use individual counseling and discussion to determine what barriers the youth faces and identify what resources are required to assist them. Youth counselors will systematically go through the 14 elements to ensure each are addressed in the youth's employment and training plan.

M. A description of the steps the local board will take to ensure 20 percent of youth funds are used for work-based training activities, such as work experience, internships, on-the-job training, job shadow or other work experience activities including how staff time setting up and monitoring such activities are counted in the 20 percent cost category;

The area's youth program incorporates several of the youth service elements including paid work experience for all participants. Youth service providers connected the development of OJT and apprenticeships for older out-of-school youth which will enhance our work-based training expenditures and have adjusted service options to reflect more of a work-based learning/training component to attain the 20% expenditure requirement. Expansion of services via remote access and training will contribute to meeting that requirement.

N. A description of how the board will prioritize out-of-school youth and identify specific steps to ensure that 75% of youth funds are dedicated to out-of-school youth.

See attached Appendix 3 – NWDB Policy #003

The Board's youth partnerships have worked to recruit more out-of-school youth. Recruitment strategies include meeting with Adult Education providers, calling guidance counselors and local schools, and engaging with probation and parole officers. These strategies have helped youth



service providers find the youth that would not typically come to the One-Stop CareerCenter. Counselors also work to develop training sites to give youth work-based training that aligns with their career goals. Using platforms familiar to youth including Microsoft Teams, Discord, Facebook, Instagram, Google Meeting, Lifesize, and Zoom will enhance ongoing efforts.

Youth service providers regularly monitor enrollments and spending to ensure the 75% goal is met.

O. If the local area has contracted with youth service providers, provide a list and description of those providers and the specific service elements they provide;

Title 1 Youth Service Providers include: ACAP; BES; and EMDC.

P. Describe how the local board will ensure that basic and individualized career services, including follow-up, will be provided to adults and dislocated workers and how such services will be coordinated across programs with required partners;

See attached Appendix 2 - CareerCenter Flow Chart

Q. Explain the local board's "follow-up" policy for adults and youth, including types of services provided, frequency of provision of follow-up services, and required documentation.

WIOA authorized follow-up services as described in WIOA sec. 134(c)(2)(A)(xiii) and § 678.430(c) are available as appropriate for adult participants who are placed in unsubsidized employment for up to 12 months after the first day of employment. For former customers, this provides them a continuing source of valuable labor market information, career and employment information, and a continuing connection with WIOA services that they may need in the future.

Follow-up contacts will be made by Service Provider career services staff and will be scheduled to occur in the first, second, third, and fourth quarter after separation in person, by phone, email or other means.

Follow-up services will be made available to youth participants for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation, as provided in § 681.580. Follow-up services for youth are intended to help ensure the youth is successful in employment and/or postsecondary education and training. Follow-up services include regular contact with a youth participant's employer, including assistance in addressing work-related problems that arise.

The NWDB's follow-up services for youth also may include the following program elements:

1. Supportive services
2. Adult mentoring



3. Financial literacy education
4. Services that provide labor market and employment information about in demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services
5. Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.

NWDB service providers offer all youth participants an opportunity to receive follow-up services that align with their individual service strategies for a minimum of 12 months unless the participant declines to receive follow-up services or the participant cannot be located or contacted. The services can be provided in-person at the CareerCenters and by remote access (telephone, computer/on-line communications).

Follow-up services may be provided beyond 12 months at the NWDB's discretion. The types of services provided and the duration of services must be determined based on the needs of the individual. The type and intensity of follow-up services may differ for each participant. Follow-up services must include more than only whether contact was attempted or made for securing documentation to report a performance outcome.

Results of all follow-up contacts will be entered into the customer's AJL record.

Section 5: Wagner Peyser Services

Section 5: Wagner-Peyser Services

A. Describe the plans, strategies, and assurances regarding maximizing coordination of services provided by the Maine Bureau of Employment Services (BES) under the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.) and services provided in the Local Area one-stop system to improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services to workers, job seekers and

Maine's CareerCenters provide a variety of employment and workforce training services at no cost to both workers and businesses in the State of Maine. Such services can be provided in-person through which customers receive staff assistance and have free access to computers and wireless internet access (Wi-Fi) for employment activity. Employers with active job openings can utilize the interview and conference rooms within Maine CareerCenters for recruiting purposes at no charge. The CareerCenters also offer services through virtual platforms, enabling customers to connect through internet or mobile data, thereby reducing their need to drive to any of the Maine CareerCenters around the state.

For job seekers or individuals, the Maine CareerCenters help:



- Register with and navigate the Maine JobLink system, including creating new or updating existing accounts;
- Gain career knowledge through one-on-one counseling and guidance;
- Develop competitive resumes and/or cover letters;
- Improve interviewing skills;
- Explore new careers;
- Reset passwords for both Maine JobLink and ReEmployME accounts;
- Register for attending workshops on various job search and training topics;
- Find current occupational skills training and education opportunities;
- Access a library of online resources and printed materials;
- Research and understand labor market information; and
- Access other services to expand employment, training-related opportunities, and supports needed to succeed in training or job search. Individuals receive direct and indirect referrals through the extensive CareerCenter partner collaboration network.

For employers with workforce needs, the Maine CareerCenters help:

- List current job openings;
- Navigate employer Maine JobLink accounts;
- Search for resumes and job seekers;
- Explore service strategies for recruitment;
- Develop competitive job descriptions;
- Write job orders;
- Create, customize, and host hiring events;
- Market positions through job boards and social media;
- Recruit specialized populations such as veterans, justice-involved, etc.;
- Develop a registered apprenticeship program;
- Apply for Work Opportunity Tax Credits and Federal Bonding;
- Access a library of online resources relating to human resources, safety, business incentives, Americans with Disabilities Act, labor laws, labor market information, licensing, and more;
- Find labor market information;
- Understand layoff aversion strategies; and
- Manage downsizing events and transition employees from their current employment to other opportunities.

Bureau of Employment Services (BES) staff administer and coordinate the Maine JobLink (MJL), Maine's labor exchange and case management system, and to track participant information required by multiple Federal workforce programs.

The MJL system is designed to be used by employers, job seekers, and partners. Basic Career Services and Labor Exchange services are universally accessible to all individuals and employers



- there are no eligibility requirements for use of these services. These services can be self-accessed virtually or through one-stop centers and can be accessed with staff assistance, as necessary.

MJL allows registered job seekers to search for jobs online, post a resume, and receive direct referrals to jobs. Employers use the MJL to post job listings free of charge, review profiles of interested applicants, and contact potential job seekers directly. The Bureau of Unemployment Compensation (BUC) requires unemployment insurance claimants to register for MJL to fulfill the job search requirement.

Additional benefits that result from Employer, Job Seeker, and Partner use of the MJL system include:

- Job listings posted on the MJL meet basic affirmative action requirements for employers required to recruit from minority populations; and
- Unfilled job listings provide the state with data that informs and documents need for industry sector skill training grants and strategic investment of existing grant funds.

Other BES platforms, such as LiveChat, assist with basic CareerCenter and employment questions and password resets for both the MJL and ReEmployME, and also serve as referral points to other services and organizations. The BES CareerCenter Hotline serves as a conduit to workforce opportunities through BES and partnering agencies, from the scheduling of in-person services to the virtual triage of customer needs to better guide and refer customers to CareerCenter and/or partner services. All workshops are ADA compliant and regularly reviewed for topic relevance, trends, and attendance.

BES staff also work directly with employers to provide a variety of services inclusive of participation in the Maine-At-Work Initiative (MAWI), a web-based platform developed in collaboration with workforce partners, that allows an easy way for job seekers and employers to request information on available programming/services. An on-line request is generated and sent to MDOL staff who either respond to the employer inquiry directly or forward it to an appropriate workforce and economic development resource partner for response. MAWI is also marketed through a flier enclosed with each employer's yearly unemployment insurance tax information to prompt them to request assistance if they have any workforce development assistance needs.

BES offers customized job fairs and recruitment services to employers and a variety of job search assistance workshops to the general public. Job fairs and/or hiring events are held regularly by the Maine CareerCenters through in-person methods or a virtual platform. Events and recruitment services to employers can be customized for individual employer needs, for general job seeker activity, and/or for sector-based industries.



BES provides formal and informal staff development for all new and existing Wagner-Peyser staff members to ensure staff understand requirements of WIOA and the basic and individualized services that are offered to job seekers, workers, and employers. Example training includes:

- Overview of Labor Exchange and provision of Career Services;
- Introduction to Maine JobLink;
- Introduction to ReEmployME, the BUC claims system, and how to provide support to individuals seeking to file unemployment insurance (UI) claims;
- Career information and expectations, including overview of career information tools, from labor market and occupational information to career decision-making;
- Overview of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA) and Training Readjustment Act;
- Understanding rapid response and layoff aversion;
- Understanding of Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) as a partnership program between the BUC and the BES;
- Introduction to standards of procedure in one-stop information centers;
- Overview of veteran's services and referral requirements;
- Migrant and seasonal farmworker outreach and partnering with the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP);
- Introduction to training programs (Maine Apprenticeship, Competitive Skills Scholarship, Title IB Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs, Job Corps, YouthBuild, etc.; and
- Overview of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and Federal Bonding Program.

BES is committed to collaboration with required WIOA partners to assist in the development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across one-stop partner programs. Such collaboration enhances service delivery, improves efficiency, and improves coordination of services. BES and WIOA collaboration have resulted in the design and implementation of common intake, data collection, case management information, performance accountability measurement and reporting processes, and the incorporation of local input into such design and implementation.

The onset of COVID-19 and social distancing recommendations have resulted in services being provided virtually with limited in-person appointments. Customers can connect with CareerCenter staff by email, LiveChat, or telephone calls to the Bangor CareerCenter. Virtual systems assure that high quality services are easily accessible with no interruption or delay of assistance.

B. Describe how the Local Board will utilize the Wagner-Peyser program to provide access to local workforce development services for unemployment insurance claimants;



The BES employs staff who are fully trained - either at initial hire or through new hire onboarding - in Unemployment Insurance (UI) eligibility and UI issue identification. These designated staff have also received training on Maine's UI web portal and are experienced in assisting individuals with filing for UI and accessing their accounts through the portal. In addition, Maine's BUC provides informative videos on their website that staff are encouraged to access and view.

Maine will meet the needs of customers requesting assistance with UI claims through in-person and virtual services. One-stop staff provide unemployment claim information and assistance by answering basic UI questions, assisting customers with creating a ReEmployME account to file initial and continued benefit claims online, and filing weekly certifications via phone through Maine's interactive voice response system. Additionally, one-stop staff will be able to access and provide individualized unemployment information and explain how the individual can manage their UI account through the UI web portal. If an individual is unable to file a UI claim due to significant barriers (such as language or disability) that hinder the use of online tools, the customer will be assisted by one-stop staff or directed to a phone line dedicated to serving the individual needs of the customer.

Reemployment services are provided through RESEA (Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assessment) to help minimize the length of unemployment and encourage timely reemployment of UI claimants. In accordance with Maine's profiling model for selection for RESEA, the local American Job Center (AJC) area randomly selects RESEA participants among claimants targeted as 'most likely to exhaust' their benefits.

BUC notifies identified claimants by letter and email of their requirement and responsibility to attend RESEA intensive and career services provided through the local one-stop service centers. Individuals who fail to attend or complete the required components of the initial RESEA session will automatically be set up for fact-finding to determine if benefits will be allowed for good cause or suspended until participation in RESEA has taken place.

BES, operating from the American Job Centers and affiliate sites, will administer RESEA by providing an additional level of service to all selected participants as needed. Reemployment services and options may include development, expansion, or continuation of individual reemployment plans, provision of a relevant referral based on individual need for completion, and intensive case management services. All participants gain an introduction to a broad spectrum of career services, including:

- Staff assistance in acquiring needed reemployment and training services;
- Counseling in career decision-making and exploration of higher learning;
- Common intake and eligibility determinations for WIOA programs;
- Access to computer based and online job search programs and applications;
- Job search and placement assistance including labor market information and in-demand occupations;



- Information on how to access supportive services, orientations to training, and all other programs offered by WIOA and partners;
- Access to Maine's JobLink (MJL) and general internet resources; and
- Core assessments that link vocational aptitudes and abilities to jobs.

The structured format design of RESEA utilizes active engagement in development of individualized reemployment plans, enabling participants to independently activate and manage their MJL profiles. Under the current pandemic guidelines, services are being offered virtually through a Zoom connection. Once in-person services resume, it is anticipated that virtual delivery will continue with a possible hybrid model option.

For in-person services, laptops and/or tablets are made available as needed for activities including internet job searches and job application submission. Reemployment services consultants work with individual participants to address and define needs and services. Upon comprehensive conclusion of the RESEA, claimants acknowledge and accept their individual needs-based 'relevant referral' (next steps to their reemployment goal) and complete this portion of the RESEA session. Each RESEA participant will receive at minimum:

- An unemployment compensation eligibility review including review of work search activities;
- Relevant and individualized local labor market information, including live use of Maine's Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI) website;
- Enrollment in Wagner-Peyser Act funded employment services;
- Development, review, and recommendations on an individualized reemployment plan (IRP);
- Individualized and relevant referrals to services, jobs, other agencies, and additional reemployment resources as needed;
- An introduction and orientation to all of the CareerCenter services offered, including self-directed options and specific program eligibility; and
- Enhanced job matching and referral profile assistance in Maine's JobLink.

Participation in reemployment services at levels appropriate to meet individual participant needs may include the following:

- Access to job hunting in Maine guide;
- Tools, tips, and strategies on conducting a successful job search;
- Information on how to obtain further skill assessments and individualized job search services;
- Introduction to USDOL's online assessment and job search tools such as MySkills MyFuture™;
- O*NET tools, and My Next Move (i.e. Interest Profiler);
- Coordination of activities with other programs and services; and
- At least one of the following career services based on need:



- Referral to training or other workforce activities including WIOA;
- Labor market information about in-demand industries;
- Information on availability of community based or WIOA support services;
- Financial aid resources outside of WIOA;
- Financial literacy services; and
- Career readiness including resume writing and interviewing.

C. Describe how services will be provided to migrant and seasonal farm workers in the Local Area;

The Local Area strategy for serving migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFWs) relies on close collaboration with statewide outreach functions of BES and the Maine State Monitor Advocate (SMA). Statewide outreach to MSFWs concentrates on service delivery areas where agricultural employers are located and where farm workers live, work, and congregate. Maine's MSFWs cycle through various labor-intensive crop harvests including wild blueberry, broccoli, diversified vegetable, and apple, as well as poultry industry operations during Maine's short agricultural production season (primarily June-October). In Maine, most employment of independent MSFWs and Foreign Labor H-2A workers occurs during peak agriculture months on farm operations in Androscoggin, Oxford, Washington, Aroostook, and the mid-coast counties. Outside of this season, MSFWs may continue to find work in the wreath-making operations (predominantly in Washington County) from early November to mid-December and in seafood processing. Service delivery strategies aim to assist MSFWs with achieving integration into the local workforce and self-sufficiency.

Wagner-Peyser Act funding supports: the State Monitor Advocate position through the Bureau of Labor Standards; BES outreach staff; and the delivery of services to MSFWs, other agricultural workers and agricultural employers through Maine's one-stop American Job Centers.

Maine Department of Labor's recent addition and integration of a full-time, bilingual Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) Outreach Consultant will allow a full range of services to be provided through the Maine CareerCenters to the migrant and seasonal farm worker community and agricultural employers. This outreach position will be supported by Wagner-Peyser Act staff and contribute to growing strong, long standing partnerships in the communities where MSFW live and work.

Outreach staff are trained in and seek to provide a full range of American Job Center services and resources to the agricultural communities including, but not limited to skills assessments, career guidance, basic skills remediation and vocational training, educational opportunities, job search assistance, and supportive services. Outreach staff will gain extensive knowledge of farm work in order to ensure high levels of awareness and sensitivity to the socio-economic and cultural nuances that exist within the agricultural communities. The majority of farmworkers work in isolated geographic areas in Maine. While Spanish is the primary language spoken



among the farm worker population, an increasing number of Haitian Creole speaking crews find work in Maine's service delivery areas.

The SMA coordinates MSFW service plans with Maine CareerCenter offices located closest to areas of greatest agricultural activity relative to the crop's peak season. The Outreach Consultant and local CareerCenter staff have full knowledge of local office procedures and the services, benefits, and protections to be afforded to MSFWs. Staff are trained during the annual scheduled one-stop office review by the SMA. Training includes review of the Judge Ritchey Court Order, identification of MSFWs, and basic outreach field methodology including making oral presentations to groups of MSFWs at their working, living, or gathering areas on the services available at the local one-stop. At their local office, staff are provided with laminated "At a Glance" fact sheets detailing the ES complaint system and identifying MSFWs and migrant food processing workers. Staff also have available printed American Job Center informational material to provide to MSFWs, log sheets to record contacts, and ES complaint information to inform MSFWs of their rights to file complaints. Outreach staff from the Maine CareerCenters regularly attend trainings and are provided resources on the ES system across core programs, including the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program. The MSFW Outreach Consultant and CareerCenter staff, in collaboration with the SMA, coordinate service delivery including, but not limited to:

- Provision of a full range of employment services, benefits, and protections on a basis that is qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate to services provided to non-MSFWs;
- Access to, and use of, job order information;
- Assistance in accessing self-assisted services via electronic technologies;
- Individual referrals to agricultural and non-agricultural jobs, occupational training, support services, assessments and testing, career counseling, and other job development services;
- Provision of information on labor rights, protections, and responsibilities with respect to terms and conditions of employment;
- Assistance in the preparation and filing of employment and non-employment related complaints;
- Accepting and referring labor-related complaints and apparent violations in accordance with established policies and procedures;
- Referrals of individuals and family members to supportive services for which they may be eligible;
- Assisting with posting resumes on-line and conducting on-line job searches; and
- Facilitating communication between limited-English proficient individuals referred to jobs and employers.

The SMA and the MSFW Outreach Consultant will work closely with the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) of which Eastern Maine Development Corporation is the grantee for



Maine. Outreach staff will also work closely with other service providers, such as those of the statewide Farmworker Resource Network of partners to effectively reach and serve MSFWs. Several of these organizations utilize space at local CareerCenters to conduct meetings with MSFWs.

EMDC has been the statewide grantee for National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) services. These services have been by design integrated within the workforce development network in Maine (particularly in the Northeastern Workforce Development Board region) and have worked effectively with WIOA Adult and Youth partners to serve eligible farmworkers statewide. The relationship between the NFJP and the WIOA system has been formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding signed by each of Maine's Workforce Development Boards. EMDC partners with local Job Centers to receive referrals to the NFJP, as well as co-enroll participants in other WIOA programs to increase efficiency and leverage resources when delivering services to participants. To date, the approach has been for NFJP staff to coordinate co-enrollment with WIOA programs by registering NFJP participants with the Job Center Wagner-Peyser system.

Section 6: Title II – Adult Education and Literacy Programs

Section 6: Title II – Adult Education and Literacy Programs

A. A description of how the local board will coordinate workforce development activities in the Local Area with the provision of Adult Education and literacy activities under Title II of WIOA, including implementation of the career pathways model. The description should explain how the local board will comply with the requirement to review local applications submitted under Title II to the Office of Adult Education and Literacy Services and once the review has been conducted, how the Local Board will submit documentation of the review and any recommendations for increased alignment to the applicant for Title II services, in a timely manner;

Memoranda of Understanding have been executed between the Northeastern Workforce Development Board and the Adult Education and Literacy providers. These MOUs detail the responsibilities and roles of all signatories and represent commitment to providing services as required under Title II of WIOA.

The Adult Education and Literacy partners have selected a representative from among the directors to serve as an active member of the Board, and many other directors from across the region regularly attend board meetings. The regional programs provide a range of academic and workforce skills training embedded in the career pathways model. Title II of WIOA defines



Adult Education as academic instruction and education services below the postsecondary level that increase an individual's ability to:

- Read, write, and speak in English; perform mathematics; and complete other activities necessary for the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent;
- Transition to postsecondary education and training; and
- Obtain employment.

Each eligible Adult Education provider receiving state subsidy, Maine College Transition grants, and grants funded under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act as part of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA), will prepare and maintain a Career Pathways Plan. This strategic plan is updated annually identifying changes from previously approved plans and encompasses needs assessment, goal development, available or needed resources, and progress. The Career Pathways Plan is presented to the Board for review, comments, and recommendations for alignment.

As described in Section 4D, Adult Education is an essential part of the Regional Partnership Advisory Group (RPAG). Similarly, Adult Education has been actively involved in the TechHire initiative. The TechHire program, is a good example of how Adult Education works with other workforce partners to connect job seekers to occupations in the information technology field. The program provided training that met job seekers 'where they are' to ensure access to work in the IT field, regardless of their current level of training. While the TechHire program is scheduled to conclude in 2021, plans are underway to continue training for job seekers in the IT field. Adult Education will support both TechHire and the RPAG by providing a range of education and occupational services, developing training plans with some participants, and incorporating career pathways into the training programs. In these initiatives, Adult Education collaborates with employers, NWDB, and other education and training providers to develop comprehensive and coordinated responses to the needs presented by employers.

Adult Education is an integral partner in developing a skilled workforce by participating on regional One Stop Partner (OSP) Committees, and therefore influences not only Adult Education policy and initiatives but also how the overall One Stop system operates and serves clients. An important aspect of developing a skilled workforce is the awareness of industry changes and job opportunities. Climate resiliency and clean energy is an example of how Adult Education can partner with the NWDB and industry leaders to build the skilled workforce needed to fill new jobs. The State of Maine's ten-year economic strategy estimates that jobs needed for energy sources will double by 2030. Partners are currently addressing this demand and identifying training platforms to prepare the new workforce. Additional job opportunities identified through stakeholder meetings and participation in the regional comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS) planning efforts include healthcare (dental, medical), CDL (trucking) drivers and transportation, mental health, forestry, aquaculture, education, construction, technology, climate change, and municipal/public services. Program development and increased accessibility will be critical to fill gaps created by people aging out of the workforce system.



Representatives of Adult Education participated in the strategic planning stakeholder sessions and provided feedback in small group interviews. Additionally, Adult Education representatives have presented at NWDB meetings to share their priorities, resources, and strategies with the Board.

As part of its effort to improve communication among partners, job seekers, and employers, the Board supports a website that includes information about Adult Education and other service providers.

COVID-19 necessitated a shift in the delivery of services to adult learners. The pandemic has validated the distance learning process, and enhanced connections with partners in the system and across the State of Maine to provide cost-effective training. The delivery of instruction and assessment through remote channels has strengthened the process and opened Adult Education to more remotely located clients. Benefits of this shift include:

- More opportunities for credentialing and job training (e.g., CNA training);
- Reduction of the waitlist for classes;
- Offering of more training programs (e.g. EMT classes renewed for the first time in eight years in Aroostook County);
- Application of remote learning to classroom and lab work, with required hands-on training taken to the rural regions;
- Reduction of the need for reliable transportation for class/training attendance;
- Attendance during winter months less impacted by adverse weather conditions;
- Continued engagement if a student leaves the region or state; and
- Increased access and support for clients with disabilities (reading lips, controlling anxiety, etc.).

During the last year, the need for broadband was evident and the Adult Education partners worked with NWDB to address connection platforms and instructions for remote access. As a result, digital literacy training became a priority. Announcements of the electronic catalog and classes/training was provided through a variety of social media including Discord (an ideal platform for Tech/Hire) and Facebook.

The success of measures implemented during COVID-19 leading to increased access, expansion of education opportunities and assessment will continue.

B. A description of how the local board will coordinate efforts with Title II providers to align basic skills and English language assessments. Such coordination efforts should include:

Adult Education programs are the central points for basic skills and English language assessments for Adult Education students as well as WIOA partner clients. Assessments provided include reading comprehension, numeracy, digital literacy, and other career and work-



related assessments. Results of these assessments are shared with and among Title I service providers, Maine CareerCenters, DHHS, agencies, businesses, and other adult education programs in accordance with MOUs and client release of information documentation. This arrangement provides Adult Education Career Pathways Advisors with the opportunity to counsel each person on what academic services may be appropriate to advance towards occupational training or postsecondary education, and also forms the basis of collaboration with counselors and advisors from WIOA partners. Confidence in the delivery of basic skills and English language assessments is made possible through ongoing training and communications around the assessment test administration requirements.

C. A description of how the local board will ensure that the individual appointed to represent Title II services on the Board will communicate with the State AEFLA grant recipient and coordinate with all Title II adult education service providers in the local area in a uniform, regular, and consistent manner.

The elected Adult Education (AE) Director serves as the five-county representative for Adult Education on the Northeastern Workforce Development Board (NWDB). Through this capacity, the AE Director can keep abreast of the regional and state governance, policies, and procedures for all WIOA-funded activities and agencies. The AE Director is also in a position to influence policies and advocate for Adult Education needs as a member of subcommittees such as the Policy and Youth Committees. The AE Director presents information concerning Adult Education workforce development-related capabilities and capacities to other Board members and conveys information generated by the Board back to the Adult Education providers in the five-county region. Central to this process has been and will be the regular review of the priority careers, sectors, or clusters tied to regional and local workforce development needs identified in the local workforce development board (LWDB) strategic planning process. The AE Director participated in the strategic planning stakeholder Zoom meetings and a smaller Adult Education interview. Through these venues, Adult Education partnered with the NWDB to begin the work of developing a work plan for the region. The AE Director also participates in the NWDB One-Stop Partner meetings. These meetings serve to identify region-wide and local-area workforce development priorities and resources, partners, and processes necessary to implement specific workforce development projects. An email distribution list is maintained for all program directors in the region and all information regarding NWDB is disseminated regularly including meeting times, minutes, and documentation shared with NWDB members. Regular updates and requests for feedback/input is requested, collected, and shared with the Board.

D. A description of how adult education services will be provided in the local area one-stop system.



Adult Education collaborates with the Comprehensive One Stop (COS) CareerCenter and service providers to collectively provide One Stop access for job seekers, workers, and businesses. While the preference of WIOA is to have all workforce services provided at the COS, the satellite service centers managed by Adult Education offer additional accessibility in the largely rural region. Traveling to a One Stop or an Adult Education Center can be challenging for some job seekers, depending on the distance. By having services separated in some locations, job seekers have more accessibility to an access point of the workforce system where they can be connected to additional services through the “no wrong door policy.”

Adult Basic Education & Literacy provides adults with educational opportunities to acquire and improve the literacy skills necessary to become self-sufficient and participate effectively as productive workers, family members, and citizens. The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, enacted as Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, is the principal source of federal support for adult basic and literacy education programs for adults who lack basic skills, a high school diploma, or proficiency in English.

High School Completion programs vary from location to location to provide two options for adults to earn high school credentials: 1) Adult High School Diploma programs are central to the mission and tradition of Maine Adult Education. These are secondary educational offerings that lead to a high school diploma awarded by the local district. 2) High School Equivalency Exam programs provide adults with an opportunity to obtain a Maine High School Equivalency Diploma through a pre-testing, preparation, and testing program.

Career Pathways (CP) and Integrated Education and Training (IET) are linked education and training services that enable students to successively advance over time to higher levels of education and employment in a given industry or occupational sector. Each step on a career pathway is designed to prepare students to progress to the next level of employment and education. The career pathways approach is a framework for weaving together adult education, training, and postsecondary programs (i.e., Eastern Maine Community College and the University of Maine), and connecting those services to the workforce needs of employers. The plans assess each program’s current status in meeting the requirements and the steps the program will take to reach full compliance in all required components. The Maine Department of Education's training programs and student support services enable individuals to secure a job or advance in an in-demand industry or occupation.

Programs also may offer WorkReady/Workforce Training programs designed to prepare participants for the rigors of employment.

Maine College Transitions (MCT) is offered free of charge through Maine Adult Education programs. The program focuses on developing skills for eligibility and easing and facilitating student transition to postsecondary education or employment. MCT is a comprehensive, student-centered program of study leading to enrollment and success in college.



Family Literacy provides a comprehensive and family-centered approach to education. Adult Education is one of the integral components in this model that brings multiple generations together to identify academic and life goals that can improve their quality of life through components including adult learning, children’s education, and parent and child activities.

Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG) is a Maine-based non-profit offering a continuum of support to help students transition from middle school through high school and on to post-secondary education. Our partnership will expand the delivery of services and foster programmatic changes to remain relevant to current needs.

Higher Opportunity for Pathways to Employment (HOPE) helps Maine families pursue training and education beyond high school to achieve career goals by addressing barriers to success. Adult Education, the NWDB, and other partners can collaboratively reduce barriers related to:

- Lack of housing, transportation, childcare, supplies;
- Technology and digital literacy;
- Access to education;
- Aging of current workers;
- Out-migration; and
- Substance use disorder and recovery.

Equity and Cultural Sensitivity has become a growing priority in the region. Efforts will focus on diversity and cultural sensitivity training for Adult Education and Literacy educators, staff, and programmatic providers. Programming to assist immigrants, diverse gender identities, and New Mainers will be available, and will involve partners including the regional chapters of Literacy Volunteers of Maine. ESL trainers perform outreach and access to interpretation services is provided if needed. Community partners have helped overcome language barriers, illustrated by an example of a local restaurant owner who engaged with Adult Education to help translate from English to Chinese. Services are available to train doctors, artists, cooks, construction workers, and others to acclimate minority and immigrant workers to the workplace environment.



Section 7: Cooperative Agreements

A. A description of any cooperative agreements between the local board or other local entities and as described in section 101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11)(B)) and the designated State agency administering programs carried out under title I of such Act (29 U.S.C. 720 et seq.) with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross-training of staff, provision of technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination to ensure access to programs and services for individuals with disabilities;

The NWDB has entered into an agreement with Vocational Rehabilitation.

- Vocational Rehabilitation – WIOA Title IV
 1. MDOL’s Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
 2. Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired
 3. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

The following summary includes service described in the Memorandum of Understanding – See Appendix 23.

B. A description of how individuals with disabilities will be served through the local area one-stop system.

Representatives of Vocational Rehabilitation are available at all One-Stop centers. As described in the One Stop Flow Chart, individuals with disabilities who self-disclose during the intake process will be made aware of disability-related resources and referred to the appropriate case manager. One Stop Centers make every effort to be accessible, complying with the ADA to ensure individuals with disabilities have access to the support they need to be appropriately served. The additional barrier experienced with COVID-19 required a reset to assure that needs were still met through distancing and remote assistance.

The Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) provide services through the one-stop system to individuals who have disabilities that are a significant impediment to employment. Priority is given to individuals with the most significant functional limitations.

Eligibility: An individual is eligible for DVR services under the following circumstances:



- Has a physical or mental impairment which, for the individual, constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment. Substantial impediment to employment means that a physical or mental impairment hinders an individual from preparing for, engaging in, retaining, or advancing in employment consistent with the individual's abilities and capabilities.
- Requires vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain, advance, or regain employment consistent with the applicant's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. Required VR services must be necessary to overcome disability related barriers. Lack of resources by itself does not constitute a disability related barrier.

Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired: An individual is eligible for DBVI vocational rehabilitation services under the following circumstances:

- Has a significant visual impairment, which for the individual constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment. Substantial impediment to employment means that a visual impairment hinders an individual from preparing for, engaging in, retaining, or advancing in employment consistent with the individual's abilities and capabilities.
- Requires vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain, advance, or regain employment consistent with the applicant's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. Required VR services must be necessary to overcome disability related barriers. Lack of resources by itself does not constitute a disability related barrier.

An individual is eligible for DBVI Independent Living Services under the following circumstances:

- Has less than 20/70 vision in the better eye with best correction or less than 20-degree fields and/or a significant functional impairment directly related to the visual limitations; and
- Blindness services are reasonably expected to significantly assist the individual to improve independent functions in family or community. Improvement in ability to function independently in family or community refers to a demonstration in functional or behavioral terms of an individual's greater independence or maintenance of independence in such areas as self-care, activities of daily living, leisure activities, community, or orientation and mobility.

Eligibility for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services is determined within 60 days based upon documentation of disability as a barrier to employment. Individuals who are not determined eligible for VR services or cannot be served because of insufficient funds are referred to other One-Stop and comparable service providers for assistance.



Services are provided at five One-Stop locations across the NWDB region: Bangor, Houlton, Lewiston, Machias, and Presque Isle. The service centers employ a “no wrong door” policy to assure that needs are met.

Based upon a comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs, employment plans are developed with eligible individuals, which include services provided directly by DVR/DBVI, as well as many other partners and contracted providers. Individuals that work with DVR/DBVI are in various stages of rehabilitation and adjustment to disability; they are encouraged to utilize all available resources to successfully achieve their vocational goals, including registering with the Maine JobLink when ready to search for employment.

BRS DVR/DBVI actively works as part of the One-Stop Operator’s CORE teams to support the integration of services with other partners in each local area. BRS assists with the coordination of services on behalf of DVR/DBVI customers and provides technical assistance, training, and consultation to other partners to ensure the physical and programmatic accessibility of the One-Stop centers for all customers with disabilities.

Services are individualized and based upon specific rehabilitation needs. Each individual’s employment plan is unique, and the services listed below are those that might be considered for vocational rehabilitation:

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation	
Vocational Guidance and Counseling	Vocational Exploration
Comprehensive Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs	Vocational Assessment
Medical and Psychological Evaluations	Job Readiness Assessment
Physical Restoration Services	Individual Employment Plan
Deaf Services, including ASL Interpreting	Job Development and Placement Services
Pre-Employment Transition Services to Students	Job Coaching
Occupational Skill Training	Occupational Tools & Equipment
Postsecondary Education and Training	Self-Employment Exploration and Planning
On-the-Job Training	Ticket-to-Work Services
Assistive Technology	Benefits Counseling
Referral to Supportive Services Resources	Post-Employment Placement Services
Short-term Transportation Assistance	Work Opportunity Tax Credit
Short-term Supportive Services	Apprenticeship
Division for the Blind & Visually Impaired	
Vocational Rehabilitation Guidance & Counseling	Job Development and Placement Services
Comprehensive Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs	Pre-Employment Transition Services to Students
Medical and Psychological Evaluations	Vocational Exploration
Orientation and Mobility Instruction	Vocational Assessment



Rehabilitation Teaching Services	Job Readiness Assessment
Adaptive Technology Assessments and Services	Job Coaching
Computer Access Training	Referral to Supportive Service Resources
Teacher of Visually Impaired Instruction	Short-term Transportation Assistance
Low Vision Evaluation	Short-term Supportive Services
Personal Adjustment Counseling	Occupational Tools & Equipment
Reader Services	Self-Employment Exploration and Planning
Individual Employment Plan Development	Ticket-to-Work Services
Occupational Skill Training	Benefits Counseling
Postsecondary Education and Training	Post-employment Services
Work Opportunity Tax Credit	Apprenticeship

Services for Employers: Through its Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI), the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) partners with businesses interested in the inclusion of people with disabilities to meet workforce needs and expand market share.

Staffing and Recruitment of Qualified Job Seekers with Disabilities: BRS Business Account Managers coordinate services with employers and assist DVR/DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation counselors to identify and refer qualified individuals with disabilities for job openings based upon employer workforce needs. Through extensive career development and work-based learning with youth with disabilities, BRS also works with employers to develop the next generation of workers for their workforce.

Job Support, Coaching and Training for Job Seekers with Disabilities: For those who need it, DVR/DBVI engage certified community-based employment specialists to provide the assistance necessary on and off the job site for individuals with disabilities to learn and perform job tasks for successful ongoing employment.

Workplace Accommodations: DVR/DBVI can assist an employer with identifying reasonable changes in the workplace that enable a person with a disability to apply for a job and/or perform job duties equal to similarly situated employees without disabilities. A majority of accommodations are low cost and can include assistive technology.

Job Retention/ Return-to-Work Services: DVR/DBVI can provide guidance and information to an employer for existing employees who currently have, or in the future may incur, a disability. This can save the employer the cost of hiring and training new staff while retaining a valuable current employee.

Financial Incentives: Financial incentives allow low risk participation for employers through DVR/DBVI paid work experiences, such as vocational assessment and On-the Job training, as



well as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, which all assist in the placement and hire of an individual with a disability in competitive employment.

Technical Assistance, Consultation and Training: Based upon employer needs, training includes Disability Awareness/Etiquette, the Americans with Disability Act, Section 503 for Federal Contractors, and disability specific information such as Deaf Culture.

Linkage to Nationwide Resources: BRS can connect employers to business leadership networks, such as Disability: IN and other Maine-based businesses that hire people with disabilities and are willing to share their experiences.

Service Changes Due to COVID-19: Vocational Rehabilitation services remain available through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DVR/DBVI), but the modality is based upon client need and contingent upon guidance from the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at the time the service is delivered to ensure the health and safety of DVR/DBVI clients, employers, and staff.

DVR/DBVI have expanded the use of video and teleconferencing, as well as developed many new virtual service options, including an online VR application through <https://workservices.maine.gov/>. Career Exploration Workshops, job shadows, Orientation & Mobility instruction, and college preparation programs. DVR/DBVI staff are able to provide in person services following CDC safety precautions when needed in safe community settings.

Ongoing efforts to enhance services will include:

- Direct input from clients to assure that adaptable conditions and accommodations have been made – are all equipment and facility needs being met?
- Programs available to support students facing anxiety and mental health issues
- Connecting individuals with alternative high school programs as appropriate

Section 8: Jobs for Veterans State Grants

A. A description of how the local board will provide priority of service to veterans and their eligible spouses;

The Board offers referral, training, and placement services to veterans through the One-Stop American Job Center system. Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces and their eligible spouses are a primary target group and are given priority over other eligible individuals for all career center services. All visitors to the One-Stop American Job Center system are asked if they are a veteran or qualifying spouse of a veteran. If the answer is yes, the visitor meets with a Bureau of Employment Services (BES) Employment Consultant who provides the individual with



information on all available workforce services and programs and counsels them on how to apply these resources to best achieve his or her employment goals.

Since the last strategic plan was published, changes to eligibility have included:

- Addition of family members of veterans; and
- Veterans from the Vietnam era added to the service eligibility list.

BES offers priority of services to all veterans and specialized employment and training services to veterans and their eligible spouses. Disabled veterans and veterans with significant barriers to employment may receive any of the services offered through the one-stop system, but in addition can receive individual assistance connecting them to a multitude of specialized resources and programs.

Under the Jobs for Veterans Act and WIOA, veterans must receive priority of services, which means that if a veteran qualifies for any federally funded employment and training program per its eligibility criteria, the veteran is given priority over a non-veteran eligible person.

MDOL ensures that priority of service opportunities are clearly visible and articulated to all customers who engage in one-stop services. At a minimum, priority of service to veterans and veteran spouses are integrated in outreach, recruitment, and notification and intake efforts through:

- Inclusion of information regarding veterans' priority of service in printed materials targeted to customers and employers;
- Inclusion of information regarding veterans' priority of service in presentations made to customers and employers;
- Addition of veterans' priority of service information to service providers, Maine CareerCenters and MDOL web sites;
- Pro-active recruitment of veterans by targeted strategies that focus on employers as well as job seeking veterans;
- Addition of a veterans' priority of service rights statement to the complaint procedures provided to a Veteran customer;
- Addition of a veterans' priority of service rights statement to the signature portion of the paper intake forms;
- Provision of the opportunity for veterans and covered persons to make known their veteran status;
- The Maine JobLink (MJL) job notification system, which will inform eligible veterans of job opportunities before all other registrants;
- Written policies to establish that service providers who receive Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds for employment and training programs will be required to identify covered persons at the point of entry to programs and/or services, so that veterans and covered persons can take full advantage of priority of service; and



- Written policies and procedures to ensure veterans and covered persons understand their entitlement to priority of service, the full array of employment and training services available, and the eligibility requirements that veterans and covered persons must meet in order to enter programs and services.

Eligibility for Services will be delineated in written policies and procedures that:

- Ensures veterans and covered persons meet the statutory eligibility requirements applicable to the specific employment and training program;
- Ensures veterans and covered persons are given priority of service where statutory or mandatory priorities are in effect and particularly where local area service providers have instituted mandatory priorities due to limited funds;
- Ensures eligible veterans and covered persons receive access to services or resources before non-covered persons when resources for services are limited; and
- Target special populations of veterans, including Special Disabled Veterans, Campaign Badge Veterans, Disabled Veterans, and covered persons.

WIOA requires that partners who identify a veteran with significant barriers to employment must refer that veteran to a Disabled Veteran's Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) who will ensure they are made aware of all additional services and resources available to eligible veterans. Specifically, WIOA requires that workforce partners refer the following types of veterans to a DVOP:

1. A special-disabled or disabled veteran, as defined in 38 U.S.C. §4211(1) & (3), is a veteran who:
 - a. Is entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retirement pay would be entitled to compensation) under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; or
 - b. Was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability.
2. A veteran who is a homeless person, as defined in Sections 103(a) and (b) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 1302 (a) and (b), as amended. This is updated to include paragraph (b) of Section 103 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which considers "homeless" to be any individual or family member who is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions in the individual's or family's current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are jeopardized, and who have no other residence and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing);
3. A veteran who during the three-year period beginning on the date of such veteran's discharge or release from active duty has been unemployed for 27 or more weeks in the previous 12 months (does not have to be 27 consecutive weeks);



4. A veteran who is an offender, as defined by WIOA Section 3 (38), refers to any eligible veteran or eligible spouse who is currently incarcerated or has been released from incarceration;
5. A veteran lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate;
6. A veteran who is low-income as defined by WIOA Section 3 (36);
7. A transitioning service member (TSM) of the Armed Forces who has been identified as in need of intensive/individualized career services;
8. A member of the Armed Forces who is wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in military treatment facilities or warrior transition unit;
9. The spouse or other family caregivers of such wounded, ill or injured member;
10. Any veteran between the ages of 18-24; and
11. Vietnam-era Veterans. Pursuant to 38 U.S.C. 4211, the term “Veteran of the Vietnam Era” is an eligible veteran any part of whose active military, naval or air service was during the Vietnam era. “Vietnam-era” means the period beginning on February 28, 1961 and ending on May 7, 1975.

B. A description of how the local board will engage local veterans employment representatives in connecting with and providing services to local businesses.

Dedicated staff members work directly with Maine employers to assist in placing veterans into employment. Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) conduct employer outreach and establish employment and training opportunities on behalf of all veteran clients that are served in their regions. The duties assigned to Maine’s LVERs are to conduct outreach to employers; facilitate employment, training, and placement services to veterans; build capacity with other services providers; and complete reporting requirements.

The Maine CareerCenter LVERs advocate on behalf of Veterans for employment and training opportunities with Maine businesses and industries, community-based organizations, or with any entity that provides quality jobs offering good pay and benefits. Through these efforts, LVERs develop relationships, jobs, or training opportunities for veterans and eligible persons.

Maine participates in innovative initiatives including the Maine Hire-A-Vet Campaign, which showcases the talents, specialized expertise, and occupational skills of individual veterans to employers. LVERs contribute to the annual planning of the campaign, which promotes the hiring of 100 veterans in 100 jobs with 100 employers in 100 days. Since its inception in 2015, the campaign has connected nearly 750 employers with 1,000+ veteran-hires and was recognized as a best practice by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) and the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA).

As a core function of the position, LVERs assist in the coordination and participation of job fairs and/or hiring events, either in-person or on a virtual platform which can be conducted on both local and statewide levels and in both general and sector specific industries. LVERs are trained



to know about one stop partner services that have the potential to improve employment and training options for veterans and focus on the promotion of veterans as job seekers who have highly marketable skills and experience. As participants on the CareerCenter business outreach teams, LVERs work directly with Wagner Peyser, Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, State Vocational Rehabilitation, and Adult Education staff to better understand options for employers in Maine and to increase employment opportunities for veterans. LVERs utilize Maine JobLink sorting tools and database of veteran job seekers and employers to assist with job matching and monitor the Federal contractor job listings to proactively reach out to employers to assess needs and further veteran placement into jobs. All employer outreach activities are documented in Maine JobLink.

LVERs will conduct employer outreach in the local community, on behalf of all American Job Center (AJC) veterans. In their outreach to employers, LVERs will seek out job opportunities in industries and employment sectors that are identified by veterans seeking employment on the Job Ready Veteran Referral form. They educate and encourage employers to participate in employment support programs such as On the Job training (OJT), GI BILL OJT, Maine's Apprenticeship Program, Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP), Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA), State of Maine Vocational Rehabilitation, Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), and Federal Bonding. They also refer Veterans to appropriate one stop partners and other service agencies that provide supportive services and educational opportunities.

Section 9: Fiscal, Performance, and Other Functions

A. Identification of the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in section 107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III), as determined by the chief elected official or the Governor under section 107(d)(12)(B)(i)'

County of Penobscot
97 Hammond Street
Bangor, ME 04401

See attached Appendix 3 – MOA between County of Penobscot and NWDB

B. A description of the financial sustainability of one-stop services with current funding levels, and a description of the ability to make adjustments should funding levels change;



The Northeastern Workforce Development Board (NWDB), in collaboration and partnership with the Chief Elected Officials (CEO's) of Aroostook, Washington, Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Washington Counties developed RFPs for Adult/Dislocated Worker service delivery and Youth service delivery. The Northeastern Workforce Development Board Plan can be accessed online at www.northeasternwdb.org. Interested parties should check NWDB's website to access the RFPs and revisit regularly for updates.

Questions about the RFP or review process may be submitted in person at the Bidder's Conference or submitted electronically to NWDB's executive director between the specified dates. No phone calls will be accepted. All questions will be responded to in written format and published on www.northeasternwdb.org. No questions will be accepted after the designated time. Attendance at the bidder's conference is not mandatory. For those who plan to attend, they will be asked to RSVP and submit the following information: (a) contact information including phone number and full e-mail address and, (b) how many representatives from the organization or from partner organizations will be attending. The Bidder's Conference will be held at the NWDB office located at 26 Franklin Street, Bangor, ME. Directions may be obtained at www.northeasternwdb.org. Proposals are due by 4:00 p.m. on designated date and will be opened at 4:00 p.m. on designated date.

Throughout the entire RFP schedule, no NWDB member, Fiscal Agent, or CEO for the region may be sought out for advice or assistance. Such communication will constitute grounds for eliminating a proposal submission from consideration. The NWDB and/or CEOs for the region reserve the right to amend the RFP process and/or schedule without advance notification.

Specific procurement for training on job skills will be managed by the NWDB's contracted WIOA service providers.

All RFP announcements will be published in the Bangor Daily News.

The following schedule/timeline has been established:

Date to be determined	RFP solicitations are published.
Date to be determined	Bidder's Conference is held.
Date to be determined	Conference response posting.
Date to be determined	Proposals are due 4pm.
Date to be determined	Finalist presentations if needed.
Date to be determined	Successful bidder is announced.
Date to be determined	Contractor/s begins new Program Year.

The NWDB uses the following criteria to decide on a non-competitive or competitive process:

- **Non-Competitive Process:** The NWDB and EMDC and ACAP have had opportunity to negotiate contract awards under \$5,000.00 by either obtaining cost estimates from a



minimum of three businesses or organizations, or by sole sourcing to a business or individual.

- **Competitive Process:** Purchase decisions more than \$5,000 for labor, equipment, supplies, or services purchased, leased, or contracted for shall be made only after receiving, whenever possible, oral quotations from at least two (2) vendors.

Purchase decisions exceeding \$25,000 for labor, equipment, supplies, or services purchased, leased, or contracted for shall be made only after receiving, whenever possible, written quotations from at least two (2) vendors. Specific selections shall be recommended by the Executive Director to the Board of Directors, for approval, with written quotations attached for review. Recommendations shall be based on consideration of all applicable criteria as described under “Evaluation of Alternative Vendors” below.

All Purchase decisions of \$100,000 or more shall be made by obtaining competitive proposals.

C. A description of the local levels of performance negotiated with the Governor and chief elected official pursuant to section 116(c), to be used to measure the performance of the local area and to be used by the local board for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers under subtitle B, and the one-stop delivery system, in the local area;

The Chief Elected Official and NWDB executive director sign a copy of the negotiated performance measures below. (See Appendix 17 PY20-PY21 Performance Measures)

**Northeastern Workforce Development Board
WIOA Title IB**

Local Performance Measures for PY20 and PY21

Local Performance Measures	PY 2020	PY 2021
Adult Program		
Employment 2nd Qtr. after exit	71.5%	73.0%
Employment 4th Qtr. after exit	71.0%	71.5%
Median Earnings 2nd Qtr. after exit	\$ 4,700.00	\$ 4,800.00
Credential Attainment Rate	65.0%	65.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	50.0%	55.0%
Dislocated Worker Program		
Employment 2nd Qtr. after exit	80.0%	81.0%
Employment 4th Qtr. after exit	82.0%	83.0%
Median Earnings 2nd Qtr. after exit	\$ 7,015.00	\$ 7,100.00
Credential Attainment Rate	80.0%	81.0%



Measurable Skill Gains	50.0%	55.0%
Youth Program		
Employment or Education 2nd Qtr. after exit	64.0%	65.0%
Employment or Education 4th Qtr. after exit	70.0%	71.0%
Median Earnings 2nd Qtr. after exit	\$ 3,800.00	\$ 3,900.00
Credential Attainment Rate	60.0%	61.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	35.0%	40.0%

D. A description of the actions the local board will take toward becoming, or remaining, a high-performing board, and consistent with the factors developed by the State board pursuant to Section 101(d)(6) a description of the process used by the Local Board to review and evaluate performance of local one-stop centers;

NWDB Financial & Program Oversight and Monitoring:

Starting with WIOA program year 2016, oversight and assessment protocols will include: a review of existing reports; data and input from the WIOA system, provider, partners, services, and resources offered to Youth, Adult and Dislocated Worker participants. Each program year begins July 1st and ends June 30th of the following year.

Under WIOA the NWDB now contracts with EMDC to provide WIOA services to Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Washington Counties and ACAP to provide WIOA services to Aroostook County. To date, the service providers have not subcontracted out any of their WIOA services.

FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT:

Financial oversight and monitoring occur annually. The NWDB's fiscal agent, County of Penobscot, conducts a financial review of EMDC's and ACAP's operations and accounting system. A sample number of documents are drawn, by request, from the financial reviewer. Data is taken from areas within the service provider's financial systems, including program invoices, personnel documents, payroll ledgers, etc. The reviewer identifies areas of strength and weakness within existing financial management policies and procedures. If deemed a serious concern, the service provider is asked to provide a corrective action plan and is reevaluated within a reasonable amount of time to ensure corrective mechanisms have been established and successfully implemented.

A formal report with the service provider's response is provided to the NWDB and the County Commissioners for review and response, as needed. The NWDB and County Commissioners examine the financial activity at minimum on a quarterly and annual basis to ensure that there is an increase in individuals obtaining employment and subsequent employment-related credentials. Job growth in sectors offering better paying employment is also examined, directly in accordance with the NWDB's mission.



Each recipient (NWDB) and sub-recipient (WIOA service providers under contract with NWDB) must conduct regular oversight and monitoring of program and financial activities to determine that expenditures have been properly allocated and are within the cost limitations. Oversight and monitoring should determine contract compliance with provisions of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) Law. The NWDB provides technical assistance as necessary and appropriate.

Except for excluding service providers paid by an individual training account, the NWDB is responsible for annual on-site monitoring of service provider(s) and sub-recipients for financial and programmatic compliance. In the event the term of agreement is less than one year, monitoring will occur about halfway through the training.

The NWDB is required to develop and use local monitoring procedures, instruments, and schedules, all of which can be viewed in the NWDB monitoring manual.

The NWDB is responsible for conducting annual monitoring of the WIOA service provider's workforce programs and financial management contracted with WIOA funds and in accordance with 20 CFR Sec. 667.410(a).

The NWDB has established a monitoring system as part of their oversight responsibilities, as detailed in the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA). While ultimate design of the system is up to each local board, the following elements are included in NWDB's monitoring:

- All monitoring procedures are in writing
- Monitoring duties are assigned to a specific individual(s) and/or committee
- A monitoring schedule is written for each program year. This schedule includes:
 1. review of service providers
 2. review of management systems
 3. follow-up on each monitoring
 4. reporting procedures that ensure
 - a. findings are documented
 - b. findings are reported in writing to the appropriate parties
 - c. deficiencies are noted along with their resolution
 - d. follow-up is completed to ensure all corrective action has been implemented.
- Documentation is developed to measure progress toward compliance with performance standards and coordination mandates, ensuring compliance with WIOA, and, at a minimum, with all applicable:
 1. Federal laws and regulations
 2. State laws and policies
 3. NWDB policies and agreements
 4. State and local WIOA strategic plans
 5. Terms of all contracts entered under the jurisdiction of WIOA.



Entities Subject to Monitoring:

MDOL conducts annual monitoring in each of Maine's local workforce areas. MDOL monitoring reports that concern governance and strategic planning are sent to NWDB's executive director. MDOL program monitoring reports, together with requests for corrective action, will be sent to NWDB's executive director, and distributed to the appropriate service providers (EMDC and ACAP) and NWDB's American Job Center manager (BES). The NWDB is responsible for providing a timely response to MDOL's concerns or findings. The response is completed by the NWDB executive director in collaboration with the direct service delivery providers (EMDC and ACAP) as appropriate.

Monitoring takes place at all levels and includes the NWDB, the service providers (Direct Delivery: EMDC and ACAP), and the individual American Job Center in the five counties, as well as the existing extension sites. The objective of monitoring varies from full system to very program-specific career assessment, workforce education and job training, individual funding opportunities, job search and placement assistance.

Description of the process used by the local board to review and evaluate performance of local one-stop centers:

One-Stop CareerCenters are the portals to our state's workforce system and its broad array of career services and resources designed to help individuals acquire the skills necessary to gain meaningful employment and our businesses to access the talent pipeline that meets their human capital needs and fuels economic growth. One-Stop operating system partners are required to collaborate to support a seamless customer-focused service delivery network. Every region across the State of Maine is unique in terms of its economy and geography, but each is actively working to create a system that provides effective services for our job seeker and business customers.

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), state and local partners share common performance goals and are mandated to collaborate in developing and implementing a One-Stop delivery system where services are designed with customers, resources are leveraged for maximum efficiency, and continuous improvement is the hallmark.

The Northeastern Workforce Development Board's (NWDB) Executive Committee review all assessments related to the Northeastern Maine One-Stop Centers and when approved will recommend formal approval by the NWDB to certify the Bangor Comprehensive One-Stop CareerCenter and the affiliate sites of East Millinocket, Dover-Foxcroft, Presque Isle, and Machias.

The NWDB staff will follow up as needed with review and action steps required by the board.



E. A description, including a copy of the local area's individual training account policy. The description should include information such as staff-assisted selection processes, dollar limits, duration, etc.

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Title 1, Sec. 134(c)(3)(F)(iii), training services for Adults and Dislocated Workers may be provided through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). Under Sec. 129(C)(2)(D) Youth training activities are not subject to the policy governing the issuance and management of ITAs. However, under 20 CFR Sec. 681.550, ITAs may be allowed for out-of-school Youth aged 16-24.

The intent of WIOA is to allow individuals to take an active role in managing their employment future through the use of ITAs. Adults and Dislocated Workers receiving training under this approach will receive information they need (e.g., skills assessment, labor market conditions and trends, training vendor performance) to make a well-informed choice about their own employment future and the training to support their decision.

The ITA is established on behalf of a registrant. An Individual Service Strategy (ISS) does not constitute an “obligation” of the ITA. WIOA Title 1 Adults and Dislocated Workers, in consultation with CareerCenter staff, use the ITA to purchase training services from eligible training providers. Payments from ITAs may be made in a variety of ways, including the electronic transfer of funds through financial institutions, vouchers, or other appropriate methods. Payments may also be made incrementally, through payment of a portion of the costs at different points in the training course.

WIOA regulations allow the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) to impose limits on the dollar amount and/or the duration for ITAs. There may be a limit for an individual participant that is based on the needs identified in the training plan; or there may be a policy decision by the LWDB to establish a range of amounts and/or a maximum amount applicable to all ITAs. Limitations established by LWDB policies must not undermine but maximize customer choice in the selection of an eligible training provider. ITA limitations may provide for exceptions to the limitations in individual cases.

This policy also clarifies the process and procedures that customers can expect to experience when the choice to seek skills training through WIOA is made.

Policy

Individuals may use ITAs in exchange for training services for skills in demand occupations within the identified industry clusters as defined by the NWDB from training providers on the approved list of eligible training providers (Sections 134(B)(v)(I)(II). WIOA mandates that all training services (except for on-the-job training, customized training, and incumbent worker training) be provided through the use of ITAs and that eligible individuals shall receive ITAs through the One-Stop Delivery System Sec. 134(c)(3)(F)(iii).



Subcontracted service providers of the NWDB shall issue ITAs at the customer's request under the following conditions, Sec. 134(c)(3)(A)(i):

- a. Funds are available,
- b. The customer chooses an eligible training provider consistent with the ETPL,
- c. The customer is eligible for Training services,
- d. The customer is unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment and in need of training to obtain economic self-sufficiency and comparable or higher wages,
- e. The customer has the skills and qualifications to successfully participate in the selected program of training,
- f. The customer demonstrates appropriate career choices based on work experience and occupational preferences. There is a reasonable expectation of completing training and a reasonable expectation of obtaining employment,
- g. ITAs are granted in high-growth employment sectors within the designated industry clusters as determined and documented in the Local Area Plan.

General:

- a. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) are established on behalf of an eligible individual to finance training services (§680.230)4.).
- b. WIOA Title I Adults and Dislocated Workers (DW) will select from the list of eligible training providers who best meet their needs in consultation with their case manager (§680.340)
- c. Training shall be directly linked to occupations within industry clusters that are in demand in the local area or in another area if the customer is willing to relocate. The NWDB's subcontracted service providers approve training services for occupations within industry clusters which have been determined to have a high potential for sustained demand or growth in the local area Sec. 134(c)(3)(F)(v).
- d. ITAs will be available through CareerCenters [Maine's One-Stop System] with the exceptions listed in paragraph VI of this section Sec. 134(c)(3)(G)(ii).

(See Appendix 18 – NWDB Policy 014 – Individual Training Accounts Policy)

I. A description of how training services under chapter 3 of subtitle B will be provided in accordance with Section 134(c)(3)(G), including, if contracts for the training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of ITAs under that chapter and how the local board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided;

Other Mechanisms for Payment [Sec. 134(a)(3)(G)(ii)(I – VI)]



Contracts for services may be used instead of ITAs when:

- a. the services provided are on-the-job training (OJT) or customized training;
- b. the LWDB determines that there are an insufficient number of eligible training providers in the local area to accomplish the purpose of the ITA in designated/identified industry clusters;
- c. the LWDB determines that there is a training program of demonstrated effectiveness offered by a community-based or faith-based (CBO, FBO) or another private organization to service special participant populations that face multiple barriers to employment. The LWDB will develop criteria to be used in determining demonstrated effectiveness, particularly as it applies to the special participant population to be served.

The criteria will normally include:

- i. Financial performance of the organization,
- ii. Demonstrated performance in the delivery of services for participant populations through such means as program completion rate, attainment of the skills, certificates, or degrees; the program is designed to provide placement after training in unsubsidized employment, retention in employment, and
- iii. How the specific program related to the workforce investment needs.

Coordination of ITAs with Other Grant Assistance

The WIOA limits funding for training to individuals who are unable to find other grant assistance for training or whose financial needs exceed the assistance available from other sources. WIOA funds are intended to supplement other sources of funding [680.230]. The LWDB will work with its Service Providers to establish policies to assure that CareerCenters in the Northeastern Local Area leverage and coordinate such resources as are available through the CSSP, scholarships, TAA, and Pell with WIOA funding. Service Providers must assure that duplicate payments are not made to training providers for the cost of training and will coordinate available funds to pay for training costs, so that WIOA funds supplement other sources of funds to pay for training and avoid duplication of payments. The exact mix of funds shall be determined on the availability of funding for either training costs or support service with the goal of planning for the completion of the training program that the customer has accepted.

J. A description of how core partners are working toward transition to an integrated, technology-enabled, common intake and case management system for programs carried out under WIOA by one-stop partners;

A common in-take form was implemented by MDOL through a WorkService computer-based platform a few years ago. After a year, MDOL cancelled the program due to cost. While partners continue to use their own databases for in-take, the core partners have made strides toward a common release of information form, referral form, and case management.



MJL hosts a universal release of information that is completed as part of the intake with registration for WIOA programming that allows partners to share information. This automatic completion of ROI establishes the fact that partners are committed to a collaborative process with the anticipation that other partners will be involved to provide an array of services/resources for each client. While each partner may utilize a different release form to meet their requirements, the ability to release the information among the partners is universal as an established practice. Electronic signatures are an option that is available to meet the needs of our customers.

Partners plan team meetings to leverage funding and consider the customer's individualized plan. We utilize core partner meetings to consider common challenges and recommendations to improve processes for the customer experience. When meeting with a new customer for the first time, all partners assess customer needs based on eligibility for all programs and include referring partners in next steps to ease the process to enroll in additional partner programs. We regularly discuss potential referrals with partner programs prior to suggesting the program to the customer so we are aware of whether the program is the right step. If it is not the right time for the customer to enroll in one of the programs, partners discuss indications that would make the program a better fit for the customer's goals, readiness, and timeline.

MDOL recently made adjustments to MJL to allow more sharing of information for plans and case notes between WIOA 1B providers and Wagner Peyser. This is a major step toward a formal integrated case management process. Partners do confer with ongoing updates, but in an informal manner.

A One Stop Partner goal for 2021 includes continuing to simplify and define our referral process to limit redundancy and create a seamless transition from service partners.

K. A description of the local board's procurement system, including a statement of assurance that the procedures conform to the standards in OMB guidance set forth in 2 CFR 200.

NWDB's procurement system is described in Section "Purchasing Policies and Procedures" on pages 12-16 of the organization's "Financial and Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual" [Financial and Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual – See Appendix 12]. As stated at the beginning of this section, these policies and procedures are in accordance with Subpart D of 2 CFR 200.317 - 200.326.



Section 10: Performance Accountability

A. How performance information on workforce development programs informs local strategic planning;

The board receives updated budget and performance information on a quarterly basis. A summary of explanation is provided. Board members are afforded opportunity to ask questions and discuss strategies to address issues that may arise. Prior to the strategic planning process, the board received comprehensive reports describing services and labor market information in Aroostook, Washington, Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Hancock Counties. The NWDB and its One Stop Partners developed goals and strategies based on the data provided.

B. How local boards will use the Statistical Adjustment Model (SAM) to negotiate local area performance goals;

The Departments of Labor and Education collaborated to develop a Statistical Adjustment Model per Sec.116 (b)(3)(A)(viii) of WIOA. This model is used and applied to targets to account for changes in economic conditions and participant demographics throughout the workforce and education systems. The Statistical Adjustment Model specifies six performance indicators to be used for performance accountability purposes. As part of the process for setting targets for those performance indicators, the law specifies that it is a statistical adjustment model developed and used as part of the negotiation process.

Negotiated Performance Goals can be found in Section 9C.

C. How performance information is used to oversee WIOA title IB programs and inform continuous quality improvements in the day to day management of Title IB programs;

See Section 9D above.

D. How local area performance information is used to conduct performance-based intervention;

The local board conducts annual program monitoring to assure contract compliance, alignment with negotiated performance goals and excellent customer service. When the board identifies an issue with unmet performance goals a corrective action will be developed with the service provider using performance-based solutions. The service provider will be asked to meet their program goals as discussed.



E. How the local board will make local area performance information available to the public on a quarterly basis.

Once the NWDB has reviewed and approved performance information and reports they will be posted on the NWDB website found at www.northeasternwdb.org.

Section 11: Local Board Assurances

A. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)

The Northeastern Workforce Development Board assures compliance with all applicable laws regarding discrimination:

- Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. 6101 et.seq.)
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794)
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et.seq.)
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d et.seq.)

All WIOA participants and staff will be informed of EEO policies and guidelines and the name of the EEO Officer during enrollment.

All Grievances and complaints submitted by WIOA participants involving allegations of discrimination, violations of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act as amended or criminal fraud, abuse or misconduct must be processed in accordance with the NWDB Grievance/Complaint Procedures.

B. Internal Program Management

The NWDB is required to establish internal program management procedures to assure compliance and to review program progress. The NWDB agrees to monitor and review the following major areas of operation:

1. Compliance with the provisions of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (20 CFR Part 652, et al) and regulations or any applicable federal or state regulations;
2. Compliance with provisions of the WIOA contract;
3. Compliance with all applicable State and workforce board policies; and
4. Compliance with WIOA Regulations regarding record maintenance.

The internal program management procedures must be sufficient to prevent fraud and abuse. All reports of information creating suspicion of, or instances of criminal misconduct, fraud or willful and gross misconduct, in connection with any WIOA program shall be reported immediately to the Maine Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Labor. Internal program management procedures must also ensure that auditable and otherwise adequate



records are maintained and confirm adherence to the specific program requirements and limitations.

C. Records Retention

The following records and documents must be maintained for WIOA participants and employees. The NWDB will make these records available for monitoring and review by the MDOL and agrees to retain these records, subject to audit, for three (3) years from completion of services. Release of responsibility to retain records after the three (3) year period will not be authorized until final audit, resolution of audit questioned costs and all questioned costs are paid or accepted as allowable. In the event the NWDB goes out of business or ceases to be an organization prior to the expiration of records retention responsibility, the board will deliver all records required to be retained hereunder to the MDOL. The following records shall be transmitted to the MDOL for acceptance in an orderly fashion, with documents properly labeled and filed and in an acceptable condition for storage:

1. General ledger or equivalent;
2. Cash receipts and cash disbursement journals/reports or equivalent;
3. Bank statements, reconciliation, deposit slips, and canceled checks for each bank account which WIOA funds were received or disbursed;
4. All WIOA contracts, including all amendments;
5. All financial reports and requirements for reimbursement;
6. Payroll records including Individual Earning Record, Employee Withholding Authorization (W-4), FICA reporting forms, Federal and State Withholding, Unemployment taxes, Employee Personnel Files, Time Records and Employee Time/Salary Allocation plan;
7. Invoices and/or supporting data for non-payroll disbursements;
8. Participant records including data forms, verification/documentation items, assessment tests and results and the Individualized Service Strategy; and
9. Monthly Financial Status and Program Performance reports.

D. Internal Financial Management

The NWDB agrees to conduct internal financial reviews of the following major areas:

1. Compliance with the provisions of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act and its regulations;
2. Compliance with the provisions of the WIOA Contract;
3. Compliance with the applicable State and workforce board policies;
4. Compliance with WIOA Regulations regarding record maintenance;
5. Compliance with accepted financial management and accounting practices as appropriate;
6. Compliance with OMB Circulars A-87, A-110, A-122, and others as appropriate.

Internal financial management procedures shall be sufficient to prevent fraud and abuse. All reports of information creating suspicion of, or instances of criminal misconduct, fraud or



willful and gross misconduct, in connection with any WIOA program shall be reported immediately to the Maine Department of Labor and to the U.S. Department of Labor. Internal financial management procedures must also ensure the auditable and otherwise adequate records are maintained which support all expenditures of WIOA funds and confirm adherence to policies regarding the allowable costs and allocation of cost to proper cost categories. The NWDB shall document all internal financial compliance reviews.

E. Monitoring and Audit Procedures

The Maine Department of Labor (MDOL) has developed a systematic fiscal and programmatic monitoring system for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of WIOA funded programs. Monitoring is the process whereby MDOL gathers and analyzes information to detect problems, identify strengths and weaknesses, and propose improvement to the program. It is the quality control system for job training projects operated with WIOA funds. MDOL will ensure that monitoring covers activities, services, and management practices supported by WIOA funds. In many instances, fiscal and programmatic monitoring are interrelated, and conducted simultaneously.

According to Section 667.410 of the Act, NWDB must cooperate with any monitoring, inspection, audit or investigation of activities related to WIOA contracts. These activities may be conducted by the Maine Department of Labor and/or the U.S. Department of Labor, or their designated representatives. The NWDB must provide access to the premises for the purpose of interviewing employees or participants and permit the examination of, and/or photocopying of books, records, files, or other documents related to the WIOA funded program.

F. Invoicing, Reporting, and Contractor Close-out

The MDOL will reimburse the NWDB for total allowable costs incurred as agreed upon between the MDOL and the NWDB. The NWDB will submit weekly invoice reports to MDOL for reimbursement of allowable costs. This report must be submitted to the MDOL according to weekly drawdown schedule.

In order to assure that the funds provided are used in accordance with the provisions of the contract, the NWDB will: (a) use such fiscal, audit, and accounting procedures as may be necessary to assure proper accounting for payments received and proper disbursement of such payments; and (b) provide the MDOL and authorized representatives of the State of Maine, U.S. Department of Labor or the Comptroller General of the United States access to and the right to examine any books, documents, papers, records, property, and equipment pertaining to funds provided or activities undertaken concerning the project.

G. Submission of Most Recent Audit to the Administrative Entity

As a recipient of WIOA funds, the NWDB must have an annual financial and compliance audit performed in accordance with Section 667.200 of the Act. The WIOA audits must be conducted according to auditing standards set forth in the financial and compliance handbook entitled “Standards for Audit of Governmental Organizations, Program Activities and



Functions” issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. The audit shall be performed by an independent Certified Public Accountant selected by methods recommended by the State of Maine and/or the Office of the State Auditor, as appropriate.

This requirement will be met by providing the NWDB with a copy of the annual audit according to OMB Circular A-128 or A-133 as appropriate. The audit should be submitted within 30 days after the completion and acceptance by the service provider’s Board.

H. Requirements for Depository Accounts Holding WIOA Funds

The NWDB must assure that U.S. Treasury restrictions on excess cash will be observed and that interest will be properly tracked and reported to the State and used for WIOA operations as program income.

I. Program Income Requirements

The U.S. Department of Labor requires that all income generated under any WIOA program shall be reported and used to further program objectives. The NWDB assures that it will comply with WIOA sec. 195(7)(A) and (B) Program Income.

J. Property Management Requirements

Any purchases with a unit cost value of \$5,000 or more to be purchased with WIOA funds must be approved by the State, prior to purchase. The State will monitor the inventory of all items purchased or leased with a value of \$5,000 or more. The NWDB agrees not to dispose of or transfer any property purchased with WIOA funds which has a value of \$500 or more and/or a life expectancy of one year or more until written authorization is received from the State. Any disposal of WIOA property must be in accordance with applicable Federal, State, and local disposal procedures. Any revenues derived from the sale of property purchased with WIOA funds must revert to a WIOA activity.

The NWDB will be responsible for maintaining an accurate inventory of all WIOA property in their possession.

In the event property purchased with WIOA funds is stolen or destroyed by criminal act, the NWDB will notify appropriate law enforcement officials immediately. The NWDB Executive Director must be notified within three (3) working days of discovering the loss or damage. A copy of the police report will be maintained as documentation of loss, and a copy forwarded to MDOL.

The NWDB agrees to pay for or replace any property purchased with WIOA funds which is lost or destroyed through the negligence of the NWDB staff or representatives.

K. Medical/Accident Insurance



The NWDB shall provide adequate on-site medical and accident insurances for all employees not covered by the Maine Workers' Compensation Law. Contributions to a self-insurance plan, to the extent that they are comparable in cost and extent of coverage had insurance been purchased, are allowable upon prior approval by the State (Maine Department of Labor), throughout the NWDB region.

L. General Assurances

1. The NWDB assures full compliance with the requirements of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act and its regulations, all Federal Regulation issued pursuant to the Act, NWDB Plan approved by the workforce board, the Chief Elected Official for the NWDB, and the Maine Department of Labor.
2. The NWDB assures that it will administer its services under the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act in full compliance with safeguards against fraud and abuse as set forth in the WIOA and the WIOA regulations; that no portion of the NWDB's WIOA services will in any way discriminate against, deny employment to, or exclude from participation any person on the grounds of race, color, national origin, religion, age, sex, disability, or political affiliation or belief; that the NWDB will target employment and training services to those most in need of them.
3. The NWDB assures that it will administer its services under the WIOA in accordance with these provisions: (1) a trainee will receive no payments for training activities in which the trainee fails to participate without good cause; (2) on-the-job training participants will be compensated by the employer at the same rate, including periodic increases, as similarly situated employees or trainees and in accordance with applicable Law, but in no event less than the higher of the rate specified in Section 6(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 of the applicable Minimum Wage Law; and (3) participants employed in activities authorized under the Act must be paid wages which will not be less than the highest of (a) the minimum wage under Section 6(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, (b) the minimum wage under the applicable State Minimum Wage Law, or the prevailing rates of pay for individuals employed in similar occupations by the same employer.
4. The NWDB assures that it will administer its services under the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act as amended in full compliance with health and safety standards established under State and Federal Law and that those conditions of employment and training be appropriate and reasonable in light of such factors as the type of work, geographical area, and proficiency of the participant.
5. The NWDB assures that all staff and participants/enrollees paid from the grant funds and employed in any service will be covered by workers compensation benefits in accordance with State Law; that enrollees in WIOA work-related training will be provided accident or medical insurance to cover any injury resulting from participation in the program; and that enrollees employed in subsidized jobs will be provided benefits and working conditions at the same level and to the same extent as other employees working a similar length of time and doing the same type of work.
6. The NWDB assures that no funds available under the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act will be used for contribution on behalf of any enrollee to retirement



- systems or plans; to impair existing conditions for services or collective bargaining agreements; to assist, promote, or deter union organization; and to displace any currently employed worker.
7. The NWDB assures that no enrollee will be employed or fill a job opening when any other individual is on layoff from the same or substantially equivalent job, or when the employer terminates the employment of any regular employee or otherwise reduces its work force with the intention of filling vacancies so created by hiring participants subsidized under the Act; and no funds may be used to create promotional lines that infringe upon any current promotional opportunities.
 8. The NWDB assures compliance with all federal rules and DOL regulations of 29 CFR Part 93 which prohibits the use of WIOA funds to lobby the Executive or Legislative Branches of the Federal Government in connection with a specific contract, grant, or loan. If lobbying has occurred utilizing other than Federal appropriated funds, the service provider agrees to file a disclosure report if applicable.
 9. The NWDB assures and certifies that it is in compliance with federal rules and regulations, Debarment and Suspension, 29 CFR Part 98 and is not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or involuntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by any Federal department or agency.
 10. The NWDB assures and certifies that the NWDB has in place an established grievance procedure to be utilized for grievances or complaints about its program and activities from participants/enrollees, grantees, contractors, and other interested parties.
 11. The NWDB will comply with the provisions of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970 (Public Law 91-646) which requires fair and equitable treatment of persons displaced as a result of Federal and federally assisted programs.
 12. The NWDB will comply with the provisions of the Hatch Act, which limits the political activity of certain State and local government employees.
 13. The NWDB will comply with NC-GS-234 which contains a provision that prohibits public officials and employees from having a personal interest in any contract to which he is also a party in an official capacity.
 14. The NWDB assures and certifies that it will comply with restrictions regarding conducting business with businesses on the Environmental Protection Agency's List of Violating Facilities. Contracts and subcontracts in excess of \$100,000, or circumstances where the State of Maine has determined that orders under an 'indefinite quantity financial agreement' in any year will not exceed \$100,000, or if a facility to be used has been the subject of a conviction under the Clean Air Act [42 U.S.C. 1319 (c)] and is listed by the Environmental Protection Agency or is not otherwise exempt, the NWDB assures that: (1) no facility to be utilized in the performance of the proposed grant has been listed on the EPA List of Violating Facilities; and (2) the NWDB will notify MDOL and USDOL prior to award of the receipt of any communication from the Director of Federal Activities, U.S.E.P.A., indicating that a facility to be utilized for a contract is under consideration to be listed on the EPA List of Violating Facilities.
 15. The NWDB assures and certifies that it will comply with applicable provisions of the following laws as they relate to employment and training procedures:



- The Drug Free Workplace Act
- The Immigration Reform and Control Act
- The American's with Disabilities Act
- The Davis-Bacon Act
- Child Labor Laws
- The Fair Labor Standards Act

