



northeastern
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Strategic Plan

2025 – 2029

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Executive Summary	5
Section 1: Strategic Planning / Regional Analysis.....	10
Section 2: Local Workforce Development System	36
Section 3: Local One-Stop Delivery System	55
Section 4: Title I - Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Program Services	69
Section 5: Wagner Peyser Services	86
Section 6: Title II – Adult Education and Literacy Programs	95
Section 7: Cooperative Agreements.....	102
Section 8: Jobs for Veterans State Grants	107
Section 9: Fiscal, Performance, and Other Functions.....	111
Section 10: Performance Accountability	121
Section 11: Local Board Assurances.....	122

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 to 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

Ten stakeholder meetings were held, with representatives of each of the five counties, Board members, and providers in attendance. These meetings included One Stop Partners, Young Workers Advisory Committee members and stakeholders, and NWDB stakeholder 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.

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 45 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 also shared by NWDB, with just under 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 2024-2027 Unified Plan Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The State Plan is based on the following premise: “By 2030, Maine will be an international leader with a vibrant, sustainable, environmentally responsible economy. All across the state, the people of Maine will have access to an unmatched quality of life and good paying jobs.” 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 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 support. 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 2025-2029 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 (NWDB) continues to align its strategic vision with the State of Maine’s priorities and regional needs by engaging in a coordinated, data-informed approach to workforce development. As demographic shifts, economic pressures, and employer needs evolve, the Board remains focused on preparing a workforce that is inclusive, resilient, and equipped to meet both current and future labor market demands. This vision is grounded in building equitable access to opportunity and addressing persistent systemic barriers that impact workforce participation.

Our goal continues to focus on the cultivation, convening, management, and participation in successful partnerships that bring traditional and non-traditional—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 extensive engagement with workforce development partners, stakeholders affirmed that while the core goals for job seekers remain consistent—access to training, career pathways, and quality employment—the strategies to achieve them must evolve. Economic and labor market shifts, including the widespread integration of technology, the expansion of remote work, and increased demand in emerging sectors, require more flexible and responsive approaches. The post-pandemic environment has heightened the need for digital access and targeted strategies to meet both immediate workforce needs and long-term career development. Clear, coordinated communication across job seekers, employers, and partner organizations will be essential to

building shared understanding, expanding access, and delivering services that are inclusive, timely, and aligned with real-world demand.

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 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.

Programming to assist underserved communities 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

1. Improve and align training pathways with employer demand
2. Develop Sector Strategies to Guide Workforce Development
3. Build inclusive, resilient workforce systems for underserved populations
4. Address urgent replacement demand and succession planning needs
5. Strengthen collaborative partnerships and service coordination

Key Priority 1: Improve and Align Training Pathways with Employer Demand

- Expand earn-and-learn models including apprenticeships, on-the-job training (OJT), and internships.
- Incentivize participation in occupational skills training through expanded access and training stipends.
- Broaden credentialing options through micro-credentials and badging to reflect skills attainment.
- Diversify training offerings in collaboration with partners (including Department of Defense contractors) to meet emerging career pathways.
- Support incumbent worker training programs in high-demand sectors.

Key Priority 2: Develop Sector Strategies to Guide Workforce Development

- Launch or expand partnerships in high demand sectors: healthcare, skilled trades, technology, and food service.
- Promote equity-focused employer education and wage transparency.
- Invest in “train the trainer” models to build employer-side training capacity.

- Work with education providers to increase training availability in in-demand fields.
- Elevate career awareness in clean energy, aquaculture, and other emerging sectors.
- Fund work-based learning programs to support direct employer engagement.

Key Priority 3: Build Inclusive, Resilient Workforce Systems

- Provide targeted outreach and services for single parents, individuals in recovery, reentry citizens, and persons with disabilities.
- Expand access to digital literacy and broadband tools and access for older and rural residents.
- Expand supportive service opportunities for participants with mental health/SUD needs.
- Offer mental health training for educators, employers, and workforce staff.
- Expand training opportunities for employers and jobseekers on workplace strategies to address workplace conflict resolution, performance improvement, employee retention, and positive organizational culture.

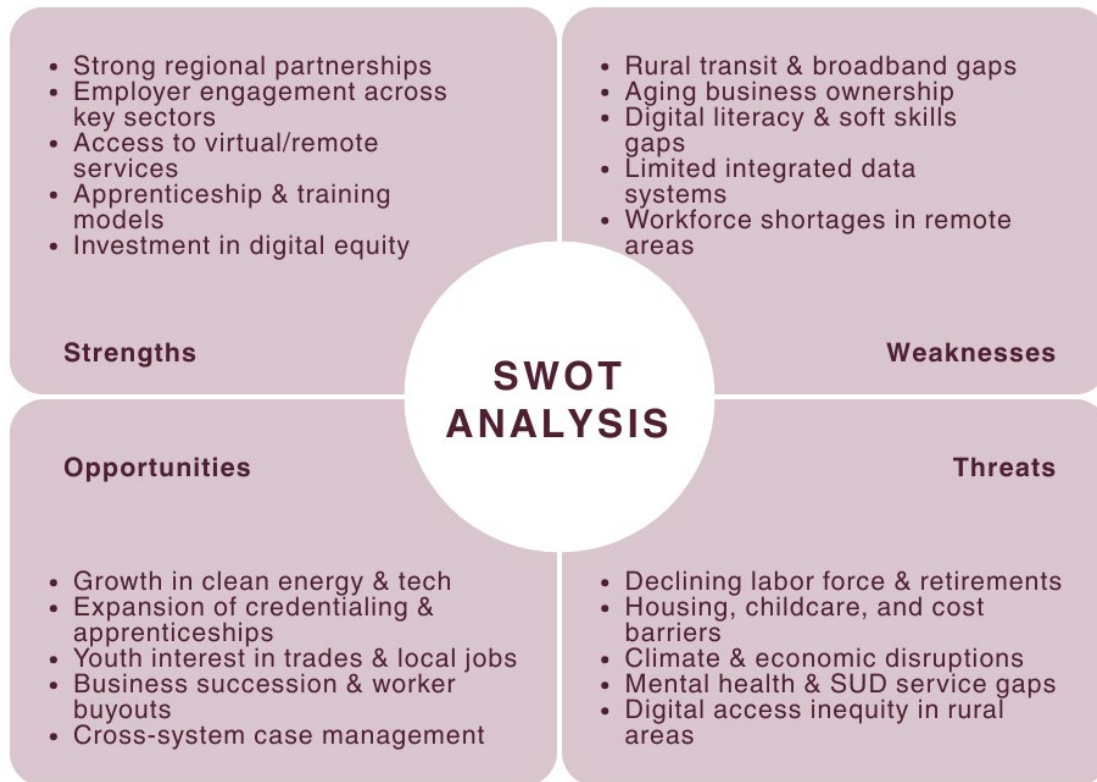
Key Priority 4: Address Replacement Demand and Support Succession Planning

- Develop tools and resources to help employers manage workforce succession.
- Promote mentorship and job shadowing to preserve institutional knowledge.
- Encourage phased retirement and flexible work arrangements to retain older workers.
- Engage youth through entrepreneurial and pre-career training in trades, IT, and healthcare.
- Build recruitment and upskilling pipelines for sectors most affected by retirements.

Key Priority 5: Strengthen Collaborative Partnerships

- Formalize relationships with Chambers of Commerce, economic development entities, and nonprofit service providers through Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs).
- Connect employers and job seekers more intentionally through targeted initiatives.
- Deepen partnership with mental health providers to raise awareness on mental health in the workforce.
- Improve referral pathways to address housing, transportation, and other barrier mitigation.
- Expand NWDB Board membership to include stakeholders from housing and transportation sectors.

During the strategic planning process, NWDB conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of the region through stakeholder meetings with representatives from all five counties. The results from the SWOT analysis can be seen below:



Summary

The Board recognizes that addressing the region’s complex workforce challenges and advancing economic opportunities requires the active collaboration of strong, engaged partners. One of NWDB’s most essential roles is to convene these partners, facilitate shared planning, and align resources to meet the needs of job seekers and employers across the region.

The following strategies will guide NWDB’s ongoing collaboration with Core Programs, One-Stop Partners, employers, educators, and community-based organizations to support the strategic vision and ensure responsive, inclusive workforce development:

- Facilitate regular, purposeful meetings with partner groups, including One-Stop Operators, Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and WIOA Core Program leads, to strengthen coordination and joint problem-solving.
- Form working groups or committees as needed to address emerging challenges, respond to new opportunities, or test out promising ideas.
- Encourage cross-involvement between organizations by inviting partners to serve on the NWDB and supporting Board members in participating on other relevant councils or boards.

- Improve communication systems and resource-sharing tools to promote service alignment, reduce duplication, and increase collective awareness of available programs for job seekers and employers.
- Stay closely connected with employers to understand their changing workforce needs. This includes direct outreach as well as engagement through trusted intermediaries like chambers of commerce, professional organizations, and economic development organizations.
- Identify and respond to emerging industry opportunities, including clean energy, technology transformation, and climate-resilient occupations, with targeted workforce strategies and pilot initiatives.
- Expand efforts to engage and retain older workers through flexible work arrangements, phased retirement options, and mentorship roles that help preserve institutional knowledge.
- Support digital access and literacy initiatives in rural communities, especially for older adults and those disconnected from education and training due to technology gaps.
- Leverage new funding streams and program initiatives to design employer-informed training models, scale work-based learning opportunities, and test new ideas that can be applied across sectors.
- Collaborate with workforce service providers to ensure that all individuals, including those facing barriers to employment, have access to the tools and support they need to succeed. This includes youth, people in recovery, justice-involved individuals, and those living with disabilities.
- Share insights and coordinate efforts with partners across the region, such as the Small Business Development Center, higher education institutions, and entrepreneurship programs, to support small business growth and job creation.

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.

Workforce demand will continue to be driven largely by the demand for replacement workers (workers retiring or otherwise leaving the workforce) over the next 10 years. 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 2024 there were a total of 147,407 jobs (compared to 139,881 in 2019) in the NWDB region. In the past five years, the region has experienced an overall decrease in unemployment, similar to decreases in unemployment in Maine and the US.

Over the next ten years, the NWDB region is projected to experience a 0.1% annual decrease in total employment. However, there will still be a need for workforce development resulting from replacement demand (demand resulting from retirements and individuals leaving the workforce), which will create the need to fill 158,111 jobs over the course of the next ten years.

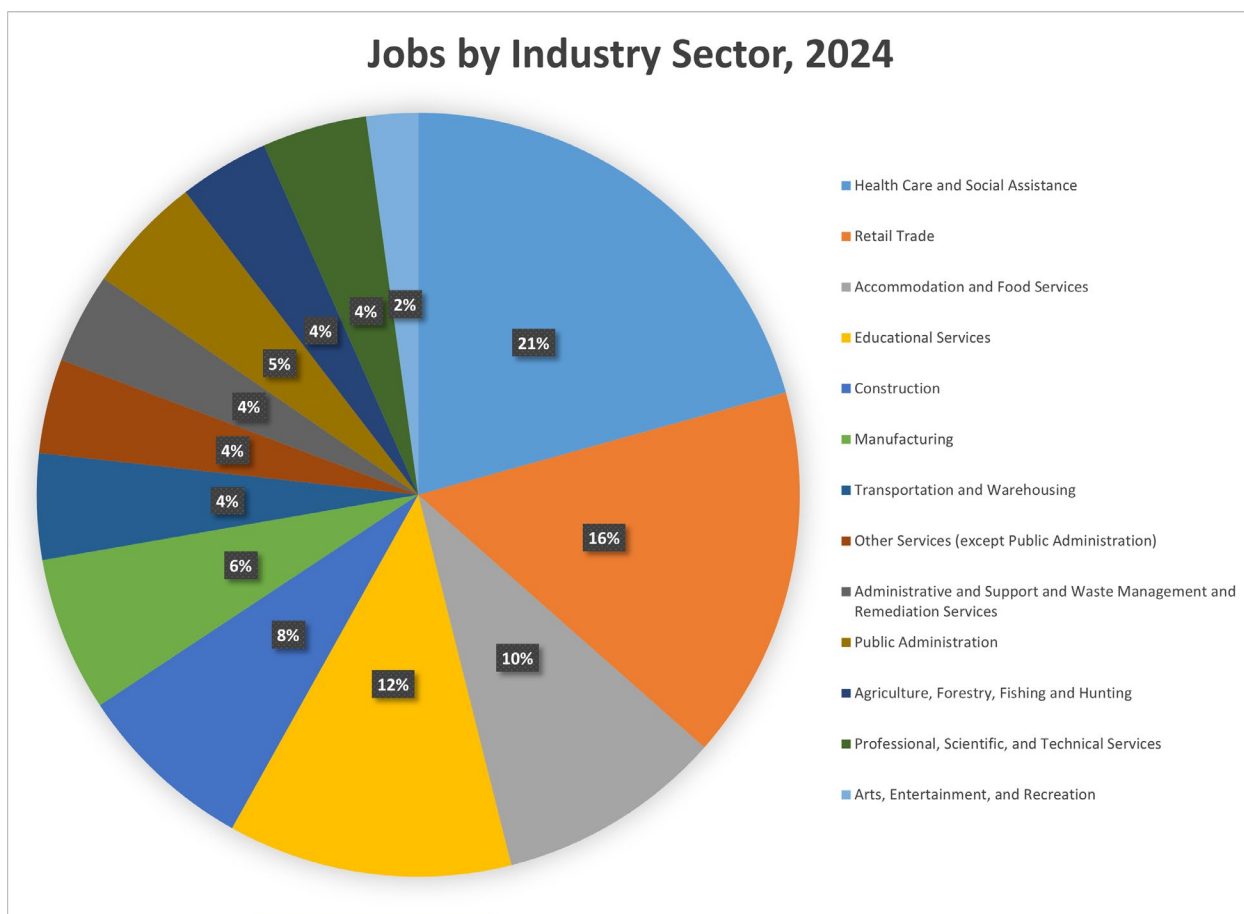
Health Care & Social Assistance, along with Retail Trade, are the two largest industries within the NWDB region, providing over 27,679 jobs and nearly 21,160 jobs, respectively. Health Care and Social Assistance is projected to grow at an average annual growth rate of 0.5% which is the only major industry class projected to grow. Other industries that represent considerable portions of jobs in the region include: Educational Services (16,109 jobs), Accommodation and Food Services (12,807 jobs), Construction (10,165 jobs), and Manufacturing (8,759 jobs).

Retail, though the second largest sector, is projected to decline by more than 0.8% 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.

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 1.25 and 1.47, respectively showing these industries are slightly more concentrated in the NWDB region compared to the United States. Other industries in which the NWDB region exhibits a greater than average concentration (above average LQ) include Education Services (1.36), Management of Companies and Enterprises (1.28), and Construction (1.15).

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.



In Demand Industries

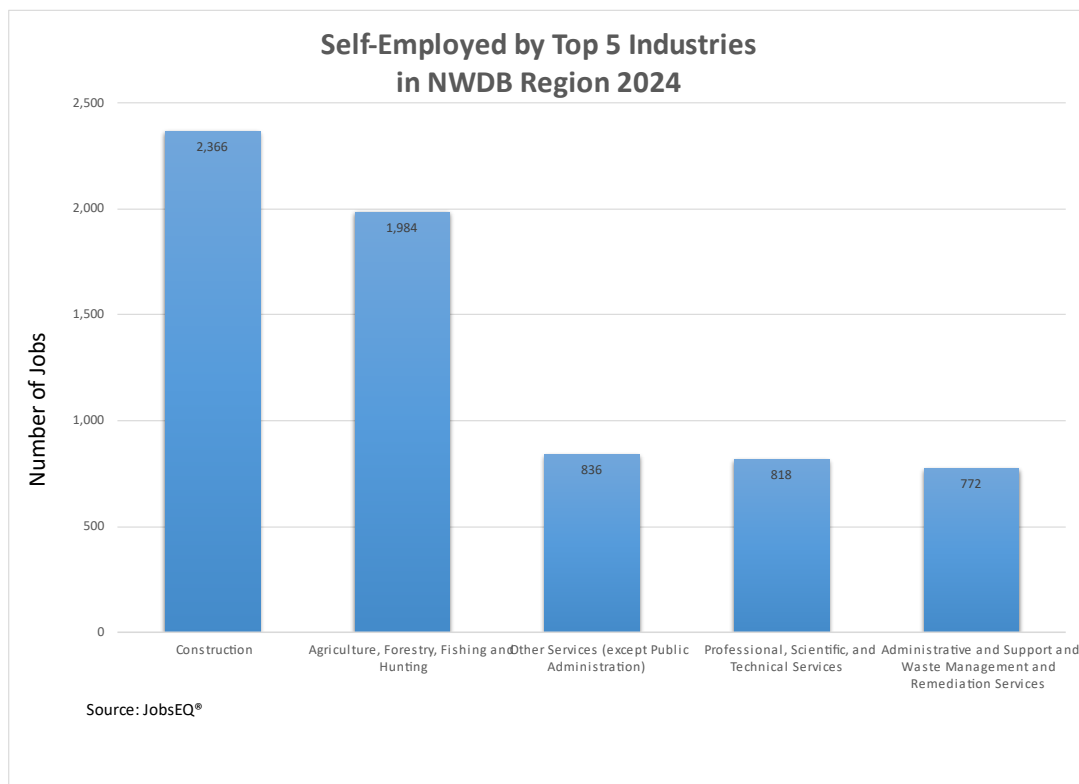
Based on a combination of existing employment, projected employment, replacement demand, and industry concentration the key industries for future workforce demand in the region are:

- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Retail Trade
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Educational 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 10,305 total self-employed individuals, which represents approximately 7% of total jobs, making self-employment a group among the top five industry sector groupings in terms of size. These individuals earn an average \$42,033 annually. Within the entire NWDB region, the industries with the most self-employed individuals are in Construction with 2,366 self-employed and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting with 1,984 self-employed. Other Services (except Public Administration) is next, with 836 self-employed.

Overall, within the NWDB region, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting self-employed have an average annual wage of about \$57,007, whereas self-employed individuals within the Construction industry see a much lower average annual wage at \$37,593.



Emerging industries will continue to play an important role in shaping workforce development strategies across the NWDB region. Clean energy, in particular, is a growing field with strong long-term potential. The State of Maine projects the creation of 30,000 new clean energy jobs by 2030, with solar and wind technician roles among the fastest-growing occupations nationally. As demand for skilled workers in this sector increases, NWDB anticipates new opportunities to collaborate with education providers and employers to develop training programs that prepare local job seekers for careers in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and related fields. These efforts will help connect workers to stable, future-focused employment while supporting broader economic and environmental goals.

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

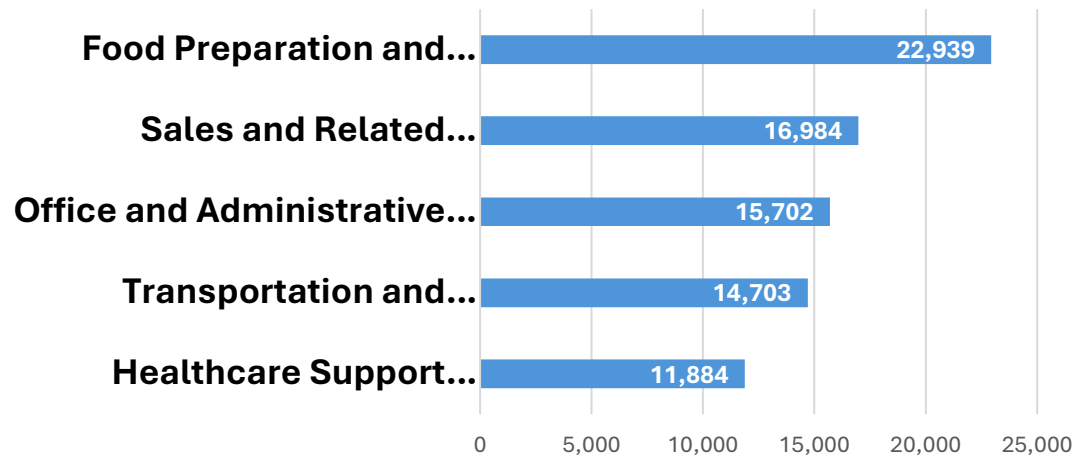
In terms of occupations, of the region's 147,407 jobs, Office and Administrative Support have the highest number of jobs with 15,869. This is followed by Sales and Related with 13,693, Food Preparation and Serving with 12,260, Transportation and Material Moving with 11,949, Management with 11,155, Healthcare Practitioner and Technical with 10,723, and Educational Instruction and Library with 10,521.

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 (704 jobs) followed by Community and Social Service (271 jobs). Other occupations with projected growth are Educational Instruction and Library (274), Management (256), Computer and Mathematical (110), Construction and Extraction (105), Personal Care and Service (80), Business and Financial Operations (69), Life, Physical, and Social Science (57), Architecture and Engineering (32). All other sectors are expected to retract.

As depicted in the chart below it is projected that replacement demand will drive the need for 160,849 at positions with the highest occupations being Food Preparation and Serving (22,983 jobs), Sales and Related Occupations (16,984 jobs), Office and Administrative Support (15,702 jobs), Transportation and Material Moving (14,703 jobs), and Healthcare Support Occupations (11,884). 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.

Top 5 Replacement Demand by Occupation

Forecast over the next 10 years



Source: JobsEQ

Targeted Industry Sector Based on Employer Demand

Analysis of regional employment, wage, and occupational data highlights several key industries that are driving workforce demand across the NWDB region. These industries play a significant role in overall employment levels, offer opportunities for wage growth, or face urgent workforce needs due to projected retirements and replacement demand.

Based on this data, the industries with the greatest impact on job creation, retention, and workforce planning include:

- Healthcare and Social Assistance
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Retail Trade
- Educational Services
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Administrative and Support Services
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services

NWDB has identified Healthcare, Manufacturing, and Technology as its top three priority sectors for targeted workforce strategies. These sectors demonstrate strong employer demand, high levels of replacement need, and a mix of accessible and high-wage job opportunities.

In addition to these primary focus areas, NWDB and its partners will continue to support workforce initiatives in Transportation and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting, where self-employment and replacement needs also play a vital role in the regional economy.

These industry priorities will guide program development, training investments, and employer engagement efforts to ensure that the region's workforce is equipped to meet both current and future job demands.

Healthcare

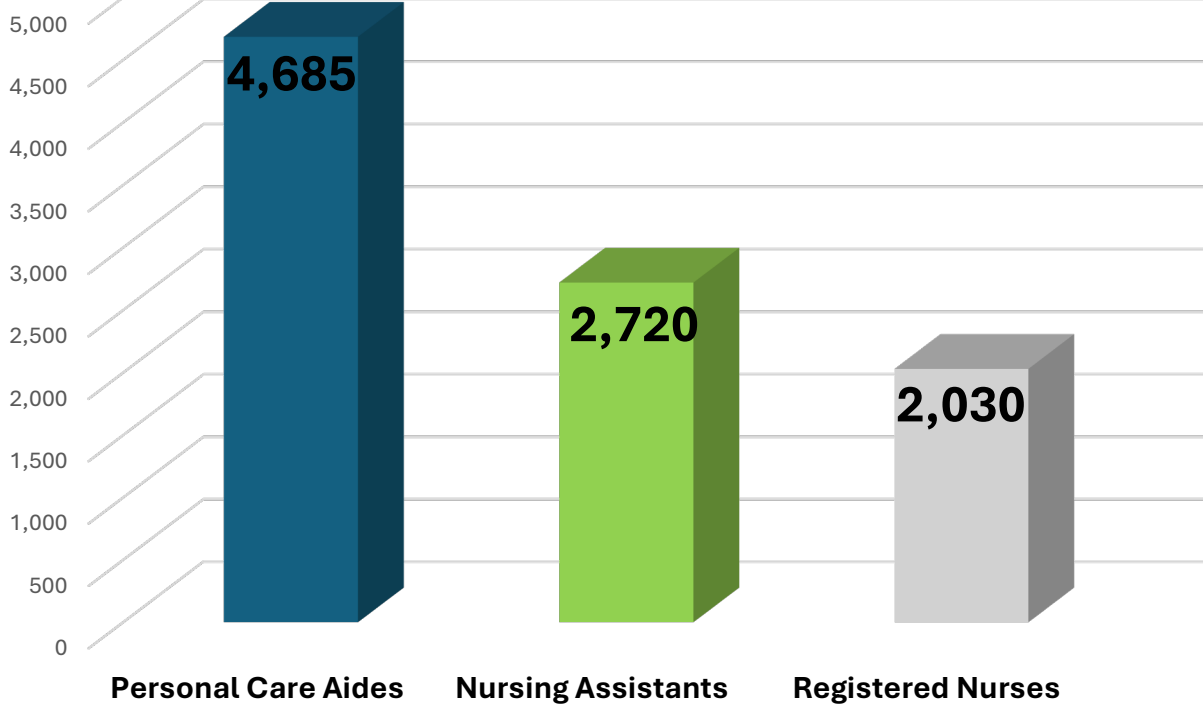
The Healthcare industry sector has 18,767 jobs within the NWDB region, representing 12.7% of the 147,407 total jobs across all industries in the Region.

The sector has shown a decline over the past 5 years, dropping 46 jobs. The Healthcare industry is projected to grow over the next 10 years at an average annual rate of 0.6%. However, the major opportunity in healthcare derives from the high replacement demand of 18,130 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 Registered Nurses (3,931), Personal Care Aides (2,888), followed by Nursing Assistants (2,009). Personal Care Aides is expected to grow by 1.4% (434 jobs), and Registered Nurses is poised to grow by 0.1%, while a decline in Nursing Assistants (-0.2%) is anticipated.

Demand by Top 3 Healthcare Occupations

Forecast Over the Next 10 Years



Source: JobsEQ®

The average annual wage for workers in this specific sector is \$60,300. 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 \$37,600 per year up to Cardiologists with average annual earnings of \$410,500.

Occupation Snapshot – Healthcare Support Occupations

Occupation	Empl	Avg Mean Wages	LQ	5-Year Empl Change	Forecast Ann Growth
Personal Care Aides	2,888	\$37,600	1.07	380	1.4%
Nursing Assistants	2,009	\$43,800	1.56	-243	-0.2%

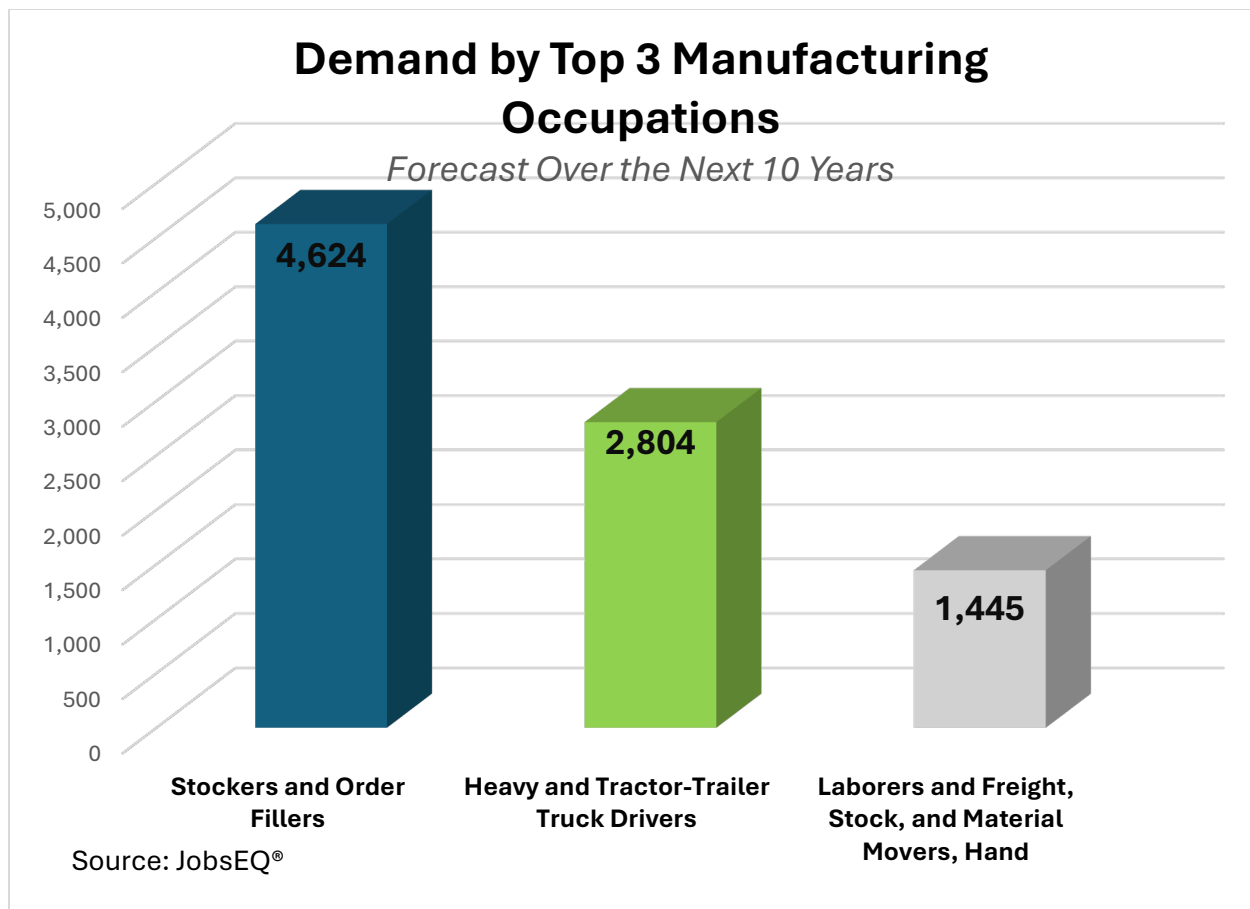
Registered Nurses	3,931	\$85,000	1.32	-41	0.1%
Home Health Aides	1,020	\$37,600	1.08	-375	1.4%
Medical Assistants	833	\$46,100	1.17	38	1.0%
Pharmacy Technicians	520	\$41,600	1.27	49	0.1%
Dental Assistants	301	\$50,400	0.89	-9	0.4%
Veterinary Assistants and Laboratory Animal Caretakers	135	\$47,900	1.27	14	1.4%
Nurse Practitioners	311	\$130,300	1.17	52	3.2%
Phlebotomists	181	\$43,900	1.42	14	0.3%
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	309	\$65,300	0.52	-58	-0.3%
Healthcare Occupations	18,767	\$75,900	1.20	-46	0.6%

Source: JobsEQ

Manufacturing

The Manufacturing industry sector employs nearly 18,470 people in the NWDB region, accounting for 13% of the region's total employment of 147,407 jobs. Although the sector has declined over the past five years, losing more than 900 jobs at an average annual rate of -0.1%, it remains a key focus for the workforce system. This is due to the sector's relatively high wages, broad job accessibility, and potential for job regeneration in more rural areas of the region.

Within the sector, the largest occupations include Stockers and Order Fillers (4,624 jobs), Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (2,804 jobs), Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers by hand (1,445 jobs), and Light Truck Drivers (1,044 jobs). Other in-demand roles include Team Assemblers (645 jobs), School Bus Drivers (503), Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators (500), and First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers (492).



Although total employment in manufacturing is projected to decline, replacement demand driven by retirements and workforce exits is expected to create 21,177 job openings in the sector over the next ten years.

Technology

For employment within Technology specific companies:

The Technology industry sector in the NWDB region includes just over 1,983 jobs, accounting for 1.35% of the region's total employment of 147,407 jobs. Over the past five years, the sector has added 145 jobs, reflecting an average annual growth rate of 4.7%. Looking ahead, the industry is projected to grow at an average annual rate of 1.5% over the next ten years, with a total projected demand of 1,207 jobs during that period.

Within the sector, Software Developers represent the largest occupational group, with 450 jobs. This occupation has grown by 92 positions over the past five years, also at an average annual growth rate of 4.7%, and is expected to continue growing at a rate of 1.2% annually over the next decade.

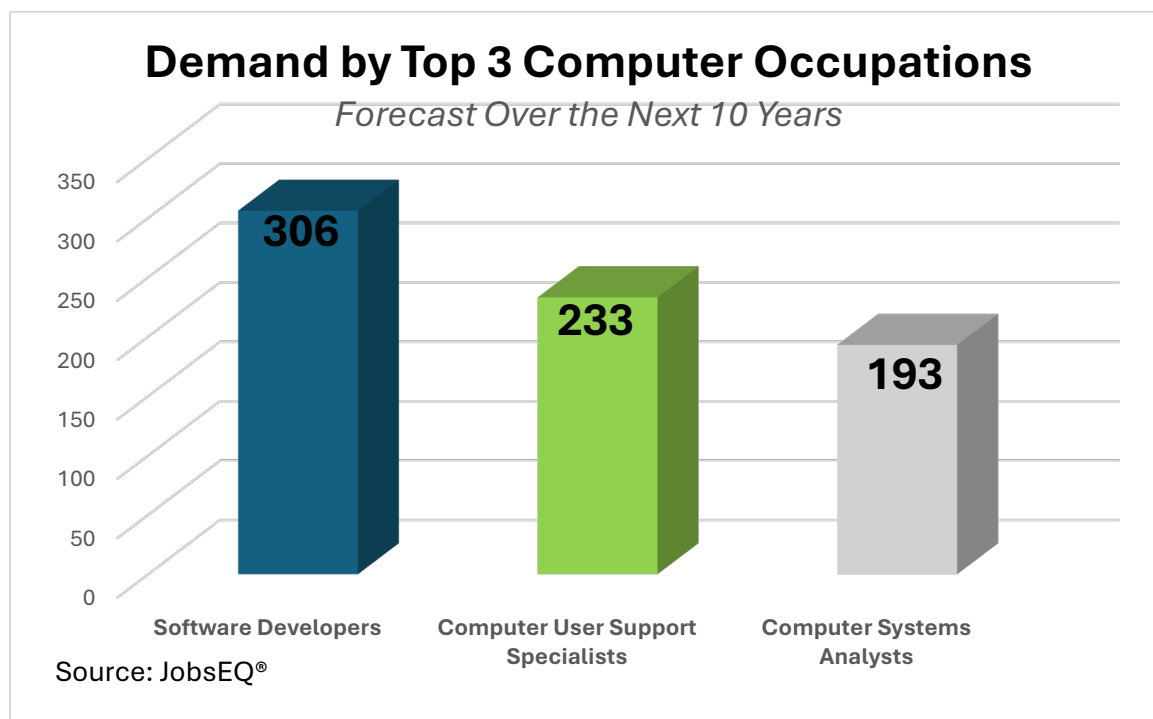
The average annual wage in the Technology sector is approximately \$90,500, significantly higher than the regional average across all industries, which stands at \$60,300.

Regarding Technology Occupations in the Region Across All Industry Sectors:

There are a total of 1,953 computer-related occupations in the region across all industries. The most common roles include Software Developers (450 jobs), Computer User Support Specialists (396 jobs), Computer Systems Analysts (318 jobs), and Network and Computer Support Specialists (201 jobs). Over the next ten years, Software Developers and Computer Systems Analysts are projected to experience modest growth, while the other leading computer occupations are expected to see slight declines.

Despite limited new job growth, replacement demand across all computer-related occupations in the region is projected to total 1,207 jobs over the next decade.

NWDB's continued focus on technology is driven by growing demand for digital skills across nearly every industry. Entry-level positions in manufacturing, healthcare, retail, and construction now routinely require basic computer literacy, and many employers are prioritizing candidates with technology proficiency. Strategic plans at the state and regional levels, including Maine's 10-Year Economic Strategy, the EMDC CEDS plan, and NWDB's priorities, highlight the importance of technology in supporting remote and hybrid work, expanding access to jobs, and strengthening regional competitiveness. This includes roles that require only a high school diploma or equivalent but benefit from additional digital training. To meet this need, NWDB will continue expanding training programs, certifications, and skill-building initiatives that equip job seekers with the technology tools needed to thrive in today's workforce.



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

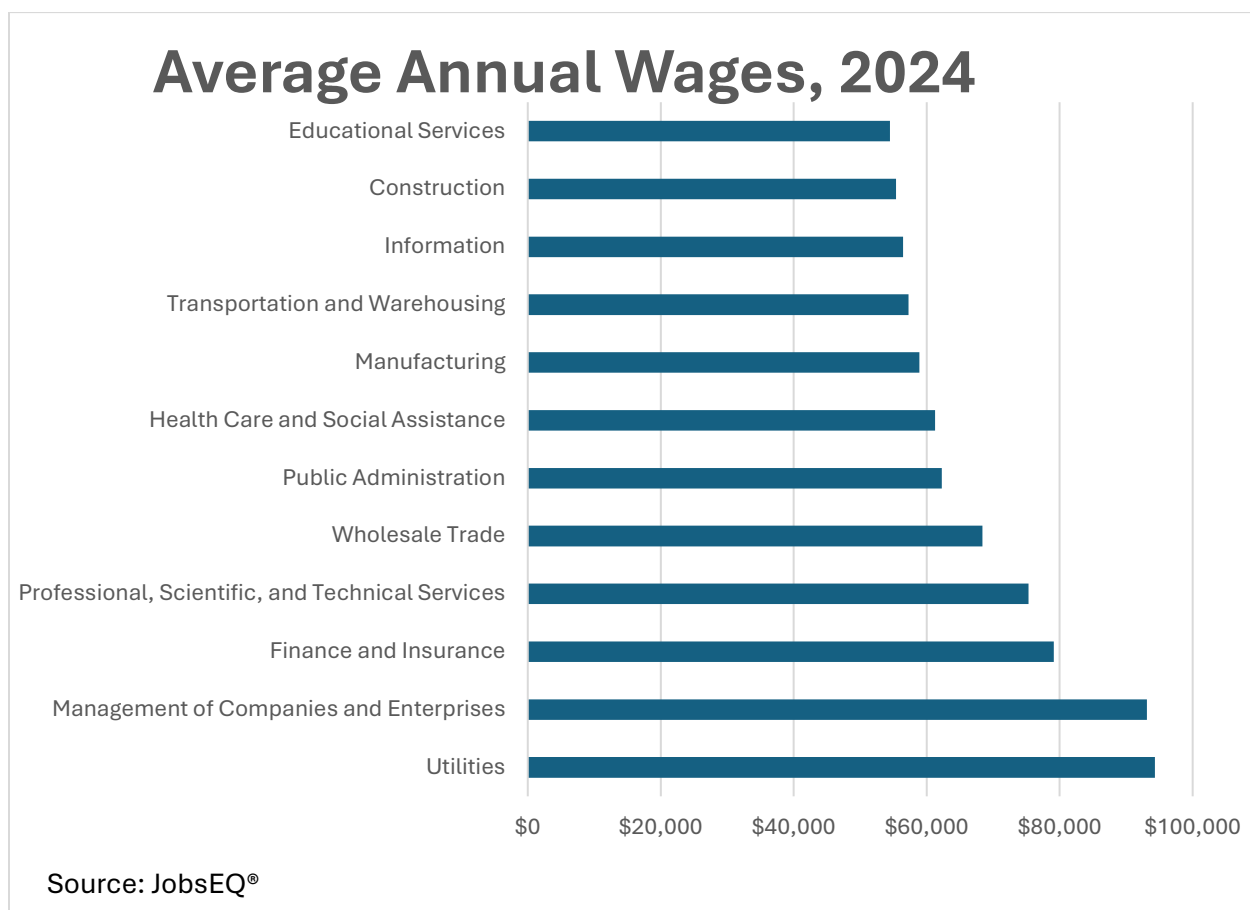
Another element of the analysis of the regional economy and employment opportunity landscape is the composition of the businesses in the region. As typical of the Maine economy most businesses in the NWDB region are small with 83% having fewer than 10 employees and a mere 1% having 100 or more employees. The number of business establishments in the region by key industry sector can be seen below:

Establishments by Industry		
within the NWDB Region, 2024		
NAICS	Industry	Establishments
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	607
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	8
22	Utilities	98
23	Construction	1,308
31	Manufacturing	417
42	Wholesale Trade	445
44	Retail Trade	1,465
48	Transportation and Warehousing	607
51	Information	237
52	Finance and Insurance	407
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	397
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,286
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	288
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	636
61	Educational Services	373
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	1,147

71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	243
72	Accommodation and Food Services	1,001
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	788
92	Public Administration	422
99	Unclassified	2
	Total - All Industries	12,182

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 2024 wages for all industries in the region averaged \$ \$52,160. Utilities had the highest average wages (\$94,312), followed by Management of Companies and Enterprises (\$93,127), Finance and Insurance (\$79,108), Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (\$75,305), and Wholesale Trade (\$68,393).



Summary of the Economic Analysis

The NWDB region is navigating a mix of workforce challenges and emerging opportunities. While job growth is expected to remain flat over the next decade, the need to replace retiring workers will create significant demand across nearly all sectors. Regional strategies must focus on both meeting immediate labor needs and preparing for long-term industry shifts.

Opportunities

- Replacement demand will drive over 158,000 job openings in the next ten years.
- Healthcare remains a strong sector, with steady growth and high demand for nurses and personal care aides.
- Technology and clean energy are gaining momentum. Tech-sector jobs have grown by over 4% annually and are projected to keep rising. Clean energy, including solar and wind, is expected to generate thousands of new jobs across Maine by 2030.
- Entrepreneurship is strong, especially in construction and agriculture, making small business support critical.
- Entrepreneurship opportunities also exist in high-wage industries such as utilities, management of companies, finance and insurance, and professional, technical, and scientific services.
- The region is supported by a strong network of training providers, including adult education, community colleges, and technical programs. This positions the region well to meet the demand for middle-skill jobs.
- The growing diversity of the population, including new Mainers and people of color, adds strength and depth to the local workforce.

Challenges

- Population decline and aging are reducing labor supply across the region.
- Several key industries, particularly healthcare, manufacturing, and public sector employment, have a high percentage of workers over age 55, creating urgency around recruitment, training, and succession strategies.
- Lower bachelor's degree attainment may limit access to higher-wage roles.
- Labor force participation is lower than average, especially among younger workers and those facing barriers like transportation, childcare, and digital access.
- Projected job growth overall is minimal, reinforcing the need to support both jobseekers and those looking to transition into more stable or higher-paying roles.
- Many of the highest-paying sectors do not currently employ large numbers of workers in the region, requiring intentional effort to build access and pathways.

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;

Employers across the NWDB region continue to face persistent challenges in finding and hiring qualified workers. This gap highlights the need for stronger alignment between the skills of the workforce and the needs of local employers. In addition to technical skill shortages, businesses frequently cite a lack of essential employability skills such as communication, critical thinking, and reliability, especially among entry-level and younger workers.

Survey feedback, stakeholder forums, and job posting data all reinforce this disconnect. The following section provides an overview of the knowledge and skills most needed to meet employer demand in NWDB’s high-wage, in-demand industries. These gaps are especially visible in real-time labor market data for job postings in key occupations across the region.

These gaps can be seen in data for job posting in the NWDB region below:

Top 10 Skill Gaps: NWDB Region

Skill	Candidates	Openings	Gap
Microsoft Office	505	697	-192
Sales	298	450	-153
Ability to Lift 51-100 lbs.	15	147	-132
Microsoft Excel	737	853	-116
Hospitality	126	240	-114
Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	113	199	-86
Teaching/Training, Job	232	307	-76

Microsoft Word	272	335	-63
Word Processing	79	134	-55
Microsoft Outlook	208	262	-54

[Source: JobsEQ®](#)

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 most significant gaps include digital literacy and proficiency in Microsoft Office tools, with Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Office showing the largest deficits in candidate readiness. These software tools are essential across nearly every sector, from healthcare to manufacturing to administrative support, indicating a cross-industry need for digital upskilling. Other top gaps include sales skills, job-specific physical requirements (such as the ability to lift heavy materials), and industry-aligned certifications like Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDL). Notably, skills tied to interpersonal effectiveness and knowledge transfer, such as teaching, training, and customer service within hospitality, also represent growing areas of concern.

This data supports the need for targeted skill-building strategies that include both technical training and soft skill development, especially as employers continue to express concern about reliability, communication, and adaptability among entry-level and younger workers. Stakeholder forums and employer feedback also confirm that foundational digital competency is now a baseline requirement cross industries, not a specialized skill.

NWDB's focus on demand-driven training, short-term credentialing, and work-based learning is well-positioned to close many of these gaps. Continued collaboration with employers, training providers, and the State of Maine will be essential to ensure that the region's workforce is equipped for both current and future job opportunities.

To inform the region's strategy, NWDB convened multiple stakeholder sessions and collected extensive input from employers, youth, service providers, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and members of immigrant and underserved communities. Using digital engagement tools and open forums, participants were asked to share their priorities for improving workforce readiness and access.

Key takeaways from this feedback include:

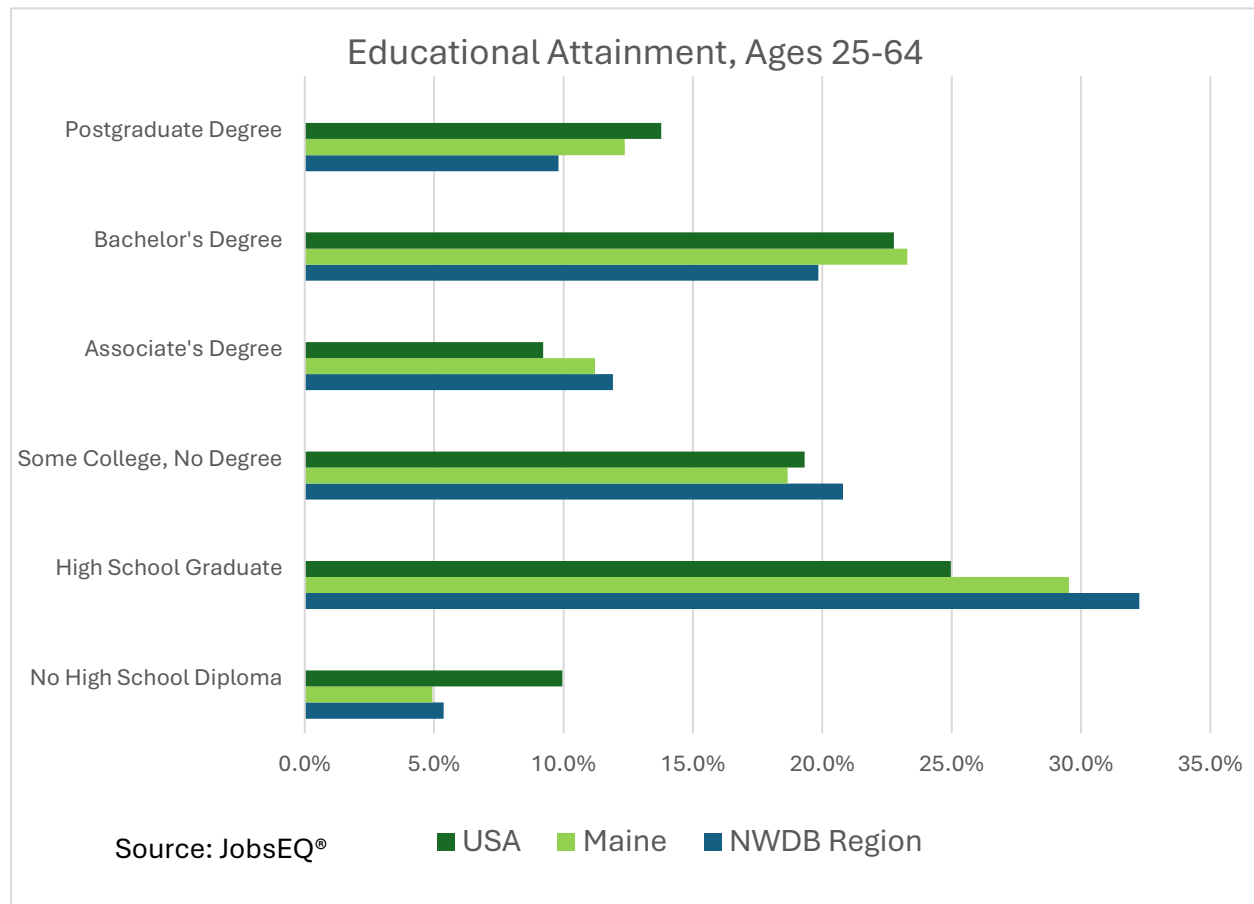
- **Emphasize soft skill development:** Employers across sectors noted a strong need for communication, reliability, and professionalism, particularly among youth and entry-level workers. Soft skills training must be embedded across workforce programs.
- **Expand access to real-world learning:** Stakeholders and young people consistently called for more internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job experiences that allow individuals to explore careers and gain practical skills.
- **Address digital skill gaps:** Participants highlighted the importance of digital literacy, especially for older workers, rural residents, and individuals reentering the workforce. Comfort with basic technology is now essential across nearly every industry.
- **Support career awareness and early exposure:** Youth emphasized the need for earlier, clearer exposure to career options, particularly in the trades, healthcare, and tech. Many are unaware of available opportunities, credentials, or pathways.
 - Feedback from both employers and young workers pointed to the need for more accessible and flexible entry points into skilled trades, including simplified apprenticeship models and pre-apprenticeship opportunities.
- **Increase training that is short-term but meaningful:** While participants appreciated the availability of short-term training, many called for programs that are long enough to build confidence and lead directly to employment or further advancement.
- **Ensure workforce programs are culturally competent and trauma-informed:** Providers and participants stressed the need for programs that recognize and address mental health, stigma, and systemic barriers, particularly for individuals in recovery, immigrants, and justice-involved individuals.
- **Improve access to critical supports:** Transportation, housing, and childcare were frequently cited as ongoing barriers to participation. Many stakeholders emphasized that training cannot be effective without addressing these foundational needs.

These insights reinforce the importance of a workforce system that is responsive to labor market trends, shaped by the lived experiences of the people it serves. NWDB will continue to center community voice and employer input as it builds the strategies, partnerships, and pathways needed to prepare the region's workforce for the future.

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 2023 was 325,268, increasing by about 2,757 from 2019 to 2023. This population growth is impacted by in-migration for the region as a whole, partially due to the rise in remote work. 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, 29.7% of people between the ages of 25 and 64 have a bachelor's degree or higher, which is slightly higher than that reported in 2019 (26.7%). However, the region reports lower than the rates of 35.7% in Maine and 36.5% in the U.S. A total of 11.9% within the NWDB region have an associate's degree, which is higher than Maine (11.2%) and the U.S. at 9.2%. 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.

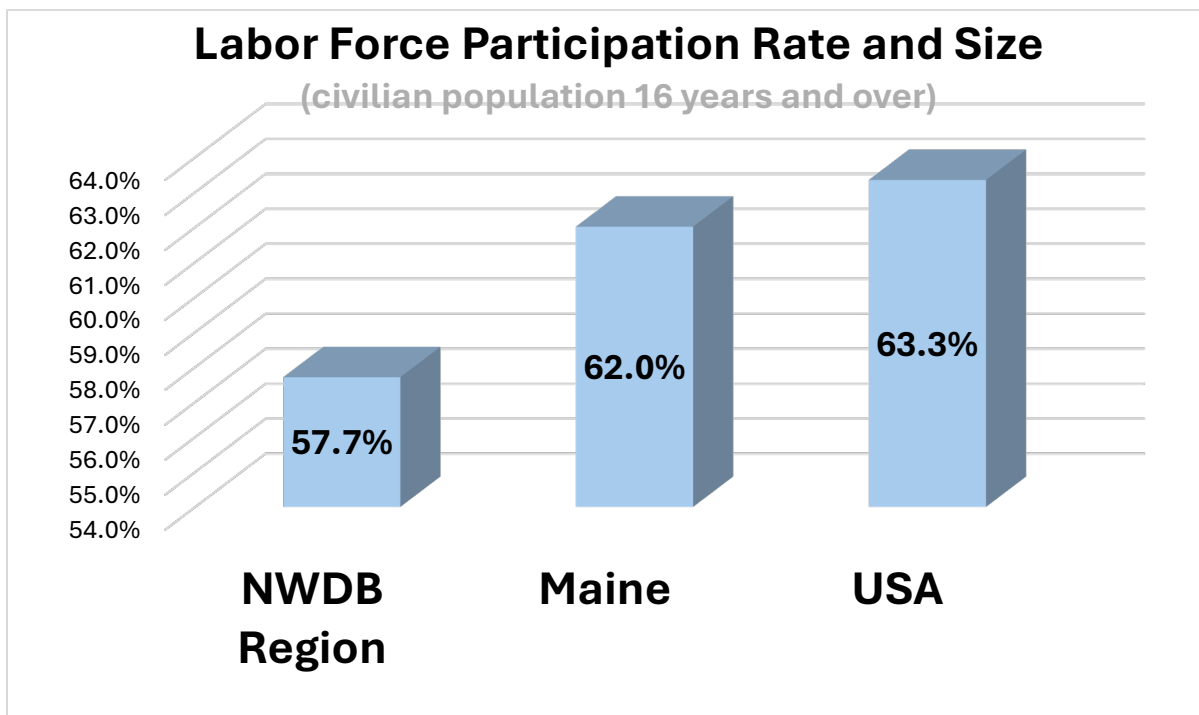


Unemployment and Labor Participation

The unemployment rate for the NWDB region was 3.7% in 2024, higher than the state average of 3.4% but lower than the national rate of 4.1% for the same period. The civilian labor force in the

NWDB region is estimated at 158,553, with a labor force participation rate of 57.7% in 2024. This rate is 4.3 percentage points lower than Maine’s average of 62.0%, and 5.6 percentage points lower than the national rate of 63.3%.

This lower participation rate presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the workforce system. Underlying factors, such as poverty, lack of affordable childcare and transportation, limited educational attainment, disabilities, or other barriers, may be preventing individuals from entering the workforce, presenting a significant challenge for the region’s workforce system. At the same time, it offers an opportunity to develop targeted strategies that address these barriers and expand access to education, training, and support services that promote entry or re-entry into employment.

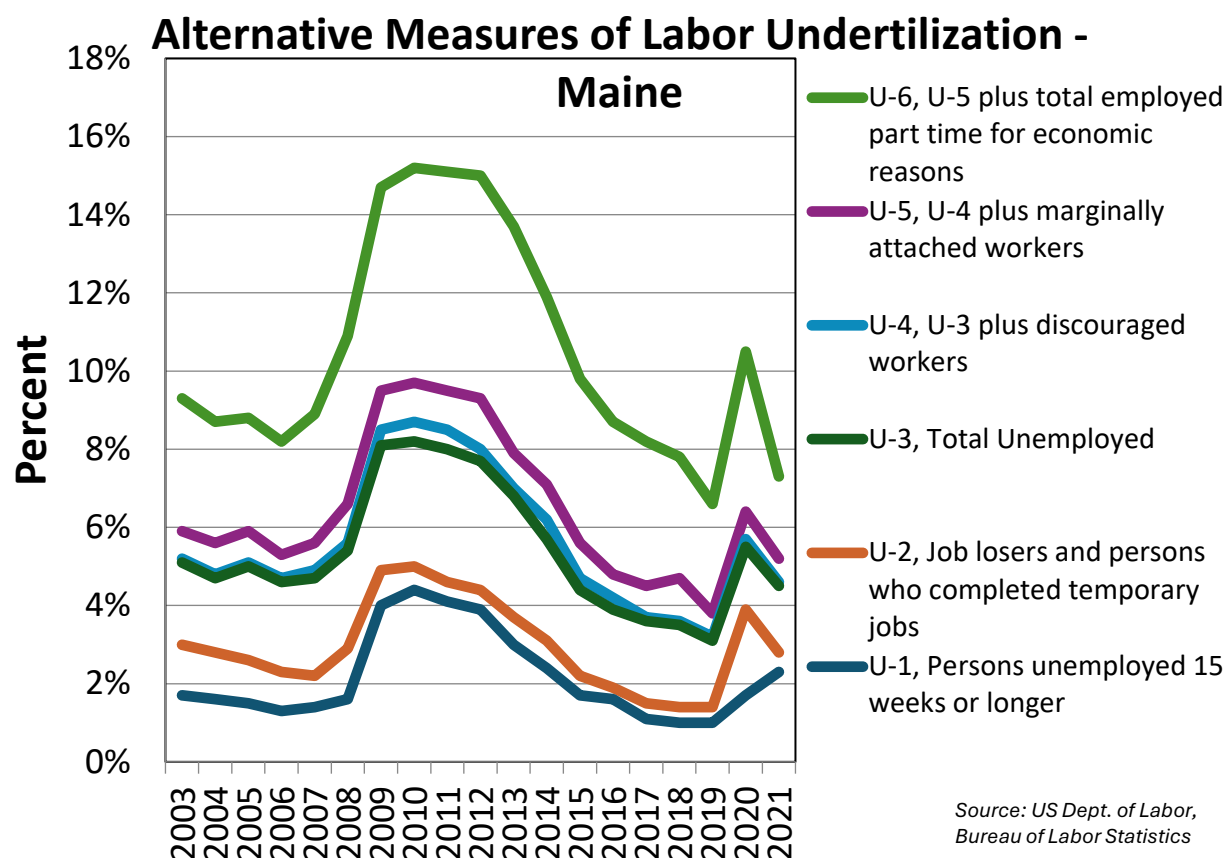


Adding to the workforce challenge is the number of individuals who are unemployed but not actively seeking work, those working part-time who would prefer full-time employment, and those who are underemployed. The unemployment rate is just one of six official measures of labor underutilization. It includes only those who are jobless, actively seeking employment, and available to work.

The broadest measure, known as U-6, captures a fuller picture of labor underutilization. It includes the unemployed, discouraged and other marginally attached workers who want a job but are not actively looking, as well as individuals working part-time who would prefer full-time positions.

While commonly reported unemployment rates have returned to pre-recession levels, the U-6 rate remains elevated, measured at 6.3% compared to 8.9% in 2007. U-6 does not fully reflect

underemployment, particularly among full-time workers in positions that do not match their skills or pay levels. These individuals may remain counted as fully employed, though they are not fully utilized in the labor market.



Other Demographic Factors: Income, Public Assistance and Housing

The median household income in the NWDB region is \$60,941, which is lower than both the state median of \$71,773 and the national median of \$78,538. Both the percentage of people living below the poverty level and the percentage of households receiving food stamps are higher in the NWDB region than in Maine or the United States overall. The regional poverty rate is 13.7%, compared to 10.8% in Maine and 12.4% nationwide. Similarly, 15.6% of households in the NWDB region receive food stamps, which is 3.8 percentage points higher than the rate for both Maine and the U.S., each at 11.8%.

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/docs/2024/2024-](https://www.maine.gov/swb/docs/2024/2024-2027_WIOA_Maine_Unified_State_Plan_Master_Document.pdf)

[2027_WIOA_Maine_Unified_State_Plan_Master_Document.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/swb/docs/2024/2024-2027_WIOA_Maine_Unified_State_Plan_Master_Document.pdf) which are summarized as follows:

- The lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic can still be seen in Maine’s labor force, contributing to early retirements, reduced workforce participation, and a reevaluation of workplace expectations. It accelerated the need for remote work infrastructure, mental health services, and flexible training models that remain critical today.
- Workforce conditions in Maine show signs of recovery, yet the state continues to face stagnant population growth, workforce shortages, and widening skill gaps. An aging population, particularly in rural counties, is placing continued strain on labor supply.
- Declining birth rates have significantly reduced the pipeline of young people entering the labor force. At the same time, retirements among baby boomers are accelerating, especially in essential sectors like healthcare, education, and food service, increasing replacement demand.
- Labor force participation remains below national averages, particularly among younger adults and those in rural areas. Contributing factors include housing shortages, unaffordable childcare, transportation barriers, and the ongoing effects of mental health and substance use disorders.
- Structural shifts in the economy continue to impact occupations once considered stable. Sectors reliant on manual labor and routine administrative tasks have contracted, and many displaced workers lack the training or credentials needed to transition into high-demand industries.
- While some progress has been made in workforce reengagement, underemployment remains a concern, especially among older workers and individuals with limited digital literacy or access to broadband infrastructure.
- In a shrinking labor force environment, Maine must prioritize the full engagement of all working-age residents. State and local workforce development boards, including NWDB, are working to advance equity and opportunity through targeted outreach and tailored services for populations historically left out of traditional workforce pathways.
- The State Board continues to prioritize inclusive workforce strategies through initiatives focused on older workers, women, youth, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and people impacted by the justice and recovery systems. NWDB aligns with these goals through partnerships, sector-based strategies, and data-informed planning designed to build a more resilient, skilled, and inclusive labor force in the region.

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 Northeastern Workforce Development Board (NWDB) and its partners continue to deliver workforce development services that prepare individuals for employment, support skill development, and connect job seekers to meaningful career pathways. These activities remain aligned with industry demand and regional economic development strategies, with particular focus on promoting access for individuals with barriers to employment.

Over the past several years, NWDB has worked to improve the efficiency and coordination of the employment and training system, with a continued emphasis on industry-driven demand. The One-Stop Partner system remains the cornerstone of integrated service delivery, with formal agreements and collaboration across WIOA core programs, Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and other key stakeholders.

Strengths of Workforce Development Activities

- **Strong and Diverse Partnerships:** NWDB's One-Stop Partner group demonstrates a high level of collaboration, regularly convening to align resources, coordinate referrals, and address service gaps. Core partners include WIOA Title I providers, the MDOL Bureau of Employment Services, Adult Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation.
- **Responsive Training Infrastructure:** A broad network of community colleges, adult education programs, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) centers supports industry-aligned training across the region. Programs in healthcare, trades, IT, and maritime fields reflect local employer demand. Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship models are in place, and training providers continue to adapt based on employer feedback and growing youth interest in careers like dental assisting, CDL, HVAC, and clean energy.
- **Youth Engagement:** Partnerships with Job Corps, CTE schools, and initiatives such as Women in Construction are helping more young people explore career options early. Youth have emphasized the value of mentorship, hands-on experience, and seeing diverse representation in the workforce.
- **Flexible and Accessible Learning Options:** Training providers have increased offerings of short-term, customized programs in high-demand areas. A majority of youth surveyed expressed interest in virtual opportunities, and NWDB has responded by adopting platforms like Teams and Zoom to make programs more accessible.
- **Supportive Services Integration:** Mental health, childcare, transportation, and housing supports are increasingly built into workforce programming. New initiatives include expanding digital literacy, improving referral systems, and piloting short-term mental health counseling through WIOA programs.

Weaknesses and Capacity Challenges

- **Rural Access and Infrastructure Limitations:** The region's large, rural geography continues to limit access to services. Broadband gaps, limited transportation, and housing shortages are major barriers, particularly in Aroostook, Washington, and Piscataquis counties. A lack of affordable driver's education also prevents many young people from accessing training or employment.
- **Underutilized Labor Pools:** Despite outreach efforts, participation remains low among groups facing systemic barriers, such as single parents, individuals in recovery, justice-involved populations, and people with disabilities. Stigma, fragmented services, and limited digital access continue to affect outcomes.
- **Training Gaps and Limited Awareness:** While sector strategies are well-supported, training programs are often oversubscribed or unavailable in high-need areas. Both youth and employers report a lack of awareness around available programs, pathways, and how to access them.
- **Mental Health and Retention Needs:** Mental health challenges are increasingly affecting workforce stability. Employers and providers report the need for more trauma-informed approaches and behavioral health support, particularly in isolated communities.
- **Digital Access and Literacy:** As workforce services move online, older adults and rural residents remain at risk of digital exclusion. Gaps in internet access and digital skills require targeted, community-based strategies to ensure full participation.

To address these challenges, NWDB will continue to facilitate quarterly meetings among One-Stop Partners, invest in sector-based training initiatives, and support cross-program service alignment. Strong relationships with education, housing, transportation, and behavioral health providers will be leveraged to ensure a more coordinated response to regional workforce needs.

NWDB will also continue to utilize the One-Stop Partner Memorandum of Understanding (OSP MOU) as a roadmap to ensure universal access to all services, streamline intake and referral systems, and build a stronger, more cohesive workforce development system that equitably serves job seekers and employers across the region.

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 (NWDB) continues to align its strategic vision with the State of Maine's priorities and regional needs by engaging in a coordinated, data-informed approach to workforce development. As demographic shifts,

economic pressures, and employer needs evolve, the Board remains focused on preparing a workforce that is inclusive, resilient, and equipped to meet both current and future labor market demands. This vision is grounded in building equitable access to opportunity and addressing persistent systemic barriers that impact workforce participation.

The Board's updated vision recognizes the growing urgency to address replacement demand from an aging workforce, labor force participation suppressed by structural barriers, and shifting expectations around workplace culture, mental health, and technology. Through strengthened cross-sector partnerships and sector-based strategies, NWDB will lead efforts to scale accessible education and training pathways, promote sustainable employment, and support long-term regional economic vitality.

Key Priorities

- Improve and align training pathways with employer demand
- Develop Sector Strategies to Guide Workforce Development
- Build inclusive, resilient workforce systems for underserved populations
- Address urgent replacement demand and succession planning needs
- Strengthen collaborative partnerships and service coordination

Key Priority 1: Improve and Align Training Pathways with Employer Demand

- Expand earn-and-learn models including apprenticeships, on-the-job training (OJT), and internships
- Incentivize participation in occupational skills training through expanded access and training stipends
- Broaden credentialing options through micro-credentials and badging to reflect skills attainment
- Diversify training offerings in collaboration with partners (including Department of Defense contractors) to meet emerging career pathways
- Support incumbent worker training programs in high-demand sectors

Key Priority 2: Develop Sector Strategies to Guide Workforce Development

- Launch or expand partnerships in high demand sectors: healthcare, skilled trades, technology, and food service
- Promote equity-focused employer education and wage transparency
- Invest in “train the trainer” models to build employer-side training capacity
- Work with education providers to increase training availability in in-demand fields
- Elevate career awareness in clean energy, aquaculture, and other emerging sectors
- Fund work-based learning programs to support direct employer engagement

Key Priority 3: Build Inclusive, Resilient Workforce Systems

- Provide targeted outreach and services for single parents, individuals in recovery, reentry citizens, and persons with disabilities
- Expand access to digital literacy and broadband tools for older and rural residents
- Enhance short-term, EAP-style counseling support for WIOA participants
- Offer mental health training for educators, employers, and workforce staff
- Advance restorative workforce practices to improve job retention and organizational culture

Key Priority 4: Address Replacement Demand and Support Succession Planning

- Develop tools and resources to help employers manage workforce succession
- Promote mentorship and job shadowing to preserve institutional knowledge
- Encourage phased retirement and flexible work arrangements to retain older workers
- Engage youth through entrepreneurial and pre-career training in trades, IT, and healthcare
- Build recruitment and upskilling pipelines for sectors most affected by retirements

Key Priority 5: Strengthen Collaborative Partnerships

- Formalize relationships with Chambers of Commerce, economic development entities, and nonprofit service providers through MOUs
- Connect employers and job seekers more intentionally through targeted initiatives
- Deepen partnership with NAMI to raise awareness on mental health in the workforce
- Improve referral pathways to address housing, transportation, and other barrier mitigation
- Expand NWDB Board membership to include stakeholders from housing and transportation sectors

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 addressing the region's complex workforce challenges and advancing economic opportunities requires the active collaboration of strong, engaged partners. One of NWDB's most essential roles is to convene these partners, facilitate shared planning, and align resources to meet the needs of job seekers and employers across the region.

The following strategies will guide NWDB's ongoing collaboration with Core Programs, One-Stop Partners, employers, educators, and community-based organizations to support the strategic vision and ensure responsive, inclusive workforce development:

- Facilitate regular, purposeful meetings with partner groups, including One-Stop Operators, Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and WIOA Core Program leads, to strengthen coordination and joint problem-solving.

- Form working groups or committees as needed to address emerging challenges, respond to new opportunities, or test out promising ideas.
- Encourage cross-involvement between organizations by inviting partners to serve on the NWDB and supporting Board members in participating on other relevant councils or boards.
- Improve communication systems and resource-sharing tools to promote service alignment, reduce duplication, and increase collective awareness of available programs for job seekers and employers.
- Stay closely connected with employers to understand their changing workforce needs. This includes direct outreach as well as engagement through trusted intermediaries like chambers of commerce and economic development organizations.
- Identify and respond to emerging industry opportunities, including clean energy, technology transformation, and climate-resilient occupations, with targeted workforce strategies and pilot initiatives.
- Expand efforts to engage and retain older workers through flexible work arrangements, phased retirement options, and mentorship roles that help preserve institutional knowledge.
- Support digital access and literacy initiatives in rural communities, especially for older adults and those disconnected from education and training due to technology gaps.
- Leverage new funding streams and program initiatives to design employer-informed training models, scale work-based learning opportunities, and test new ideas that can be applied across sectors.
- Collaborate with workforce service providers to ensure that all individuals, including those facing barriers to employment, have access to the tools and support they need to succeed. This includes youth, people in recovery, justice-involved individuals, and those living with disabilities.
- Share insights and coordinate efforts with partners across the region, such as the Small Business Development Center, higher education institutions, and entrepreneurship programs, to support small business growth and job creation.

NWDB's findings and priorities are aligned with broader regional and statewide economic strategies, including the Eastern Maine Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Maine's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy. These efforts share a common focus on building talent, fostering innovation, and investing in critical infrastructure to drive long-term prosperity.

The Eastern Maine CEDS plan identifies four key priority areas:

- Broadband
- Climate Resiliency
- Transportation
- Workforce and Education

The goals and objectives outlined in the NWDB Strategic Plan directly support these regional priorities by expanding access to quality jobs, improving workforce readiness, and strengthening the systems that connect people to education, training, and employment. NWDB's focus on sector partnerships, digital access, climate-resilient occupations, and equitable service delivery complements statewide efforts to grow Maine's economy by attracting and retaining talent, supporting business innovation, and building stronger, more connected communities.

Section 2: Local Workforce Development System

A. A description of the workforce development system in the local area identifying all 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 Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) as the One-Stop Operator (OSO), 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 provide access to coordinated programs, and services through a network of staff, Partners, and stakeholders. Currently, this coordination occurs through regularly scheduled meetings between the OSO and the core partners. Additionally, the OSO regularly reports to the Board, providing updates and documenting progress to reach performance goals.

WIOA TITLE 1B Service Providers

Aroostook County Action Program

Organizational Experience:

Aroostook County Action Program, Inc., (ACAP) is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit community action agency annually serving 15,000 residents of northern Maine. 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"> • Asset Development: Matched Savings; Financial Counseling; Volunteer Income Tax Preparation • Childcare & Youth Development: Child Care & School Readiness; Youth Restorative Justice; Head Start / Early Head Start; Specialized Care & Education; Youth Development • Employment Training: Transition Teams; Workforce Development Services; Youth & Young Adults; Vocational & Skills Training; Employer Assistance • Energy & Housing: Energy Assistance & Emergency Fuel; Heating Systems Improvement' Weatherization • Seniors: Senior Support Services; Home Repair and Safety Modifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health: Substance Use Prevention; Health Care Services; ACA Health Insurance (ACA) Navigator; Disease Prevention and Outreach; Tobacco Use Prevention; Oral Health Services • Housing: Foreclosure Counseling; Homeownership Education; Home Repair & Modification; Homelessness Prevention; Supportive Housing • Nutrition: Child & Adult Food Care Program; Nutrition Education, Food Programs; Women, Infants & Children (WIC) • Strengthening Families: Coaching; Family Development / Parenting Education; Case Management / Info & Referral; Home Visiting
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ACAP has more than 50 years of experience in successfully administering Federal, State, and private grant funding, and supporting the families and individuals of northern Maine toward economic and social mobility. 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 \$20 million annual budget is from Maine Department of Health & Human Services. ACAP manages approximately 40 contracts each year from Maine Housing , Department of Corrections/Division of Juvenile Services, Department of Labor, Department of Agriculture, and more. Recent private donations have been provided by John T. Gorman Foundation, Mary Barton Smith, Maine Cancer Foundation, and more.

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. From July 2024-May 2025, a total of 8,842 self-service job seekers have registered in the NWDB region

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:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act – Workforce services for Adults, Youth and Dislocated Workers
- Economic Development Planning – Community planning and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
- Small Business Administration – Business financing services
- Rural Development - Revolving Loan Fund services
- Environmental Protection Agency - Brownfields services
- Maine APEX Accelerator – Assistance with government contracting

- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) - Support services for Maine DBEs 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.

Further, most Adult Education programs have students access the hundreds 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, Electrical, & Masonry
- Hospitality: Culinary
- Automotive & Transportation: Automotive & Heavy Truck Driving (CDL)
- Information Technology: CISCO Networking, Microsoft Academy, Cyber Security

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, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, 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 three 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 MCCS 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 three 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.

Apprenticeships/Pre-Apprenticeships: Apprenticeship programs have become a vital part of the workforce development landscape in Maine, offering individuals a clear pathway into meaningful, well-paying careers. These programs combine paid, hands-on work experience with classroom learning, allowing participants to build skills while earning a wage and advancing toward industry-recognized credentials.

Within the NWDB region, the Board partners with the Maine Apprenticeship Program (MAP), employers, and training providers to grow apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities across high-demand sectors such as healthcare, construction, manufacturing, and early childhood education. These earn-while-you-learn models are especially valuable in rural areas, where access to traditional training may be more limited. They provide a flexible, supportive path into the workforce, particularly for individuals who need to earn income while they learn new skills.

Pre-apprenticeship programs have also grown in reach and impact, especially when offered in collaboration with Adult Education and community partners. These programs help individuals gain the foundational skills and confidence needed to successfully enter a registered apprenticeship.

By continuing to partner with MAP and local employers, NWDB will support the development of customized training programs that respond directly to employer needs while creating new career opportunities for people across the region.

Other Education and Training Programs: The Board also partners with Career and Technical Centers, Associated General Contractors (AGC), 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.

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. 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 of Maine at Augusta 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. The University of Maine system also offers online and distance learning opportunities to all students. 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. 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.

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) 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, NWDB has identified Maine's aging workforce and persistently low labor force participation rates as key challenges contributing to a shrinking labor pool. Employers across the region continue to report difficulty filling open positions, even as job vacancies remain high. To address these issues, the workforce system is prioritizing outreach to individuals not currently active in the labor force, particularly those facing systemic barriers to employment.

This includes veterans, individuals with disabilities, justice-involved individuals, New Mainers, youth and opportunity youth, individuals in recovery, and low-income adults. These priority groups align with those identified in Maine's Unified State Plan, and NWDB has taken steps to tailor services and programming to better meet their needs.

Key strategies include:

- Developing targeted outreach and flexible training models in partnership with adult education providers, community colleges, behavioral health agencies, and community-based organizations.
- Reviewing supportive services and training policies annually through the NWDB Policy Committee to ensure they reflect current barriers and support equitable access while maintaining fiscal responsibility.
- Implementing a coordinated intake process and maintaining a "no wrong door" policy to ensure individuals are referred to the most appropriate programs across One-Stop partners and external providers, increasing co-enrollment and wraparound support.
- Working with training providers to expand short-term, stackable credential programs in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, skilled trades, clean energy, and IT—many of which are designed to accommodate participants balancing work, caregiving, or recovery.
- Expanding outreach to disconnected individuals through partnerships with food pantries, housing agencies, reentry programs, and youth-serving organizations.
- Promoting recovery-informed workforce practices by supporting training for staff, employers, and community partners. Workshops such as Recovery Coach Basics and Recovery Works for ME are helping reduce stigma and build understanding of how to support individuals in or seeking recovery.

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. Five 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 (4/23/2025)
- Youth Stakeholders (4/24/2025)
- NWDB Stakeholders Meetings (4/14/2025, 4/15/2025, 4/16/2025)

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 45 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 developed with input by NWDB's Youth Worker's Advisory Committee and garnered just under 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:

a. Facilitate engagement of businesses, including small businesses and businesses in in-demand industry sectors and occupations, in workforce development programs;

NWDB's employer engagement strategy is grounded in economic analysis, real-time labor market data, and feedback from businesses, chambers, service providers, and community partners. Across the region, employers consistently cite challenges related to hiring and retaining skilled workers, particularly in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, construction, and technology. These industries account for a significant share of regional employment and also face rising replacement demand due to retirements, skill mismatches, and structural barriers affecting the workforce pipeline.

To respond, NWDB has adopted a more relationship-driven and data-informed approach to employer engagement. Instead of relying solely on formal advisory structures, the Board connects with employers through industry roundtables, one-on-one conversations, strategic surveys, and targeted forums. These formats provide timely insight into employer needs, hiring trends, and training gaps, and ensure that the workforce system remains responsive to both small businesses and large regional employers.

Partnerships with chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, and industry groups further strengthen this approach. These entities provide valuable context on sector-specific challenges and are instrumental in extending NWDB's reach to smaller employers and rural business communities. Board staff and leadership regularly attend business events and meet with local chamber directors, ensuring two-way communication between the workforce system and the employer community.

Employer input has called for the development of new training programs in areas such as CDL driving, dental assisting, HVAC, IT support, and clean energy. These programs reflect a growing demand for short-term, accessible credentialing that prepares job seekers for immediate employment. Employers have played a key role in shaping work-based learning models, including internships, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships tailored to their hiring needs and timelines.

NWDB also continues to engage business leaders through its Workforce Board, ensuring private sector voices help shape regional strategy. New Board members participate in comprehensive onboarding that explains the broader workforce system and the resources available to their businesses. Many of these members now act as workforce ambassadors, sharing information with their peers and promoting system resources throughout their networks.

Through this multi-faceted approach, NWDB ensures that employers are not only aware of available services but are actively shaping the region's workforce strategies. The result is a more connected and responsive system that supports business growth and meets the evolving needs of Maine's economy.

b. Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area;

Rather than depending solely on formal advisory groups, the Board connects with businesses through one-on-one outreach, employer forums, strategic surveys, and collaboration with chambers of commerce and economic development organizations. These partners help surface real-time insights on workforce needs, hiring trends, and industry-specific challenges.

NWDB is working to strengthen and streamline this feedback loop by supporting consistent communication among workforce agencies, education and training providers, and business-facing organizations. Plans are underway to formalize the process of collecting and sharing employer feedback across partners. This includes training frontline staff—such as chamber

representatives and CareerCenter teams—on available workforce services and referral pathways. Looking ahead, NWDB may pursue the development of a shared Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to coordinate employer outreach, track engagement, and improve service alignment across the region.

To meet the specific needs of businesses, the Board offers a suite of workforce services, including:

- Work experience
- On-the-job training (OJT)
- Incumbent worker training
- Customized training programs
- Access to discretionary grant-funded training initiatives

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

c. Better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development;

In the last five years, the Board has continued to collaborate 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.

d. Strengthening linkages between the one-stop delivery system with unemployment insurance programs and other required partner 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. This can help employers hire qualified workers while helping job seekers 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.

NWDB is committed to expanding the use of work-based learning strategies to strengthen workforce participation, meet employer demand, and prepare individuals for in-demand occupations. Work-based learning is particularly effective in a region like Northeastern Maine, where many industries require hands-on experience and where barriers such as transportation, lack of experience, and training access often prevent job seekers from securing quality employment.

Through ongoing engagement with employers, education partners, chambers of commerce, and community organizations, NWDB has identified work-based learning as a central strategy in supporting both economic and workforce development. Rather than relying on static programs, the Board works with partners across the region to tailor work-based learning approaches to the unique needs of employers and job seekers.

The following strategies reflect NWDB's approach to expanding work-based learning in 2025 and beyond:

- Collaborate with employers and industry groups to identify skills gaps and design work-based learning programs that respond directly to those needs and prepares employees to obtain necessary licensure to maintain employment, including apprenticeships, internships, and customized training.
- Expand on-the-job training (OJT) programs that reimburse employers for training new hires, particularly in priority sectors. These models reduce risk for businesses and create immediate job opportunities for participants.
- Promote and scale registered apprenticeship programs, including pre-apprenticeship pathways for youth, justice-involved individuals, and people in recovery. Focus areas include healthcare, trades, construction, and energy.
- Leverage incumbent worker training to help businesses upskill current employees and create advancement opportunities, especially in small to mid-sized companies that lack internal training resources.
- Connect students and job seekers to internships, co-ops, and job shadowing opportunities in collaboration with community colleges, CTEs, Job Corps, and adult education providers. These experiences build confidence and align education with real-world application.
- Map and share career pathways within in-demand industries, working with employers to clearly define entry points, advancement steps, required credentials, and support resources.
- Use integrated education and training (IET) models to provide concurrent instruction in literacy, numeracy, digital skills, and occupation-specific content, especially for adults with basic skill gaps or English language learners.

- Assess job seekers systematically to determine eligibility and readiness for work-based training opportunities, ensuring resources are matched to individuals who will benefit most.
- Coordinate wraparound supports, such as transportation, childcare, mental health services, and digital literacy training, to ensure participants can complete training and successfully transition into employment.
- Utilize labor market data to prioritize training investments and ensure alignment with occupations that offer competitive wages, benefits, and long-term career potential.

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. This trend is especially evident in the NWDB region, where self-employment accounts for approximately 7% of all jobs. Survey feedback and stakeholder input also highlight growing interest among both young people and adults in pursuing business ownership, particularly in trades, agriculture, personal services, and digital enterprises.

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 acts as a conduit of information and referrals, including:

- Providing information and tools to help individuals assess their interest and readiness for business ownership, including self-assessments, informational sessions, and exposure to local entrepreneurial success stories.
- Referring participants to trusted partners such as Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), New Ventures Maine, SCORE, regional higher education institutions, startup hubs, and local chambers of commerce.
- Promoting short-term credential programs and digital badges that build entrepreneurial competencies, particularly in skilled trades where self-employment is common.

- Collaborating with regional economic development organizations to offer workshops and training that cover business planning, licensing, marketing, financial literacy, and digital tools for business owners.
- Coordinating with partners to explore co-location opportunities or shared office hours at CareerCenters, allowing participants easier access to entrepreneurship counseling and resources.
- Supporting special events, pitch competitions, and regional conferences that celebrate and advance entrepreneurship, particularly for youth, women, immigrants, and underserved communities.
- Collaborating with business support organizations to inform small businesses about workforce hiring incentives, training reimbursement, and job placement assistance.
- 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.

Supportive services are especially critical during key transitions—such as entering training or beginning a new job—when customers may face heightened challenges related to transportation, childcare, housing, digital access, mental health, or job readiness. Employers hiring individuals with barriers may also require guidance on how to support those workers and make use of available retention incentives or wraparound supports.

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.
- Monitor academic progress by requesting grades or training updates at regular intervals to identify issues early and intervene if necessary.
- Document and promote success stories that highlight how job seekers have used supportive services to complete training or successfully transition into employment, with a focus on individuals from priority populations.
- Regularly communicate with training providers and when appropriate employers to assess the participants' progress.
- Connect jobseekers to Work Source Maine Virtual CareerCenter 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 in 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 regularly attend chamber events, partner with industry groups, and collaborate with economic development organizations to gather employer feedback and share information about workforce programs and resources. The Board also leverages digital platforms, including its website and social media channels, to keep employers informed about workforce trends, funding opportunities, and support services.
- The Board works closely with chambers, economic development groups, and regional planning initiatives, including Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) efforts, to ensure employer feedback is continuously captured and used to shape local workforce 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-today 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: Foster industry-led partnerships that identify workforce challenges and collaboratively develop career pathways, training programs, and solutions that reflect real-time employer needs.

NWDB supports the development of strong, sector-based partnerships to ensure that training opportunities are directly informed by industry input and aligned with local labor market demand. Rather than relying on a single structure, the Board works with a range of employers, chambers of commerce, education and training providers, economic development partners, and community-based organizations to gather input and co-design strategies.

These partnerships, built through roundtables, focus groups, employer interviews, and formal collaborations, center on industries critical to the region's economy, including healthcare, manufacturing, construction, and technology. Through these ongoing engagements, NWDB creates space for employers to discuss hiring challenges, identify skill gaps, and participate in the design of responsive training solutions.

Through these industry-led partnerships and feedback loops, NWDB is cultivating a workforce system that is nimble, collaborative, and grounded in the real challenges and opportunities facing employers across 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.

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 affiliate,

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:

- Physically and virtually 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

1. **Machias CareerCenter (Affiliate)**
53 Prescott Dr
Machias, ME 04654
2. **Presque Isle CareerCenter (Affiliate)**
66 Spruce St
Presque Isle, ME 04769
3. **Katahdin Higher Education Center (Affiliate)**
1 Dirigo Drive
East Millinocket, ME 04430
4. **Penquis Higher Education Center (Affiliate)**
50 Mayo Street
Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426
5. **Ellsworth EMDC Office (Affiliate)**
248 State Street, Suite 15A

Ellsworth, ME 04605

6. Presque Isle ACAP (Affiliate)

771 Main St

Presque Isle, ME 04769

7. Houlton ACAP (Affiliate)

91 Military St

Houlton, ME 04730

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, individual 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:

- Initial Triage:
 - Customers fill out a career center form to help determine possible services and appropriate referrals. If a customer is seeking information about Unemployment

Insurance, they are provided with an option to meet with someone. Those looking for all other services are directed to a service orientation. If a customer seeks services through virtual chat, they are assessed of their needs and referred to appropriate services.

- Maine JobLink setup: If necessary, help customers that are inexperienced on computers and review the created profile for efficiency.
- Orientation for new and returning customers. The orientation is a shared presentation by participating partners. Partners discuss next steps once orientation is complete.
- Initial assessment: CareerCenter staff holds a conversation with the customer to determine how best to address customer needs using an initial interview outline as guide. This same assessment could be completed by a career center partner.
- Referral is made to appropriate program or service.
- Intake/Application: determination of eligibility with one or more WIOA partners (Vocational Rehabilitation, WIOA Provider, Adult Education, BES, Others)
- 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.
- 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 by 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 One-Stop 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 in rural areas to access career development, job training, and support services at the same level of quality and consistency afforded by 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 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;

NWDB will work with partners and training providers to ensure the highest quality services are 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 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.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, NWDB has made a concerted effort to assess how service delivery has changed and to identify which adaptations should be preserved, improved, or reimaged. Stakeholder feedback, including insights from job seekers, youth, employers, and training providers, revealed that expanded virtual service options significantly increased access for rural residents, individuals with disabilities, and working parents. At the same time, there were challenges related to digital literacy, broadband access, and maintaining engagement in remote settings. To continuously improve the One-Stop experience, NWDB is reviewing hybrid service models, monitoring customer satisfaction, and collaborating with partners to identify where in-person support remains essential. Emphasis is being placed on technology training for both staff and participants, improved intake and referral processes for virtual users, and strengthening follow-up strategies to ensure sustained engagement across both Tracks 1 and 2. These assessments are helping to shape a more resilient, flexible workforce system that better meets the diverse needs of job seekers and employers in a post-COVID environment.

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 at the One-Stop.

The Board uses its One-Stop Operator (OSO) Agreement as a tool to meet its performance requirements, develop new solutions to customer challenges, and collaborate effectively with partners to deliver services efficiently. The new Adult and Dislocated Worker contract includes 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 NWDB has developed an MOU governing the One-Stop partners. The MOU document specifically outlines the contributions of One-Stop partners and expectations of partners. This document is also used to facilitate constant improvement at the One-Stop. When standards improve, One-Stop customers are served more efficiently. The One-Stop MOU mandates regular meetings between the partners and the One-Stop Operator to ensure any challenges or bottlenecks are mitigated, and operations are improved. 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. This MOU document will continue to be reviewed annually to identify areas of improvement for One-Stop partners.

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 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. 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 aligned 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.

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 finance and accounting systems is conducted by an outside firm while the Board is responsible for monitoring financial and programmatic compliance of subconsultants 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 serves as a portal for job seekers to connect with workforce resources, with 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 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 virtual Unemployment Insurance (UI) workshops and Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) services.

The Board and many of its One-Stop partners have embraced 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 ensure 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.

The Virtual Career Center is available online (<https://www.myworksourcemaine.gov/>). The site enables individuals to navigate a wide array of career services tailored to their geographic location, employment needs, and specific challenges. A built-in virtual assistant guides individuals through available services and tools. To further personalize support, users are invited to complete a brief survey, which generates targeted service recommendations based on their responses. Additionally, the platform offers the opportunity to schedule virtual one-on-one consultations with trained career coaches, ensuring access to direct, individualized guidance when preferred.

Finally, the Board is committed to transparency and public engagement. The Board provides a Zoom link to participate in board meetings virtually. This allows 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. 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.

The One-Stop system staff is trained to understand the needs of individuals with disabilities and how to best connect them with employment and training opportunities. 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 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 have been 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 upon by all One-Stop 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 One-Stop 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 collaborative partnerships 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. Engagement with employers will lead to a clearer understanding of the types of training employers find to be most beneficial for new workers. The 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 has established policies and implemented 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.
- Individuals with basic skill deficiencies.

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.
- 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 ensures that its local supportive services policy and practices are adapted to consider 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

NWDB recognizes incumbent worker training as a powerful tool not only to retain jobs and avert layoffs, but also to support long-term business stability and continuity in a region where small businesses are a major employer. In the current labor market, where workforce shortages, technology shifts, and the aging of the business-owning population converge, incumbent worker allows businesses to remain competitive while helping workers grow in place, move up career ladders, and avoid displacement.

NWDB will use WIOA funding and supplemental resources where available to support incumbent worker training for upskilling employees in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, IT, trades, and tourism. Training activities may include cross-training to support role shifts within companies, digital literacy for adapting to technology, or leadership development to support internal promotions and succession planning. Strategies to expand awareness of these efforts include:

- Promote incumbent worker training through targeted business outreach, workforce partner meetings, and chamber and economic development communications;
- Provide employers with simple, clear guidance on applying for IWT and identifying training partners that can deliver high-impact, customized instruction;
- Prioritize support for small to mid-sized businesses, particularly those located in rural areas or operating in sectors at risk of disruption.

NWDB also recognizes a growing, urgent need to address the threat of job loss from small business closures due to owner retirements, a challenge that has been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Research by the Cooperative Development Institute and the USM School of Business highlights that Maine's business landscape is aging rapidly. In rural Maine, 71% of business owners are over age 50, and nearly half are over age 60. Most lack a formal exit plan. Without proactive strategies, many of these businesses face closure, resulting in job loss and economic decline, particularly in smaller communities.

The workforce system is uniquely positioned to respond to this "Silver Tsunami" by connecting directly with business owners, providing early guidance on succession planning, and supporting employees who may be in a position to take over businesses. In cases where worker buyouts or transitions to employee ownership are viable, the workforce system can coordinate with partners to provide entrepreneurship training, incumbent worker upskilling, and technical assistance.

In the coming program years, NWDB will:

- Incorporate exit planning awareness into employer engagement activities, working with partners to provide materials and training to frontline staff;
- Collaborate with SBDCs and economic development agencies to support employee buyouts and succession models;
- Use incumbent worker training strategically to support transitions of leadership, retain institutional knowledge, and preserve jobs when business owners retire;
- Explore grant opportunities and partnerships to expand capacity to support business continuity and worker ownership as a layoff aversion strategy.

Through these efforts, NWDB aims to not only prevent layoffs, but also to preserve critical businesses, retain community assets, and help workers build both economic stability and long-term equity through career advancement and ownership.

To address this risk, we would continue 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.

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.

NWDB will also continue to promote and expand apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship models across priority sectors such as healthcare, construction, and manufacturing. These earn-while-you-learn programs are particularly well-suited for rural and underserved populations, offering structured advancement pathways for incumbent workers while helping employers develop internal talent pipelines. Apprenticeship will be aligned with succession strategies and incumbent worker training efforts to support transitions in business ownership, fill leadership roles, and reduce turnover in hard-to-fill positions.

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). Systemic changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- Activation of a State-wide hotline to connect displaced workers with service providers. The 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.
- Virtual Job Fairs and workshops provide an alternative to in-person events, increasing opportunities for engagement with job seekers and employers.
- Resources across providers are shared, and different audiences are targeted depending on the identified need.
- Reemployment Services Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) connects individuals with assessments and reemployment services through the American Job Centers.
- 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, a SWOT analysis was performed by stakeholders to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. As part of the strategic planning process, input was gathered from employers, youth, and community stakeholders through surveys, listening sessions, and regional forums. Their feedback highlighted key challenges and opportunities across the workforce system, with a shared emphasis on the urgent need to strengthen education and workforce pathways. Stakeholders identified the following as critical to expanding our region's workforce:

- Expanding broadband access and digital literacy to close equity gaps and support remote work and learning
- Improving transportation options to increase access to training, education, and employment, particularly in rural areas
- Investing in training pathways aligned with employer demand, especially in healthcare, skilled trades, IT, education, and behavioral health, with a focus on access for underserved populations such as youth, people in recovery, and those in rural communities

Our region recognizes the importance of leveraging multiple resources, including DLW. Whenever possible, the NWDB pursues co-enrollment strategies and agreements with other programs such as 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 throughout the region.

The Maine Department of Labor (MDOL) is responsible for coordinating statewide and local Rapid Response activities, which include both Layoff Aversion and Rapid Response support services.

Layoff Aversion focuses on helping businesses avoid layoffs through proactive solutions, including:

- **WorkShare Program:** An unemployment option allowing businesses to temporarily reduce employee hours instead of laying off staff. Affected employees can collect partial unemployment benefits to offset income loss.
- **Skill Upgrades and Retention Support:** Providing training to upskill existing workers,

Rapid Response activities assist businesses and workers impacted by layoffs or plant closures by offering immediate services to promote rapid reemployment and minimize the negative effects of job loss. Services include:

- Job search skills workshops
- Resume development assistance
- Interview preparation
- Access to labor market information
- Specialized job fairs connecting displaced workers with hiring employers

Rapid Response services are coordinated through the Bureau of Employment Services (BES) central office, with statewide and local representatives conducting outreach to affected employers and workers.

Early Identification and Communication Systems

Maine has developed a highly effective system for identifying and responding to potential or actual layoffs through multiple channels:

- **Confidential Lists:** Monitoring employers where the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation has documented three or more initial unemployment claims.

- WARN Act and Maine Severance Law Notifications: Formal notices submitted to the Dislocated Worker Unit and Bureau of Labor Standards.
- Ongoing Monitoring: Regular review of websites tracking mergers, downsizing, offshoring, and local/state press releases.
- Community Intelligence: Early rumor tracking and information sharing with economic development entities at state, regional, and local levels.

When credible information is received, Rapid Response representatives immediately contact affected businesses, gather critical layoff information, and offer layoff aversion strategies such as:

- Employee buyouts
- Skill retooling
- Access to state business support programs

The Governor's office is also notified to coordinate additional supports.

Customized Transition Support

Following initial employer contact, a customized package of Rapid Response services is developed, including:

- Rapid Response orientations and workshops
- Direct training and reemployment assistance
- Job development services

In addition, Maine's Rapid Response team collaborates with local communities to establish or participate in Community Transition Teams. These teams include partners from:

- Maine Community College System
- University System
- Local elected officials
- Adult Education programs
- Local Workforce Development Boards
- Community Action Agencies

Transition Team activities may include:

- Production of resource booklets featuring community services for impacted workers
- Resource fairs offering access to housing assistance, small business support, healthcare services, and more
- Non-employment-related workshops, such as financial counseling, stress management, and health clinics

For more information, visit: [Rapid Reponse at MyWorksourceMaine.gov](https://www.myworksourcemaine.gov/search?query=rapid+response) or cut and paste <https://www.myworksourcemaine.gov/search?query=rapid+response> into your browser.

Employers can receive guidance on layoff and closure requirements, and workers are connected to retraining and support services. For assistance, contact your local CareerCenter or call 207-623-7981 (TTY: Maine Relay 711), or email rapidresponse.dol@maine.gov.

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, SWOT analysis, future priorities, and barriers to services. Regional trend and priorities were identified as follows:

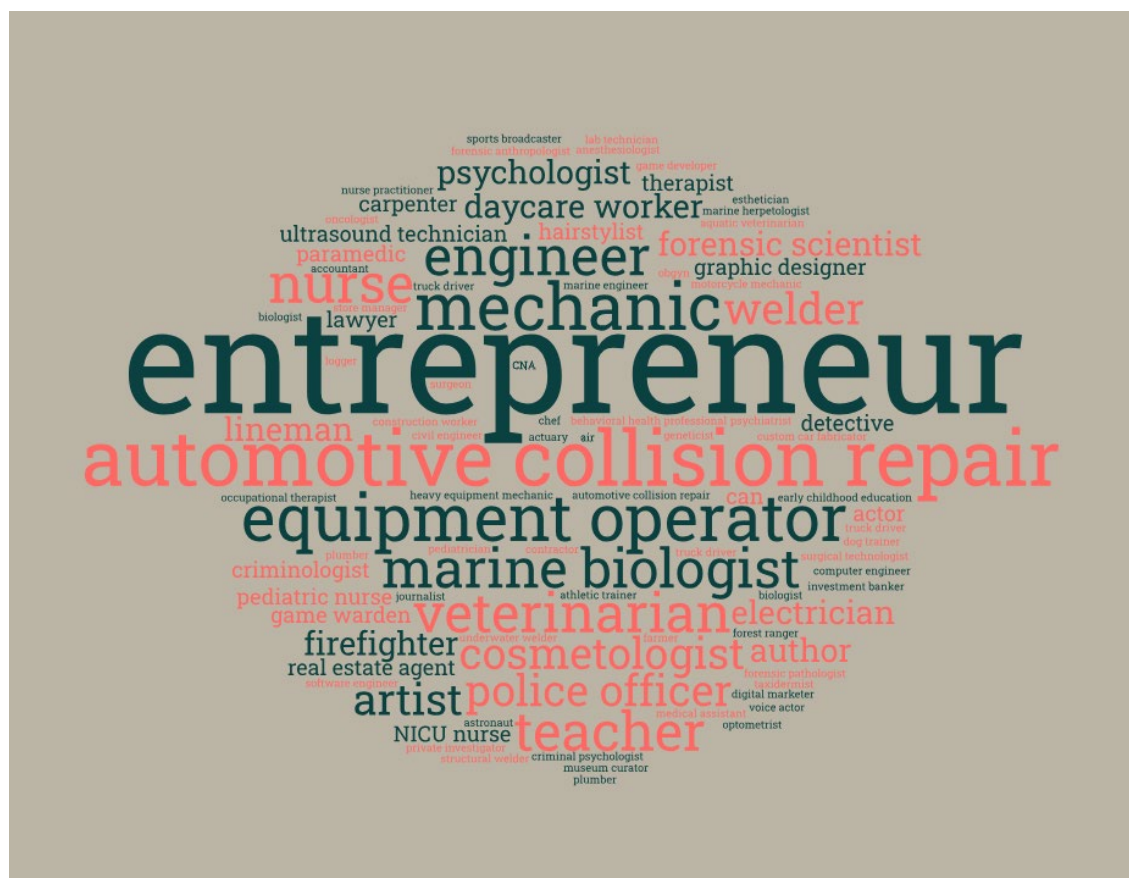
- Elevating the trades and hands-on career pathways by expanding early vocational exploration, internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training programs.
- Offering training and skill-building aligned with current and emerging workforce needs, including clean energy, IT, and healthcare.
- Promoting industry-recognized credentials and digital badging, while educating employers on how to evaluate and utilize these tools in hiring.

- Strengthening employer engagement with youth.
- Expanding digital access and literacy, including reliable broadband, devices, and training platforms, paired with communication through youth-centered channels like social media and mobile apps.
- Supporting flexible work arrangements and integrating technology into career planning and pathways.
- Addressing transportation barriers that limit access to training and employment opportunities.
- Emphasizing mentorship and guidance that connects youth to meaningful career options and long-term pathways, not just short-term employment.

Supplementing the provider discussions was a comprehensive survey shared with the youth perspectives about the services, opportunities, and barriers to participation. A total of 295 responses from youth aged 14-24 were returned. Of those, 73 youth requested follow-up services. The survey results are provided in Appendix 18. A synopsis of the responses is provided below:

- 203 responders were enrolled in high school, 25 trade schools, 17 colleges/universities, 8 adult education, and 6 home school.
- Barriers include a lack of transportation, struggles with in-person interactions, debt or fear of accumulating debt, lack of skills and training, an existing medical condition, and lack of technology. Of note, 84 of the 295 did not feel they had barriers preventing them from employment or job training/education.
- Primary needs for assistance included job searches (46), work experience (46) financial help (39), career exploration (37), owning your own business (35), job shadow (35) college enrollment (34), job training/certifications (34), apprenticeships (23), and high school diploma (21).
- 36% would participate in virtual events using platforms familiar to youth including Microsoft Teams, Discord, Facebook, Instagram, and Zoom.

One of the most impactful elements of the youth survey was a simple, open-ended question: *"What is your dream job?"* This question generated an enthusiastic and personal response from participants, offering valuable insight into the aspirations and passions of young people across the region. The responses revealed a wide range of interests, from entrepreneurial ambitions to careers in healthcare, skilled trades, public service, and creative industries. The word cloud below highlights the most commonly mentioned dream jobs, with **entrepreneur, mechanic, marine biologist, equipment operator, and teacher** standing out among the top choices. This visual representation has helped inform how the Board and its partners think about career exploration and youth engagement, reinforcing the importance of connecting young people's goals with accessible, real-world training pathways.



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.

Collaborative partnerships 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.

These collaborations, especially in high-demand sectors like healthcare, clean energy, construction, and IT, prioritize the development of training programs that meet employer demand and offer clear, attainable pathways for job seekers. Strategies to collaborate with education and training partners include:

- Organizing business tours and employer engagement events for students, teachers, and guidance counselors to expose youth to careers in priority industries. Virtual tours and digital job fairs will also be used to expand access regionally.
- Enhancing communication between students, educators, and employers by providing virtual platforms where learners can explore career options and understand the skills and credentials needed to succeed.

- Maintaining an updated, user-friendly Board website that acts as a hub for workforce resources, training opportunities, and employer engagement tools.
- Co-locating workforce staff at community college and adult education sites to improve accessibility.
- Integrating adult education more intentionally into occupational training programs, enabling participants to simultaneously work toward a high school credential and gain job-specific skills aligned with local demand.

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, childcare, supplies, and emergency funding can often be the difference between completing a degree or certificate and dropping out to take a low-wage job. NWDB supportive services are available to job seekers based on reasonable necessity to successfully obtain and retain employment and training.

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
 - Childcare
 - Technology/Internet
 - Clothing/Uniforms, depending on need
 - Equipment and tools, depending on need
 - Medical expenditures, depending on need
 - Emergency assistance, depending on need

More information on NWDB's supportive services can be found in Appendix 4.

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 training is to improve the employability and earnings potential of workers.
2. Customized Training (CT): Training that is:
 - a. Designed to meet the specific requirements of an employer (or group of employers),
 - b. Delivered with a commitment by the employer to hire the individual upon successful completion, and
 - c. Reimbursed by the employer for not less than 50% of the training cost.
3. On-the-Job Training (OJT): A formal training arrangement where an employer hires an individual who does not yet meet all qualifications for a position and agrees to provide hands-on instruction to develop the necessary skills. Employers are reimbursed for a portion of the wage costs to offset the reduced productivity during the training period.

See attached Appendix 15.

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 14 – 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, 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.

See attached Appendix 22.

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 may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Counseling participants about the workplace;
- Contacting participants or employers to help secure better paying jobs, additional career planning, and counseling for the participant;
- Assisting participants and employers in resolving work-related problems;
- Connecting participants to peer support groups;
- Providing participants with information about additional educational or employment opportunities; and
- Providing participants with referrals to other community

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

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 employers;

The Maine Bureau of Employment Services (BES) offers a wide range of free employment, workforce training, and business services to workers and employers across Maine. Services are available in person at Maine CareerCenters, where customers have free access to computers and wireless internet (Wi-Fi) for employment-related activities. Employers can also utilize CareerCenter interview and conference rooms for recruitment activities at no cost. In addition to in-person support, services are available remotely through itinerant access points and virtual platforms.

Maine CareerCenters assist individuals seeking employment or a career change with the following services:

- Registering for and navigating Maine JobLink (MJL) accounts (creating new or updating existing accounts)
- Career guidance and counseling through one-on-one sessions
- Developing competitive résumés and cover letters
- Improving interviewing skills (available both in-person and virtually)
- Exploring new career opportunities
- Resetting MJL account passwords
- Registering for and attending workshops on job search strategies and training topics
- Finding occupational skills training and education opportunities
- Accessing an extensive library of online career resources
- Researching and understanding labor market information
- Connecting to additional employment and training support services

Customers benefit from a robust network of CareerCenter partner collaborations that provide direct and indirect referrals to maximize opportunities for employment success.

Maine CareerCenters provide a full range of workforce solutions for employers, including:

- Listing job openings on Maine JobLink
- Managing MJL accounts
- Searching for qualified candidates through resume databases

- Exploring recruitment strategies
- Developing effective job descriptions and job orders
- Creating and hosting customized hiring events such as general or specialized recruitment and Job Fair Services
- Marketing job openings via job boards and social media
- Recruiting specialized populations (e.g., veterans, individuals with justice involvement)
- Establishing registered apprenticeship programs
- Applying for Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC) and Federal Bonding
- Accessing comprehensive resources on human resources, workplace safety, business incentives, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), labor laws, licensing, and more
- Researching labor market trends and information
- Implementing layoff aversion strategies
- Managing downsizing events and assisting displaced employees in transitioning to new opportunities

Maine JobLink (MJL)

Administered and coordinated by BES, Maine JobLink (MJL) is a free job bank and labor exchange system designed to connect employers with workers. MJL services are universally accessible—there are no eligibility requirements for individuals using these tools. However, employers must:

- Maintain an employer-employee relationship with workers
- Comply with all relevant federal, state, and local laws and regulations
- Have active workforce needs

MJL allows job seekers to post résumés, search and apply for jobs online, and receive job referrals. Employers can post job openings, review applicant profiles, and directly contact potential candidates at no cost. Unemployment insurance claimants are required to register with MJL to fulfill job search requirements.

Additional Benefits of MJL Usage

- Job listings posted on MJL help employers meet affirmative action requirements by facilitating recruitment from minority populations.
- Data from unfilled job postings supports the state’s workforce development efforts, providing critical insights that help secure industry sector training grants and guide strategic investments in workforce programs.

Other Services

The Bureau of Employment Services (BES) utilizes several platforms to enhance service delivery and customer access:

- My WorkSource Maine virtual one-stop platform that offers a personalized service matching tool that recommends resources based on individual needs and access to a wide array of partner services and a career exploration tool.
- LiveChat provides real-time assistance for basic CareerCenter and employment-related questions, Maine JobLink (MJL) password resets, and referrals to additional services and organizations.
- The CareerCenter Hotline serves as a conduit to workforce opportunities across BES and its partners, offering:
 - Scheduling of in-person appointments
 - Virtual triage of customer needs to better direct individuals to CareerCenter and/or partner services

Both in-person and virtual CareerCenter workshops that are ADA-compliant and are regularly evaluated for topic relevance, current labor market trends, and attendance patterns to ensure they meet evolving customer needs.

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 and virtual platforms. Events and recruitment services to employers can be customized for individual employer needs, for general job seeker activity, and/or for sector-based industries.

Staff Development and Training

BES ensures that all Wagner-Peyser employment services staff, both new hires and current team members, receive comprehensive training to meet the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and deliver quality services to job seekers, workers, and employers. Training topics include:

- Overview of Labor Exchange and Career Services delivery
- Introduction to Maine JobLink (MJL) as the state's labor exchange and case management system
- Familiarization with the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation (BUC) claims system and how to assist individuals with Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims
- Career information resources, including labor market and occupational tools and career decision-making supports
- Overview of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and Training Readjustment Act programs
- Understanding Rapid Response
- Introduction to RESEA (Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment) as a joint program between BUC and BES
- Standards and procedures for service delivery at one-stop CareerCenters
- Overview of Veterans' services and required referral processes
- Outreach and services for Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers, including partnerships with the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP)
- Overview of training programs such as:
 - Maine Apprenticeship Program
 - Competitive Skills Scholarship Program
 - Title I-B Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs
 - Job Corps
 - YouthBuild
- Overview of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and Federal Bonding Program

Commitment to Collaboration and Innovation

BES is committed to working closely with the required WIOA partners to develop strategies that:

- Align technology and data systems across one-stop partner programs
- Enhance service delivery to individuals and businesses
- Improve efficiency and accuracy in reporting on workforce performance metrics

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.

Customers can connect with CareerCenter staff in-person or through virtual methods such as email, Live Chat, or telephone calls to the Bangor CareerCenter. Virtual systems ensure that high quality services are easily accessible without 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 Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services (BES) employs staff trained in Unemployment Insurance (UI) eligibility and UI issue identification during initial onboarding. Designated staff are equipped to assist individuals with:

- Filing UI claims
- Accessing and navigating their accounts through the UI portal

Additionally, Maine's Bureau of Unemployment Compensation (BUC) offers training videos on its website, which One-Stop staff are encouraged to view regularly.

UI Claimant Assistance

Maine CareerCenter staff provide both in-person and virtual services to support UI claimants, including:

- Answering basic UI questions
- Assisting customers in creating Re-EmployME accounts to file initial and continued claims
- Helping claimants file weekly certifications via phone

Reemployment Services through RESEA

Maine delivers Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) using the state's profiling model to identify claimants most likely to exhaust their benefits. Selection occurs in two steps:

1. Claimants must meet the state's profiling model criteria.
2. Random selection by local American Job Center (AJC) areas for RESEA participation.

All selected claimants are required to engage in intensive RESEA services, with the goal of minimizing unemployment duration and promoting timely reemployment.

RESEA Notification and Compliance

- BUC notifies selected claimants through letter, email, and Re-EmployME portal notifications.
- Claimants must attend and complete the initial RESEA session.

- Failure to comply triggers a fact-finding process to determine if UI benefits should be suspended or continued for good cause.

Delivery of RESEA Services

BES staff at One-Stop Centers and affiliate sites administer RESEA by offering comprehensive reemployment services tailored to participant needs. Services include:

- Development and continuation of Individualized Reemployment Plans (IRPs)
- Personalized referrals based on needs
- Intensive case management services as needed

Participants are introduced to a broad range of career services, including:

- Assistance accessing reemployment and training services
- Career counseling and exploration of higher education options
- Common intake and eligibility assessments for WIOA programs
- Access to computer-based job search programs and applications
- Job search and placement assistance with labor market information
- Orientation to supportive services and WIOA partner programs
- Access to Maine JobLink and general internet for job search activities
- Core assessments connecting skills and abilities to job opportunities

Delivery options are flexible:

- Services are available in-person or virtually via Zoom, based on claimant preference.
- For in-person sessions, laptops and tablets are available for job search activities.

Comprehensive RESEA Components

At a minimum, each RESEA participant receives:

- Unemployment compensation eligibility review, including a review of work search activities
- Relevant local labor market information, with live demonstrations of Maine's Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI) website
- Enrollment in Wagner-Peyser Act funded employment services
- Development or update of an Individualized Reemployment Plan (IRP)
- Relevant referrals to jobs, training, or community services
- Orientation to all CareerCenter services, including self-directed options
- Enhanced job matching and profile updates in Maine's JobLink

Participants also engage in further career services as needed, which may include:

- Access to the "Job Hunting in Maine" guide
- Tools, tips, and strategies for a successful job search
- Information about skill assessments and individualized job search services
- Introduction to USDOL online tools like:
 - MySkills MyFuture™
 - O*NET Online
 - My Next Move (Career Profiler)
- Coordination with other workforce development programs and services

Optional Career Services (Based on Individual Need)

Participants may also receive:

- Referrals to workforce training (WIOA or other programs)
- Labor exchange services in high-demand industries
- Information on financial aid resources beyond WIOA
- Access to community-based supportive services
- Financial literacy education
- Career readiness activities such as resume writing and interview preparation

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 farm workers (MSFWs) relies on close collaboration with statewide outreach functions of BES and the Maine State Monitor Advocate (SMA). The Monitor Advocate System, through the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL), ensures that Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs) have equitable access to career services, training, skill development, and workforce protections through Maine CareerCenters. The goal is to help MSFWs improve their living and working conditions.

MDOL staff work to develop an understanding of farm work and maintain awareness and sensitivity to the social, economic, and cultural differences within agricultural communities. Migrant workers travel to Maine from Mexico, Haiti, Canada, Central America, Texas, Florida, and California, with most arriving from Mexico. Many travel with families, including small children, and most MSFWs speak Spanish or Haitian-Creole, often with limited English proficiency. Some workers speak indigenous dialects rather than Spanish.

Farmworkers usually work in isolated areas during the agricultural season, adding challenges to service access. They often require help navigating services across local, state, and federal levels and may be unaware of resources related to:

- Health, dental, and eye care
- Mental health services
- Basic education and childcare
- Food and nutrition programs
- Safe and suitable housing
- Fair labor practices and wage protection
- Education and job training opportunities for stable employment

Service Delivery Structure:

In addition to operating 11 CareerCenters, the Bureau of Employment Services (ES) employs:

- A State Monitor Advocate (SMA)
- A multilingual MSFW Outreach Coordinator

These staff provide direct outreach, traveling to farms and living sites (e.g., labor camps, churches, grocery stores) to deliver on-site services.

Outreach is organized around agricultural areas and seasonal needs. Maine’s agricultural season runs from June through early October, with key crops like blueberries (Washington County), potatoes, broccoli, and cauliflower (Aroostook County), and apples (Androscoggin and Oxford Counties). Off-season, several hundred MSFWs also work in wreath production and seafood processing (November–mid-December), where outreach efforts continue.

Service goals focus on helping workers achieve self-sufficiency and integration into broader employment opportunities.

Services Provided:

Outreach workers ensure that workers have access to the full range of CareerCenter services, including:

- Career services and job search assistance
- Enrollment in Maine JobLink (MJL) for access to thousands of job postings
- Skills assessments and career guidance
- Referrals to supportive services and training
- Help with filing employment-related complaints
- Dissemination of information through laptops and tablets in the field

Outreach workers collaborate with organizations like the Farmworker Resources Network (FRN) to better understand and meet workers' needs, plan resource fairs, and improve services.

At CareerCenters or virtually, workers can access:

- Self-directed and staff-assisted services
- Interpretation and translation services (written materials available in eight languages)
- Interest profiling (via O-NET Interest Profiler)
- Personalized career support such as resume writing, interview preparation, referrals to H-2A jobs, and training enrollment

Community and Partner Engagement:

CareerCenter staff also engage in broader community outreach through:

- Job fairs, schools, libraries
- Partnering with agencies like PathStone, Mano en Mano, Maine Mobile Health Program, Pine Tree Legal, Maine Migrant Education Program, and Preble Street
- Promoting opportunities via social media, community bulletins, and press releases

Over 500 public and private agencies help expand networking and opportunity awareness statewide.

Staff Training:

All staff are trained to:

- Work with individuals with unique needs (LEP, ADA accommodations, etc.)
- Assist with employment and non-employment complaints
- Conduct field visits to employers if needed
- Tailor services to meet each customer's individual career goals

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, or federal WIOA Title II funds under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) is expected to align programming with regional workforce priorities and career pathway goals. Providers continue to conduct local needs assessments, set goals, and develop strategies that support adult learners in progressing toward employment and postsecondary education. During the most recent AEFLA application cycle, the local Boards, including NWDB, played an active role in the review and evaluation of applications to ensure alignment with local workforce plans. This coordination ensured that proposed services were responsive to regional labor market needs and supportive of broader system goals such as co-enrollment, integrated education and training, and access for individuals with barriers to employment. Ongoing collaboration between NWDB

and Adult Education providers reinforces this alignment and supports continuous improvement across the workforce system.

Adult Education plays a critical role in regional workforce initiatives, particularly those focused on digital literacy, foundational skills, and access to career pathways in high-demand fields. Through partnerships with NWDB, employers, and other training providers, Adult Education has supported cohort-based training models that integrate academic instruction, industry-recognized credentials, and wraparound supports to meet learners where they are and move them toward employment. Technology skills are embedded across these initiatives, helping job seekers build digital fluency while earning certifications that support career advancement. Whether in healthcare, trades, or emerging industries like clean energy and IT, Adult Education contributes to training design, instruction, and participant support, ensuring equitable access to education and employment. These collaborative efforts ensure that adult learners gain the skills needed for today's workforce while aligning with employer needs and regional economic priorities.

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 engagement include high-demand roles in healthcare (including dental and medical fields), commercial driving and transportation, mental and behavioral health, forestry, aquaculture, education, construction, technology, climate-resilient industries, and municipal and public services. These occupations reflect both current labor shortages and projected growth areas. As older workers exit the labor force, program development and expanded access will be critical to ensure the next generation of workers is prepared to step into these roles. Targeted training, work-based learning opportunities, and career pathway models will be key to meeting this challenge and supporting long-term regional workforce sustainability.

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.

The COVID-19 pandemic 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.
- 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.
- Increased access and support for clients with disabilities (reading lips, controlling anxiety, etc.).

The need for broadband access remains a critical issue across the region, and Adult Education partners have worked closely with NWDB to improve digital access and provide guidance on connection platforms and remote learning tools. In alignment with the Maine Connectivity Authority and the goals outlined in the Maine Digital Equity Plan, digital literacy training has become a key priority to ensure individuals can fully participate in education, training, and employment opportunities. Efforts have included expanded course offerings in basic computer skills, internet navigation, and digital communication, as well as support for learners to access devices and connectivity. Announcements of available classes and training opportunities have been promoted through various channels, including Facebook, Discord, and other social media platforms, to reach a broader and more diverse audience.

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:

- An outline of the agreed upon steps that will be taken to align basic education skills and English language assessments within the local area, including, but not limited to, any Memoranda of Understanding (MOU);

- An identification of how assessment scores will be shared among WIOA Title I and Title II providers (*consideration must be given to the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*);
- An identification of service partners who will conduct approved assessments (*including for trade participants*) and when such assessments will be conducted, consistent with state and local policy;
- An outline of how the local area will coordinate testing between workforce development and adult education providers; and,
- An outline of how the local area will ensure that test administrators are trained in accordance with specific assessment test administration requirements;

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 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. Satellite service centers managed by Adult Education offer virtual accessibility in the 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 Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, 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 post-secondary 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.

The Maine College and Career Access (MCCA) Program (formerly known as College Transitions) 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. MCCA 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.

New Mainers Resource Center (MRC) helps internationally trained professionals (ITPs) who have a bachelor's degree or above from outside the USA, as well as immigrants with work experience in the trades, to overcome barriers to enter the US workforce and thrive. They provide

advising and case management, licensing and credentialing support, workshops focused on job readiness skills, connections to employers, employment, and networking opportunities, and other services designed to ensure workforce readiness for ITPs of all professions. They also work to connect employers with qualified and motivated individuals.

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. The following summary includes service described in the Memorandum of Understanding – See Appendix 22.

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 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.

DVR offers a monthly virtual orientation, every third Thursday of the month, to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services for individuals with disabilities. The orientation is an opportunity to learn about VR services and how VR can support individuals in obtaining, maintaining and advancing in employment.

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. Note: 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.

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. Note: 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 twelve One-Stop locations across the NWDB region: Augusta, Bangor, Brunswick, Houlton, Hinckley, Lewiston, Machias, Portland, Presque Isle, Springvale, and Wilton. 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. This can include apprenticeships and other work experiences, as well as direct hires. 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.

DVR/DBVI staff provide in-person and virtual services. DVR/DBVI have expanded the use of video conferencing and online VR application through <https://workservices.maine.gov/>. Career Exploration Workshops, job shadows, Orientation & Mobility instruction, and college preparation programs.

Ongoing efforts to enhance services 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;

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 screened to determine if they are a veteran or qualifying spouse of a veteran. If so, 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:

- A veteran who has been referred for employment services by a representative of the Department of Veterans Affairs added to the 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.

Under the Jobs for Veterans Act and WIOA, veterans must receive priority of services, meaning 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.

The Bureau of Employment Services (BES) and WIOA Title IB Service Providers ensure Priority of Service is clearly communicated to all customers through:

- Printed materials and presentations targeting customers and employers.
- CareerCenter and MDOL websites.
- Outreach and proactive recruitment strategies focusing on veterans.
- Notification statements regarding veterans' rights added to complaint procedures and intake forms.
- Opportunities for veterans to declare their status at intake.
- Maine JobLink (MJL) notifications that alert eligible veterans to job opportunities before other registrants.

- Written policies ensuring covered individuals are identified early and receive service priority.

Eligibility is outlined in policies and procedures that ensure veterans and eligible spouses:

- Meet statutory program eligibility requirements.
- Receive service priority where funding is limited.
- Are targeted through outreach if they belong to special veteran populations (e.g., Special Disabled Veterans, Campaign Badge Veterans).

Eligibility Definitions:

Eligible Veteran (38 U.S.C. § 4211(4)) includes individuals who:

- Served active duty over 180 consecutive days with any characteristic of discharge except dishonorable discharge.
- Were discharged for a service-connected disability.
- Served on active duty under certain military call-up provisions during war/campaigns and discharged honorably.
- Were discharged under sole survivorship.

Eligible Person (38 U.S.C. § 4101(5)) includes spouses of:

- Service members who died of a service-connected disability.
- Service members missing in action, captured, or detained for more than 90 days.
- Veterans permanently and totally disabled due to service-connected disability.

(Important: An eligible person must meet these definitions independently; eligibility is not transferable through marriage unless explicitly stated.)

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. . 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.
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 has been referred for employment services by a representative of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
5. A veteran who is experiencing homelessness, as defined in Sections 103(a) and (b) of the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. § 11302(a) and (b));
6. A veteran who is an justice-involved, as defined by WIOA Section 3(38), 29 U.S.C. § 3102(38), refers to any eligible veteran or eligible spouse who is currently incarcerated or has been released from incarceration;
7. Any veteran between the ages of 18-24;
8. A veteran lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate;
9. A veteran who is economically disadvantaged, meaning one of the following:
 - a. Low-income as defined by WIOA Section 3(36), 29 U.S.C. § 3102(36);
 - b. Unemployed
 - c. Heads of single-parent households containing at least one dependent child.
10. A transitioning service member (TSM) of the Armed Forces who has been identified as in need of intensive/individualized career services;
11. A member of the Armed Forces who is wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in military treatment facilities or warrior transition unit; and
12. The spouse or other family caregivers of such wounded, ill or injured member;

B. A description of how the Local board will engage local veteran’s employment representatives (LVERs) in connecting with and providing services to local businesses.

CareerCenter 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. LVERs focus on building relationships with employers to create job and training opportunities for veterans. Their core duties include:

- Conducting employer outreach and advocacy for veteran hiring.
- Promoting veterans as highly skilled candidates.

- Facilitating connections between employers and veterans.
- Coordinating and participating in job fairs and hiring events (in-person and virtual).
- Promoting veteran participation in programs like On-the-Job Training (OJT), Apprenticeship, GI Bill OJT, CSSP, and WIOA.
- Monitoring federal contractor job listings for proactive veteran placements.
- Documenting all employer outreach activities in Maine JobLink.

LVERs will conduct employer outreach in the local community, on behalf of all veteran clients. 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.

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 1,900 employers with 2,200+ 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).

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 competitive process to be used to award subgrants and contracts in the local area for activities carried out under this title as appropriate, including describing risk assessment factors reviewed about potential subgrantees and contractors;

The Northeastern Workforce Development Board (NWDB), in collaboration and partnership with the Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) of Aroostook, Washington, Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Washington Counties developed Request for Proposals (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 PM on the designated date and will be open at 4:00 PM on the 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 the 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 4 PM.
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 the opportunity to negotiate contract awards under \$10,000.00 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 \$10,000 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 Title IB, and the one-stop delivery system, in the local area;

The CEO and NWDB executive director sign a copy of the negotiated performance measures below. (See Appendix 16 PY24-PY25 Performance Measures)

Northeastern Workforce Development Board

WIOA Title IB

Local Performance Measures for PY24 and PY25

Local Performance Measures	PY 2024	PY 2025
Adult Program		
Employment 2nd Qtr. after exit	70%	71%
Employment 4th Qtr. after exit	68%	69%
Median Earnings 2nd Qtr. after exit	\$7,300	\$7,400
Credential Attainment Rate	64%	65%
Measurable Skill Gains	51.5%	52.5%
Dislocated Worker Program		
Employment 2nd Qtr. after exit	75%	75.5%
Employment 4th Qtr. after exit	68%	69%
Median Earnings 2nd Qtr. after exit	\$8,500	\$8,600
Credential Attainment Rate	67.00%	68%
Measurable Skill Gains	54.00%	54.5%
Youth Program		
Employment or Education 2nd Qtr. after exit	69%	71%
Employment or Education 4th Qtr. after exit	70%	71%
Median Earnings 2nd Qtr. after exit	\$4,800	\$4,900
Credential Attainment Rate	53%	53.5%

Measurable Skill Gains	48.00%	50%
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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 providers 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:
 - A. review of service providers
 - B. review of management systems
 - C. follow-up on each monitoring
 - D. 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:
 - i. Federal laws and regulations
 - ii. State laws and policies
 - iii. NWDB policies and agreements
 - iv. State and local WIOA strategic plans

- v. 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 seekers 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, of the local area's individual training account (ITA) 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 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

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:

1. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) are established on behalf of an eligible individual to finance training services (§680.230)4.).
2. 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)
3. 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).

(See Appendix 17 – NWDB Policy 014 – Individual Training Accounts Policy)

F. 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

WIOA limits funding for training to individuals who are unable to find other grant assistance or whose financial needs exceed the assistance available from other sources. WIOA funds are intended to be coordinated with other sources of funding and to avoid duplication [680.230]. Service Providers will work with partners to establish policies ensuring resources, including CSSP, scholarships, TAA, and Pell, are leveraged and coordinated with WIOA funding. Financial resources shall be determined on the availability of funding for either training costs or supportive services with the goal of planning for the completion of the training program.

G. 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;

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 in providing 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 the 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.

The ability to share information for plans and case notes between WIOA 1B providers and Wagner Peyser is a major step toward a formal integrated case management process.

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

H. 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 the explanation is provided. Board members are afforded the 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 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;

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 local area performance information is used to conduct performance-based intervention; and

See Section 9D.

D. 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 Opportunities (EO)

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.)

B. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)

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.

C. 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.

D. 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

Monthly Financial Status and Program Performance reports.

E. 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.

F. 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.

G. 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.

H. 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.

I. 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.

J. 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.

K. 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

L. 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.

M. 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:
 - a. The Drug Free Workplace Act
 - b. The Immigration Reform and Control Act
 - c. The American's with Disabilities Act
 - d. The Davis-Bacon Act
 - e. Child Labor Laws
 - f. The Fair Labor Standards Act
 - g. The Equal Opportunity Act