

MAINE PYS 2020-2023

CONTENTS

Maine PYs 2020-2023	1
I. WIOA State Plan Type and Executive Summary	3
a. WIOA State Plan Type.....	3
b. Plan Introduction or Executive Summary	3
II. Strategic Elements	4
a. Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis.....	4
b. State Strategic Vision and Goals.....	50
c. State Strategy	54
III. Operational Planning Elements.....	57
a. State Strategy Implementation	57
b. State Operating Systems and Policies	81
IV. Coordination with State Plan Programs.....	119
V. Common Assurances (For All Core Programs).....	119
VI. Program-Specific Requirements for Core Programs	121
Program-specific Requirements for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities under Title I-B	121
Program-Specific Requirements for Wagner-Peyser Program (Employment Services)	145
Program-specific Requirements for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Programs...	168
Program-Specific Requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation (Combined or General)	189
Program-Specific Requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind).....	263
VII. Program-Specific Requirements for Combined State Plan Partner Programs	338
Performance Indicator Appendix	338
All WIOA Core Programs	338
Additional Indicators of Performance	341
Other Appendices.....	341

I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

This is a unified plan

B. PLAN INTRODUCTION OR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following pages outline Maine's four-year strategic and operational plan for enhancing its workforce. Maine, like the rest of the nation, is experiencing a healthy, thriving economy and historically low unemployment. This plan is developed with the intent of continuing the success of Maine's businesses and helping people whose employment barriers have kept them from thriving in this economy.

This is a Unified Plan developed in accordance with the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and to establish the long-term agenda for Maine's workforce development system. This plan covers the following programs authorized by the WIOA:

- Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs
- Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program
- Title III Wagner-Peyser Employment Services
- Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Under the direction of the State Workforce Board (SWB), the aforementioned programs and other stakeholders participated in facilitated sessions to develop the vision and priorities for the Unified Plan and to collaborate on the development of an integrated, performance-based employment and training system. This Unified Plan will result in: quality jobs for Mainers, employers matched with skilled workers, and a more efficient workforce development system (WDS).

In late 2019, Governor Mills published a 10-year economic development strategy for the State of Maine. The strategy has two key components, increasing talent and spurring innovation. Maine's workforce is talented, skilled, and needs more participation. There are approximately 100,000 people in Maine who are of working age and not working. Many individuals have barriers to employment that they struggle to overcome. It is the State's goal to build bridges over these barriers, enabling all who wish to work to do so. We firmly believe that everyone has a place in Maine's economy.

Maine has numerous resources that contribute to its workforce development system. In order for that system to meet the needs of employers and workers alike, these resources must be better aligned and integrated across all sectors – public, private, non-profit and philanthropy. A high-quality workforce will enable Maine to better retain existing businesses, draw new ones that bring high quality and good paying jobs, and attract new workers to meet the goal set forth in Governor Janet Mills' economic development plan to add at least 75,000 people to our work-force over the next ten years.

The Unified Plan (Plan) starts with a clear vision:

Maine's residents and businesses will have economic opportunity and contribute to the growth of the state through a responsive, networked, and coordinated workforce development system across public and private sectors. The system will integrate all services into a seamless

continuum resulting in increased educational and employment attainment for residents with a focus on careers and support Maine's business sectors with skilled and qualified workers. To realize its vision Maine will:

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

Throughout the strategic planning process Maine's workforce system partners demonstrated a willingness to engage in the development of solutions and strategies that will meet the needs of employers, workers, and Maine's economy. These actions will result in quality jobs for Maine residents, employers matched with skilled workers, and a more efficient workforce development system.

Maine's State Workforce Development Board (hereafter referred to as the State Workforce Board or SWB) directed the creation of this Unified Plan with the intent that the plan should reflect the state's unique workforce and economic development characteristics and challenges, as well as the ideas and solutions of the myriad stakeholders that comprise Maine's workforce development system.

Beginning in September 2016, the SWB formed a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) implementation steering committee that included the directors of Maine's local workforce investment boards and the directors of the authorized core programs: Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Adult and Basic Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation (see Appendix B for members of the WIOA implementation steering committee). The Steering Committee's role was to monitor the implementation of the State's workforce plan.

Maine used a collaborative process to establish the vision, goals, and strategies represented in this plan. During October, November, and December the SWB held sessions across the state where stakeholders including the administrators of core programs, local workforce board directors and members, secondary and higher education representatives, policy makers, advocates and employers participated in the visioning work represented in this Plan (see Appendix C for a list of sessions and participants).

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

A. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

II.(a.1.A) Economic Analysis

Economic conditions in much of Maine are positive going into 2020. In the last several years, growth has created new jobs and driven unemployment and other measures of the labor market to near record lows. These tight labor market conditions, with high numbers of job openings and rising wages, provide a positive environment for individuals but are a challenge for many employers seeking to attract and retain the staff they need.

While we are currently in a positive, expansionary environment, economic cycles still exist; we need to be prepared for the next downturn. In addition, the aging of our population presents a significant challenge to maintaining the size of our labor force in the years to come.

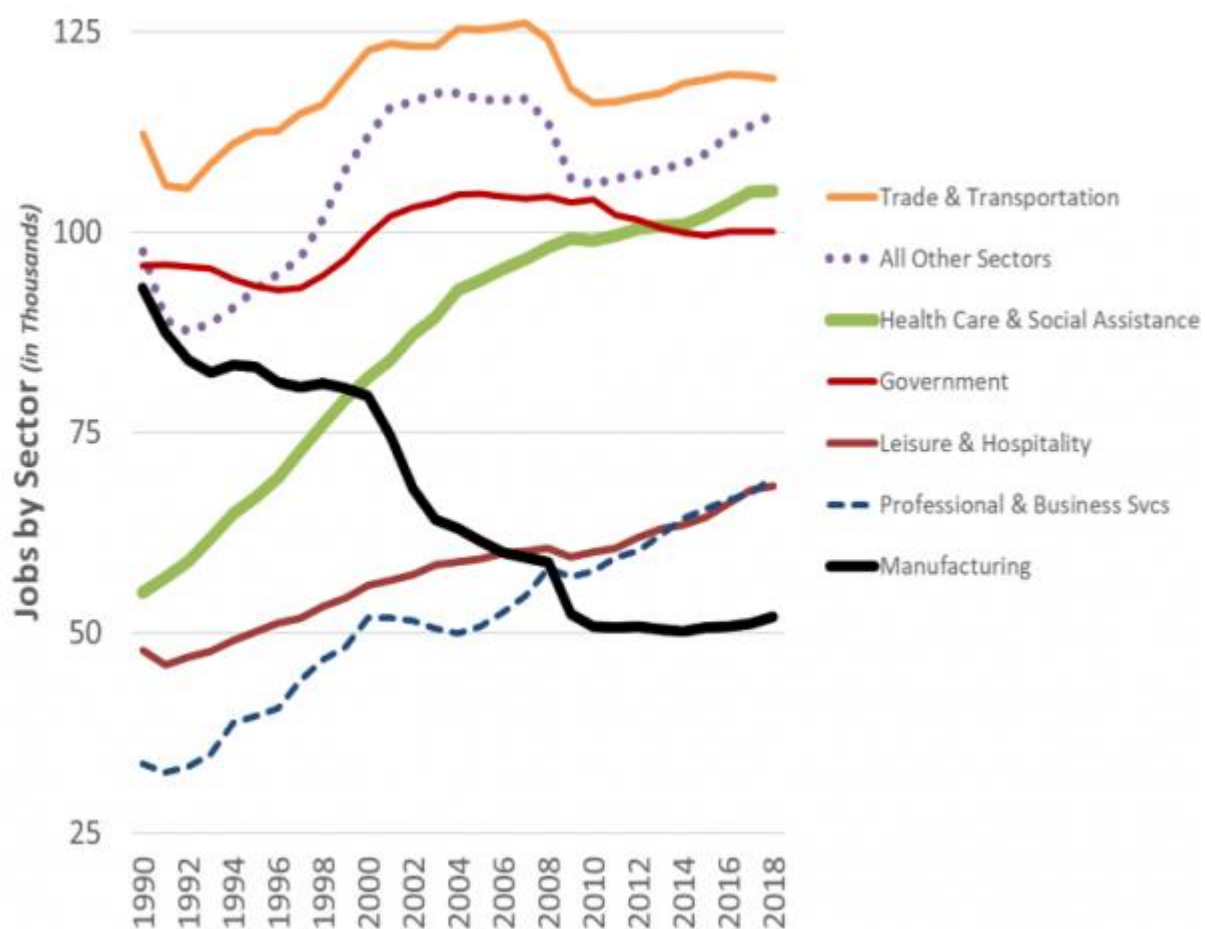
Recent Trends and Current Conditions

Total output of the economy increased at accelerating rates in recent years with gross domestic product reaching \$67 billion in 2019. The average of 633,000 nonfarm payroll jobs was up more than 4,000 from 2018, marking the ninth straight year of job growth. Though the recovery from the very deep recession of 2008 and 2009 was initially quite slow, conditions today are better by nearly every measure than before the decade-ago downturn.

Economic analysis

Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

Over the last three decades, the industry structure of jobs changed significantly. The most prominent trends were the near doubling of jobs in the healthcare and social assistance and the professional and business services sectors, as well as a sharp decline in manufacturing jobs. The types of jobs in sectors that are growing have different education, skill, and performance requirements than the types of jobs in sectors that are declining.



Jobs by sector

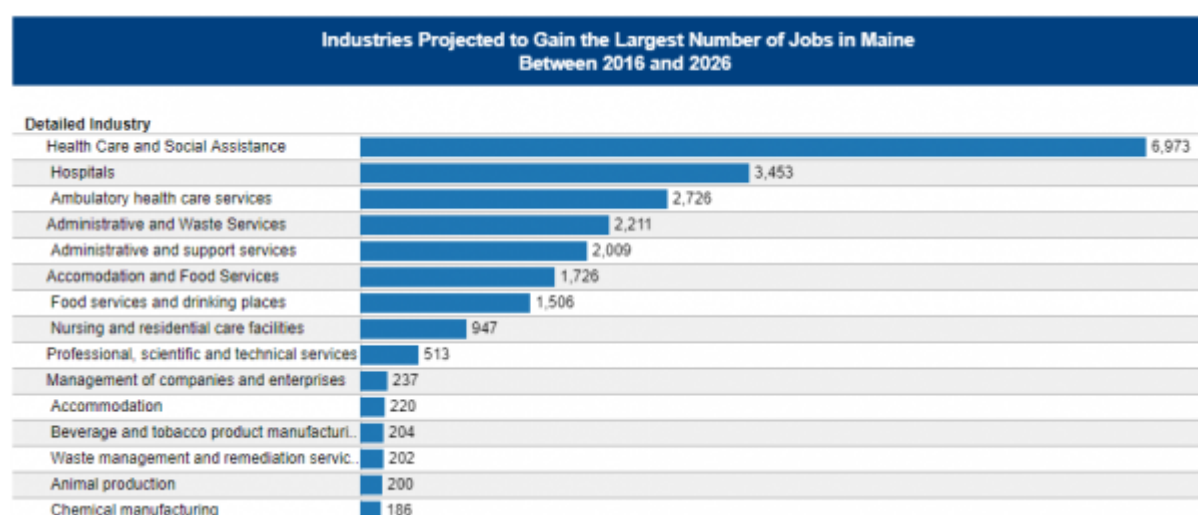
Regarding occupations, the ten highest occupational groupings employ almost three-quarters of those working Maine. 2018 data available through the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the top three occupational groups for the state are Office and Administrative Support with 92,250 employees, Sales and Related Occupations with 57,760 employees, and Food Preparation and Serving-Related Occupations with 56,960 employees. These three groups, along with the others that round out the top ten, include approximately 451,000 employees and

about 75 percent of Maine workers. The top ten categories and number of workers in each are provided in the following table. Standard Occupational Codes are also provided for reference. The top category, Office and Administrative Support, is comprised of such occupations as customer service representatives, administrative assistants, and stock clerks.

Rank	Occupational Major Group	# Employed
1	Office and Administrative Support	92,250
2	Sales and Related	57,760
3	Food Preparation and Serving-Related	56,960
4	Education, Training and Library	41,760
5	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	41,280
6	Transportation and Material Moving	36,360
7	Production	35,900
8	Management	35,630
9	Personal Care and Service	26,850
10	Construction and Extraction	26,140

Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

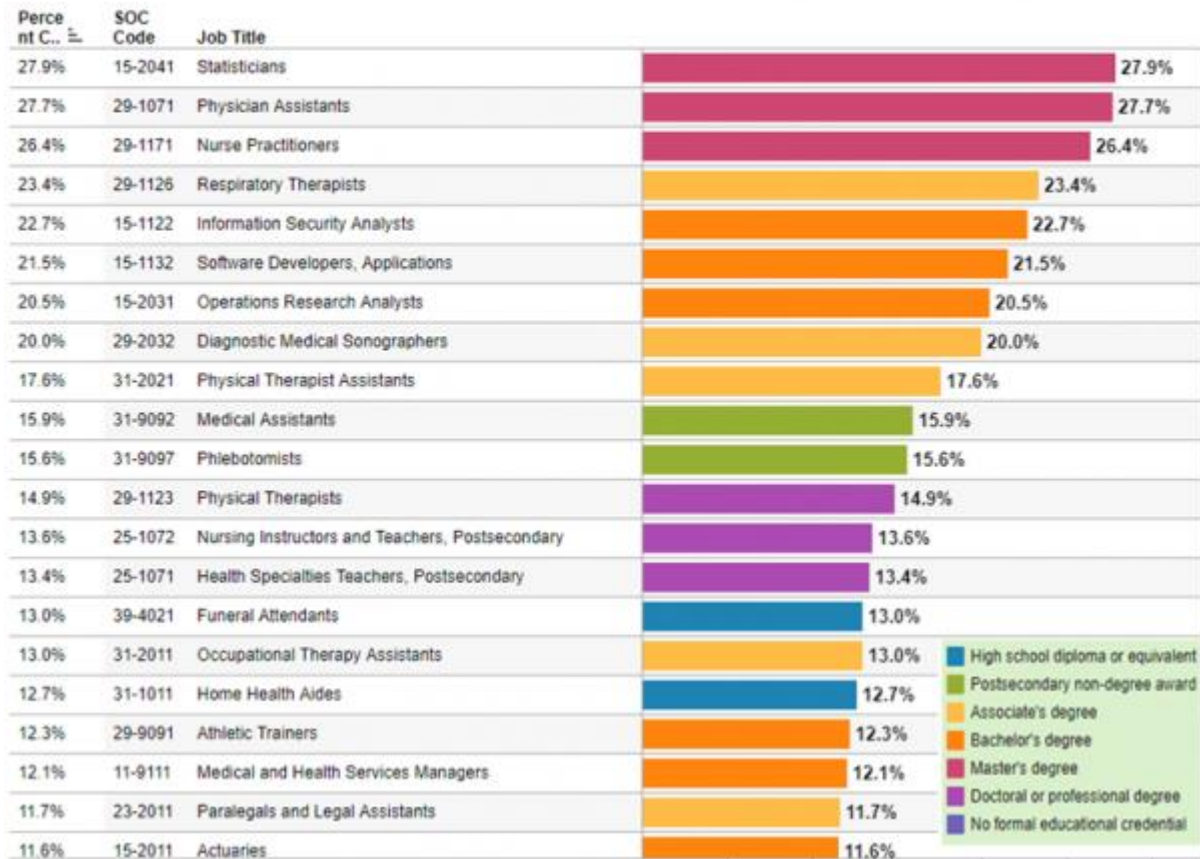
Job openings and growth in the decade through 2026 are concentrated in two areas: human capital-intensive occupations that generally require postsecondary education and offer above average earnings and in labor-intensive functions that generally do not require high levels of education and offer lower than average earnings. Middle-income jobs that traditionally have had limited education or skill demands are either declining or rapidly changing, requiring increasingly higher levels of technology competency.



Industries Projected to Gain the Largest Number of Jobs in Maine Between 2016 and 2026

Healthcare is the largest sector in Maine, accounting for nearly 17 percent of jobs. As the chart below shows, Maine will see the largest growth in healthcare-related sectors over the next several years

25 Occupations with the Fastest Projected Rate of Job Growth in Maine



Occupations with the Fastest Projected Rate of Job Growth

From an occupational standpoint, large numbers of physicians, nurses, laboratory, and diagnostic technicians will be required. Healthcare practitioner and technician occupations require postsecondary education ranging from certifications to highly advanced degrees.

Information technology (IT) is expected to continue to increase in importance across every sector of the economy with IT-related occupations continuing to be among the fastest growing. Many IT jobs not only require certification in certain applications but the types of applications, systems, and platforms are changing quickly, and require a flexible, adaptable workforce that is regularly pursuing additional education. Technology competency will increasingly pervade most occupations often in ways that cannot yet be anticipated.

Other areas of projected job growth include hospitality industries including food service and other associated occupations with mostly limited education and skill demands.

Manufacturing was the backbone that built many cities in Maine in the 19th and 20th centuries. Textile mills, shoe shops, paper and saw mills, and others provided middle income jobs for tens of thousands of workers without postsecondary education. The number of manufacturing jobs peaked in the late 1970s but declined sharply until about 2010 before stabilizing.

The forecast through 2026 is for fewer manufacturing jobs as automation continues to be adopted in an even wider range of processes. This will mostly impact the number of jobs in production occupations. This will also continue to be the case for jobs in administrative support

occupations as office technology continues to advance which will allow people in professional and technical occupations to perform those functions digitally.

Regional Trends

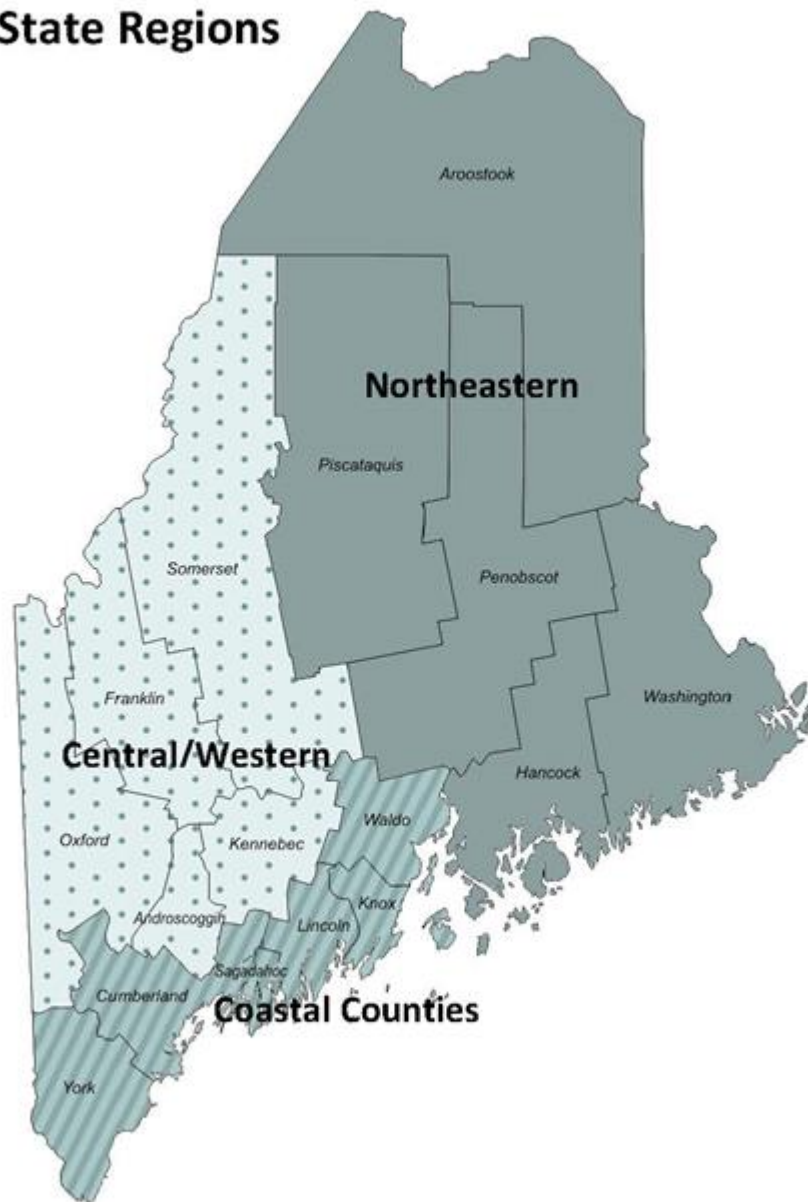
Economic performance across the state has been uneven. Maine's economy is strongest in the south especially along the Interstate 95 and 295 corridors. The economy has been more limited in the central and mid-coast regions, while some counties along the northern rim of the state continue to lose residents and jobs.

There are a wide range of factors involved in the differing performance of regions. The economic structure of northern Maine is highly concentrated in forest products and agriculture. Advances in mechanization of harvesting of timber and crops, as well as other factors, have displaced thousands of workers from those industries over the years. Much of the region has not found the economic development solutions to replace those industries. This has caused stagnation or decline in many communities as a large share of young people leave for southern Maine or other states in search of better job opportunities, leaving a generally older population behind. Several counties in Maine are among the oldest in the nation by median age.

Jobs are increasingly concentrated in and around cities primarily because stable and growing industries tend to be in densely populated areas. Healthcare, the strongest growing industry in Maine, is mostly concentrated in and around hospitals which are only found in places of population density. Law and accounting firms and other types of professional services, colleges, and some other industries that comprise a rising share of jobs also are primarily found in cities.

Maine has identified three regions for the purpose of aligning workforce development resources to regional economies as shown in the map on the following page. These regions are referred to as Northeastern, Central/Western and Coastal Counties. State and Local Boards considered factors such as alignment with economic development districts and postsecondary institutions, inclusion of major urban hubs and distribution of employment by industry. It is also very important to support partnerships already in place for community planning and development and appropriate distribution of financial resources for workforce development.

Sub-State Regions



Sub-State Regions

Several factors set the workforce board regions apart. The Coastal Counties region contains 49 percent of the population and 52 percent of jobs on just 12 percent of the land area, making by far the most densely populated of the regions. This region has high concentration of jobs in the financial services and hospitality sectors. Coastal Counties is the only region that has had population growth in the last decade. Some of that growth is from people moving from northern Maine in search of better job prospects.

The Central/Western region has 25 percent of the jobs and 28 percent of the population on 29 percent of the state's land area. The region has the state's highest concentration of jobs in manufacturing and education and--as home to the state capital--a large share of jobs in government. Farming and food production are burgeoning growth industries. Demographics and population declines are the region's most pressing issues; the outlying counties are projected to experience a decline in the working age population over the next two decades.

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

A more detailed discussion for each region follows below.

The Coastal Counties Region is comprised of six counties and is the most demographically and economically diverse of Maine's three regions. Six of the ten largest municipalities in the state are in this region: Portland, South Portland, Brunswick, and Scarborough in Cumberland County and Biddeford and Saco in York County.

Given the size of the area, the region is generally classified into four distinct hubs for service delivery purposes.

York County, located in the southern area of the region, is the gateway to Maine. Its coastal plain contains Maine's most visited beaches and supports a large tourism base. Beyond tourism, York has several defined economic clusters related to defense-dependent industries, healthcare, retail, and manufacturing. Interstate 95, which runs north to south through York and Cumberland Counties, creates an east to west demarcation that separates the seasonal tourist industry of the beaches and larger commerce centers from the rural, agricultural, bedroom communities and, for the most part, small business and retail-centered communities. Commerce in extreme southwestern county towns is focused on New Hampshire where there is no sales tax.

Just up the coast, Cumberland County, is the most populated county, and home to Portland, the most significant commerce hub and the largest city in the state. Portland capitalizes on its strategic location. The city's port has had a resurgence of shipping and bulk cargo transfers and it is a major port of call for cruise ships. The city hosts the state's major airport and it is a hub for healthcare, banking, insurance, IT, bio tech, retail, and education. West of Interstate 95 is characterized by growing bedroom communities and retail expansion. The lakes and mountain regions focus on tourism and seasonal, recreational-based economies.

Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox, and Waldo counties, commonly identified as the mid coast, comprise the northern segment of the region. These counties are historically steeped in farming, dairy, and the traditions of the sea including boat building and fishing. Similar to York County, the mid coast attracts and is supported by a significant influx of seasonal tourists. The three cluster communities of Brunswick, Topsham, and Bath form one of the major economic regions of the four-county mid coast. Shipbuilder Bath Iron Works is the largest manufacturer in the state. The nearby Brunswick Landing, which is the redevelopment of a former Naval Air Station, is one of the most significant commerce parks in the state. Healthcare, retail and colleges offer opportunities for growth on the southern end of the mid coast hub.

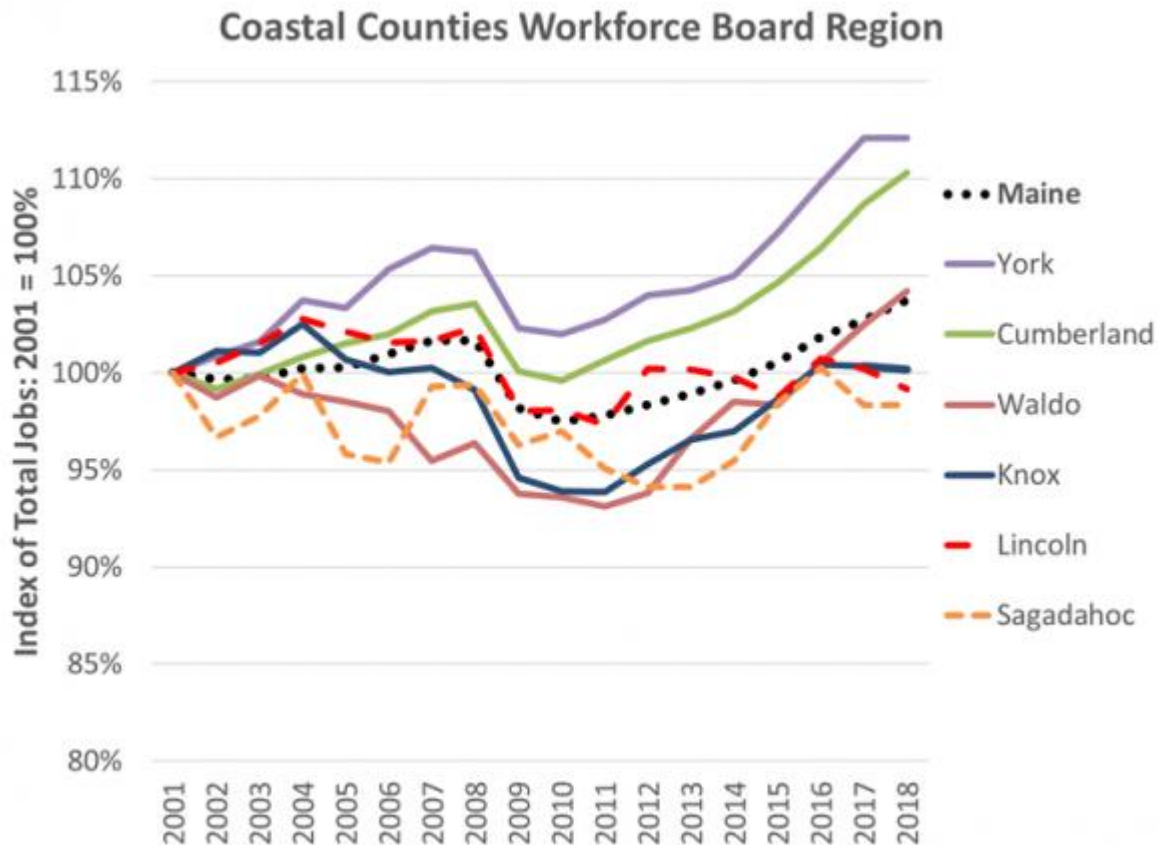
The closure of Brunswick Naval Air Station in 2011 presented a challenge for economic and workforce development in the region, potentially removing millions of dollars of economic activity from the region and reducing demand for a wide range of products and services. Redevelopment of the former base locations in Brunswick and Topsham is well underway and having a positive economic impact. To date, the project has attracted \$400 million in capital investment. Over 135 public and private entities employ more than 2,000 people in six target sectors: aerospace, composites, IT, bio tech, renewable energy, and education as well as other complementary industries.

The Boothbay/Damariscotta hub features a strong tourist industry, hosts Renys retail and distribution operations and Mölnlycke Medical, as well as two substantial boat builders, Washburn and Doughty and Hodgdon Yachts. The north end of this hub features the retail commerce cluster of Thomaston, Rockland, Rockport, and Camden. Major employers include Fisher Engineering, Dragon Cement, Penbay Medical Center and those associated with the tourist industry. Rockland, Rockport, and Camden are home to working waterfronts, both commercial and seasonal recreational. The one area of commonality among all four counties in this hub is the fact that tourism is a critical industry either on a transient or destination basis. Route 1 (the coastal route) hugs the coast, providing access points to the hundreds of miles of coast line and peninsular amenities found along the way.

Biggest Challenges:

- The tightening labor market--unemployment is at a historic low--has challenged many employers in their efforts to attract and retain the staff they need.
- Population demographics are impacting growth as mid coast counties, with a large share of retirees, are among the oldest in the nation.

Population and workforce trends in this region are more favorable than in the other two regions due to higher birth rates and in-migration, both from around the state and from outside it. Still, the region will be challenged by a rapidly aging population. Between 2016 and 2031, the Coastal Counties population is projected to rise by 3.5 percent, though the working-age population is projected to decline somewhat.



Coastal Counties Index of Total Jobs

Because the region comprises such a large share of jobs in Maine, its industry composition is not significantly different from the state's as a whole. The region has a slightly smaller share of government jobs than the statewide average. The distribution of other industries is nearly the same as the state.

The 2018 annual average unemployment rate of 2.9 percent in the region was well below the statewide average rate of 3.4 percent. Within the region, unemployment rates ranged from a low of 2.7 percent in Cumberland County to a high of 3.3 percent in Lincoln County.

Incomes are higher in the southern counties of York, Cumberland and Sagadahoc compared to the state and to the mid-coast counties of Lincoln, Knox, and Waldo. From 2013 through 2017, median household income ranged from a high of \$65,700 in Cumberland County to a low of \$50,200 in Waldo County. The state median household income is \$53,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 ACS).

The range of incomes and unemployment rates across the six counties is due in large part to internal variations in economic structure. Southernmost York and Cumberland counties have the highest density of population and jobs. Together, these two counties account for 82 percent of the region's jobs, with an above-average share of jobs in growth industries (healthcare and social assistance, professional and business services, private education, and leisure and hospitality). The mid coast counties of Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox, and Waldo are less populated and more reliant on seasonal tourism, agriculture, and fishing. These counties have a below-average share of jobs in growing industries.

Employers

In 2019 the largest private employers were primarily in the healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, and manufacturing sectors. The three southernmost counties have a concentration of jobs associated with national defense which includes the federal Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Pratt and Whitney Aircraft Group, General Dynamics Armament Systems, and Bath Iron Works.

Rank	Employer	Number of Jobs (Range)
1	MAINEHEALTH	12,501 to 13,000
2	BATH IRON WORKS CORP GEN DYNAMICS	4,001 to 4,500
3	HANNAFORD BROS CO	3,501 to 4,000
4	L.L. BEAN, INC.	2,501 to 3,000
5	UNUM GROUP	2,001 to 2,500
6	PRATT & WHITNEY AIRCRAFT GROUP	1,501 to 2,000
7	WAL MART	1,001 to 1,500
8	SHAWS SUPERMARKETS INC	1,001 to 1,500
9	MERCY HOSPITAL	1,001 to 1,500
10	MID COAST HOSPITAL	1,001 to 1,500
11	UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND	1,001 to 1,500
12	WEX LLC	501 to 1,000
13	IDEXX LABORATORIES INC	501 to 1,000
14	BOWDOIN COLLEGE	501 to 1,000
15	T D BANK N A	501 to 1,000
16	YORK HOSPITAL	501 to 1,000
17	MARTINS POINT HEALTH CARE CENTER	501 to 1,000
18	ATHENAHEALTH INC	501 to 1,000
19	TYLER TECHNOLOGIES INC	501 to 1,000
20	IDEXX DISTRIBUTION INC	501 to 1,000
21	GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND	501 to 1,000
22	LOWES HOME CENTERS LLC	501 to 1,000
23	INTERMED PA	501 to 1,000
24	BANK OF AMERICA, NA	501 to 1,000
25	SPURWINK SERVICES INCORPORATED	501 to 1,000
26	SWEETSER	501 to 1,000

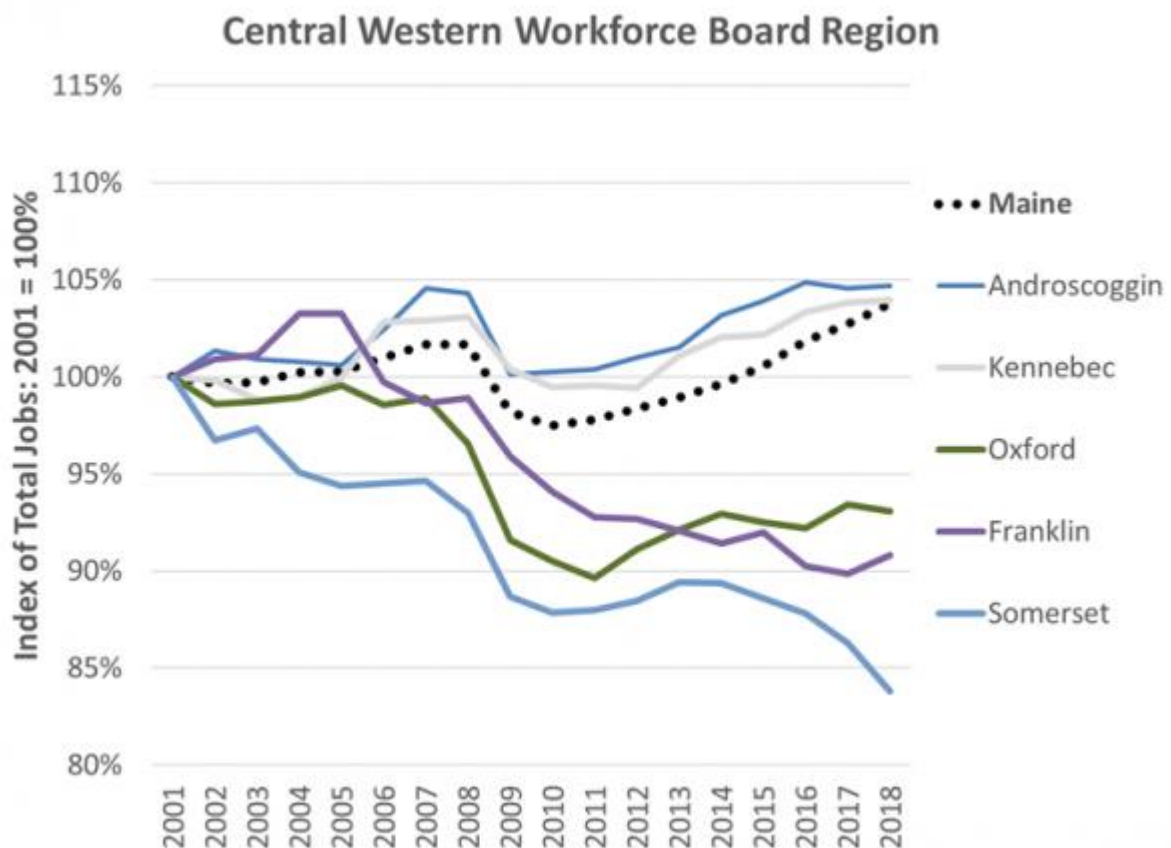
The latest available statistics reveal that the majority of the region's workforce--280,300 primary job holders--lives and works within the area. About 56,600 resident workers commute

to jobs outside the region, offset by 52,700 non-resident workers commuting into the region (2017, *OnTheMap*, U.S. Census Bureau).

The Central/Western Region encompasses 29 percent of Maine’s land area. It is home to 28 percent of the state’s population and 25 percent of private sector jobs. The largest population centers in the region are the cities of Lewiston and Auburn in Androscoggin County, and Augusta and Waterville in Kennebec County.

Similar to the state, the region will be challenged by a rapidly aging population. Between 2016 and 2031, the Central/Western Region is projected to lose two percent of its population, with a sharper decline in the working-age population.

In 2018, the annual average unemployment rate of 3.6 percent in the Central/Western region was close to the 3.4 percent statewide average. Unemployment rates ranged from lows of 3.2 and 3.3 percent in Kennebec and Androscoggin counties to a high of 4.8 percent in Somerset County.



Central Western Index of Jobs

The disparity of unemployment rates across the five counties is due in large part to variations in the economic structure within the region. The central more populous counties of Androscoggin and Kennebec—have more job opportunities than the more sparsely-populated rim counties of Franklin, Oxford and Somerset.

The economic base in Androscoggin and Kennebec counties is diversified across a broad spectrum of industries, with higher concentrations of jobs in professional and business services, transportation and warehousing, and healthcare than the region or the state. In addition,

Kennebec County is home to Augusta, Maine's capital city, and has a significant concentration of jobs in state government. Kennebec and Androscoggin counties are home to 72 percent of jobs in the region.

In the rim counties, the economy is less diverse and more concentrated in forestry-related industries, seasonal agriculture and hospitality, including major ski resorts.

Within the region, incomes are higher in the central counties of Androscoggin and Kennebec compared than the western counties of Franklin, Oxford, and Somerset. From 2013 through 2017, the median household income ranged from a high of \$50,100 in Kennebec County to a low of \$41,500 in Somerset County. Median household income was lower in each county in the region than the state median income of \$53,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 ACS).

Employers

In 2019, the largest private employers were primarily in the healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, and retail trade sectors.

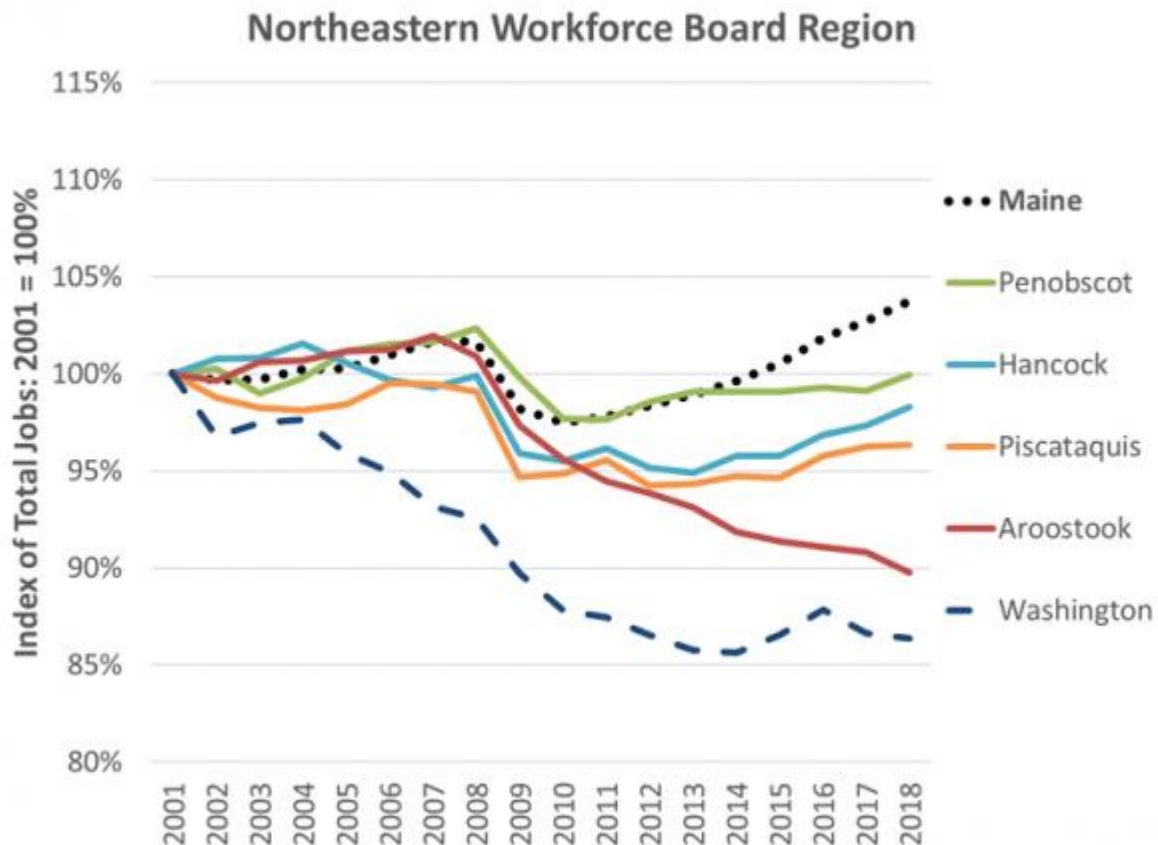
Rank	Employer	Number of Jobs (Range)
1	MAINEGENERAL MEDICAL CENTER	2,501 to 3,000
2	WAL MART SUPERCENTER	2,001 to 2,500
3	CENTRAL MAINE COMMUNITY HEALTH CORP	1,501 to 2,000
4	HANNAFORD BROS CO	1,501 to 2,000
5	T D BANK N A	1,001 to 1,500
6	ST MARY'S REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER	1,001 to 1,500
7	MAINEHEALTH	1,001 to 1,500
8	COLBY COLLEGE	501 to 1,000
9	BATES COLLEGE	501 to 1,000
10	T MOBILE USA INC	501 to 1,000
11	NEW BALANCE ATHLETIC SHOE INC	501 to 1,000
12	S D WARREN	501 to 1,000
13	JOHN F MURPHY HOMES INC	501 to 1,000
14	REDINGTON MEDICAL PRIMARY CARE	501 to 1,000
15	ND PAPER INC	501 to 1,000

Statistics describing worker flow into and out of the Central/Western region reveal that 71 percent of the region's 145,000 resident primary jobholders lived and worked within the area. In 2017, about 46,000 resident workers commuted to jobs outside the region, partially offset by 36,700 nonresident workers commuting into the region to work, for a net outflow of 9,300 commuters (2017, OnTheMap, U.S. Census Bureau).

Northeastern Region

The five counties comprising Northeastern Region encompass 59 percent of Maine's land area. They are home to 25 percent of the state's population and 23 percent of private sector jobs. The largest population centers in the region are the cities of Bangor, Orono, and Brewer in Penobscot County and Presque Isle and Caribou in Aroostook County.

Like the state, the region will be challenged by a rapidly aging population. Between 2016 and 2031 the region is projected to lose 1.3 percent of its population, with a sharper decline in the working-age population.



Northeastern Index of Total Jobs

The 2018 annual average unemployment rate of 4.1 percent was higher than the 3.4 percent statewide average. Within the region, unemployment rates ranged from a low of 3.8 percent in Penobscot County to a high of 4.9 percent in Washington County.

The disparity of unemployment rates across the five counties is due in large part to the diverse makeup of the region's economic structure. The more densely populated Hancock and Penobscot Counties offer better job prospects than the sparsely populated northern and eastern counties of Piscataquis, Aroostook, and Washington.

There are three distinct economies within the region: coastal Hancock and Washington counties, regional service centers in Bangor and Presque Isle/Caribou, and Piscataquis, interior Hancock, Washington, and rural Penobscot and Aroostook counties.

The economic base in coastal Hancock and Washington counties is dependent on seasonal, tourism-related commerce and maritime trades, with concentrations of jobs in hospitality, retail, and construction industries.

The economic base in the Bangor metropolitan area and Presque Isle/Caribou is diversified across a broad spectrum of industries with relatively large shares of private jobs in retail, wholesale trade, health care and social assistance. These areas are commercial and regional centers for government administration and educational services.

Away from the coast and outside of its service areas, the region is rural. The economic base is heavily dependent on natural resource-based industries (farming and logging), woods-based manufacturing and seasonal tourism. Relatively high concentrations of private jobs occur in natural resources, retail and manufacturing industries.

The industry structure of the Northeastern Region features higher concentrations of jobs in government, healthcare and social assistance, and retail trade. Five percent of the region's jobs are in natural resources and mining compared to one percent statewide.

Within the region, incomes were higher in the central Hancock and Penobscot counties than the northern and eastern counties of Aroostook, Piscataquis, and Washington. From 2013 through 2017, the median household income ranged from a high of \$51,400 in Hancock County to a low of \$38,800 in Piscataquis County. Median household income was lower in each county in the region than the state median wage of \$53,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 ACS).

Employers

In 2019, the largest private employers were primarily in the healthcare and social assistance, retail, and manufacturing sectors.

Rank	Employer	Number of Jobs (Range)
1	EASTERN MAINE MEDICAL CENTER	3,001 to 3,500
2	WAL MART	1,001 to 1,500
3	HANNAFORD BROS CO	1,001 to 1,500
4	THE JACKSON LABORATORY	1,001 to 1,500
5	NORTHERN LIGHT HEALTH	501 to 1,000
6	ST JOSEPH HOSPITAL INC	501 to 1,000
7	THE AROOSTOOK MEDICAL CENTER	501 to 1,000
8	PENOBSCOT COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE	501 to 1,000

Statistics describing worker flows into and out of Northeastern region reveal that most of the region's 116,600 primary job-holders lived and worked within the area. In 2017, about 7,400 resident workers commuted to jobs outside of Aroostook-Washington counties, partially offset by 4,400 non-resident workers who commuted in. About 20,100 resident workers commuted to jobs outside of the Penobscot, Piscataquis, Hancock counties, offset by 20,100 non-resident workers who commuted into the three counties (2017, OnTheMap, U.S. Census Bureau).

Employers' Labor Force Needs

Employment has shifted towards industries with a greater share of educated workers. Over the last two decades, industries recording employment gains had a higher share of workers with a bachelor's degree than industries that shed jobs. The education, health, business, and professional services industries have a higher than average share of workers with a bachelor's

degree. Conversely, manufacturing and construction, which have shed thousands of jobs, have a lower than average share of workers with a bachelor's degree.

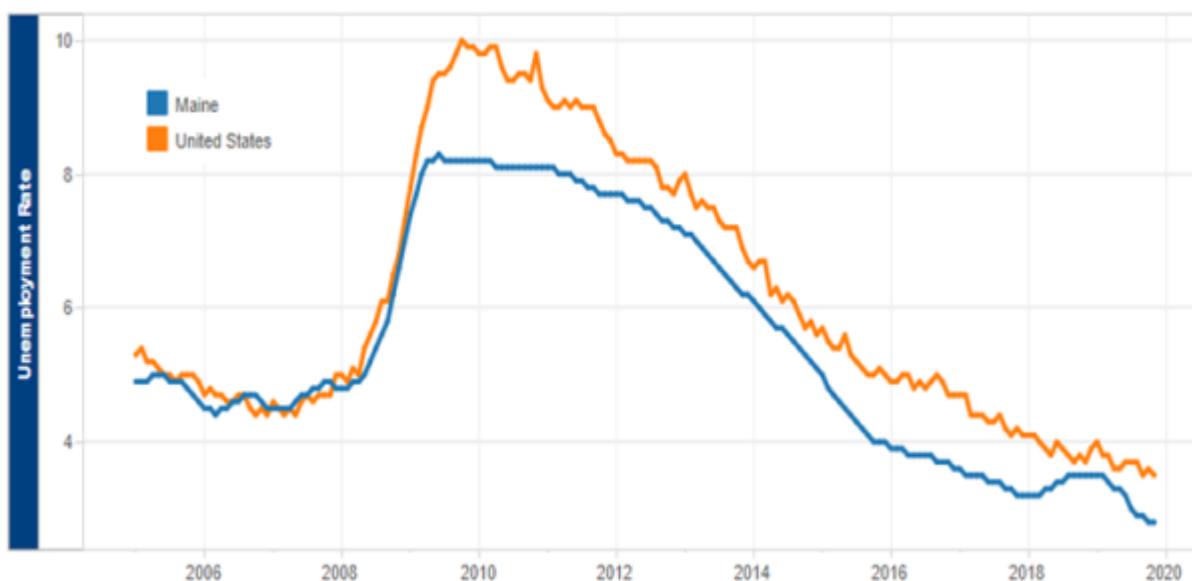
The changing educational needs of employers reflect the changing nature of work, that is, the shifting occupational structure of the workplace. Changes that have been taking place and are expected to continue include:

- An increase in higher level jobs and a decline in traditional manual occupations
- Movement from skills associated with manual dexterity toward skills associated with understanding and monitoring complex systems
- A shift away from routine processes toward coordination and collaboration
- An increase of general work skills required in many jobs such as the ability to use computers
- Expanded need for communication skills
- Jobs that include a broader range of responsibilities

Even among production workers, the demand for highly educated workers has grown. Since 1990 the share of production workers with some college or an associate degree and a bachelors' degree rose by 15 percentage points and two percentage points, respectively, even as the number of workers fell by 52 percent.

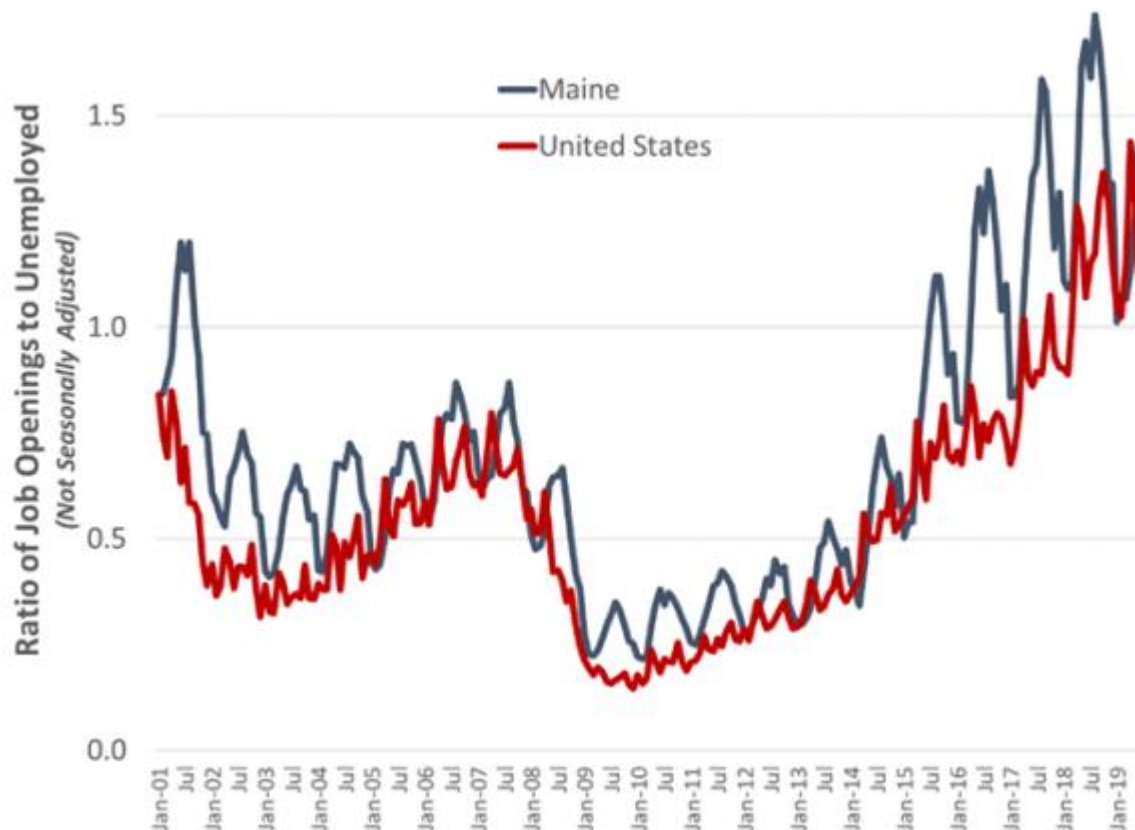
Employment and Unemployment

The statewide seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was near three percent throughout 2019, and as the year closes, it has been below four percent for 48 consecutive months—more than twice the previous record. The graph below shows that Maine's unemployment rate since the recession has been below the national average.

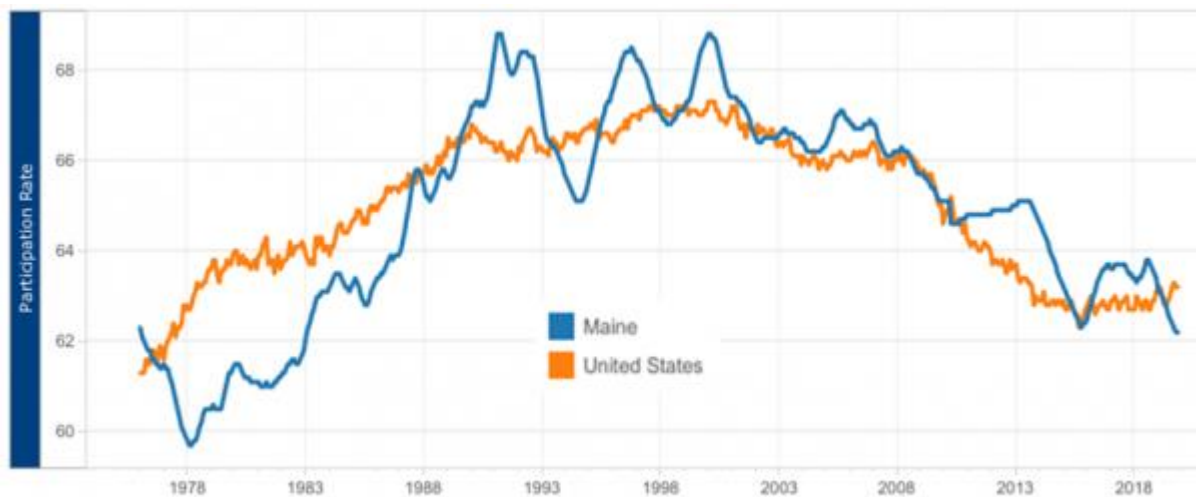


Unemployment Rate

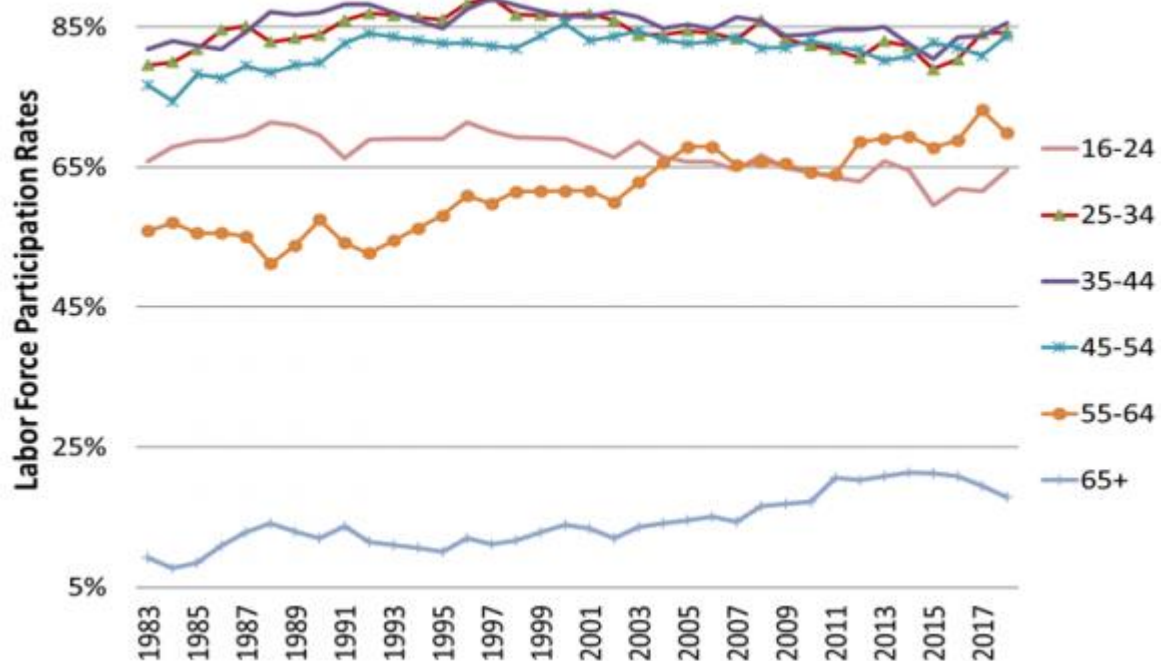
These positive conditions pushed the job openings rate to new highs in 2019. The job openings rate in Maine was not markedly different than for the nation. Due to the large influx of summer tourists, however, there is much more seasonality to openings in Maine than in most of the nation. Hospitality businesses that cater to tourists, especially in communities along the coast, have been particularly challenged to attract the staff they need during the peak season in the summer and early fall. This situation has been exacerbated by a reduction in seasonal H2B visa workers that previously had been an important source of labor during those peak months of the year. The graph below shows that there have been more job openings than unemployed people in the United States for the last two years; in Maine that has been the case for three years.



The Labor Force Participation Rate measures the share of the population age 16 and over that is employed or actively seeking employment. The graph below shows that the labor force participation rate in Maine and across the country has declined over the last two decades. This follows a pronounced rise in participation in the previous three decades. Maine's current labor force participation rate of 62 percent is the lowest since 1983, but it is higher than at any point before that.



Participation Rate

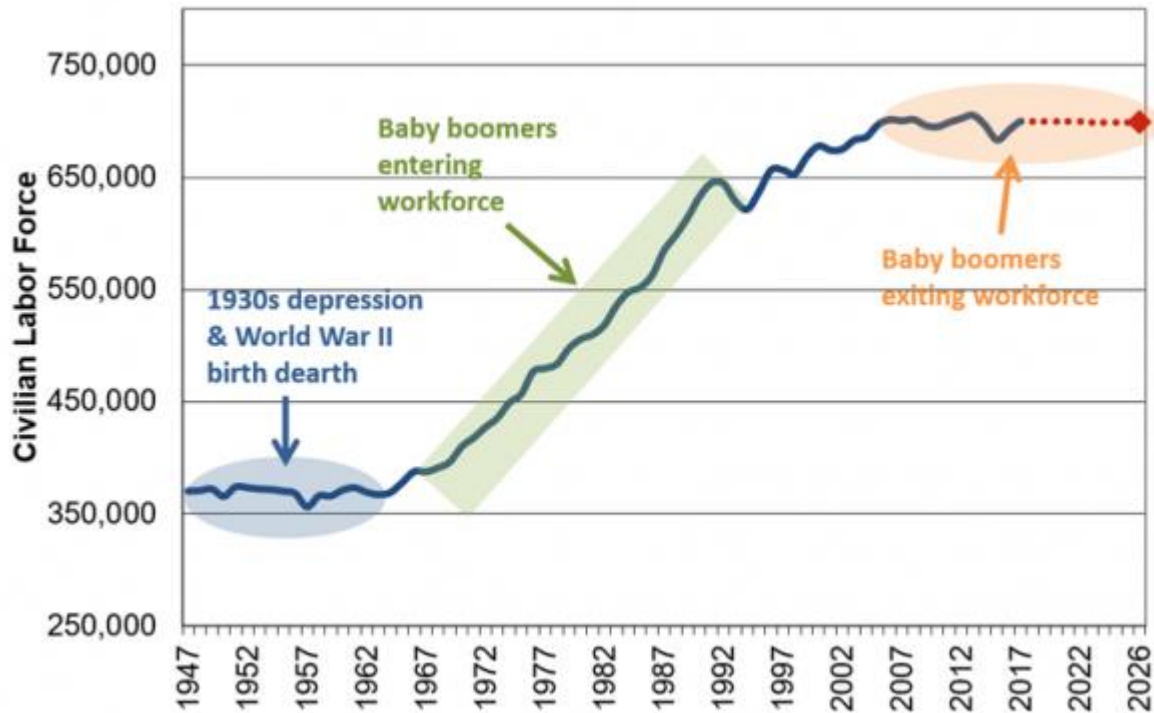


Labor Participation Rates

The decline in participation over the last two decades is due to the advancing age of the large baby boom generation, the same reason it increased in the previous three decades. In the 1970s and 1980s, many baby boomers entered the labor force. In the 2000s, boomers began to move beyond the 25 to 54 peak age of participation. As the graph on the following page shows, participation rates have not changed much over the years in the three age cohorts that include people aged 25 to 54. However, participation is up in older cohorts as people now tend to work well into their 60s, and down among those under 25 years of age as more are enrolled in school than in the past.

Close to 425,000 people age 16 and over in Maine are not employed, while just 22,000 of those are classified as “unemployed.” Those who are unemployed are people who are able and

available to work and are actively looking for work. While they are between jobs, unemployed people are considered to be in the labor force. The rest of those who are not employed are not in the labor force for a variety of reasons. They may be retirees, full-time students, homemakers raising children. They may have a disability or some other barrier that prevents them from working.



Civilian Labor Force

Taking a longer view of the labor force, the growth that was the norm in the three decades before the turn of the 21st century has not been present for the last two decades. This is because of a decline in the number of births over the last five decades especially since the 1990s. As baby boomers born in the two decades after World War II advance in age to retirement, fewer young people are aging into the labor force to replace them. Succession planning for employees and business owners will be critical as these individuals move to retirement. The State projects a relatively flat trend in its labor force over the next decade.

A look at employment rates (the share of the population that is employed) of the working age population is illustrative of the very different outcomes those with limited education face compared to those with higher educational attainment. Data from the American Community Survey 2018 one-year estimates, includes outcomes for Maine people aged 25-64. The data shows that 53 percent of those with less than a high school diploma are in the workforce compared to 74 percent of those with a high school diploma and 87 percent of those with a bachelor's degree or higher. Further, unemployment decreases as education levels increase even in this current period of low unemployment. Unemployment is eight percent for those without a high school diploma and decreases to four percent for those with a high school diploma and two percent for those with some level of post-secondary education.

Educate Maine's report on Education Indicators for Maine 2018 states that approximately 87 percent of Maine students graduate from high school in four years, placing Maine above the

national average for high school completion. However, only 55 percent of the state's high school graduates enroll in some form of postsecondary education. Of those who begin college, only 46 percent return for a second year and 30 percent receive a two- or four-year degree. The rates of enrollment and completion are substantially different based on the economic standing of the student. Only 16 percent of students who are economically disadvantaged receive their two- or four-year degree.

Occupational projections to 2022 indicate that 60 percent of net job growth is expected to occur in occupations requiring some form of postsecondary training or credential, including 35 of the 50 fastest growing occupations. Workers entering or returning to the job market with lower levels of education find a much more challenging environment to prosper in than was the case not many years ago.

There has been a great deal of discussion about a rising skills gap as the recovery has advanced and unemployment rates have reached very low levels. Many businesses and trade associations assert that the available labor force lacks the knowledge and skills they need. This has been widely reported in the media.

It is challenging to quantify the gaps between the skills that employers seek and those that job seekers possess. Skills are attributes of performance requirements, ranging from basic functions such as hand-eye coordination, repetitive machine feeding, and instruction following, to advanced functions such as deductive reasoning, analytical thinking, and complex problem solving. At present, there is no way to catalog or inventory skills to determine who possesses what skills and at what level. Additionally, employer requirements for certain functions vary.

Though we cannot broadly define or measure skill gaps, we can see indications of a mismatch between employer needs and the available workforce in job trends over the last decade. There are declining numbers of jobs in production, administrative support, and other functions that value physical labor, routine tasks, and direction following. There are rising numbers of jobs in managerial, professional, and technical occupations that require skills in critical thinking, problem solving, reading comprehension, social perceptiveness, communication, and other more cognitively-oriented functions. The transition from operating a production machine in a manufacturing environment to operating a diagnostic imaging machine in a hospital, for example, is complicated. This transition and many others involve learning entirely new technical skills and different ways of interacting with customers and coworkers.

Individuals with barriers to Employment

Priority populations

Stakeholders and businesses in Maine grasp the need to prioritize services that will facilitate participation of **all** potential members of the labor force. They will continue to work to implement strategies that alleviate barriers to attaining employment.

SWB advocates on behalf of individuals facing challenges to employment. An official standing committee is charged with examining the barriers specific target populations face and developing recommendations that address such barriers. SWB promotes employment without discrimination based on the basis of gender, race, age, ethnicity, national origin or other barriers.

Individuals with barriers to employment include the following:

- Displaced homemakers
- Eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers
- English language learners and those facing substantial cultural barriers
- Formerly incarcerated
- Foster care youth or youth transitioning out of foster care
- Homeless individuals
- Native American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians
- Individuals with disabilities, including youth with disabilities
- Individuals with low literacy levels
- Older individuals
- Individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility for TANF
- Long-term unemployed individuals
- Low income individuals
- Single parents

Persons with disabilities

Maine can rightly claim a long standing and abiding concern with the employment issues facing people with disabilities. Addressing these issues and increasing the workforce participation of this population must be a priority to improve the economic wellbeing of individuals with disabilities but also for the state as a whole.

From 2013 through 2017, an average of 208,600 persons with one or more disabilities resided in Maine, equal to about 16 percent of its civilian non-institutionalized population of 1.3 million. This proportion was higher than that of the United States in which an estimated 13 percent of residents had a disability. The age distribution of the civilian noninstitutionalized population with disabilities differs from the general population (with and without disabilities) and has a higher share of persons over 64 and a lower share in cohorts 64 or younger. In Maine, nearly 40 percent of the population with disabilities is over 64 years, more than double the comparable share of the general population (18 percent).

Adults with disabilities in Maine are less likely to be employed than adults without disabilities. Fewer than half work or seek work; the unemployment rate among adults with disabilities is three times that of other working age adults. From 2013 through 2017, 33 percent of working-age Mainers with disabilities were employed compared to 80 percent of those with no disability. Those who do work earn less than workers with no disability. Median earnings of workers with disabilities were \$18,434 in a twelve-month period, compared median earnings of \$31,217 among workers with no disability. Adults with a disability are more likely to live in or near poverty regardless of work status and are less likely to have postsecondary education than adults with no disability (Source: CWRI).

The Commission on Disability and Employment (CDE):

The CDE was established by the Maine Legislature in 1997. It promotes collaboration with the public and private sectors to increase awareness of and influence policy related to employment for people with disabilities. Its members envision a Maine workforce that includes all people with disabilities employed in jobs that meet both their economic and personal needs. The CDE issues a formal annual report that includes recommendations to the Governor and Legislature.

women

According to the June 2016 brief *Gender Pay Gap- Recent Trends and Explanations*, issued by the Council of Economic Advisors, women represent approximately 47 percent of the labor force. On average, women make 79 cents for every \$1.00 earned by men in similar occupations. This gap is even larger when race and ethnicity are factored in. A non-Hispanic Black woman earns 60 cents to a non-Hispanic White man's \$1.00, a Hispanic woman earns 55 cents. While the disparity is smaller, women of color make less when compared to men of color.

The 2017 Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Maine was presented as a series of one-page briefs presented to the Maine Legislature and covers the topics of economic security, freedom from violence, health and education. The report indicates that Maine women continue to be drawn to jobs that are traditionally female and, as such, traditionally pay low wages. Despite long-term efforts to encourage Maine women to explore traditionally male, high-wage occupations such as the construction trades, those jobs often require travel to different areas, overnights or weeks away from home, longer work days, and other issues that specifically impede women from entering them particularly those who are single parents with childcare needs.

Single heads of household are made up more of women than men, due, in part, to the fact that women live longer than men (more widowed), but also because more remain unmarried or divorced. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, this population group included an estimated 33,570 females with nearly 40 percent of these households living in poverty.

The Women's Employment Committee:

The Women's Employment Committee (WEC) is committed to taking action on current factors affecting women's participation in the workforce such as the gender wage gap and affordable dependent care. Committee members review women-specific employment issues and develop recommendations to the SWB that remove barriers which prevent women from attaining economic success and security and that result in legislation supporting full economic opportunity for all Maine women. Five years ago, the WEC produced a report entitled "Working Women in Maine, Indicators for Progress" which featured quantifiable benchmarks to measure, monitor, and evaluate Maine's progress in achieving economic opportunity and security for all Maine women. WEC has identified the following program and policy priorities for the next five years:

Education and Training:

- Affordable, accessible college and degree attainment, including advising services to help women and girls of all ages become informed about higher education and how to plan for college or other pathways to earning credentials
- Access to comprehensive workforce preparation, training, and support services that help women and girls to develop foundational skills and transition to education and employment leading to higher paying jobs in growth sectors

- Access to support services to assist them as adult learners to persist and achieve degree attainment, including such services as scholarship assistance, healthcare, access to child and elder care, and transportation resources

Employment and Business Ownership:

- Pay equity and paycheck fairness, including minimum wage increases
- Family-friendly workplace policies and benefits, such as paid sick and family medical leave health insurance, retirement, flexible work options, support for education and advancement
- Training and technical assistance to employers to build and sustain a diverse workforce
- Support for women's entrepreneurship and business ownership for starting and growing their own businesses

Financial Education and Asset Ownership:

- Access to timely and relevant financial education and coaching services
- Support for multi-generational savings and asset building strategies (education, business, home ownership) and equitable tax policies which address the income gap
- Increase retirement savings options including protecting Social Security

Address Barriers to Economic Security for Women:

- Access to affordable healthcare and family planning services
- Access to affordable and available child and elder care services
- Affordable and energy-efficient housing and transportation options
- Freedom from violence and sexual harassment
- Support for leadership development of girls and women to contribute to the workforce, business ownership, and public life

Rural Residents lacking reliable transportation

Maine is a geographically large, rural state in which those without affordable, reliable transportation face significant barriers to accessing occupational training and employment. Rural communities in the state's three regions have limited or non-existent public transportation services. The larger cities are served by municipal or regional bus services, but intercity bus links are limited. Stakeholders must work to identify new ways for rural Mainers to access workforce and educational resources. Some do not have access to high-speed internet and many lack basic computer literacy skills.

Partnering with Maine's Public Library System

Workforce boards will work to promote the resources of Maine's public library system as a key partner in addressing this issue. Maine has over 266 public libraries, the smallest of them serving an island population and the largest serving urban hubs (Portland, Lewiston-Auburn, and Bangor). Libraries are vital centers of community access to technology and resources for online learning. Recent surveys reveal that 750,000 Mainers have a library card. Over 1.7 million high speed internet sessions took place through 230 libraries. (Each library has between

100 mbps to 1 gigabit of fiber connections.) Maine libraries offer safe, family welcoming environments where single parents can access job search resources with children in tow. They offer informal training in digital literacy from tools to set up email accounts (which are needed to register for labor exchange and file unemployment claims) to assisting with uploading resumes to various job sites.

In partnering with Maine's public library system, workforce providers can promote participant access to resources in the Digital Maine Library, specifically, the Career Preparation, Adult Skills and Computer Skills Center. The Digital Maine Library also provides access to "Career Transitions," an online resource for job seekers that assists them in finding sustainable employment. The Maine State Library invests state and federal dollars as well as money from the Maine MTEAF (Maine Telecommunications Access Fund) to provide a vast array of resources for all Maine citizens. The Career Preparation Center provides specific occupational practice tests that assess and provide online skill development through varied occupationally-specific tools that address readiness to enter careers from allied health to homeland security. Residents can also access tools that prepare them to pass high school equivalency exams such as the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) and post-secondary entrance exams such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or Accuplacer.

Local Boards will develop agreements with regional libraries and, using best practices already available in state, engage in staff cross-training that will inform workforce system staff about the resources libraries offer and how to promote these to their customers. Library staff, in turn, will become versed in promoting the programs and resources provided through CareerCenters.

When the CareerCenter closed in Waterville, the Waterville Library (Library) established an active partnership to provide access to career services and expertise from agencies such as the Augusta CareerCenter, New Ventures, the Kennebec Valley Community Action Program, Chambers of Commerce, local workforce boards. The Library has fully integrated and embedded workforce development as part of its mission and activities. The Library hosts itinerant staff from the Augusta CareerCenter who are able to provide employment and training services as well as a local job fair.

Many public libraries can assist members of the public who are not digitally literate, including those who either do not have access to or do not know how to navigate the internet or on-line resources. All partners must continue to engage in creating solutions because the need for this level of one-on-one digital guidance far outstrips the capacity of either library or CareerCenter staff to address alone.

Older workers

Older workers in Maine face considerable barriers to employment. The median age in Maine is 44.6 years compared to the national average of 38.1. This segment of Maine's population is large and growing rapidly. In 2018, 21 percent of the population was over age 65; by 2036 this figure is expected to increase to 28 percent. As the first baby boomers reach traditional retirement age, labor force participation among older workers will increase. As increasing numbers age into their 70s and beyond, labor force participation is likely to decline. This initial increase presents an opportunity to find ways to capitalize on the skills and experience of older workers who continue to work, either in their current careers or in "encore" careers.

Proven strategies to engage older workers include educating employers about the benefits of hiring older workers who, as a cohort, are recognized for their expertise and skills, judgement, commitment to quality, and demonstrated work ethic. Older workers are valued for their

flexibility regarding work hours, schedules, place and benefits, deferred retirement option plans, job sharing, and workplace accommodations.

The Older Workers Committee:

The SWB's Older Workers Committee (OWC) is dedicated to working with employers, employees, retirees, and older worker advocacy groups.

Members of OWC work to promote the value of Maine's workers (age 55+) through advocacy, education, and policy development. The main objective of OWC is to address the needs of older workers and their employers. The OWC instituted the "Silver Collar Employer Award" to recognize employers in Maine whose policies and practices fulfill the needs of older workers.

formerly Incarcerated

The formerly incarcerated often face barriers re-entering life outside of the corrections system. The Maine Department of Corrections (DOC) estimates it will release 6,000 prisoners from its facilities within the next five years. Based on the current population, at the time of their release, 31 percent of these individuals will have reading skills comparable to the middle school level and 76 percent will be similarly prepared in math. This lack of proficiency in math, reading and other skills create barriers to employment. The lack of employment prospects often lead to other problems such as securing housing and accessing support services.

Finding employment after release greatly reduces the likelihood that an individual will commit another crime. Workforce service providers assist those transitioning out of the corrections system to access job search assistance resources, but system partners will need to work more closely with employers to identify ways they can best capitalize on this prospective labor pool. Evidence-based approaches will be promoted. Some local areas are currently launching projects that include provision of career services in pre-release and county jails that educate soon to be released inmates about job search and workforce training resources and that establish relationships between them and prospective employers. Maine is also working with employers to reduce concerns about hiring formerly incarcerated. Previous job fair-like events have been held at two Maine State Prison facilities. Employers who attended reported that it helped to better understand the system as well as the rehabilitation and education programs in which inmates participate. In addition, Maine is promoting the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and the Federal Bonding Program as incentives to employers considering hiring justice-involved individuals. The MDOL and DOC recently agreed to a partnership where DOC staff will pre-certify for WOTC and issue Federal Bond vouchers to inmates as part of their release processing. These formerly incarcerated individuals will leave correctional facilities with documents offering incentives to employers who hire them.

DOC has also implemented registered apprenticeship programs in some of its facilities for both staff and inmates. They also work closely with the university and community college system in the provision of educational opportunities for inmates.

Younger workers

WIOA requires that all programs serve youth with significant barriers to employment or education, including: high school dropouts, pregnant or parenting, homeless or runaway youth, those subject to the criminal justice system, youth with disabilities, and low-income youth who are basic skills deficient or lack English proficiency. These are documentable barriers, but the youth that fall under these categories often cope with numerous additional challenges such as low aspirations, depression, substance use, unstable homes, lack of appropriate adult role

models, family violence, neglect, abuse, rural isolation, lack of transportation, sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination, and an overall lack of basic work-readiness competencies.

Youth service providers will partner to assess the need for a full menu of youth-oriented services from attainment of high-school diploma to parenting skills, financial literacy and career counseling. Employers will be at the table to offer work experience, internships and adult role-modelling and will continue to be involved with occupational and career awareness activities like EPIC Maine (a partnership of regional employers and education providers that introduces young adults to various careers) and the Annual Crafts Championships (a collaboration between industry, career and technical education centers and community colleges to showcase careers in the construction trades).

The Younger Worker Committee:

This committee works to identify, evaluate and address issues facing youth ages 14 to 24 who are in transition and to ensure multiple partner resources are available. Committee membership includes representatives from the Bureau of Employment Services (BES), Job Corps, Jobs for Maine's Graduates, Title IB youth service providers, secondary and post-secondary career and technical education programs, YouthBuild, juvenile justice, private industry, Office of Child and Family Services serving transitioning foster youth, Maine Youth Transition Coalition, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), and Adult Education to name a few. In the past, the committee has focused on development of a youth resources guide that was distributed through schools and service agencies. Most recently, committee members have focused on strategies to address transportation, childcare, and housing issues that impede the ability of younger workers to enter employment or access higher education. Committee members collaborate to develop new and innovative ways to jointly serve youths in transition.

Veterans

The flow of veterans and transitioning service members through Maine's one-stop CareerCenters averages over 3,500 people per year. Unemployment for veterans in Maine is at an all-time low with less than 2 percent of our veterans currently unemployed. Wagner-Peyser, WIOA and other USDOL funded projects operate in unison with the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) to ensure that all veterans receive priority of service within the workforce delivery system. These and other workforce programs are the point of entry for Maine veterans, disabled veterans and covered persons. Our employment service capacity is strategically distributed throughout the CareerCenters to serve veterans.

The JVSG is a non-competitive, USDOL funded program that provides over \$800,000 annually to Maine, supporting 11 full time staff positions. A mix of disabled veterans outreach program specialists and local veteran's employment representatives (LVERs) work out of one-stop CareerCenter offices. There is one LVER who serves as the state veterans program manager based at the central office in Augusta.

The Veterans' Employment Committee:

This committee works to improve training and employment opportunities for Maine veterans, disabled veterans, and eligible spouses. The committee focuses on building employers' awareness of the advantages of hiring veterans and works to develop policy recommendations to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of veterans' employment and training programs in Maine. The committee began initiatives to improve outreach and education to both employers and veterans. This resulted in a new web portal at the Maine Bureau of Veterans Services which has been very effective. In addition, an advanced military culture training was developed and

delivered to over 200 employers. This training is now available on YouTube. The committee members include representatives from the following organizations: Boots2Roots, Easterseals Maine, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services, Maine National Guard, Maine State Approving Agency for Veterans' Education, Military OneSource, Military Talent Source, student veterans' programs, Togus Veterans Administration Medical Center, Volunteers of America Northern New England, and several Maine employers. The MDOL's Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) program manager staffs this committee.

This committee continues its Hire-A-Vet campaign that promotes hiring of 100 veterans in 100 jobs with 100 employers in 100 days. The average wage for veteran hires increased from \$17.43 in 2015 to \$23.06 in 2019. Employers partnered to make the initiative a success and all goals have been exceeded in each of the last four years. The campaign connected nearly 750 employers with 1,000+ veteran-hires since its inception in 2015 and was recognized as a best practice by the USDOL and the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA).

Persons with language barriers

People who are foreign-born and for whom English is not their primary language typically face considerable barriers to employment in the United States. According to 2018 American Community Survey one-year estimates, approximately 3.5 percent of Mainers were born outside the United States. Of those, nearly one third entered the U.S. since 2010.

According to the American Community Survey, about 6 percent of the population speaks a language other than English at home.

Persons with language barriers live throughout the state. However, clusters of foreign-born Mainers with language barriers are more prevalent in cities where services are more available, such as in Lewiston/Auburn, Greater Portland and Saco/Biddeford. According to the Maine Center for Economic Policy, in addition to New Mainers, Maine has a population of second-, third-, and even fourth-generation French-speaking Franco-Americans. Roughly 10 percent of adult Franco-Americans and Acadians in Maine do not have a high school diploma or equivalency and one in five has some college but no degree. Low English language proficiency among this population may account for some of these numbers. Even within the cities, the state does not have enough current resources available to meet the need for English language instruction.

Individuals living in poverty and with low levels of education

Other people with barriers to employment in Maine include those who are low income with low levels of education. Twelve percent of the population lives in poverty. Of that figure, 35 percent are Native Indian and Alaskan Native, and 20 percent are black or African American. In addition, 25,361 Mainers over 25 have less than a 9th grade education and 43,100 are without a high school diploma (American Community Survey 2018 ACS 1-Year Estimates). The State Workforce Board's (SWB) subcommittees focus on many of those populations who are statistically in poverty. Committee chairs are working across the committees in recognition that each constituent group is not mutually exclusive and many barriers to employment are crosscutting.

WIOA - TANF PARTNERSHIP OBJECTIVES

Under Governor Mills' administration, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program will be a full partner of the one-stop system as recommended under WIOA. As such, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will support and guide its TANF service provider (currently and hereafter, Fedcap) to work with core and required partners of

the one-stop system to jointly serve customers and, as appropriate, leverage and share resources on their behalf.

First-Steps to Partnership

The Greater Portland and Rockland CareerCenters will serve as pilot sites for the development of collaborative service delivery. Staff from each agency have identified program services that each agency provides, such as assessment, case management, plan development, barrier mitigation, training, and job search activities such as job fairs and job development through outreach to employers.

The pilot project teams identified specific services they can collaborate on, including the following:

- Supplemental job search services, such as participation in job search, resume, and interviewing workshops offered by each provider
- Registration with Maine JobLink, the labor exchange system that matches worker skills with jobs listed by Maine employers (i.e.: teaching Fedcap staff how to guide TANF clients through this process and/or having employment services staff assist TANF recipients with this process)
- Coordination between agencies on client service plan development to eliminate unnecessary duplication of services for co-enrolled customers
- Referrals and program co-enrollment that will enable customers to leverage the supports and resources of multiple programs
- Co-management and accountability of participant involvement in activities and services of partner programs, such as coordinated and/or shared case management and formal protocols for communication between programs on behalf of shared customers
- Ongoing cross-informing between Fedcap and employment services to better align service coordination overall
- Collaboration on employer outreach and job development activities

Staff collaboration and communication steps have been drafted between employment services, Fedcap and other DHHS staff to include:

- Involvement of DHHS regional planners acting as liaisons between programs and possibly co-located at pilot sites (CareerCenters or Fedcap service sites)
- Formal cross-training in which Fedcap staff will learn how to access WIOA core and required partner services and vice versa
- Sharing of best practices and practical example of resource leveraging and braiding of services
- Instituting regular (monthly) partner team meetings to:
 - Further develop relationships
 - Fine tune and implement collaborative practices
 - Discuss pilot and customer progress and success and address identified challenges

- Promote continuous improvements
- Define success and establish measurable outcomes

Coordinated Sector Pilot

A second pilot designed to address worker shortages in the healthcare sector and meeting the work requirements of TANF is in development. The pilot will focus on workforce needs of healthcare providers and how TANF and other partner resources can be aligned to meet the sector needs. The project will focus on locations with high but unmet demand for entry-level healthcare positions. The project will involve Adult Education, the Maine Community College System, and the TANF-funded Parents as Scholars and Higher Opportunity for Pathways to Employment (HOPE) programs. The collaborative will work to launch participants on career paths with advancement opportunities and the potential for ongoing training and development, allowing trainees to advance in skills and earnings over time.

Formal Steps

DHHS will formally partner with each of Maine's three local workforce boards to take part in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that guides collaborative and integrated service delivery across programs and funding streams. Local workforce boards act as the lead conveners of partners for their regions.

The Northeastern Workforce Development Board (NWDB) has oversight of Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis and Washington counties.

The Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board (CWMWDB) has oversight of Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec Oxford, and Somerset counties.

The Coastal Counties Workforce board, (CCWI) has oversight of Cumberland, Knox Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo, and York Counties.

The boards work with partners to develop and maintain the local one-stop system and to articulate the coordinated service delivery design for their local region. Local boards bring additional partners to the table and promote collaborative resolution of issues facing the region such as poverty, the effects of opioid use and more. Local boards also negotiate cost sharing between partners to ensure adequate one-stop infrastructure and access to all partner programs and eliminate redundancies such as multiple intake or assessment specialists when these could possibly be provided by staff shared between programs.

Signing of a MOU is a formal step that introduces TANF as a partner to the one-stop system and outlines how TANF service providers will work with all required partners going forward.

Future Steps

For partner agencies to better serve TANF recipients it will be beneficial for them to adopt a whole family approach to jobs that looks at not only the enrolled individual but that takes children and other family dependents into consideration when developing service delivery approaches that will enable them to achieve success through a holistic approach to employment services. Likewise, partners should understand how the benefits cliff affects TANF recipients.

TANF could play a key role in educating system partners regarding the benefits of two-generation approaches to service, as well as how to use a benefits cliff tool to be developed for Maine.

2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

II.(a.2) Workforce Development, Education, and Training Activities Analysis

Maine has a variety of programs and activities to address the skilled workforce needs of employers that focus on developing the skills, abilities, and credentials of the population, including those with barriers to employment. The aggregate public investment in these activities is significant, totaling more than \$500 million. Developing greater levels of coordination and alignment among programs is an integral component of this unified plan and essential to navigating Maine's many workforce development challenges.

The tables in II.(a.2.a.) provide an analysis of Maine's workforce development, education and training activities that receive regular public funding. For the purposes of this analysis, programs and activities are grouped into four categories: WIOA core partner programs, other publicly funded employment and training programs, other publicly funded education programs, and additional programs.

Note: These tables do not include public investments in K-12 education (although secondary career and technical education is included), nor does this analysis represent a comprehensive view of DHHS training programs.

Funding levels vary with a range of factors and are subject to yearly change, and allowable expenditures are governed by federal and state laws and policies.

II.(a.2.A) The State's Workforce Development Activities

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Core Partner Programs

The WIOA core partner programs: adult, dislocated worker and youth programs; employment services, vocational rehabilitation (VR), and adult and basic education served more than 90,000 participants and represented \$56.9 million in public investment in fiscal year (FY) 2019 (58 percent of which was federal, 24 percent state and 18 percent local funds). This information is displayed in Table 5, below.

The MDOL oversees administration of the Title IB adult, dislocated worker and youth programs and the Title III employment services program. In program year 2018 (PY18), 542 adults, 264 unemployed workers and 402 youth were served by these programs. On average, 75.2 percent found jobs. During the year 4,819 job seekers received individualized career services and 42,700 participated in labor exchange services.

MDOL's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) works to bring about full access to employment, independence, and community integration for people with disabilities. While under the oversight of the U.S. Department of Education, BRS operates within the offices of MDOL at CareerCenters and provides VR services through its Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI). The co-location of VR and employment services offers greater opportunities for aligning programs and services. During PY18 BRS had 3,773 new applicants and served 6,968 individuals through plans for employment.

Maine Adult Education (hereafter, Adult Education) is part of the Maine Department of Education. Service providers are housed within nine educational programming areas (hubs) and consist of 67 local providers aligned with local school districts statewide. In fiscal year (FY) 2019, over 17,000 individuals participated in high school completion, workforce training, and college transitions programming. Of those, 5,830 participated in federal programs directly

linked to high school equivalency completion, entering employment, and entering postsecondary education.

Over 23,000 people also participated in lifelong learning classes such as health and wellness, political awareness, personal finances, and other community enriching courses.

Maine's unified plan emphasizes greater levels of integration, alignment and coordination among core programs and one-stop partners.

In 2016, Adult Education began implementing Integrated Education and Training (IET). The passage of WIOA in 2014, enabled Adult Education to use federal literacy funds to support training when combined with education. Integrating relevant reading, math, and comprehension instruction, occupation training, employability skills, and English language acquisition as needed is a training model with proven effectiveness. Another key piece of an IET is the earning of a credential of value. Combining these elements compresses learning time frames and accelerates entry into the workplace. While IETs are successful, they are expensive to develop and run, making cost-sharing with partners essential. The IET programs offered are based on identified local workforce board needs, and on collaboration with employers, other service providers, and postsecondary institutions. From the initial six programs, the number of IETs has grown to 402 in FY19. The goal is to increase the number of adults receiving credentials through an IET to 800. IET is a proven training model that enhances learning comprehension by integrating classroom and occupation training and often compresses learning time frames. Based on identified local workforce needs, the pilot projects were developed with extensive employer engagement and the involvement of support service providers and a variety of educational institutions. Since then, IET programming has been rolled out statewide and is a required programming element for each adult education hub.

Maine's Public Sector Investment (in Millions) in Workforce Development; WIOA Core Partner Programs

Program	Federal	State	Other	SFY19 Funding	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title IB	\$7.20			\$7.20	MDOL	WIOA Title IB provides employment and training services to adults, dislocated workers, and youth who meet priority and eligibility criteria. IB programs overseen by three local workforce boards and delivered through four service providers served a total of 1,230 participants. Of those who exited the programs an average of 75.4 percent were employed. Of those who participated in classroom training, 63 percent earned a degree, diploma or credential.

Program	Federal	State	Other	SFY19 Funding	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
WIOA Title III Employment Services	\$3.60			\$3.60	MDOL	WIOA Title III amends the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933 and provides employment and labor exchange services to individuals and employers. Over 42,700 job seekers accessed the Maine JobLink labor exchange system in which 5,408 employers posted 31,464 jobs. Individualized career services were provided to 4,819 job seekers who required more intensive assistance finding employment.
WIOA Title IV Rehabilitation Services	\$18.50	\$8.20	\$0.50	\$27.20	USDOE/ MDOL	The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) works to bring about full access to employment, independence and community integration for people with disabilities: The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation helps individuals with a range of disabling conditions to achieve or retain employment; the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides services to individuals who are blind or have low vision; and the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened assists individuals with hearing loss. During PY18, BRS had 3,773 new applicants and served 6,958 individuals through plans for employment.
WIOA Title II Adult Education	\$1.70	\$6.00	\$11.17	\$18.87	MDOE	Maine Adult Education promotes programs that help adults get the foundational skills they need to be educated and productive workers, family members, and citizens. The major areas of instruction and support are adult basic education, adult secondary education (high school completion), English language acquisition, college transition,

Program	Federal	State	Other	SFY19 Funding	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
						and workforce training. These programs emphasize foundational skills such as reading, writing, math, English language competency, career awareness and exploration, workforce training, and problem-solving. In FY19, adult education served 17,640 adults in academic and workforce programs, including 5,830 participants in federal funded programs. An additional 23,150 adults participated in self-sustaining personal enrichment courses.

	Federal	State	Other	Total		
Totals in millions	\$31.0	\$14.2	\$11.7	\$56.9		
Percentages	55%	25%	21%			

Other Publicly Funded Employment & Training Programs

A wide range of employment and training activities in Maine occur outside the core WIOA programs. Many of these activities are described in Table 5, below. These programs are supported by \$45.2 million in public funding (see Table 6) and deliver employment and job training services to a variety of population groups including veterans, dislocated workers, youth, and individuals with skill deficiencies and other barriers to employment. Programs are accessible through Maine's one-stop CareerCenters administered by local workforce boards in three regions.

In addition to the programs displayed in Table 6, a variety of other employment and training activities are funded through discretionary grant awards to the state of Maine. Such grants include, but are not limited to H1B grants, Youth Build, and Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Training (TAACT) grants.

Maine's Public Sector Investment (in Millions) in Workforce Development; Other Publicly Funded Employment & Training Programs

Program	Federal	State	Other	SFY19 Funding	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)	\$0.80			\$0.80	MDOL	Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) funds are allocated to state workforce agencies from the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) in direct proportion to the number of veterans seeking employment within their state. The grants support two principal staff positions: disabled veterans' outreach program specialists, and local veterans' employment representatives. This grant provides funds to exclusively serve veterans, other eligible persons and, indirectly, employers.
Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)	\$2.80			\$2.80	MDOL	The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program is a federal program that provides a path for employment growth and opportunity through aid to US workers who have lost their jobs as a result of foreign trade. The TAA program seeks to provide these trade-affected workers with opportunities to obtain the skills, resources, and support they need to become reemployed.
Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)	\$0.08			\$0.08	MDOL	The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax credit available to employers for hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment.
ReEmployment Services & Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	MDOL	The ReEmployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program assists unemployed workers to return to work more quickly by delivering and services to those

Program	Federal	State	Other	SFY19 Funding	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
						claimants profiled as “most likely to exhaust” and all transitioning veterans receiving unemployment compensation. Targeted claimants will be provided relevant reemployment services and eligibility review interviews. Services will be delivered through group workshops, one-on-one meetings, and other methods allowing individuals who would not be able to attend for various reasons to attend.
CareerCenter General Funds		\$0.50		\$0.50	MDOL	The Maine CareerCenter provides a variety of employment and training services at no charge for Maine workers and businesses.
Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP)		\$2.60		\$2.60	MDOL	The Competitive Skills Scholarship (CSSP) helps workers learn new skills and succeed in a changing economy. The program is open to all qualified Maine residents and pays for education and training for high wage jobs in demand in Maine. The number of new CSSP applicants accepted into the program each year is based on available funding and allocated by county.
Maine Apprenticeship Program (MAP) and Apprenticeship Expansion Grant	\$0.70	\$0.50		\$1.20	MDOL	Maine Apprenticeship Program (MAP) and Apprenticeship Expansion Grant helps mobilize Maine's workforce with structured, on-the-job learning in traditional industries such as construction and manufacturing, as well as emerging industries such as healthcare, information technology, energy, telecommunications and more.

Program	Federal	State	Other	SFY19 Funding	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
						Registered apprenticeships connect job seekers looking to learn new skills with employers looking for qualified workers, resulting in a workforce with industry-driven training and employers with a competitive edge.
WIOA Title ID National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWGs)	\$1.10			\$1.10	MDOL	National dislocated worker grants (NWDGs) provide additional assistance to support employment and retraining efforts for dislocated workers displaced due to mass layoff or natural disaster. USDOL offers access to these funds through a competitive process to address other issues affecting workers such as the opioid crisis or need for technology upgrades. Maine is in the process of implementing a single portal from which job seekers can access the services of all core partners. The portal allows information to be shared between the information systems of each partner upon request from the job seeker, saving the customer from answering the same questions multiple times.
WIOA Title IC: Penobscot Job Corps Center	\$9.40			\$9.40	Boston Regional Office of Job Corps	Job Corps is a no-cost education and career technical training program administered by the USDOL that helps young people ages 16 through 24 improve the quality of their lives through career technical and academic training. The Job Corps program is authorized by Title I-C of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The Penobscot Job Corps Center is operated by Career Systems

Program	Federal	State	Other	SFY19 Funding	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
						Development Corporation for the USDOL.
WIOA Title IC: Loring Job Corps Center	\$9.50			\$9.50	Boston Regional Office of Job Corps	See above
Maine Conservation Corps (MCC)	\$0.40	\$0.09	\$0.70	\$1.40	Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry	The mission of Maine Conservation Corps (MCC) is to accomplish conservation initiatives that inspire individuals and enhance communities. The MCC is a state AmeriCorps program, comprised of members who undertake conservation projects while completing job readiness training and achieving personal development goals. Service inherently includes the distillment of personal responsibility, accountability, teamwork, communication, problem solving, as well as many other appropriate workplace behaviors and attitudes. Members also engage in career research, goal setting, resume and cover letter writing, develop interview skills, and earn certifications as part of their AmeriCorps terms.
New Ventures Maine (NVME)	\$0.20	\$0.90	\$0.70	\$1.80	UMA/ UMS	New Ventures Maine (NVME) is a statewide community outreach and education program of the University of Maine at Augusta/University of Maine System. NVME provides in-person and online training and individual coaching in career planning, entrepreneurship, and financial education and asset building. For Mainers in life and career transitions, NVME provides an

Program	Federal	State	Other	SFY19 Funding	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
						empowering environment for participants to define and achieve goals. NVME helps individuals recognize strengths, overcome barriers, access resources, develop a plan and take action towards their goals- -finding good jobs, furthering their education, starting a business, managing their money and building savings and assets.
Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)	\$1.90			\$1.90	USDOL/ A4TD	The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a community service and work-based training program for unemployed, low-income persons over the age of 55 with barriers to employment. Authorized by the Older Americans Act (Title V), the program provides subsidized, service-based training by placing participants in paid internships at 501C3 non-profit and public agencies. Participants are also able to participate in workshops that improve their job search skills and job readiness. Individuals train for an average of 20 hours per week and are paid minimum wage. The community service training serves as a bridge to unsubsidized employment opportunities.
Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG)	\$4.00	\$3.50	\$3.30	\$10.80	JMG	Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG) partners with public education and private businesses to offer results-driven solutions to ensure all students graduate, attain post-secondary credentials and pursue meaningful careers. JMG is hosted in Maine's public

Program	Federal	State	Other	SFY19 Funding	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
						middle and high schools, and community college and university systems. JMG reaches more than 10,000 students throughout all of Maine's 16 counties. JMG programs are led by JMG specialists who serve as mentors and educators. The JMG model integrates competency-based learning strategies with career exploration. JMG helps students overcome academic, financial and social barriers to help students reach their fullest potential. JMG increases high school graduation rates, post-secondary persistence, and degree attainment.
WIOA Title ID YouthBuild Portland (YBA)	\$1.00			\$1.00	USDOL	Youth Building Alternatives (YBA) program serves teens and young adults who struggle to find their way in the traditional education system. Since 1994, high school dropouts aged 16-24 were assisted in successful transition to adulthood through an alternative education model that includes HiSET exam preparation, construction skills training, leadership development, job skills, and life skills. Through YBA, young adults obtain important certifications including NCCER, OSHA-10, ServSafe, and more. Most advance toward postsecondary education or career-oriented employment. In addition to the program itself, one year of follow-up services support graduates' transition to education and work.

Program	Federal	State	Other	SFY19 Funding	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
WIOA Title ID National Farmworker (NFJP)	\$0.20			\$0.20	USDOL	The National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) provides workforce development services and training assistance to migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their dependents.
WIOA Title ID Indian and Native American (INA) Program	\$0.20			\$0.20	USDOL	The purpose of WIOA Indian and Native American (INA) programs is to support employment and training activities in order to: develop more fully the academic, occupational, and literacy skills of such individuals; make such individuals more competitive in the workforce and to equip them with entrepreneurial skills necessary for successful self-employment; and promote the economic and social development of INA communities in accordance with their goals and values.
Federal Bonding Program	\$0.30			\$0.30	USDOL	The USDOL established the federal bonding program in 1966 to provide fidelity bonds for “at-risk,” hard-to-place job seekers. The bonds cover the first six months of employment at no cost to the job applicant or the employer.
	Federal	State	Other	Total		
Totals in millions	\$32.6	\$8.1	\$4.9	\$45.6		
Percentages	71%	18%	11%			

**Program funding is sporadic.*

In addition to core partner programs and other employment and training programs, the University of Maine System (UMS), the Maine Community College System (MCCS), Maine’s Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Maine Quality Centers (MQC) provide education programs to prepare participants for success in careers and the workforce. As shown in Table 7,

below, these programs represent more than \$440 million in annual public funding, 80 percent of which are state funds.

With seven campuses and annual enrollment of more than 40,000, the UMS represents a foundational component of the state's postsecondary education system. The university system offers associate, bachelor, master, and doctoral degrees as well as a selection of specialized undergraduate and graduate certificates. See Appendix D for a list of Maine's public and private colleges.

Maine's network of seven community colleges has a combined enrollment of more than 18,000 of which 94 percent are Maine residents. 65 percent of these students attend part time. The MCCC offers certificate, diploma and associate degree programs directed at the educational, occupational, and technical needs of Maine residents as well as the workforce needs of employers. The goals of the MCCC are to create an educated, skilled, and adaptable labor force responsive to the changing needs of the economy, and to promote local, regional, and statewide economic development. See Appendix D for a list of Maine's public and private colleges.

The UMS and MCCC have been working together to develop an ecosystem around micro-credentials/digital badges which are employer recognized. With the support of MDOL and other partners, the UMS received a \$350,000 grant from the Lumina Foundation to enhance this ecosystem and focus on engaging people of color, low income, Native Americans and incarcerated individuals.

Additionally, the UMS and MCCC have been engaged in a regional and national project to improve the transparency of available credentials and educational opportunities through a searchable, centralized credential registry, Credential Engine. New England Board of Higher Education received a grant of \$650,000 to launch High Value Credentials for New England (HVCNE) in partnership with Credential Engine. HVCNE will provide individuals, institutions, state policy leaders and employers the tools to:

- Develop a common language to describe credentials
- Evaluate credentials' value
- Identify critical education and employment pipelines
- Understand the skills and competencies obtained in earning a credential

The mission of Maine's CTE program is to ensure that students acquire the high-quality technical skills that will prepare them for postsecondary education, entry into an ever-changing workplace and society, and to meet the rigorous academic standards of Maine's Learning Results. Students benefit from this integrated system of academic and applied learning.

MQC provide customized workforce training grants to employers who are either seeking to locate or expand their operations in Maine or who are interested in providing training to their incumbent workers. Training programs are coordinated and delivered through Maine's seven community colleges, and other service and training providers as needed.

In conjunction with the MCCC and MQC, Bath Iron Works (BIW) established a tuition-free training program at the former Brunswick Landing Naval Air Station. Using one of the former airplane hangars, participants get training and exposure to the facets of welding, pipe fitting, insulation and painting in the ship building industry. Acknowledging the difficulties of transportation for some students, housing for the four-week program can also be provided on

site. BIW has an agreement to interview successful Maine Job Corps welding students for positions at BIW as they prepare to transition out of Job Corps.

Addressing the workforce development challenges that confront Maine will require coordination and partnership across employment and training programs and education institutions, as well as a commitment to measuring the employment outcomes of program participants. Recognizing the need for greater levels of alignment, the UMS, MCCS and MDOL formed a data sharing partnership to evaluate the employment outcomes of college students. As part of this relationship, the university and community colleges send student records to MDOL where they are matched with corresponding wage records. MDOL then formulates employment and wage outcomes by credential, area of study, and school. These efforts, funded by grants from the USDOL and Maine Department of Education, have resulted in the development of Maine Education and Attainment Research Navigation system or MaineEARNs. This system has since expanded to include Adult Education and vocational rehabilitation programs. MaineEARNs is expected to play an integral role in measuring and providing outcomes information that drives program evaluation and policy decisions.

Maine's Public Sector Investment (in Millions) in Workforce Development; Other Publicly Funded Education Programs

Program	Federal	State	Other	SFY19 Funding	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
Career and Technical Education (CTE) (secondary)	\$2.30	\$56.50		\$58.80	MDOE	As part of the Maine Department of Education's ongoing commitment to support all learners, Maine Career and Technical Education (CTE) aims to ensure that students acquire the high-quality, industry-recognized technical skills and related academic standards that will prepare them for postsecondary education and entry into an ever-changing workplace and society.
University of Maine System (UMS)	\$54.50	\$230.90	\$28.80	\$314.20	UMS	The University of Maine System (UMS) offers associates, bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees (including the JD degree) as well as a selection of specialized undergraduate and graduate certificates. The UMS currently is developing a series of micro credentials specific to 21st century work ready and technical skills and is working across the state to develop a statewide approach to this. The UMS features seven universities — some with multiple campuses—

Program	Federal	State	Other	SFY19 Funding	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
						located across the state, as well as eight University College outreach centers, a law school, 31 additional course sites, and Cooperative Extension. It has an annual enrollment of nearly 30,000 students in credit bearing programs and serves over 500,000 individuals annually through educational and cultural offerings, including non-credit continuing education and professional development programming.
Maine Community College System (MCCS)	\$4.70	\$70.00		\$74.70	MCCS	The mission of the Maine Community College System (MCCS) is to provide associate degree, diploma, and certificate programs directed at the educational, occupational, and technical needs of the state's citizens and the workforce needs of the state's employers. The primary goals of the MCCS are to create an educated, skilled and adaptable labor force responsive to changing economic needs and to promote local, regional and statewide economic development.
Maine Quality Centers (MQC)		\$0.90		\$0.90	MCCS	The Maine Quality Centers (MQC) program funds customized workforce training delivered through Maine's seven community colleges. MQC grants are available to fund pre-hire, post-hire, and incumbent worker training. The program is designed to ensure that businesses have the qualified workers they need to succeed. Grant limits for incumbent worker training are based on company size. Employers with 1-50 employees may apply for 100 percent funding. Employers with

Program	Federal	State	Other	SFY19 Funding	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
						51-100 employees may apply for 75 percent funding, with a 25 percent company match. Employers with 101+ employees may apply for 50 percent funding, with a 50 percent company match. Other customized training is provided at no cost to either the business or trainee.
	Federal	State	Other	Total		
Totals in millions	\$61.5	\$358.3	\$28.8	\$448.6		
Percentages	14%	80%	6%			

Additional Publicly Funded Programs

The state correctional system, and Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership, Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment (ASPIRE), and Food Supplement Employment & Training programs provide workforce development activities to inmates, manufacturing employers and low-income adults. Details of these programs are provided below. Please note that the following table does not represent all publicly funded DHHS programs for employment supports with individuals with significant disabilities.

Maine's Public Sector Investment (in Millions) in Workforce Development; Additional Publicly-Funded Programs

Program	Federal	State	Other	SFY19 Funding	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
State Correctional System	\$0.20	\$3.20	\$1.30	\$4.70	MDOC	Provides programs and services to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.
Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnerships (MEP)	\$9.40	\$3.60	\$0.20	\$13.20	U.S. Dept. of Commerce	Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnerships (MEP) leverage a vast array of public and private resources and services that are available to every manufacturing enterprise in Maine. The nationwide system of MEP centers is linked through the U.S. Department of Commerce - National Institute of Standards and Technology, with the

Program	Federal	State	Other	SFY19 Funding	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
						common goal to strengthen the global competitiveness of U.S. manufacturers. MEP's mission is to become the state's premier provider of growth-based solutions for Maine's small and medium sized manufacturers; and its vision is to create profitable growth opportunities for small and medium sized manufacturers by helping them become more efficient, productive and globally competitive.
Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment (ASPIRE)	\$20.10	\$7.10		\$27.20	DHHS	DHHS's Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment (ASPIRE) program is the training and employment program serving TANF recipients by developing individualized employment plans and providing supports which lead to successful transition to employment.
Food Supplement Employment & Training (FSET)	\$0.80	\$0.50		\$1.30	DHHS	DHHS administers Maine's Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), including employment and training activities (E&T) provided by MDOL at CareerCenters. Maine's E&T program is known as the Food Supplement Employment and Training (FSET) Program.
Higher Opportunity for Pathways to Employment (HOPE)	\$2.20	\$0.10		\$2.30	DHHS	Higher Opportunities for Pathways to Employment (HOPE) is administered by DHHS to assist low income families. HOPE provides financial assistance and campus-based navigators to support families and help them to achieve education goals leading towards employment.

Program	Federal	State	Other	SFY19 Funding	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
	Federal	State	Other	Total		
Totals in millions	\$32.7	\$14.5	\$1.5	\$48.7		
Percentages	67%	30%	3%			

***National Institute of Standards and Technology, Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NIST MEP)

Maine's Public Sector Investment in Workforce Development; Summary

	Federal	State	Other	Total
Core Partner Programs (in millions)	\$31.00	\$14.20	\$11.67	\$56.80
Other Publicly Funded Education and Training (in millions)	\$32.58	\$8.09	\$4.91	\$45.58
Other Publicly Funded Education and Training (in millions)	\$61.50	\$358.30	\$28.80	\$448.60
Additional Public Funded Programs (in millions)	\$32.70	\$14.50	\$1.50	\$48.70
Totals	\$157.78	\$395.09	\$46.81	\$599.68

II.(a.2.B)Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

Strengths and weaknesses of Maine's workforce development activities are discussed below. These attributes and characteristics reflect the views of the core partners and the WIOA Steering Committee.

Strengths:

- Commitment and willingness among the core partners and other stakeholders to build a better workforce development system. Partners are committed to continuing and enhancing coordination and integration so that the people of Maine are better served. This commitment to bring the shared vision to fruition is foundational to repositioning Maine's workforce development system
- Quality of service, programs and operations
- Accessibility to stakeholders, business leaders and key decision makers. Collaboration and partnering are core strengths of Maine's workforce development system activities. Maine's close-knit workforce development communities foster an environment where business relationships can be easily maintained, resources mobilized quickly and access to key decision makers is abundant. This is a state with relatively little bureaucracy, which fosters access to decision makers and resources

- Apprenticeship program is successful in expansion by working with industry organizations to reach large and small businesses statewide
- Maine's relatively small population and lean infrastructure enables collaboration between service providers without layers of bureaucracy. For example, Bath Iron Works has been working with the Maine Community College System and Maine Quality Centers in the development of welding programs and guarantees an interview to anyone who completes the program.

Weaknesses:

- Maine's large geographic size and dispersed population present barriers to the efficient delivery of services. Rural communities in Maine struggle with higher than average unemployment rates. Delivering services to these rural areas is a challenge. Moreover, limited public transportation networks make it difficult for many to access employment opportunities.
- Maine's workforce development, education and training activities are governed by multiple state and federal agencies. This often results in coordination and alignment challenges. Maine is taking steps to better coordinate activities, starting with the creation of a statewide vision and goals for the workforce development system
- Individual and employer awareness of the workforce system and available opportunities, as well as how to access them continues to be less than desirable
- There are misconceptions about Maine's demographic challenges and the future workforce needs. While Maine is projected to have relatively flat job and workforce growth through 2026, there will be an estimated 73,000 jobs openings in Maine each year, largely to replace others as older Mainers leave the workforce
- Most stakeholders recognize the importance of using valid and reliable information to drive decision making, program evaluation and to support policy initiatives. Unfortunately, the core partners are currently working with three separate and discreet management information systems. The realities of current financial constraints leave the state without the means to develop a robust system for integrating data.
- Maine has limited financial resources with which to address its many workforce development challenges. WIOA program funds are allocated to states based on population size and unemployment levels. Maine's outlying counties are geographically large with comparatively small populations that are struggling with unemployment considerably higher than the state average rate. Delivering needed services to these individuals is costly and not effectively supported in the funding model. In addition, program administration funds are capped at 5 percent resulting in low levels of funding to cover fixed costs required to remain in compliance with administrative activities. Rural, less populous states such as Maine are at a "small state disadvantage": they receive substantially fewer funds to support system costs comparable to large states and higher delivery costs.

II.(a.2.C) State Workforce Development Capacity

The range of workforce development programs and activities previously described represent a significant investment of both human and capital resources into Maine's workforce development system. Since the implementation of its unified plan, the state has made concerted efforts to increase interagency collaboration to better coordinate federal employment services

and training for adults, dislocated workers and youth, and adult education, as well as create additional access points for vocational rehabilitation services. These activities resulted in a developed network of physical assets, including strategically located one-stop affiliate centers; seven community colleges and seven university campuses. In addition, Maine's workforce development system includes 76 local adult and basic education sites across the state.

While Maine's workforce development system contains a robust network of partnerships, it must continue the development of additional partnerships in order to reach people and businesses for which the distance to an access point is prohibitive. Two strategic partnerships are with the DHHS, which provides TANF services across the state, and with the network of libraries, which consists of approximately 260 public libraries across the state. By partnering with these entities, Maine's workforce development system will be able to reach more communities, people and businesses in the next four years.

In addition, technology will facilitate service delivery. Maine's economic strategic plan calls for the substantial expansion of broadband. Once implemented, this will enable Maine residents and businesses to access workforce and other online services that will allow them to thrive. More specific to the workforce development system, three of the core partners have jointly developed Workforce Opportunities, Referrals, and Knowledge Services (W.O.R.K. Services), an online portal that will allow people, either independently or with staff support, to assess their employment needs, research next steps, and find services in their area. At launch, information on services include: job matching, resume and interviewing preparation, services for veterans, services for people with disabilities, and, training through adult Additional partners will be added, with a vision of being a one-stop online portal for all workforce development system services.

B. STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

During November and December 2019, the State Workforce Board (SWB) convened 10 strategic planning sessions attended by over 100 stakeholders, including administrators of core programs, employers, workforce developers, educators, youth, advocates, representatives of state agencies and policy makers, to discuss the workforce development system and create a vision for a bright and prosperous future.

Discussion centered on what success will look like for Maine's workforce development system in five to ten years and what will need to occur in order to make the vision a reality. A broad range of ideas were shared and discussed, some were challenged and others were some honed. Ultimately, participants discovered that they shared many of the same ideals. The resulting vision addresses the requirements of WIOA and creates a defined direction for Maine's future workforce system.

II.(b.1) Maine's Strategic Vision for 2023

Maine's residents and businesses will have economic opportunity and contribute to the growth of Maine through a responsive, networked and coordinated workforce development system across public and private sectors. All components of the workforce development system will be provided seamlessly, resulting in increased educational and employment attainment for residents with a focus on careers, not just jobs, and support Maine's business sectors with skilled and qualified workers.

II.(b.2) Goals

In order to fulfill this vision, the following goals have been set.

1. Maine's untapped labor pool will enter employment and advance into high-demand occupations of their choice through private and public investment in training, education, and supports.
2. 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.
3. 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.

II.(b.3) Performance Goals

Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth

Adult Performance Goals PY2020 AND PY2021

	Program Year: 2020 Expected Level	Program Year: 2020 Negotiated Level	Program Year: 2021 Expected Level	Program Year: 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	72%		73%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	71%		71.5%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$4,953		\$5,203	
Credential Attainment Rate	62%		63%	
Measurable Skill Gains	45%		55%	

Dislocated Worker Performance Goals PY2020 AND PY2021

	Program Year: 2020 Expected Level	Program Year: 2020 Negotiated Level	Program Year: 2021 Expected Level	Program Year: 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	79%		79.5%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	76.5%		77%	

	Program Year: 2020 Expected Level	Program Year: 2020 Negotiated Level	Program Year: 2021 Expected Level	Program Year: 2021 Negotiated Level
Median Earnings [PRE1] (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$6,500		\$6,800	
Credential Attainment Rate	64%		65%	
Measurable Skill Gains	50%		55%	

Youth Performance Goals PY2020 AND PY2021

	Program Year: 2020 Expected Level	Program Year: 2020 Negotiated Level	Program Year: 2021 Expected Level	Program Year: 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	65%		65.5%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	70%		71%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$3,685		\$3,869	
Credential Attainment Rate	57%		57%	
Measurable Skill Gains	35%		40%	

Title II Adult Education

Adult Education Performance Goals PY2020 AND PY2021

	Program Year: 2020 Expected Level	Program Year: 2020 Negotiated Level	Program Year: 2021 Expected Level	Program Year: 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	34.0%	TBD	35.0%	TBD

	Program Year: 2020 Expected Level	Program Year: 2020 Negotiated Level	Program Year: 2021 Expected Level	Program Year: 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	32.0%	TBD	33.0%	TBD
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4250	TBD	\$4300	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	32.0%	TBD	33.0%	TBD
Measurable Skill Gains	36.0%	TBD	37.0%	TBD
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Title III – Wagner-Peyser

Wagner-Peyser Performance Goals PY2020 AND PY2021

	Program Year: 2020 Expected Level	Program Year: 2020 Negotiated Level	Program Year: 2021 Expected Level	Program Year: 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment Q2 after exit	67%		68%	
Employment Q4 after exit	65%		66%	
Median Earnings Q2 after exit	\$5,350		\$5,600	

Title IV Programs—Vocational Rehabilitation

Within the MDOL’s Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), Maine has two federally designated state units, the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), which deliver vocational rehabilitation (VR) services.

For the first two years of the 2020-2023 Unified State Plan, DVR and DBVI have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator and thus have identified an initial expected level of performance on that measure only from which to negotiate with the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The following indicators will be designated as “baseline” for VR programs in PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)

- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)
- Credential Attainment Rate

Vocational Rehabilitation; Performance Goals PY2020 and PY2021

	Program Year: 2020 Expected Level	Program Year: 2020 Negotiated Level	Program Year: 2021 Expected Level	Program Year: 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Credential Attainment Rate	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Measurable Skill Gains	33.8%	33.8%	33.8%	35%

II.(b.4) Assessment

A State Plan Implementation Steering Committee tracks progress towards the goals set out in the unified plan. The committee is comprised of representatives of the core programs and local board directors. As part of their work, they will continue to monitor the employment of untapped labor pools. For example, the committee will use tools like the American Community Survey for monitoring the employment of people with disabilities.

The state's economic plan identifies targets of increasing the annual wage by 10 percent and increasing the value of products sold per worker by 10 percent as measures of increased performance of workforce and economic development.

Members of the steering committee also participate in MaineSpark, an initiative striving to have 60 percent of Maine's workforce have a credential of value by 2025. The State Board has been tasked with making an annual report on this goal to the joint standing committees on education and cultural affairs and labor, business, research and economic development.

The State Board will continue to monitor and advise the Governor and the State on progress towards meeting employer needs.

Each core program monitors achievement of its negotiated performance measures and reports these to our federal partners annually.

C. STATE STRATEGY

Stakeholders of the workforce development system and state agencies with responsibility for the administration of core programs developed strategic objectives to achieve the state's vision and goals. These strategies reflect Maine's unique economic, workforce, and workforce

development characteristics; focus on delivering greater value to customers; and target opportunities for greater alignment between programs and increased system-wide efficiencies. Maine's strategic objectives are discussed below and more fully elaborated throughout this document.

Aligning with Maine's Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029, the Unified State Plan seeks to partner economic development with workforce development. The Economic Development Strategy identifies renewable energy (solar, wind, bio-fuel), sustainable fishing, aquaculture and bio-based products as sectors which will be areas of focus for the next 10 years. Coupling that with Maine's already growing needs in health care and manufacturing, workforce and economic development will be partnering to address the needs of established and emerging industries. Being a large, rural state, local workforce boards will be identifying local industry sectors as areas of focus as well.

Maine's strategy is three pronged to support employers, constituents and develop a sustainable system of growth for both of these important customers. The Strategic Objectives outlined below provide the framework and guiding principles of the implementation plan in III.a State Strategy Implementation.

Strategic Objective: Partner and Respond to Business Talent Needs

For Maine's economy to flourish, employers must have a ready supply of capable and skilled workers. Maine's strategic objectives begin with the recognition that the system must place business and residents at the center and construct programs designed to support them rather than placing programs at the center and requiring business and residents to manage the programs.

Specifically, Maine will:

1. Align and coordinate with economic development efforts to anticipate and prepare for the next generation of talent requirements by executing a joint business engagement strategy and continual cross-agency communication on business needs and opportunities
2. Work across state agencies to coordinate business marketing, outreach, and engagement efforts to streamline business access to services and talent
3. Establish strategy for regular engagement with regional business groups, industry associations to ensure alignment of education and training services with employer demand, with a focus on priority industries in Maine
4. Identify strategies to leverage private sector investment in training their workforce, including apprenticeships and other work-based learning approaches, advancement strategies, and an employer of choice designation for businesses offering quality jobs

Strategic Objective: Create a System of Lifelong Learning and Employment Connection for Maine Residents

The success of Maine's economy will ultimately be determined by the strength and quality of its workforce. As part of this unified plan, Maine will build its workforce using a multi-faceted approach.

Specifically, Maine will:

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

Strategic Objective: Build an Integrated Workforce Development Infrastructure Accountable to Residents and Businesses

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

To achieve this objective, the core programs will employ a range of strategies that focus on alignment and integration of systems, services and operations.

Specifically, Maine will:

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

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

A. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS

Maine's State Workforce Board meets the WIOA state board composition requirements and will implement the functions under section 101 (d) of WIOA. The State Workforce Board will assist the Governor in:

1. The development, implementation, and modification of the state plan
2. The review of state policies and programs and recommendations on actions to align programs to support a streamlined system, including the review and provision of comments on the State Plans, if any, for programs and activities of one-stop partners that are not core programs
3. The development and continuous improvement of the workforce system, including:
 - a. The identification of barriers and means to remove them to better coordinate, align, and avoid duplication among programs and activities carried out through the system
 - b. The development of strategies to support use of career pathways for the purpose of providing individuals, including low-skilled adults, youth, and individuals with barriers to employment, with workforce investment activities, education and supportive services to enter or retain employment
 - c. The development of strategies for providing effective outreach to and improved access for individuals and employers who could benefit from services provided through the workforce development system
 - d. The development and expansion of strategies for meeting the needs of employers, workers, and jobseekers, particularly through industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations
 - e. The identification of regions, including planning regions, for the purposes of sec 106(a) and the designation of local areas under section 106, after consultation with local boards and chief elected officials
 - f. The development and continuous improvement of the one-stop delivery system in local areas,

including providing assistance with planning and delivering services

g. The development of strategies to support staff training and awareness across programs supported under the workforce development system

4. The development and updating of comprehensive state performance accountability measures, including state adjusted levels of performance, to assess effectiveness of core programs in the state as required under section 116(b)

5. The identification and dissemination of information on best practices, including best practices for:

a. The effective operation of one-stop centers, relating to the use of business outreach, partnerships, and service delivery strategies, including strategies for serving individuals with barriers to employment

b. The development of effective local boards, which may include information on factors that contribute to enabling local boards to exceed negotiated local levels of performance, sustain fiscal integrity, and achieve other measures of effectiveness, and

c. Effective training programs that respond to real-time labor market analysis, effectively use direct assessment and prior learning assessment to measure an individual's prior knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences, and that evaluate such skills and competencies for adaptability to support efficient placement into employment or career pathways

6. The development and review of statewide policies affecting the coordinated provision of services through the state's one-stop system described in sec 121(e), including the development of:

a. Objective criteria and procedures for use by local boards in assessing the effectiveness and continuous improvement of one-stop centers

b. Guidance for the allocation of one-stop center infrastructure funds under sec 121(h)

c. Policies relating to the appropriate roles and contributions of entities carrying out one-stop partner programs within the one-stop delivery system, including approaches to facilitating equitable and efficient cost allocation of such system

7. The development of strategies for technological improvements to facilitate access and improve the quality of services and activities provided through the one-stop system, including improvements to:

a. Enhance digital literacy skills (as defined in sec 202 of the Museum and Library Services Act (20 U.S.C. 9101), referred to in this Act as "digital literacy skills")

b. Accelerate participants' acquisition of skills and recognized postsecondary credentials

c. Strengthen the professional development of providers and workforce professionals

d. Ensure technology is accessible to individuals with disabilities and individuals residing in remote areas

8. The development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across one-stop partner programs to enhance service delivery and improve efficiencies in reporting on performance accountability measures. This includes the design and implementation of common intake, data collection, and case management information, and performance accountability measurement and reporting processes, and the incorporation of local input into such design and implementation, to improve coordination of services across one-stop partner programs

9. The development of allocation formulas for fund distribution to local areas for employment and training activities for adults and youth workforce investment activities as permitted under sections 128(b)(3) and 133(b)(3)

10. The preparation of annual reports described in paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 116(d)

11. The development of the statewide workforce and labor market information system described in section 15(e) of the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 491-2(e))

12. The development of policies that promote statewide objectives for, and enhance the performance of, the workforce development system in the state.

Board membership complies with WIOA-required percentages of business and workforce representatives, government and state agency representatives, and representatives from community-based organizations.

Board membership was expanded in 2019 to include a third county commissioner to ensure representation from each local workforce area. Additionally, legislation was passed to add a seat representing the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) to the board (26 MRSA §2006, sub-§2-A). While the DECD representative had previously participated as an advisory member, this legislation codified their role on the board as a voting member. With the addition of these members, new employers and workforce partners were also added to the board to ensure it meets the employer majority and at least 20 percent workforce member requirements.

This same legislation also made members of the State Workforce Board subject to review by the joint standing committee of the legislature having jurisdiction over labor matters, and confirmation by the Legislature.

The board benefits from additional input from the Commissioners of Health & Human Services, Corrections, and Transportation, as well as representatives of the Maine Community College and the University of Maine systems.

The State Workforce Board meets quarterly and decisions are made by a vote of the majority present as articulated in the State Workforce Board by-laws. The by-laws also require a quorum of at least 50 percent of the appointed members and at least 50 percent of the quorum being business representatives.

The State Workforce Board is funded by the Maine Department of Labor and staffed by a director, a workforce development program coordinator and a labor program specialist.

It has six constituent committees that make recommendations to the board about service delivery and policy: Apprenticeship, Commission on Disability & Employment, Older Workers, Veterans, Women's Employment, and Younger Workers. These committees meet four to eight times annually. State Workforce Board members are active on the Youth, Veterans and Commission on Disability and Employment. Other committees are working on enhancing their membership and identifying State Workforce Board members to participate on the committees. To ensure continuity between the larger board and committees, the State is integrating regular committee updates into Board meetings as well. As the State moves to implement the State Plan, committees will be instrumental in participating in the activities and providing feedback on implementation. The State Workforce Board staff also sit on the State Rehabilitation Councils for the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

The State Workforce Board is in the process of implementing a process of providing updates to Board members between meetings. During the recent Covid-19 pandemic, updates were being provided on at least a weekly basis, at times, daily, and the intent is that updates will continue on at least a monthly basis when businesses reopen and information slows.

The State Workforce Board and the State Workforce Agency (SWA - Maine Department of Labor) will work together to establish and convene workgroups that focus on required implementation and service delivery components of WIOA.

Working closely with the SWA, core program staff and the workgroups, the State Workforce Board will fulfill its responsibilities to assist the Governor with all the required functions in section 101(d) of WIOA.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

A. CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGY

Workforce Development Infrastructure

Commissioners of the core programs are represented on the State Workforce Board. This ensures a level of equal representation and collaboration to initiate state-level system changes. The State Workforce Board also has the WIOA Implementation Policy Committee (WIPC). This committee is made up of the program directors of the core partner agencies and executive directors of the local workforce boards. This group generates and examines policies to meet WIOA requirements and guide program alignment. System-facing policies are presented to the State Workforce Board for consideration and validation.

The WIOA Program Partner Committee, made up of the lead administrators of all WIOA-required partners and leads from additional partner agencies, is convened on an as-needed basis to inform the board and/or work in collaboration to implement the goals of WIOA. Partners have made commitments to achieving an integrated and seamless workforce system through a written memoranda of understanding that provides the framework for how partners collaborate to serve workforce participants and employers. Partners will develop policies and procedures that improve shared customer flow.

The core partners recognize it important that employees and clients of their agencies understand the vision, the services available to users of the system, and the role and responsibilities of each partner relative to the success of the vision. To that end, they will:

- Work together with the local area one-stop operators to create and disseminate a common message about Maine's workforce development system
- Provide extensive professional development and cross-training between workforce partners so each can deliver a consistent message on services and practices (i.e. data/resources, recruiting, training opportunities, retention, educational opportunities, layoff assistance)
- Ensure agency points of contact have a broad knowledge and can be responsive and effective in connecting customers with workforce resources
- Contribute to informational websites for external stakeholders
- Develop marketing materials that highlight a collaborative approach to service delivery
- Post partner information on each other's website
- Create and disseminate marketing materials in alternate formats that are accessible to individuals with disabilities and reflect cultural competence

- Create and disseminate educational materials for employers regarding the benefits of employing priority populations, including veterans, older adults, youth, individuals with disabilities, formerly incarcerated, and New Mainers, paying specific attention to the needs of small businesses in rural areas of the state
- Use the compilation of data and evaluation with rapid cycle metrics as the cornerstones to increase the effectiveness of Maine's workforce development system. The core programs are committed to sharing data as allowed by law with vigilance regarding confidentiality and information security. The partners will establish mechanisms for tracking benchmark performance indicators. MaineEARNs and W.O.R.K. Services are two examples of activities involving the core programs that will help analyze and improve Maine's workforce development system.

Industry Outreach

Developing and sustaining close relationships with employers is essential to coordinating integrated responses to their needs. Using input from employers, the system will develop education and training programs to equip existing and future workers with necessary skills and align education and training programs that support industry-identified career pathways.

Employers will be engaged as system partners in a variety of ways to identify skill needs, validate stackable credentials, and act as training providers of work-based learning activities such as work-experience, on-the-job training, internships, apprenticeship, and customized training.

Business partners will be engaged at both the state and regional levels, through utilization and implementation of ongoing employer assistance initiatives such as the State Workforce Assistance Team (SWAT), a team made up of partners from education, workforce development, and economic development, and through strategic meetings with industry and trade associations and business-led forums.

A collaborative outreach campaign will be developed with involvement of workforce resource partners, education and training providers, and economic development entities. The outreach campaign will include development and delivery of oral presentations and marketing tools collaboratively created by the partners. They will present an easy to access, seamless system of employer services that blend workforce, education, and economic development resources in response to business needs. Recognizing the needs of employers to attract and retain a diverse talent pool, resources will include proven strategies and best practices in building an inclusive workforce.

Implement direct contact with businesses and their representatives.

State and local boards and business outreach team leads will generate the input and involvement of employers through:

- Meeting with individual businesses at local, regional, and state levels
- Hosting and/or attending regional industry forums that address workforce development needs
- Strategic planning and formal communications with industry and trade associations
- Events sponsored by state and local workforce boards

- Employer advisory committees to the Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools, Maine Community Colleges, and the University of Maine system
- Chambers of Commerce and the Maine Workplace & Disability Connection

Lifelong Learning and Employment

Many Maine employers have identified an immediate need for skilled workers. Concurrently, many Maine adults with the need for employment do not have the time or means to enter traditional training programs or to commit to earning two or four-year degrees. Both employers and workers need alternatives to gain the skills, knowledge, and ability required for jobs within specific industry sectors. Through collaborative efforts, core partners will promote the use of stackable credentials, micro-credentials, Maine College and Career Access, Registered Apprenticeship, and other training programs that integrate and contextualize academic and workforce skills. These best practices of program delivery accelerate learning through concurrent rather than sequential pathways.

The core partners see great promise in their work to develop and institutionalize portable, industry recognized credentials that can be earned in a relatively short period of time. While recognizing the need for entry-level workers, the Maine workforce system is not interested in creating a system of credentials that lead only into entry-level positions. In full-support of the goal to develop a system of lifelong learning and continued connection to employers, Maine is focused on developing a system that addresses accelerated pathways to employment.

To fully implement and support the activities noted above, Maine's core partners are committed to:

- Adopt and articulate a shared vision of an aligned lifelong learning system that clearly delineates each partner's role and responsibilities in the development of a seamless continuum of programs and supports leading to employment
- Demonstrate shared leadership and commitment to institutionalizing this lifelong learning system
- Work within the workforce system (including required one-stop partners, non-required organizations and employers) to construct and deploy the activities listed above
- Focus on the development of portable, stackable credentials of value for in-demand occupations. The U.S. Department of Labor defines a "stackable credential" as "part of a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time to build up an individual's qualifications and help them move along a career pathway or up a career ladder to different and potentially higher-paying jobs" (Training and Employment Guidance Letter 15-10, U.S. Department of Labor).
- Work within Maine's academic arena to support and expand on the work being done to develop portable, stackable, in-demand micro-credentials that are accepted by employers and lead to digital badges bearing post-secondary credit
- Establish pathways to employment that contain agreed upon multiple entry and exit points that enable all learners to participate as a result of earning various credentials and degrees
- Give priority consideration to referring adults to the Maine College and Career Access program to receive, according to their learning and employment goals, the academic,

employability skills and introductory hard skills needed to enter a postsecondary education or training program without the need for remedial coursework

- Recognizing the need for individuals to possess foundational skills for success in employment and meeting life challenges, all core partner programs will be developed with consideration regarding the inclusion of foundational skills in math, reading, and literacy which may best be provided prior to entering a credential or other job training program, or concurrently
- Develop a system of accountability to ensure that education and workforce training initiatives provide the knowledge and skills necessary for employability
- Provide equal access to these opportunities through the implementation of universal design from the program design stage through implementation and reflect cultural competency
- Integrate work-readiness skills into programs offered throughout the lifelong learning process
- Identify and integrate into the workforce system, those supports needed for workplace success; childcare, transportation, mental health, intensive academic and career advisement and other services
- Use and promote data and continuous improvement strategies. Partners are data-driven and focused on continuously improving efforts by measuring participants' interim and ultimate outcomes as well as process indicators
- Support professional development. Partners support robust and ongoing professional development for relevant practitioners and administrators
- Develop a process of promoting credentials as a pathway to employment
- Create differentiated strategies that support equity in rural areas

B. ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN

As authorized by WIOA, the State Workforce Board is also comprised of non-required WIOA partners. Their expertise, knowledge, and resources in the areas of developing an integrated and accountable workforce system will be of great benefit. The State Workforce Board will also make use of every opportunity, including presentations to the Joint Committees of Labor and Housing and Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business, to educate the entire legislature about workforce development activities, challenges and infrastructure to ensure alignment and avoid duplication.

Further, the core partners are well-connected to both required and optional one-stop partners, which allows for optimal use of other resources that can support Maine's workforce and employers. Partnerships with other state agencies, such as the Departments of Health and Human Services, Corrections, Education, and Economic and Community Development, are critical to maximizing federal and state resources while reducing duplicative or parallel efforts. Sources of funds that can be leveraged by mapping across agencies and programs will be identified. SNAP Employment and Training expansion in partnership with DHHS is one example. Pursuing other federal procurement opportunities and funds, such as the Lewiston Choice application, and meeting with philanthropic organizations to understand their priorities are other activities that will be undertaken. These partnerships are also critical to addressing

statewide issues of housing, transportation, childcare and access to broadband, which were identified in the many listening sessions conducted for the Governor’s economic development plan, as well as the WIOA State Plan. An important part of this strategy is the development of career pathways that include secondary and career and technical education, adult education, apprenticeship, post-secondary education, work-based learning, and other opportunities within industry sectors that are responsive to employer and job seeker needs.

Maine partners have taken great strides toward inculcating the “Whole Family Approach to Jobs” as a best practice for serving low income individuals and their families. Also referred to as a two-generation approach, it brings human services, education and workforce stakeholders together to:

- Identify program and policy alignment opportunities at the local, state and federal level that will improve employment equity and economic stability for low-income parents and work toward undoing intergenerational poverty for families
- Promote state policies and systems alignment that will improve access to and success in education, training and employment for parents
- Develop a regional learning community focused on whole-family approaches to employment equity that will include employer stakeholders

Maine’s Whole Families Working Group conducted research to assess the impact of benefits cliffs on families that rely on social service supports. The study reviewed the interplay between several state and federal programs and found that childcare and health benefits programs had the most extreme cliffs with downward slopes across all benefit programs, negatively impacting parents’ financial security and capacity to work outside the home. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) at the state and federal levels was shown to be an effective policy lever to ease the cliff effect but more needs to be done.

Maine enacted a bipartisan package of bills, referred to as the Invest in Tomorrow package (LD 1772, LD 1774), in 2019. The new laws look to address the state’s benefits cliffs. The package eliminates the gross income test for TANF, invests \$2 million in whole-family pilot programs and increases the income disregard in TANF to support parents’ transition to work. It also authorizes an increase in TANF funds for transitional food assistance and establishes a working group to align programs and improve accountability for better outcomes for families. In addition, the Legislature enacted LD 765, which requires the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to convene a stakeholder group to study asset limits in various state social service programs, including TANF and SNAP.

It is important for employers to understand how the benefits cliff creates work disincentives for low income working families. These employers understand that a very slight increase in wage could move the employee out of the income bracket to retain subsidized childcare or food stamps which they use to survive. Employers who participate in whole family approaches to jobs are better able to support and retain their employees through involvement with employee supports such as affordable childcare, providing non-cash incentives for exemplary work, supporting employees to advance their skills through tuition assistance or formal training opportunities leading to upward mobility along a formal career ladder.

To prepare a robust system of lifelong learning, agencies beyond the core partners need to be included in the process of developing stackable credentials. Maine is a geographically large state. The challenge of distance and limited resources have resulted in a tradition of collaboration and cooperation. Non-core partners are needed as each brings expertise, adds

value to the partnership and greatly increases the success of developing a highly integrated lifelong learning and employment system. Partners vital to meeting this strategy include, but are not limited to, Department of Health and Human Services, state and local libraries, state and local workforce boards, state and local chambers of commerce, secondary educational institutions, Maine's Community College and University Systems, Department of Corrections, industry associations and labor associations. Due to our current shared vision to improve the state's economic viability and the prosperity of residents (many of whom are common clients), a variety of collaborative efforts between these agencies are already in place. These provide a firm foundation to build upon.

The Maine Department of Labor is recognized by USDOL as a State Approving Agency (SAA) for USDOL Registered Apprenticeship Program in Maine. Registered Apprenticeship allows trainees to earn while they learn a skilled occupation under the watchful eye of a mentor. The Maine Apprenticeship Program (MAP) has experienced unprecedented growth, nearly doubling the number of apprentices served with the last year. In part because of the tight labor market, demand from businesses interested in adopting registered apprenticeship to recruit, hire and train a skilled workforce continues to increase. Apprenticeship provides an alternative, structured pathway for youth and adults to earn a credential of value and good wages while meeting employers' needs. As a truly viable career pathway in Maine, apprenticeship programming continues to expand with the following activities currently underway:

- Partnership with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) to develop apprenticeship opportunities for BRS customers with disabilities. The pilot project is gaining momentum and the first BRS apprentice has been placed in an apprenticeship as a bridge carpenter. The pilot is an example of expanding apprenticeship opportunities for priority populations through braiding workforce resources. This project will be replicated statewide
- Expansion of existing registered apprenticeship programs offered within the prison system to better prepare formerly-incarcerated individuals for successful re-entry to employment
- Development and expansion of quality youth apprenticeship programs, in collaboration with Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools and community colleges, that provide youth with a paycheck and structured on-the-job learning that allows them to apply relevant and affordable classroom training that results in dual credit toward high school graduation and an associate degree. Also pursue support of out-of-school youth apprentices with WIOA funding and services
- Focus on the registration of additional community colleges as registered sponsors of apprenticeship to facilitate small business access to apprenticeship programming and affordable related technical instruction
- Work with system partners and employers to establish entry level apprenticeship programs that articulate into more advanced apprenticeship training programs

C. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS

Maine's core programs are in agreement about the importance of a coordinated customer service approach in achieving an effective workforce development system. Time is of the essence in addressing the employment and life needs of people with barriers. Progress is being made but results must come quicker through the creation of coordinated, networked, and targeted strategies to engage the untapped talent also referred to as high-priority populations.

Individuals who may already be financially under-resourced, dealing with health (physical, mental and or emotional) challenges, lacking foundational academic skills including English language literacy, unaware of the how to navigate the current workforce system, or lacking basic computer skills to apply online require a system of help that is agile and responsive.

The re-branding and marketing of the system will reflect this coordination and customer-centered focus. W.O.R.K. Services is one example of an initiative underway to establish an integrated referral and registration system that is easily accessible to individuals no matter when or where they need help with education and/or employment.

Individualized career plans are also recognized as a primary tool to ensure that activities are coordinated and that resources are effectively used across programs to provide comprehensive and high-quality services.

Adult education is experiencing an increase in the number of younger dropouts enrolling in preparation classes to earn their HiSET, the test that lead to Maine's high school equivalency credential. Most of these younger adults need fewer hours of preparation before testing and score higher than other demographic groups. In FY 19, 36 percent of HiSET testers ages 17-18 scored at the college and career readiness level on all five assessments. In the 19-24 age group, 35 percent scored at the college and career ready level. These two age groups scored significantly higher than the 23-44 age group in both pass rates and college and career readiness attainment. Advising and recruiting efforts by adult education providers, in collaboration with postsecondary partners will address steps to engage these individuals in additional education and training opportunities leading to employment.

Adult education is exploring how this data may support changes to the current high school completion process to reduce the drop-out rate, especially for those students who have the academic skills, but do not want to remain in the high school environment. Steps will be taken to establish an improved referral process to more quickly connect students who leave high school with an adult education provider. A system, that includes robust youth apprenticeship opportunities may result in an alternative that provides these younger adults with credentials and a pathway to postsecondary opportunities.

Refugees, asylum seekers, and foreign-trained professionals face unique challenges to entering the workforce. Credentialing issues and limited financial assistance to pay for prior learning assessments keep many New Mainers from accessing appropriate training and employment opportunities. In addition to creating additional opportunities for English language acquisition, core partners will engage with other workforce development stakeholders to try and streamline the foreign credentialing process and improve licensing process through work with the state licensing departments. This can include improved workforce development State resources to provide low and no-cost evaluations of foreign secondary and postsecondary credentials and better participant assessment and navigation in the process.

Core partner leads will monitor the progress of collaborative efforts to ensure the needs of sub-populations are being systematically addressed statewide. This group will also work to ensure that no instances of implicit bias are impacting the creation and delivery of services.

D. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

Through the statewide visioning sessions, information was gathered from employers and others regarding their understanding of and needs and recommendations for an effective workforce development system. Each core partner has learned from experience that no one agency can successfully meet the needs of employers and workers on their own and that there is strength in

the many workforce programs in Maine combining resources on behalf of shared customers. Whenever possible, interagency staff must work to leverage available funds and resources. Moving forward, partners will collaborate and seek opportunities for co-enrollment, so that available funding can support as many individuals as possible.

The outcome of employment is critical for successful engagement and retention of learners in both academic and job skills training programs. WIOA requires that the core partners coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to employers to meet their current and projected workforce needs and to achieve the goals of industry or sector partners in the state. To meet that goal, all partners need to understand the services each has to offer, speak a common language, and promote the part that each partner plays in the system. The use of local, regional and state plans to align programs and activities is also critical to best providing services to employers. Partnerships with businesses and sector strategies will increase knowledge of current and projected workforces needs, to ensure workforce training, education and employment placement are job-driven and forward thinking.

The state plan implementation committee will be responsible for gathering information from the partners to coordinate efforts, streamline services to employers, look for opportunities that dovetail efforts with the Maine Economic and Community Development Plan and leverages resources. It will ensure that each agency can use consistent language to effectively communicate with employers that:

- Their input is required for creation of a workforce system that is committed and responsive to their needs
- Clarify the roles of each partner in the system
- Clarify what they can contribute toward establishing stackable credentials and micro-credentials that advance the progress of entry level workers
- Clarify the benefits of registered apprenticeship, internships, on the job training, customized training, incumbent worker training, and support services
- Assistance is available to help them identify skills and qualifications for in-demand employment
- Employer engagement is vital in the creation of credentials that meet their needs and that will result in employment for those who earn them
- Employer input should guide the identification of sector pathways to enter employment

Located within the Maine Department of Education, the state office of adult education provides technical and grant management support to over 70 local adult education providers throughout the state. In FY19, providers served over 13,900 adults. The majority of these adults lack the foundational skills in numeracy, literacy and work readiness needed to be competitive in Maine's changing economy. The state director is a voting member of the State Workforce Board and local adult education programs are represented on each local workforce board. Adult education personnel at both the state and local levels participate on a number of boards and initiatives addressing the workforce needs of Maine's employers.

In addition to the state system-wide approach, there are many activities underway with the partners in the coordination of services to employers. Examples include:

- On a quarterly basis, the Statewide Workforce Assistance Team (SWAT), comprised of core partners and other key partners responsible for providing business services, convene to share best practices, provide program updates and learn about new opportunities. SWAT participants include but are not limited to staff from the following partners: WIOA service providers, Wagner Peyser, CareerCenter, Vocational Rehabilitation, Local Veteran Employer Representatives, State-funded apprenticeship and Competitive Skills Scholarship Programs, Rapid Response and Trade Adjustment Assistance, community colleges, adult education providers, chambers of commerce, and non-profit organizations engaged in workforce development activities. SWAT meetings have been held regularly for the past three years and have been instrumental in furthering collaborative workforce development efforts amongst interested parties
- The Maine-At-Work Initiative was developed collaboratively with workforce partners and continues to be an easy way for employers to request assistance with their workforce needs. An on-line request is generated and sent to MDOL staff who either respond to the employer inquiry directly or forward it to a partner contact for response. Maine-At-Work is also marketed through a flyer enclosed with each employer's yearly unemployment insurance tax information to prompt them to request assistance if they have any workforce development assistance needs
- Maine's Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP) is open to individuals whose family income is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level and who do not yet already have a marketable post-secondary degree or credential. CSSP is funded by contributions from employers through and offset from their unemployment insurance taxes. CSSP provides funding to eligible individuals for education, training and necessary support services that lead to high-wage jobs that are in demand in Maine. The education and training must be universally recognized and accepted by the trade or industry in which the participant intends to seek employment. In 2019, CSSP served 1,041 individuals
- Job Fairs are held regularly at each CareerCenter. In the larger centers, job fairs for specific sectors are held so job seekers can apply to multiple employers within a sector. Staff engage with businesses in attendance to discuss their hiring needs to better understand what the businesses are looking for
- A successful model that needs to increase in implementation is Integrated Education and Training (IET). As the name implies, this type of programming involves intentional planning to deliver the specific academic, employability skills, and workforce training to a pre-determined audience resulting in a workforce credential and or further training and employment. For example, a group of learners may be enrolled in a welding program that incorporates instruction in reading and/or math all contextualized to pertain to welding. In this instance, the academic and trades instructors might work together to identify the vocabulary and calculation assistance participants will need to be successful. The benefit of this approach is it enables participants who may be closed out of a similar welding class because of low foundational skills to participate and be successful with appropriate supports.
- Historically, adult education providers in Maine have worked independently or with small-scale partnerships for specific purposes. Recently, local programs were grouped into regional hubs to promote common standards, fiscal efficiencies, economy of scale, and greater collaboration amongst the adult education programs within the hub. Rather than compete against each other for financial resources, the emphasis is on mutual

collaboration and support. This reorganization has resulted in strengthening all programs, and especially those in smaller, more rural areas. Within the boundaries of each hub there are community college campuses, a local workforce board, CareerCenters, and a University of Maine presence. Many hubs are strengthening their connections to these organizations as well as with other core partners to address the needs of employers and workers.

Local providers will continue their long-standing work of connecting with individual employers to design instructional services in response to their needs. The number of employers contracting directly with a local literacy provider for help with workforce development is growing. As appropriate, these services may include job-site classes, contextualized vocabulary, connections with occupational training, Maine College and Career Access transition programs, micro-credentials, and other means that help build the foundational skills of students while preparing them for successful employment

- The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) coordinates and aligns services to employers that will encourage and support them in the hiring of individuals with disabilities. Partners will inform employers of the value in Maine's *Workplace & Disability Connection*, which is housed at the Retail Association of Maine and supported by the Maine Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Human Services. The network provides a forum that encourages business-to-business discussions about hiring, retaining and career advancement of people with disabilities. BRS also utilizes in-house staff to help provide the needed connections between Vocational Rehabilitation staff, clients seeking employment, providers, and employers. To do this, BRS learns the needs of employers and connects them with clients that have the strengths, abilities, and interests to meet those needs. BRS is starting this process at a younger age, working with youth through a model adopted from Vermont, called *Progressive Employment*, currently being offered in four Division of Vocational Rehabilitation offices. Maine's *Progressive Employment* initiative takes a dual customer approach to meet the needs of employers and Maine youth with disabilities by matching them to activities such as: job tours, interviews, job shadows, work experience, and on-the-job training. These experiences give the employer the opportunity to meet their next generation of workers at little to no risk while also assisting the youth to build employment skills

Future activities identified during this state plan period related to the coordination, alignment, and provision of services to employers include:

- **Business outreach tools developed with cross-agency partner input:** Tools will be developed to support an integrated, seamless system of services to businesses. New marketing and outreach tools will be co-developed by members of the business response teams from education, economic and workforce development. Integrated business assistance marketing tools will stress services over programs and promote no-wrong-door access, whereby businesses can rely on single point of contact to access the full menu of services.

Similarly, a business needs assessment tool to be used by business outreach team members to assess needs pertaining to workforce and other business challenges will be created with partner and employer input. Use of the common tool will ensure business needs are easily communicated and assigned to specific partners.

An integrated service response tool will be developed to outline response actions, agency resource commitments, employer commitments, and expectations. This tool will be accessible,

easy to understand, and serve as a plan to be followed by the employer and the multiple service agencies responding to the business needs.

- **Employer/Business Response Team - No-Wrong Door** State and regional-level business response teams will be identified and cross-trained. These teams will include leads from agencies with resources and capacity to assess and address business needs (both economic and workforce). Business response team members will attend ongoing cross-training necessary to understand and represent the full menu of services and to ensure a single point of access by which employers can acquire the information and resources necessary to address their workforce and business development needs.

Business response teams at the state and regional levels may include representatives from three key resource areas:

- Workforce development:
 - Employment services (MDOL's Bureau of Employment Services and Bureau of Rehabilitation Services) on behalf of:
 - Apprenticeship
 - Competitive Skills Scholarship Program -Business
 - Federal Bonding Program
 - Foreign Labor Certification Program
 - Labor Exchange
 - Rapid Response
 - Reemployment Initiatives
 - SafetyWorks
 - Trade Act
 - Veteran's Services
 - Work Opportunity Tax Credit
 - DHHS - TANF (Fedcap – Parents as Scholars – LIFT – HOPE)
 - Title IB service providers (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth)
 - Vocational Rehabilitation (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation & Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired)
 - Pre-Employment Transition Services
 - Workforce boards
- Education and Training:
 - Adult Education
 - Career and Technical Education Secondary Schools
 - Job Corps

- Maine Community College System
- Private schools, colleges, universities
- Trade skills training entities
- University of Maine System
- Educate Maine
- Economic Development
 - Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI)
 - Department of Economic and Community Development
 - Regional and municipal economic development entities
 - Small Business Association
 - Small Business Development Centers
 - May also include (as appropriate):
 - Coastal Enterprises, Inc.
 - Employer representatives
 - Finance Authority of Maine
 - Live and Work in Maine
 - Maine Chamber of Commerce
 - Maine Development Foundation
 - Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership
 - Maine Rural Development Authority
 - Maine Technology Institute
 - Philanthropic entities
- **Expert Business Response Team** Comprehensive business support and integrated service strategies will be offered by a fully-informed business response team that has a grasp on the available resources available to be leveraged from a multitude of partner agencies. Cross-training of business response team members will include:
 - Understanding workforce development resources and who to work with at the local, regional, or state level
 - Understanding economic development resources and who to work with at the local, regional, or state level
 - Navigating education, training, and research and development resources
 - Understanding labor market and industry information and sources
 - Understanding best practices in attracting and retaining untapped labor talent pools

- Understanding and effectively utilizing business outreach materials and tools
- Effectively assessing employer needs and coordinating efficient low-risk responses in collaboration with business response team partners
- Addressing employer needs using the integrated response tool approved by team partners
- Tracking and communicating employer services to ensure follow-up and reporting of achieved outcomes
- **Seamless Coordination of Services** Business response teams will work behind the scenes to address industry needs using an integrated response tool as follows:
 - Using agreed-upon communication protocols to share business needs assessment data with appropriate partners
 - Within agreed-upon timeframes, partners will review and assess appropriateness of services their agency can offer and will identify the level and type of service(s) they can provide as part of the integrated service response, a point person and contact information, the dollar amount of either in-kind or cash resource to be provided, additional data required or steps the employer must take to access the resource, dates by which employer must provide information, timelines in which services/resources are to be provided, and outcomes achieved.
 - In most cases, the initial point of contact will act as lead liaison with the business on behalf of all partners and support the employer in achieving the desired outcomes and implementing the integrated service response.

A no-wrong-door, integrated service response strategy removes the need for employers to navigate a vast and complex system of services and assures they are presented with appropriate services. Interagency responses will promote layoff aversion activities, clarify and address perceived skill gaps, and allow workforce agencies to promote the employment of underutilized talent pools. It will link employers to business assistance programs and technical assistance on a just-in-time basis.

Properly assessment of an employer's workforce and business service needs is essential to developing and providing effective solutions. A collaborative approach to addressing business needs will eliminate duplication of efforts and ensure responses are developed with the focus on the employer rather than the program. As stated previously, business response team members must be those with an excellent command of the programs they represent and a good command of services/programs offered by the other partners.

E. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Educational institutions are key partners in Maine's workforce development system and play a critical role in the State's strategies to increase the effectiveness in how partners work together. Through articulation agreements, establishment of career pathways, joint professional development, and a focus on best practices that reduce barriers to employment (especially for high priority populations), the partners will work together and meet the strategic vision. To that end:

- The re-branding and marketing of the workforce development system will create and distribute a common message that conveys the role of educational institutions as part of the system
- The State's education and training systems will be supported to provide job-driven instruction as part of a cohesive continuum that includes secondary schools, adult education, community colleges, universities, on-the-job training, and apprenticeship
- Partners will increase engagement with secondary schools to expand student awareness of Maine's career pathways, in-demand occupations, and employment opportunities
- Postsecondary educational institutions and training organizations will join in the messaging of the workforce development system
- Engaging core partners and employers in micro-credentialing and digital badging will ensure that skills are meeting industry and business needs and credentials are recognized by employers
- Working with education, workforce, and employers, including the MaineSpark and All Learning Counts initiatives, criteria for a "credential of value" will be defined in a way which is clear, measurable, and meaningful to individuals and employers. Career pathways will be identified which allow workers to engage with educational opportunities that lead to higher wage occupations in in-demand sectors
- Workforce development service providers in each of Maine's local areas will partner with adult education providers, local community colleges, industry trade groups, and others to develop recruitment and training programs to meet the needs of individual or sector employers. For example, the Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP), provider of adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs in Maine's most northern county, regularly partners with the local adult education providers to address the new hire training needs of employers. A recent initiative involved three regional health care providers and resulted in a health care academy designed to prepare workers for entry-level positions in patient care. Similarly, a construction boot camp was developed in conjunction with adult education and Associated General Contractors to prepare entry-level workers to enter the construction trades. A new initiative is currently underway that will package recruitment, assessment and training services for a new processing factory.

Though adult education in Maine is characterized as working with learners beyond the age of compulsory education, historically, the majority of learners served have been in 24 and above. The efforts of adult education providers have been on moving this group on to college and/or employment. Adult educators are well-acquainted with the challenges and life situations of this group.

Data now indicates younger learners are seeking adult education services. Most of these students come well-prepared and earn high scores, many at the college and career-ready level. This group is not leaving school because they lack ability, but as a result of environmental issues. They report feeling bullied, disenfranchised, or dealing with anxiety and/or family issues. Adult education is no longer a place for problem students end, but a positive solution for a growing number of students. In response to this change, adult education will be taking steps to interact differently with the day school.

Steps planned:

- Conduct several listening sessions to hear from this group of young test takers more about why they chose adult education and how best we can serve them
- Provide professional development to instructors and staff on understanding the needs of this group
- Establish relationships with high school guidance counselors to inform them of possible ways adult education can help them, especially with career and postsecondary advisement as well as micro-credential attainment in technology and health care post-graduation
- Develop pathways to adult education for the 40 percent of high school graduates who do not have any post-secondary plans
- Explore pathways and collaborations with Career and Technical Education programs
- Work with high schools to formulate what it looks like for adult education to serve as a recognized pathway to high school completion

Adult education will look to update MOUs with educational partners and work to increase the number and quality of collaborations with other educational institutions and include those that may be missing.

It is important that communication occurs not only with the public postsecondary system but also the private institutions. There must be engagement with employer training departments to determine what foundational skills their current and prospective employees may need and how these skill requirements might be integrated into their training and hiring efforts.

Adult education will continue to draw on other agencies with expertise in the delivery of English language services to coordinate ways to meet the ever-rising demand for this type of instruction and will develop, introduce, and put into place, a referral system between the various programs and service providers so learners have access to the most appropriate provider.

F. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

Core and other partner agencies will collaborate with the “MaineSpark” initiative (with a goal of ensuring 60 percent of Mainers will hold a credential of value by 2025) to ensure alignment of activities, sharing of information, participation in and contribution to cross-training and professional staff development, and participation in local, regional and state strategy implementation sessions. They will ensure local and regional employer stakeholder groups are apprised of the goals and work of the initiative and have opportunity for input on the specific credentials of value being considered and promoted.

Similarly, system partners will work with the University of Maine system to support work initiated through the “All Learning Counts” initiative, funded by the Lumina Foundation and focused on expanding opportunities for adults, (especially people of color) to attain credentials. The initiative supports the goal of MaineSpark and seeks to expand access to a range of credentials from micro-credentials to traditional degrees. Like MaineSpark, “All Learning Counts” is a coalition of public and private organizations working to develop a micro-credential ecosystem and to support adult learners in gaining credentials demanded by employers. Two critical components of this initiative are to validate skills learned outside of educational systems (non-institutional learning) for credit toward credentials and provide more flexible, accessible programming and access to support services that will address personal and academic challenges facing adult learners.

Key partners include University of Maine Orono and Augusta, the Wabanaki Center, Eastern Maine Community College, the Maine Department of Corrections and its vendor Edovo, the Maine Department of Labor, the State Board, the Maine Department of Education – Adult Education, the Maine State Library, the United Technologies Center and Educate Maine. Educate Maine is another collaborative initiative that promotes education and career readiness through teacher education and connecting teachers with businesses to ensure curricula are meeting the needs of industry.

It is important to stay in communication with the state postsecondary system and also the private institutions to stay current on their initiatives and avoid duplication. There must also be engagement with employer training departments to determine what foundational skills their current and perspective employees may need and how they might be integrated into their training and hiring efforts.

Adult education needs to draw on other agencies with expertise in the delivery of English language services to coordinate ways to meet the ever-rising demand for instruction.

A learner referral system between the various programs and service providers must be developed, introduced, put into place, and promoted to ensure learners, and the partner agencies have awareness of and access to the most appropriate provider.

G. LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS

The establishment of a coordinated, networked, and targeted strategies approach is the first in a series of steps needed to use each agencies' resources effectively. Deliberately planning together to serve specific sub-populations can result in collaborative programming and grant writing that strengthens an application rather than competing against one another.

To best leverage resources, it must be clear amongst the partners what the resources can support. Each agency has slightly different eligibility requirements. Being aware of who partners can serve and who they cannot creates the ability to braid funding and serve more customers. Collaboration for resource sharing among partners on a state and local level is effective as funding streams ebb and flow. Frontline case managers will be fully knowledgeable of what is available and able to guide individuals to appropriate core program services and other available benefits such as Federal Financial Aid, TANF/ASPIRE, individual scholarships, and more. Leverage of supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) funds can result in a federal match of state funds.

The involvement of core partners to support the efforts of other agencies also results in a synergistic environment and improved outcomes. Educate Maine and the Maine Development Foundation are focused on the state's goal that by 2025, 60 percent of Mainers will hold a credential valued by Maine's businesses. A workgroup is being established to focus on improving Kindergarten – 12th grade coordination, in conjunction with the State's Economic Development Plan. Other organizations with a similar vision, human capital, and expertise that can be leveraged include Finance Authority of Maine (FAME), New Ventures, and Maine Educational Opportunity Center. Others include the trade associations, chambers, private employment agencies, and employer training departments.

Additional steps to undertake to leverage resources include:

- Increase in co-location of adult education programs on post-secondary campuses
- Offer additional post-secondary courses in adult education programs through articulation agreements

- Joint professional development for intake and advising staff of educational and workforce system partners
- Elimination of barriers for evaluation of foreign secondary and postsecondary credentials

The majority of workforce and economic development programs and resources require a commitment from the employer/business in exchange for program assistance. Such commitments range from agreement to hire trainees who successfully complete training, provision of in-kind or cash match toward cost of formal classroom costs, paying the full wage for on-the-job training with an understanding that a partial wage reimbursement will be provided to offset the cost. In most cases, the employer invests more than 50 percent of the cost of employee training.

Partner resources that can be leveraged are as follows:

- Labor market research and information provided by CWRI
- Prevailing wage data and workplace safety information and training provided by the Bureau of Labor Standards
- Employer tax information provided by the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation,
- Employee recruitment and labor exchange services provided by the Bureau of Employment Services, including job fairs
- Informational services and training to businesses by the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services regarding the benefits of and supports available for employing individuals with disabilities
- Help to the farming industry to access migrant and seasonal farm workers and assurance of safe and clean living and working environments for workers hired through the H2B program
- Assistance with development of registered apprenticeship programs through the Maine Apprenticeship Program, an industry-led employee training mechanism that provides businesses with a formal, long-term method for ensuring new hires and existing employees to attain necessary skills
- Recruitment of participants from each of the core partners and/or outside partners, including assessment of work history and work readiness skills required by the employer and required to succeed in the specific on-the-job training, customized training, integrated education and employment activity and incumbent worker training

The Maine Community College System's Business and Industry Program works to develop and deliver industry-specific training to businesses across Maine and New England. One of the programs offered is the Maine Quality Centers (MQC). The MQC program funds the cost of customized classroom training for new hires and/or incumbents whose positions will be backfilled once their skills have been upgraded. The MQC program is often packaged with WIOA funded OJT resources and the Bureau of Employment Services division of the Maine Department of Labor provides specialized recruitment services to the MQC to identify participants to fill the training slots.

Local workforce areas are partnering with Career and Technical Education Centers and high schools to offer a bridge program to the community college. This program allows CTE students

to take college-level classes while in the secondary program and earn credits toward a college degree. This practice introduces students to college-level course requirements and alleviates the perception that college is beyond their reach.

Through Vocational Rehabilitation's Pre-Employment Transition Services, students with disabilities are engaging in real-world work-based learning activities (job tours, job shadows, paid work experiences, etc.) earlier. Partnership with Jobs for Maine Graduates is yielding promising results for students with disabilities in a research project in targeted Maine schools. Use of the Progressive Employment dual-customer approach is introducing Maine employers to a new generation of employees at low/no risk and innovative programming, such as Step Up and College Prep, and opening post-secondary and career opportunities that have not existed previously for individuals with autism and visual impairments.

H. IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

The State's strategies as described throughout this plan will address issues that prevent access to postsecondary credentials, including establishing youth apprenticeship opportunities and increasing the number of Registered Apprenticeships, addressing student loan debt issues that prohibit readmission, continuing partnership efforts with initiatives, such as Live and Work in Maine, to encourage college graduates to stay and work in Maine, supporting the transition of students from high school to community college and university, including advocating for smoother credit transfers between institutions, developing and sharing a clear, concise consumer handbook with information on postsecondary services, publicizing no-cost and low-cost training opportunities, and promote availability for Vocational Rehabilitation to collaborate and coordinate with educational institutions in provision of services for students with disabilities.

The world of workforce development is becoming increasingly aware of the meaning, benefits and uses of stackable credentials to enable a person to progress from a series of stackable short-term certificates to postsecondary degrees to their chosen occupations. In the world of education, a very similar process is referred to as micro-credentials. Each micro-credential certifies competency in a specific skill. These micro-credentials can be stacked to indicate higher level of skill attainment and in Maine, the goal for many is to connect them with recognized course credits and if desired, lead a holder of micro-credentials on to other credentials or degrees.

The benefits to earners of micro-credentials, especially for WIOA clients, are that they are not place based, are short-term, tied to learner mastery, can be earned online at the learner's convenience, are self-directed, contain job embedded content, many include college credit, eliminates duplication of coursework, and can be used to recognize and validate prior learning. These factors make them a valuable solution to the state's need to connect with learners who feel unable to participate in traditional education and/or training due to financial or time constraints or who believe they are not "college material".

The benefits of micro-credentials to the workforce system is that they clearly articulate what the person has done to earn the credential in a job specific area. In addition, whereas new programs of instruction at the higher education level can take a long period of time to develop and be approved, micro-credential development is very nimble. This makes for a timely response to employer needs.

Both adult education and the MDOL are currently participating in an All Learning Counts (ALC) initiative lead by the University of Maine System. The project focuses on engaging adults with barriers in earning micro-credentials and gaining employment. Committees are currently

focusing on the sub-populations of low-income, Native American, English language learners and incarcerated individuals. Other partners include the community college system, Maine Department of Corrections, Edovo, Educate Maine and the Maine State Library.

Though the content area will vary, all of the micro-credential work is separated into three consistent areas of competency attainment.

- Level 1- Exploration and Discovery
- Level 2- Skill Development
- Level 3- Initiative/ Leadership

Following the completion of these three levels, the learner earns a stacked macro-badge, which is the cumulative assessment of skills, evidence of learning is visible and validates alternative learning. Micro-badges, capturing 21st Century skill development and/or industry/association credentials, will also be embedded along the pathway, adding further value.

University of Maine System is part of Education Design Lab's Badged to Hire campaign, implementing employer-demanded 21st Century skill badges into courses and programs.

This micro-credential initiative relies on Maine's workforce data regarding areas of employer need and the specific competencies required of employees. It also includes the development of an employer advisory group to ensure, like stackable workplace credentials, that micro-credentials align with employer needs, will be recognized for employment purposes and support Maine's goal of a seamless continuum of programs and supports with a focus on career pathways for in-demand industries.

Adult education is expanding its connection to the state's postsecondary institutions regarding that continuous and seamless continuum. In 2019, adult education providers established a presence on three of the seven community college campuses. Efforts are continuing to expand that number. When adult education is on community college campuses, adult education learners envision themselves as college students and recognize they have adult education support services to help them transition to college. Having staff members on the campus also facilitates the communication that is needed amongst the two systems to articulate the best pathways for students.

Adult education will continue to build on the collaborative success of the Maine College and Career Access (MCCA) transitions program which also fully integrates into Maine's priority to develop a seamless continuum of programs and supports. MCCA, offered by adult education providers across the state, provides academics, college and employability success skills for adult education students seeking a postsecondary credential and/or employment. In the past, MCCA targeted adult students over 25 with a high school credential who were planning to attend a traditional postsecondary institution. In response to a changing adult education population and the Maine workforce needs, the state adult education office revised the grant goals in 2018 to include all adult education students and those seeking any postsecondary credential of value. This change allows adult education providers to increase access for young adults under 25 and for those students without high school credentials. Pathways for students from a high school credential to MCCA or a postsecondary credential were created.

Partner efforts also resulted in the Maine Community College System accepting college and career readiness scores on the HiSET in place of the NextGen ACCUPLACER placement test. This change, which began in early 2019, allows students who perform at the HiSET college and career level to enter directly into credit-bearing courses. Beginning at the time of student intake

and throughout their preparation for taking the HiSET, emphasis will be placed on the benefits of scoring at the college and career readiness level. When learners are prepared through MCCA To enter postsecondary without having to take developmental courses saves money and accelerates the path to graduation. Adult education providers, organized in regional hubs, continue to collaborate to ensure equitable access to MCCA programming across their region, as well as coordinating with postsecondary partners in their region to develop articulated courses or to encourage co-enrollment.

The adult education state director will continue meeting with representatives of the workforce training department of the Maine Community College system. Goals of those meeting have been to increase communication amongst the local programs and their community college partner with the focus on establishing the appropriate place for adult education to support learners in community college trades programs.

With greater availability for adult education students to earn college credits comes the possibility for them to enter community college with six college credits and be eligible for Pell funding. Currently, lack of access to federal financial aid is a major barrier for many WIOA eligible learners to enter postsecondary. Working with postsecondary partners, including the university system to development a system for these learners to access Pell will greatly increase their access to academic and career education.

I. COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

For the first time in more than 20 years, Maine has a ten-year economic development plan. This plan for 2020-2029, created by the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) with input from many other government agencies, business leaders and private organizations, focusses on the state's economic growth, particularly in rural Maine, and includes language that resonates with the goals and priorities of this state plan.

"By 2030, Maine will be an international leader with a vibrant, sustainable, environmentally-responsible economy. All across the state, the people of Maine will have access to an unmatched quality of life and good-paying jobs"(Maine Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029).

The hinge points of the DECD Plan are talent and innovation. This WIOA state plan includes several steps to address the DECD near-term recommendations and it will be important that related activities are coordinated on state, regional and local levels. Those include the development of a system of stackable, micro-credentials, increasing the availability of online learning, and instituting statewide a variety of real world, on the job learning opportunities.

Maine's economic development strategy focuses on three overarching goals: grow the average annual wage by 10 percent, increase the value of products sold per worker by 10 percent, and attract 75,000 additional people to Maine's talent pool. Seven core strategies have been outlined to achieve these goals:

1. Grow local talent
2. Attract new talent
3. Promote innovation
4. Support universal connectivity
5. Provide supporting infrastructure
6. Maintain a stable business environment

7. Promote hubs of excellence.

Workforce and economic development partners will work collaboratively to implement several action steps outlined in the State economic plan with a focus on four key industry sectors: Healthcare, Clean Energy, Manufacturing and Tourism.

Steps will be taken to promote career exploration, apprenticeship and internship opportunities and engage workers in continuing education that will result in attainment of stackable credentials for career advancement. Education partners will work to align curriculums to the digital economy and articulate career pathways that support workers along the continuum of careers in high-demand industry sectors. Providers working with diverse populations will strive to increase their participation in the workforce through specialized outreach, development of paid work experience opportunities, provision of service supports and promotion of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and Federal Bonding programs to name just a few.

Workforce and economic development leaders at the State level will work to achieve structural alignment of workforce and economic development priorities, joint business engagement responses, and to establish regular use of a common database of employer contacts and service responses.

Workforce and economic development leaders at the state level will work to achieve structural alignment of workforce and economic development priorities, joint business engagement responses, and to establish regular use of a common database of employer contacts and service responses.

In addition to this, the State Workforce Board and the workforce development system will be working with the Children's Cabinet to work with other state agencies to address other issues which impact Mainer's abilities to find and maintain employment such as housing, transportation and childcare.

Regional collaborations between workforce, education, and economic development partners continue to work to align resources and address the needs of local and regional employers.

ATEC is a collection of WIOA partners, higher education, legislator representatives, employers, and other relevant agencies like New Ventures. The leadership is a collaborative effort to "tackle" regional workforce and education issues and to identify and braid services to address business workforce needs.

In the tri-county area of Penobscot, Piscataquis and Hancock counties, Title IB services are provided by Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) which is also the lead regional economic development agency. In these complementary roles, staff from each part of the agency are able to integrate a wide range of services to businesses and community partners, including work to assist the regions recovery from the demise of traditional manufacturing industries (paper, textiles, shoes, etc.) and the associated dislocation of workers and community infrastructure. EMDC was instrumental in leading the charge to revision economic assets in the region leading to identification of new uses for abandoned mill sites, including site clean-up, to pave the way for new business development and launch retraining efforts to reposition the regions workers for new job opportunities resulting from those investments.

Similar collaborations between employers, education providers and workforce programs occur in the Central Western and Coastal Counties regions. Central Western service provider, Western Maine Community Action Program, promotes each collaboration through public media and on their website, publishing testimonials from participants, employers and partner agencies regarding each collaboration. Publications such as these promote additional employers and

training providers to follow suit and because the projects often result in direct employment and credentials, it is an efficient way of recruiting prospective job seeker participants into the training initiatives.

B. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

n/a

1. THE STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF–

In the autumn of 2016, Maine received a \$1.1 million-dollar Reemployment and Systems Integration (RSI) Dislocated Worker grant (DWG) to investigate and implement a common access portal across core programs. The working group for this project gathered information from other states on their pursuit of similar initiatives and worked with vendors to review available options for solutions. A request for proposals (RFP) containing the State's requirements for a system was developed and a vendor secured through competitive bid. The system, named W.O.R.K. Services: Workforce Opportunities, Referrals, and Knowledge Services, went live in December 2019 at two soft launch locations, Bangor and Machias, and will be rolled out statewide in 2020. The system integrates the disparate management information systems of Adult Education, BES and BRS with the capacity for additional agency partners over time and includes a public facing portal. For more information on the portal see the Program Data; Data Alignment and Integration section of the plan for more information.

Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI), MDOL's labor market information provider, will add the data on participants of core partners to Maine's of Maine Education and Attainment Research Navigation system or MaineEARNs, thereby linking the records of core program participants with their corresponding wage and employment records for program evaluation and reporting purposes.

MaineEARNs also provides information on employment and wage outcomes for Maine workers who graduated from the University of Maine System and Maine Community College System after July 2008. Students, parents, educators, administrators, policy makers, and anyone interested in earning education credentials and employment in Maine will be able to use this data to research, plan and make informed decisions. Interest has been expressed by at least one private university to join in the collections and reporting. It is this same system which is being used to meet the requirement for the annual ETPL reporting.

Core partners of this Unified Plan utilize the following case management and management information systems (MIS): Adult Education uses MaineSTARS, Vocational Rehabilitation utilizes AWARE, and workforce programs administered by the Maine Department of Labor use Maine JobLink a system developed and maintained by America's Job Link Alliance.

The systems comply with current federal reporting requirements for each program. The data elements required for each program are being collected and will be used to support the coordinated implementation of Maine's strategic objectives.

MaineSTARS is a federally approved MIS system compliant with adult education's National Reporting System. Local adult education programs are required to use MaineSTARS for all intake, demographic, assessment, and attendance data. At the state level, aggregate numbers are compiled in MaineSTARS and used to perform data matches against Maine Department of Labor employment data, high school equivalency completion data, and the National Student Clearinghouse database for postsecondary enrollment.

The AWARE system collects and reports data required by the Rehabilitation Services Administration in the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services, as well as serving as a case management tool for the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The system is maintained by its vendor, Alliance Enterprises, and has been updated to meet WIOA reporting requirements.

The Maine JobLink (MJL) is a multi-faceted system with ability to interface with other MIS systems. MJL components include ReportLink which collects and dispatches the data required for federal and state reporting on behalf of multiple employment and training programs, ServiceLink, a case management system from which participant eligibility is determined and documented, employment and training plans are developed and updated, services are tracked, and assessment and outcome data captured, FiscalLink a financial management system that tracks program expenditures and funds leveraged from other resources, JobLink, which provides labor exchange services that match job seekers to employers position listings, ProviderLink also referred to as the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) which provides information on providers and programs approved for WIOA purposes, and finally, CertLink which provides a portal in which Maine employer can submit applications for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). The Maine JobLink system serves the following programs: Title IB Adult, Dislocated worker and Youth programs, Employment Services, Trade Act, Veterans, National Farmworker Jobs Program, Apprenticeship, Competitive Skills Scholarship Program, National Dislocated Worker Grant programs, H1B programs and more as necessary. The system interfaces with Unemployment Compensation's – ReEmployME system, Adult Education's – Maine Stars system, and Vocational Rehabilitation's – AWARE system.

The Maine JobLink system also tracks services to employers from which part of the annual Effectiveness Serving Employers report is generated. Employer assistance staff from multiple agencies enter information about the services provided directly in the employer account. The State has issued a policy delineating requirement for employer service tracking along with a guide for employer assistance staff from all service agencies to use. See PY19-01Employer Services Tracking policy.

2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES (E.G., CO-ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND UNIVERSAL INTAKE PROCESSES WHERE APPROPRIATE). IN ADDITION, PROVIDE THE STATE'S GUIDELINES FOR STATE-ADMINISTERED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

Administrators of the Maine's core programs had extensive discussions regarding the policies and practices that will enable the state to achieve its strategic objectives. At the beginning of these discussions, it became apparent that establishing the basic operating principles, or the 'must haves' of an integrated workforce development system will be essential to creating operational plans that implement the state's strategies. The principles outline how services can be integrated and delivered to customers of the one-stop system with the goal of enhancing the effectiveness in serving clients, minimizing duplication of efforts, and increasing customer satisfaction.

Following are the stages of customer flow that Maine's core partner programs developed for one-stop centers.

- Initial Triage
- Intake

- Assessment by one of four core partners
- Services and plan development

Initial Triage —The first point of contact for customer at a one-stop center must be knowledgeable, welcoming and capable of assessing the customer's needs and circumstances (e.g. does the customer have a disability?). In addition to performing an initial triage (a series of questions to identify what the customer's needs and where to direct them), the initial contact person, or "navigator" will make the customer feel understood and connected. The navigator is responsible for directing customers to the optimal resources: intake, a specific program (referral) or the information center (self-service).

Intake (the process of gathering the data to determine eligibility)—Maine will have a common intake system where relevant customer data is captured and is electronically available to all partners with the informed consent of the customer. This will reduce the need for customers to fill out intake forms multiple times, thereby increasing efficiency of operations and customer satisfaction. Common intake will also foster greater continuity of service.

Assessment—Because core programs share a common purpose in assessing clients, there has been an effort to eliminate unique assessments and focus instead on an assessment process that is standardized, seamless, and integrated whenever possible. Progress in each area is outlined below.

Maine's efforts for assessments to be:

- Standardized. Core partners have set standards for assessment tools that are accessible and to be used for specific purposes. Two examples are the CASAS for numeracy and literacy, and the WOWI for career goals)
- Seamless. Electronic CASAS testing enables access to test scores throughout the state and minimizes assessment mistakes and duplications. Through the new W.O.R.K. Services website, core partners can access customer assessments across agencies. Now, customers only take tests when different skills need to be assessed. This modular system of assessment streamlines the customer experience and minimizes duplication of effort
- Integrated. Core Partners have all been trained on the same workforce assessment (the WOWI) and now recognize and understand a customer's assessment results even when the assessment is administered by another partner. The result is better communication among core partners

Services and Plan Development (getting every customer employed or on a career path)- Currently, a client's plan is not routinely shared among partners, thus reinforcing the 'siloes' nature of the existing system. As part of this unified plan, policies will be developed to enable a client's service plan to follow them (paper copy or scanned file) when they are referred to a new program.

Policies supporting the enactment of these basic principles

The range of policies listed below will be developed by the WIOA Steering Committee to support the aforementioned 'must haves':

- Policies governing and optimizing communication across and among programs and partners to foster better continuity of service and reduce drop-out rates

- Protocols for record or scanned sharing of individualized service plans among partners
- The development of a quasi-standard individualized service plans template; programs are expected to continue to use their proprietary framework
- Policy on standards for assessments and protocols for inter-agency and inter-program assessment sharing
- Policies for professional development to enable the:
 - Development of new skill sets for those operating as navigators
 - Proper reading and interpretation of partner individualized service plans
 - Proper interpretation of intake data
 - Proper use of the front-end software
 - Proper interpretation of assessment data
- Policies governing the development of system improvement measures (communication, dropouts, number of customers referred, etc.).

MOUs will also be further developed and guide work that can be done by and between partners to align services and formalize referral processes and guidelines. Such agreements will also catalog and map out the parts of the workforce development system that will be made up of comprehensive one-stop centers, affiliate one-stop centers, and various other points of service entry, such as partner service sites. The MOUs will be a major tool for articulating specific ways that resources, services, and information will be aligned and integrated and the level and extent to which each partner will jointly serve and or refer an individual customer.

Current policies in place that are to be followed by system partners, include policy

- PY17-01-Nondiscrimination and Accessibility
- PY15-23-Veteran's Priority of Service
- PY15-20 Change 1-Referring Veteran's with Significant Barriers to Employment to DVOPs
- PY19-02 Expanded definition of Basic Skill Deficiency
- PY16-04 One-Stop Certification Criteria
- PY19-01 Employer Service Tracking Requirements
- PY16-01 Memoranda of Understanding
- PY19-04 Infrastructure Funding Agreements/ MOU Phase II (DRAFT)

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING & COST SHARING

Core and required partners must collaborate to design and support the local one-stop delivery system and must articulate how they will work together to jointly serve customers and share costs. It must be articulated through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each of the three local workforce boards.

The process requires partners to identify the types and levels of services they offer, the comprehensive, affiliate, and other sites their services can be accessed from, how referrals and

customer co-enrollment will be handled, and how resources of each partner will be leveraged and coordinated. In addition to service coordination, local partners must establish cost sharing agreements that at a minimum, delineate how infrastructure costs of the local one-stop system will be supported by each required partner. Local boards act as the lead in negotiating cost sharing and to develop the Infrastructure Funding Agreements. Local areas at an impasse in the agreement process must notify the Bureau of Employment Services who will provide technical assistance and if necessary, implement the state funding mechanism through which the state will impose infrastructure cost sharing requirements for that local area.

The Bureau of Employment services is currently working on a co-enrollment policy that will pertain to all core programs and other programs. The policy will promote co-enrollment and blending of services that are customer centered, seamless to the customer and that will stimulate higher-level collaboration and leveraging of resources between system partners.

3. STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

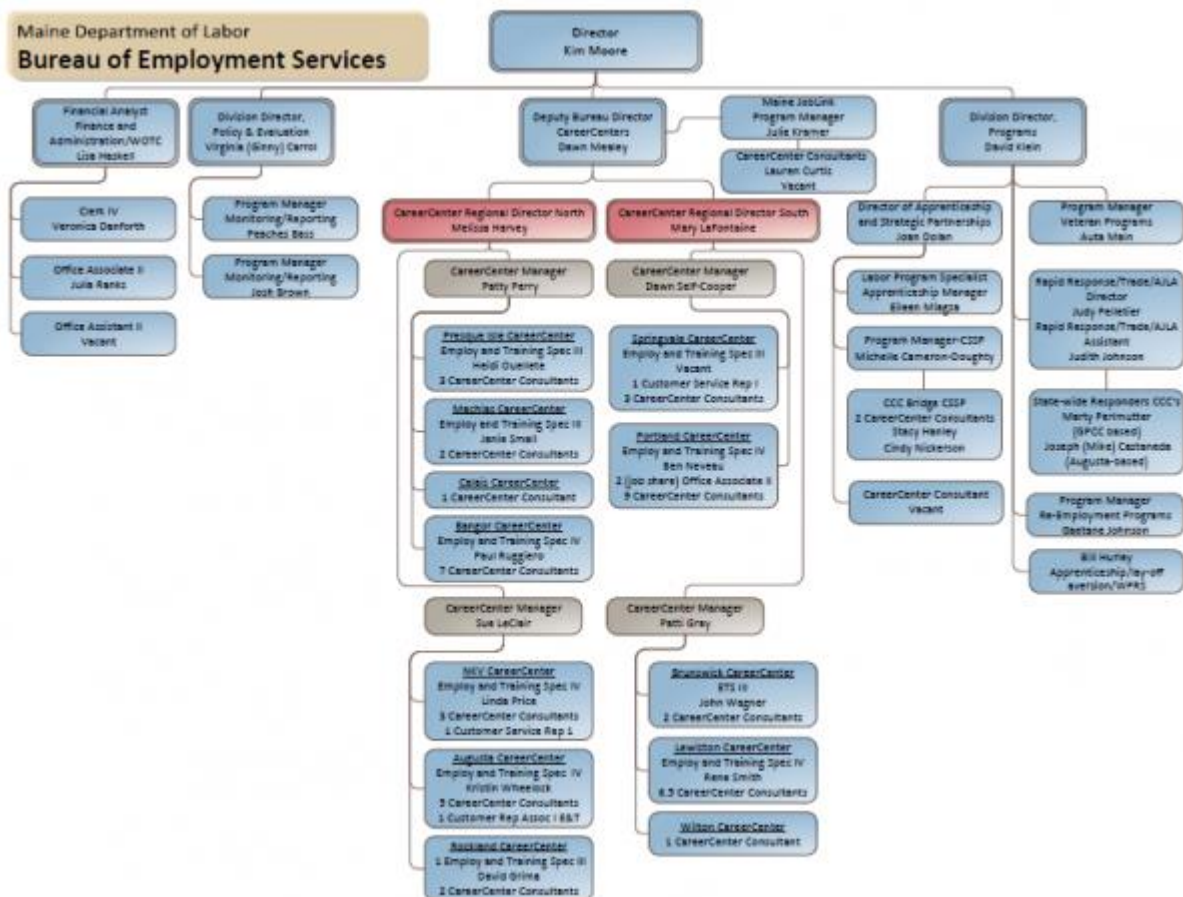
A. STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

The organization and delivery systems for the core programs covered in this Unified Plan are described below.

Adult, Youth, Dislocated Worker, and Wagner-Peyser Programs

The Maine Department of Labor (MDOL) is the State Workforce Agency (SWA) established to provide oversight and administration of state and federal workforce programs. The Bureau of Employment Services (BES), within the MDOL, is designated to provide financial, administrative and policy support to Maine's one-stop system.

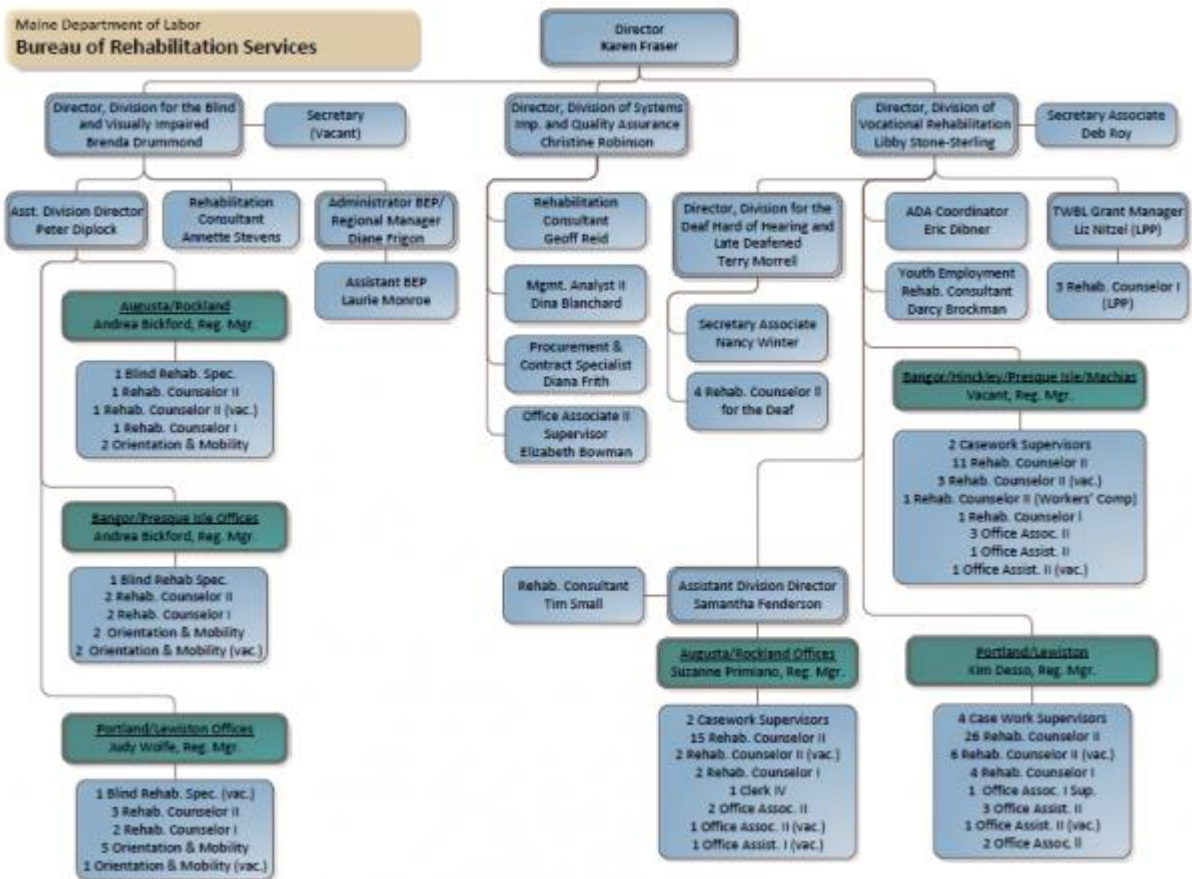
The BES provides labor exchange and employment services at one-stop centers across the state and through the Maine JobLink. BES also administers several USDOL-funded employment and training programs including: Veterans Services, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Rapid Response, Registered Apprenticeship Program. Bureau staff also conduct Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) certification and issue bonds to employers through the Federal Bonding grant. BES also administers the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP), a state-funded program targeted to low income individuals enabling them to attain post-secondary credentials in high-demand, high-wage occupations



Organizational Structure- Employment Services

Vocational Rehabilitation

Within the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), vocational rehabilitation services are delivered through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI). DVR and DBVI staff are regionally based in seven one-stop centers and provide statewide coverage.



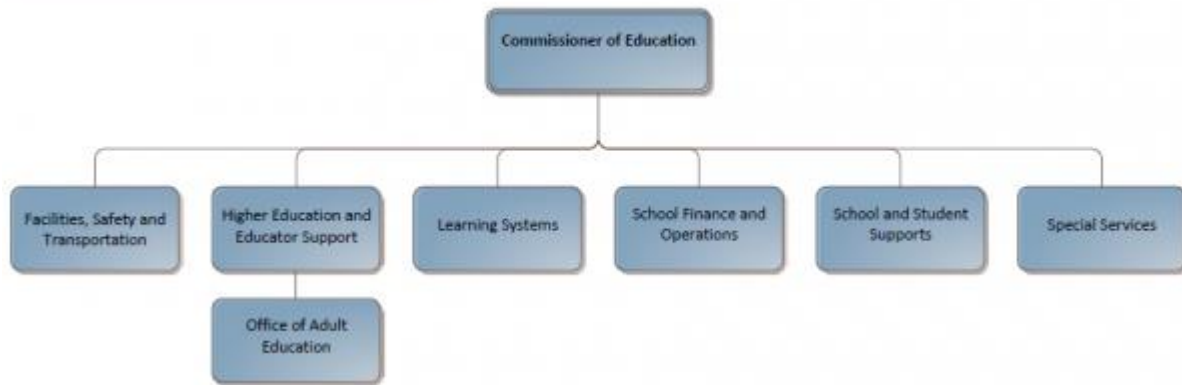
Organizational chart for the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

Adult Education Organizational Structure

The Office of Adult Education and Family Literacy is the state agency within the Maine Department of Education that provides services, instruction, and vocational training primarily for individuals beyond the compulsory school age through a career pathways system. Elements of this system include learner intake, assessment, advising, instruction, and individual learning plans. It is guided by data management and analysis, annual monitoring, and annual professional development plans. The system uses appropriately certified staff, is designed to meet identified local needs, and makes use of partnerships and alignment with workforce development, postsecondary institutions, and support services.

Maine Adult Education offers courses in literacy and adult basic education, English language acquisition, citizenship, high school completion, college transition, career exploration and preparation, job skills training, and personal enrichment. In addition, support services, such as academic and career advising, and financial literacy are provided. Maine Adult Education has over 76 programs located throughout the state administered through public school administrative units.

Maine Department of Education



B. STATE BOARD

Maine's SWB is responsible for the functions articulated in WIOA Section 101(d). The SWB serves as a convener of workforce, education, and business stakeholders and seeks to align and improve employment and training activities and programs to enhance the economic prosperity of Maine residents and enable business growth. The SWB implements Governor Mills' workforce development initiatives and ensures the workforce system is customer focused and responsive to job seeker and employer needs.

I. MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

Membership Roster

The membership roster for the State Workforce Board, including members' organizational affiliations, is provided.

<u>NAME</u>	<u>COMPANY/ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Janet T. Mills	State of Maine	Governor
Guy Langevin, Chair	Dead River Company	Business representative
Peter Anania	Anania & Associates	Business representative
LuAnn Ballesteros	The Jackson Laboratory	Business representative
Bob Dorko	Sappi North America	Business representative
John Fortier	State Farm Insurance	Business representative
Scott Good	Crescendo Consulting	Business representative
John Herweh	MMG Insurance	Business representative
Colleen Hilton	Northern Light Health	Business representative

<u>NAME</u>	<u>COMPANY/ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Kimberly Lindlof	Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce	Business representative
Jon Mason	Bath Iron Works (BIW)	Business representative
Ed McKersie	Pro Search	Business representative
Jim Nimon	Sanford Regional Economic Growth Council	Business representative
Ashley Pringle	Maine & Company	Business representative
Mary Kate Reny	Renys	Business representative
Greg Sweetser	Sweetser Orchards	Business representative
Vacant		Business representative
Vacant		Business representative
Vacant		Business representative
Tarlan Ahmadov	Catholic Charities Maine	Worker Advocate
Tracey Cooley	Job Corps	Worker Advocate
Jen Fullmer	Boots 2 Roots	Worker Advocate
John Leavitt	Carpenters Local 1996	Labor organization
Nate Pelsma	JMG	Youth
Grant Provost	Iron Worker Local 7	Labor organization
Jason Shedlock	Maine Building and Construction Trades Council	Labor Organization- joint labor-management registered apprenticeship program
Peter Baldacci	Penobscot County Commissioner	County Commissioner
Steve Gorden	Cumberland County Commissioner	County Commissioner
Robert Sezak	Somerset County Commissioner	County Commissioner
Mike Sylvester	State Representative	Senator
Ned Claxton	State Senator	Representative
Denise Garland	Deputy Commissioner, DECD	State
Laura Fortman	Commissioner, MDOL	State (Title I-B & III)
Karen Fraser	Bureau of Rehabilitation Services	State (Title IV)

<u>NAME</u>	<u>COMPANY/ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Gail Senese	Adult Education	State (Title II)

In addition to the members listed above, the following commissioners and higher education representatives also provide input to the board:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>COMPANY/ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Nina Fisher	Maine Department of Transportation	Deputy Commissioner
Sara Gagne-Holmes	Health and Human Services	Deputy Commissioner
Randy Liberty	Maine Department of Corrections	Commissioner
Rosa Redonnett	University of Maine System	Associate Vice Chancellor
Dan Belyea	Maine Community College System	Executive Director of Workforce Training

II. BOARD ACTIVITIES

Board Activities

In addition to the activities described above, the SWB assists the Governor in the development, modification, and implementation of Unified Plan. The SWB convenes member and stakeholder board meetings at least four times per year. Regular communications with board members are carried out via email. The SWB also maintains a website, which contains meeting minutes, important news, and other relevant information. The website serves as a communication tool with stakeholders and interested parties. State board activities also include the production of an annual report and the coordination of other activities that are relevant to the development of the state's workforce. During the autumn of 2019, the board hosted nine statewide visioning sessions to gather input into the creation of the State's workforce development vision and Unified Plan.

4. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNERS

A. ASSESSMENT OF CORE PROGRAMS

Assessment of Title I-B Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Program Services

Maine Bureau of Employment Services has established a schedule of formal monitoring, which includes a program and fiscal review of each of the Title I-B programs. Maine's Monitoring Policy and Guidance Manual covers oversight and monitoring of WIOA Title I-B and Title III programs and spells out the roles and responsibilities of local area monitoring and identifies criteria to be reviewed annually and on an ongoing basis.

Financial Risk Assessment

Fiscal reviews ensure that expenditures meet the programmatic, performance, cost category, and compliance requirements of WIOA. Fiscal reviews assess the quality of financial administration by reviewing and assuring that service providers have adequate internal controls and fiscal policies and procedures in place. Financial reviews are conducted using tools

provided by the USDOL Employment and Training Administration. In addition to on-site fiscal reviews, the Department of Administrative and Financial Services (DAFS) also reviews the audit reports completed on each local area and their subrecipients. Bureau staff work very closely with DAFs staff to ensure that costs for which funds are being requested are allowable and documentation of such are clear and allocated appropriately.

Fiscal monitoring results in an informal exit interview at which identified findings and concerns are discussed and best practices lauded. It is followed up with a formal report that articulates specific findings, cites the regulations and/or policies pertaining to the findings, outlines required action steps that must be taken to resolve the findings and the timelines in which the action steps must be completed.

Procurement practices and policies are also reviewed to ensure that the local area has a clearly identified process for competitive procurement and appropriate procurement practices are in place for pass-through awards. Contract documents are reviewed to ensure they contain the required citations and protocols and procurement activities are also reviewed to ensure contract award decision makers have followed controls pertaining to conflict of interest.

Finally, the fiscal monitoring that the local areas conduct on their subrecipients is also reviewed for the same purposes listed above.

Local Board and Program Assessment

The Bureau of Employment Services' monitoring tool is fashioned after the "Core Monitoring Tool" published by the Employment and Training Administration. Each local area and its Title I-B sub-recipients are monitored annually. Monitoring is conducted to ensure the one-stop system is in compliance with the intent and substance of the rules governing funding streams and to identify whether the systems are operating to achieve state and local strategic workforce system goals. The monitoring tool is also designed to explore the working relationships between required workforce system partners. Monitoring provides an opportunity to identify best practices that can be replicated and to identify performance and compliance issues that need addressing.

Each year, the Bureau of Employment Services conducts on-site monitoring of the local board during which local board governance is evaluated and local area subrecipient monitoring activity is assessed. The local area governance review includes examination of board policies, board membership, and formal "Memoranda of Understanding" with required partners. It also includes a review of board minutes, requests for proposal, service and subrecipient contracts, quarterly reports and most recent progress in achieving planned service levels and performance goals. Inadequate policies and/or lack of required board membership are identified as findings and technical assistance is provided upon request.

The local area plan is reviewed against plan guidelines issued by the USDOL and Maine. Plans that do not contain all the required elements are not approved until they comply with all the requirements. Local areas are evaluated on the process used to develop and create the local plan, to ensure adequate involvement of system partners in identifying and implementing strategies outlined in the plan and that the plan contains steps for implementation of identified strategies. Local board certification is approved only if the local board has an approved plan in place, meets negotiated performance measures, maintains required local board membership, addresses any outstanding findings or policy requirements, and sustains fiscal integrity.

Methods the local board uses to communicate, educate and inform sub-recipients and system partners is also evaluated to understand local area effectiveness in meeting plan goals and promoting continuous improvements.

Local area subrecipients are also monitored annually to ensure that the local board oversight is adequate and results in subrecipient compliance. Subrecipient monitoring includes intensive file reviews to ensure that adequate documentation of eligibility, participant services, and performance outcomes are in place. Program staff interviews are utilized to gauge whether program design and delivery is being conducted according to requirements and local area plans and participant interviews are conducted to gain insight on the participant's perspective and satisfaction with the service being provided. Service providers are required to upload all validation and eligibility documentation eliminating the need for paper files. This allows staff to conduct file reviews through the central office on an ongoing basis.

Sub-recipient interviews allow the monitors to assess whether the service providers understand and are implementing service delivery according to the local area plan and whether they are familiar with and appropriately applying federal, state and local board policies and meeting the requirements of specific programs. Tools that service providers use to conduct initial, comprehensive, and academic assessments are also appraised, as are the methods for providing and documenting provision of required services, including information about nondiscrimination and customer complaint process, labor market and career information, and job search assistance processes.

Program Youth services staff are asked to explain how they assess and document each youth participant's need for individualized or training services or need for any of the required youth service elements. File reviews and the number of enrolled, look to identify whether youth have access to each of the elements. Youth program case managers are interviewed to showcase service delivery methods. Staff interviews help reviewers understand how they develop employment and training plans or individual service strategies for youth and whether they partner with outside entities to provide any of the fourteen service elements, such as adult mentoring. Work experience files and agreements are reviewed, and staff members are asked to explain how work experience sites are monitored to determine that they are safe and are asked to describe how any issues identified at such sites are addressed. Service providers must also provide an overview of and discuss how work experience employers are educated about child labor law and safety requirements. Youth service policies and protocols are discussed to identify whether and how they differ from adult program policies and protocols.

Assessment of Employer Services

One of the fundamental methods for assessing quality of employer services is to identify if the information and services being provided are being coordinated with other one-stop system partners. Providers are asked to explain how they promote the services of the Maine JobLink and how they collaborate with other Maine business assistance entities, such as the Department of Economic and Community Development or the Small Business Development Centers, the business and industry team members of Maine Community Colleges and other local and regional education and workforce partners. Core partners are required to document services to employers in the Maine JobLink employer account system. This system is used to create the Effectiveness Serving Employers annual report, documentation requires that the employer have an account in the Maine JobLink and staff are educated to explain the many benefits to an employer of having a Maine JobLink account.

Quarterly Performance Assessment

Monitoring is an ongoing activity that requires local areas to submit quarterly reports that identify actual to planned service levels and levels of attainment of negotiated performance goals. Local areas submit both quantitative and qualitative reports which must include at least one service success story from each program each quarter. Planned spending is also reviewed against actual using quarterly fiscal reports to ensure spending thresholds are met and spending caps not exceeded.

Quarterly reporting allows us to address and understand issues regarding service or spending levels that are below or above planned levels. Bureau of Employment Services' responses to quarterly reports may be in written or oral form; whenever there are common issues across multiple local areas at once, a group conference call is initiated to share data and brainstorm action steps to address the issues directly with local board staff. The Bureau of Employment Services has recently added another component to monitoring, which is to conduct random checks of backup documentation for weekly drawdowns; this practice allows a just-in-time review of fiscal practices and internal controls.

In addition to monitoring of one-stop partner programs conducted by their own administrative entity, the level and ability of the partner programs to adhere to the activities identified in the local area Memorandum of Understanding, that pertain to provision of and access to services and cross-agency referrals, will be reviewed as part of the review process identified by each local board and as part of the annual monitoring process conducted by the MDOL.

Local areas are required to provide an annual report on the progress of their local/regional strategic plan activities, including partner-related activities identified in the plan. These reports will also be used to evaluate and assess the efficacy of one-stop partner roles in the local one-stop systems.

Data Validation

The BES has developed a Data Element Validation Policy Manual that explains how data will be validated for Title I-B and Title III programs. The policy requires that all validating documents be uploaded into Maine JobLink at specific times and under specific document upload headings. It requires local areas to conduct a sample file validation exercise once quarterly to ensure staff are keyed in on what is required for data validation and includes both a quarterly and annual data element validation file review to be conducted by bureau staff as well. The manual identifies acceptable data element validation documentation and tools and report forms to be used by service provider staff. The policy includes a requirement for annual staff training on data validation that will explain the purpose of data element validation and that will address any areas in which validation checks have failed throughout the year. Files selected for validation each quarter are those of participants who have exited from the adult, dislocated worker, in-school and out-of-school youth programs.

The State Board has a subcommittee known as the program partner committee made up of core, required, and additional one-stop partners. The committee meets to discuss implementation of the local area Memorandum of Understanding and how to integrate services and implement cost sharing agreements. The mission for this subcommittee is to provide leadership to their service providers in the local areas on how to implement and improve a customer-centric, seamless, integrated workforce system that meets the needs of workers, including those with barriers to employment and employers.

One-Stop Certification

A key tool for assessing how well the system functions is the one-stop certification process. The SWB reviewed the criteria that must be considered for one-stop certification and identified two additional items to be included. The first additional component they identified was outreach; specifically, the level, methods, and outcomes of outreach efforts to both employers and target populations, but particularly to employers offering high-demand, high-wage job openings to targeted populations that cannot readily access one-stop services because they live in isolated areas or are reentry civilian life after incarceration.

In addition to outreach, the SWB identified the capacity to meet or exceed negotiated performance measures by one-stop, so one-stop center performance can be compared, best practices identified and replicated, corrective action steps be implemented, and additional resources and technical assistance can be applied to one-stops that are having difficulty meeting or exceeding performance measures. State policy PY16-04 One Stop Certification outlines the requirements for implementing a methodology and certifying one-stops.

The certification process is important to setting a minimum level of quality and consistency of services in one-stop centers across Maine. The certification criteria allow the state to set standard expectations for customer-focused, seamless services from a network of partners that will help individuals overcome barriers to becoming and staying employed. In order to be eligible to receive infrastructure funding, one-stop centers must be assessed and certified by the local board at least once every three years using criteria established under WIOA Section 121(g) and identified by the SWB in consultation with the chief elected officials and local boards, as outlined in the policy.

The SWB, in consultation with chief elected officials and local boards, will review the one-stop certification criteria at least once every two years and will update it as necessary to assure continuous improvement of the system. The SWB will ensure that one-stop certification criteria is in alignment with the Unified Plan and that any revisions to the certification criteria will be formalized in a policy issuance and included as a modification to the Unified Plan.

If a local board also acts as a one-stop operator, the SWB will be the entity that evaluates and certifies the one-stops in that local area.

The criteria identified in this guidance will be used to evaluate one-stop centers for effectiveness, customer satisfaction, physical and programmatic accessibility, and alignment and integration of resources for the purpose of continuous improvement.

Evaluation Criteria must include assessment of how well the one-stop center:

- Integrates available services for participants and businesses in a way that is tied to locally negotiated performance goals
- Meets the workforce development needs of participants through provision of services and leverage of resources
- Meets the employment needs of local employers
- Operates in a cost-efficient manner
- Coordinates services among and between one-stop programs in a way that is seamless to the customer and eliminates duplication of services
- Provides access to partner program services to the maximum extent possible, including providing services outside of regular business hours where and when there is a workforce need identified by the local board

- Ensures equal opportunity for all individuals, including individuals with barriers to employment, to participate in or benefit from one-stop center services
- Acts to comply with disability-related regulations implementing WIOA Section 188 set forth in 29 CFR 38
 - Achieves or exceeds state negotiated levels of performance and other performance measures established by the local board for the local area
 - Has a process for identifying and responding to technical assistance needs of staff and partners
 - Has a system of ensuring professional staff have the requisite abilities, knowledge and skills required to administer services, including a system for provision of continuing professional development activities on behalf of professional staff, as necessary
 - Has a system in place to capture and respond to customer feedback and to ensure customer-centric service delivery and customer satisfaction (workers, seekers and employers)
 - Has a system in place to assess itself regarding these requirements and to implement continuous improvements

State Criteria: Per the SWB, local boards must also evaluate one-stop centers on the effectiveness of outreach strategies and efforts, including:

- Outreach to employers to provide information about the types of services, information and sector initiatives offered by and through the system
- Outreach to individuals who cannot easily access the services at the physical one-stop centers, including:
 - Individuals in remote areas
 - Individuals with disabilities
 - Individuals with limited English proficiency or literacy
 - Individuals who are currently incarcerated and preparing for release

Procedures and Methods of Evaluation: Local boards may adopt locally identified methods of assessment which may include:

- Assessment through a recognized certification mechanism, like the Malcolm Baldrige Award, that incorporates the above criteria
- Assessment using a specific evaluation tool designed to review and evaluate the above criteria
- Assessment using a combination of the above or other method as determined by the local board

Local Board Requirements and Deadlines:

- A draft of the local area process and evaluation instruments to be used must be submitted to the Bureau of Employment Services

- Local boards must ensure local one-stop system service providers and partners have been made aware of the process and evaluation instruments that will be used to evaluate and certify one-stops
- All local area one-stops must be evaluated and certified at least once every three years
- Documentation of certification of each one-stop must be provided to the Bureau of Employment Services

Local Area Criteria: Local boards may identify criteria in addition to that identified in state guidance. They must inform local system partners of the additional criteria via dissemination of formal policy or guidance and must include the additional criteria as part of the local/regional plan and must assess based on the criteria as part of the overall one-stop certification process.

Assessment of Title III Wagner-Peyser Programs –Accessibility - EEO Practices

Wagner-Peyser programs are assessed at the same time Title I-B program reviews are being conducted. Staff members are interviewed regarding knowledge and practice of explaining job order procedures and job seeker registration services and are asked to explain the ways in which they provide employer assistance and help in creation and resolution of jobs orders. An assessment of staff knowledge regarding equal opportunity and affirmative action requirements is also conducted along with a review of staff knowledge Wagner-Peyser regulations. Processes to provide initial assessment and appropriate referrals to center customers and front-end procedures are also reviewed. In some instances, participants may also be interviewed either in person or via telephone. Monitors use the checklist provided under Section 188 to conduct a portion of the accessibility review.

Staff review the local board's annual assessment of accessibility of the centers and conduct a brief accessibility assessment while monitoring specific one-stops. Staff members must explain how customers can access the assistive technology in the centers; all required posted information is examined to ensure it reflects the most up-to-date version of the regulations and sites are checked to determine whether information is provided in Braille and other languages besides printed English.

At least once annually, a separate equal employment opportunity review is conducted by the State EO officer. The EO officer reviews subrecipient compliance with universal access and nondiscrimination regulations through examination of participant applications and enrollments against demographic data. Likewise, participant files are reviewed to ensure that all staff-assisted participants have been provided with the required EO statement and understand their right to file a complaint. Upon completion of the review, providers are supplied with a formal report of review outcomes and a corrective action plan to address findings.

Customer Satisfaction

Job Seeker and employer customer satisfaction surveys are conducted at least once annually in addition to any local area customer satisfaction activities. These are conducted using survey monkey and may include short phone interviews as well. In general, the results provide us with information about the perceived value of required services and whether the services are meeting the needs of the customer. The quality of staff assistance is also ascertained through the questionnaire. The results of the service are explained in the Annual Report.

Walk-in customers are requested to fill out a customer satisfaction survey at each visit, this tool has resulted in reconfiguring info center space, reviewing customer guides to ensure they are easy to understand, and other efforts toward continuous improvements.

Performance Results

Every two years, state performance goals for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth and Wagner-Peyser programs are negotiated with USDOL. In turn, the Maine Bureau of Employment Services negotiates performance goals with each of the local areas. Technical assistance is provided to local area board and service provider staff regarding how performance is negotiated, measured and reported. The ability to achieve proposed performance levels can be affected by numerous factors, including unanticipated mass layoffs, layoffs of low-skill workers in a high-skill job market, and lack of job openings in rural areas. Most recently, low unemployment and an increase in minimum wage each year for the last three years have had an effect on negotiated measures.

Assessment of Core Program Activities Using Annual Performance Accountability Assessment Results.

Now that all four core partners are required to report on the same performance outcomes, the State will be better able to compare outcomes for quality improvement purposes, based not only on the barriers of the individuals served, but on the type and level of services received through each core program.

Using specific reporting elements, such as co-enrollment, level and type of career service provided, level and type of training service provided (or not), amounts spent on each participant for each service type, participant demographics and local economic factors, the state will be able to develop a quality assessment that more deeply explores all of the data that may affect performance achievement.

The additional data will allow the state to compare the programs, service packages, co-enrollments and specific approaches of local areas (and individual service providers) that meet or exceed planned and negotiated measures with those of local areas that are having difficulty doing so. In doing this, the performance staff will be able to promote and/or require local areas that are struggling to achieve negotiated measures to replicate the practices of local areas that are exceeding goals. Such strategies may include, expanding the number of participants taking part in multiple core programs services simultaneously, such as adult education and Title I-B services. It may also identify that professional staff development pertaining to participant and/or employer outreach needs to be addressed. Finally, it may be that state, local area or service provider policies are restricting service blending possibilities and that by adjusting these the providers will be better able to address participant needs and provide supports for improved employment opportunities and longer-term employment success.

Once the state becomes adept at utilizing the Statistical Adjustment Model it will have the ability to identify factors that are beyond the local area's control, such as major downsizings, extreme rurality, higher levels of non-English speaking residents etc. and will be able to recommend proactive responses by core and other service partners in those areas that can begin to address those issues. Such as by directing collaborative investments to improved English literacy programs that combine English proficiency and occupational training, or that establish partnerships that link individuals without access to one-stops or affiliate sites (because they reside at extreme distances) through technology or new partnerships with adult education providers or municipal libraries.

Local Areas are conducting research around high-growth career pathways and training staff to utilize pathway models whenever providing labor market guidance to, or developing individual services strategies with, participants. It is likely there is some direct correlation between clearly

defined pathways (both at the individual and local area level) and improved employment attainment and retention outcomes.

Maine reviews performance on a quarterly and annual basis using various methods, including program and fiscal report review, annual and ongoing desk top monitoring, and anecdotal information sharing. By using all available assessment data, monitors have been able to identify service models that result in better outcomes for high-risk youth that could be replicated in some areas but not all. If the state achieves at least 90 percent of the negotiated performance rate they are considered to have met the individual measure; however, when reviewing the overall measures for the state, the adjusted levels attained by all four core partners are considered.

B. ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS

See III.b.4.A

C. PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Title III Wagner-Peyser Performance PY18 Outcomes

Program Measures	Negotiated	Outcome
ADULT Employed 2nd quarter after exit	72.6%	Did not meet
ADULT Employed 4th quarter after exit	70%	Exceeded
ADULT Median Earnings	\$4,900	Exceeded
ADULT Credential Attainment	60%	Exceeded
DW Employed 2nd quarter after exit	78%	Exceeded
DW Employed 4th quarter after exit	75%	Exceeded
DW Median Earnings	\$6,500	Exceeded
DW Credential Attainment	55%	Exceeded
YOUTH Employed or enrolled in education 2nd quarter after exit	69%	Did not meet
YOUTH Employed or enrolled in education 4th quarter after exit	69%	Exceeded
YOUTH Credential Attainment	55%	Exceeded
WP Employed 2nd quarter after exit	65%	Exceeded
WP Employed 4th quarter after exit	63%	Exceeded
WE Median Earnings	\$5,000	Exceeded

Assessment of Title II—Adult Education

Adult Education Federal Participant Performance Outcomes

Adult Education Learner Type	FY18 Enrollment	FY18 Measurable Skills Gain	FY18 Federal Target	FY18 Outcome
Adult Basic Education- ABE	3,903	39%	-	-
English as a Second Language- ESL	2,103	32%	-	-
Adult Education Learners- All	6,006	37%	37%	Exceeded

Adult Education Learner Type	FY18 Enrollment	FY18 Measurable Skills Gain	FY18 Federal Target	FY18 Outcome
Adult Basic Education- ABE	3,752	36%	-	-
English as a Second Language- ESL	2,078	30%	-	-
Adult Education Learners- All	5,830	34%	34%	Did not meet

Primary Indicators of Performance	FY19 Number Achieved	FY19 Percent Achieved
Employment- 2Q	1,500	33%
Employment- 4Q	1726	32%
Median Wage	\$4,349.00	-
Secondary School Credential & Postsecondary Enrollment	149	10%
Secondary School Credential & Employment	314	39%

After exceeding federal targets in both FY17 and FY18, measurable skill gains decreased slightly in FY19 and the negotiated target of 41 percent for FY19 was not met. Performance measures are expected to improve in FY21 with recent changes to the managed information system to better capture skill gains for high school completion and an increased focus on post-testing learners. Baseline percentages have been established for employment and postsecondary outcomes in FY19 and with both increased academic rigor and better alignment with comprehensive career pathway services, Maine adult education's baseline percentages will improve.

Title IV Programs—Vocational Rehabilitation

Within the Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), Maine has two federally designated state units, the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), which deliver vocational rehabilitation (VR) services.

In accordance with Section 116(b) of WIOA, as well as the Rehabilitation Services Administration's TAC 19-01, BRS is updating its internal controls and quality assurance processes to assure the accuracy, validity, and reliability of its performance data. As part of this effort, BRS is working with its core partners to develop additional data sources that will provide a more complete report of the outcomes achieved by people with disabilities served by DVR and DBVI. In addition to Maine unemployment insurance wage data, Maine will access the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) data by submitting regularly scheduled data requests. BRS has contracted with the National Student Clearinghouse and will access data from that source on a regular basis to document credential attainment, both academic and occupational. BRS is also developing a data sharing agreement with Maine's Department of Education, to assist with documenting adult, secondary and career and technical credentials and measurable skill gains. The agreement is expected to be in place in PY 2019.

BRS is providing ongoing training to all staff so that they have a solid working knowledge of WIOA and how it impacts the work they do. Training topics have included: an overview of WIOA partners, common performance measures, career pathways, and best practices in serving the needs of employers. BRS has an intensive technical assistance agreement in place with WINTAC (the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center) to assist with this effort and to further their expertise on common performance measures, internal controls, career pathways, apprenticeships and peer mentoring.

BRS and its core partners are using the Maine JobLink as a common data collection tool for performance data regarding effectiveness serving employers.

For the first two years of the 2020-2023 plan, DVR and DBVI have two full years of data available regarding the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only and have identified an initial expected level of performance on that measure from which to negotiate with the Rehabilitation Services Administration. As directed in the Information Collection Request, the following indicators will be designated as "baseline" for the VR programs for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit),
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit),
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit), and
- Credential Attainment Rate

D. EVALUATION

See III.b.4.A

5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

A. FOR TITLE I PROGRAMS

I. YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 128(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

Maine uses the basic formula identified in WIOA Sec. 128 (b) for local area distribution of WIOA Title IB youth funds and uses the basic formula identified in WIOA Sec. 132(b) for local area distribution Title IB formula funded Adult and Dislocated Worker funds. Because Maine uses the exact formula identified under these sections of WIOA the State has not issued a separate policy on WIOA Title IB fund distribution to local areas.

Of the total amount of funds allocated for Youth training under WIOA §128, the State will reserve 15% for statewide activities including administration as permitted by WIOA. The remaining amount will be distributed to local areas:

33 1/3% of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative number of unemployed individuals residing in areas of substantial unemployment in each local area as compared to the total number of such unemployed individuals in the State.

33 1/3% of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative excess number of unemployed individuals who reside in each local area as compared to the total number of such unemployed individuals in the State. "Excess number" means the number of unemployed individuals in excess of 4.5 percent of the civilian labor force.

33 1/3% of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative number of disadvantaged youth compared to the total number of disadvantaged youth in the State.

The State will not employ the discretionary option described in WIOA §128(b) (3).

Data for the first two requirements will be produced by MDOL's Center for Workforce Information Services. Data for the third element will be provided by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) from census data.

The State will employ the discretion given by the Secretary of Labor to utilize the "hold harmless" clause described above.

As Maine follows the WIOA local area distribution formula, we are adding the "minimum percentage" component to the plan which delineates how funds are allocated to local areas for the Youth and Dislocated Worker Programs. The wording is exactly the same for both the Youth and Dislocated Worker allocation description.

Minimum Percentage – The Local Area will not receive an allocation percentage for a fiscal year that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the two preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with the preceding sentence shall be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

II. ADULT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

Maine uses the basic formula identified in WIOA Sec. 128 (b) for local area distribution of WIOA Title IB youth funds and uses the basic formula identified in WIOA Sec. 132(b) for local area distribution Title IB formula funded Adult and Dislocated Worker funds. Because Maine uses the exact formula identified under these sections of WIOA the State has not issued a separate policy on WIOA Title IB fund distribution to local areas.

Of the total amount of funds allocated for the Adult program under WIOA §132(b) (1), the State reserves 15 percent for statewide activities and administration as permitted. The remaining amount is distributed to local areas within 30 days of receipt as required by WIOA §182(e).

The state does not utilize a discretionary formula for distribution and has adhered to the basic allocation formula as follows:

33 1/3% of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative number of unemployed individuals residing in areas of substantial unemployment in each local area as compared to the total number of such unemployed individuals in the State.

33 1/3% of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative excess number of unemployed individuals who reside in each local area as compared to the total number of such unemployed individuals in the State. "Excess number" means the number of unemployed individuals in excess of 4.5 percent of the civilian labor force.

33 1/3% of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative number of disadvantaged adults compared to the total number of disadvantaged adults in the State.

Data for the first two requirements will be produced by MDOL's Center for Workforce Information Services. Data for the third element will be provided by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) from census data.

The State will employ the discretion given by the Secretary of Labor to utilize the "hold harmless" clause:

MINIMUM PERCENTAGE--No service delivery area within any State shall be allocated an amount equal to less than 90 percent of the average of its allocation percentage for the two preceding fiscal years prior to the fiscal year for which such determination is made. If the amounts appropriated pursuant to section 3(a)(1) for a fiscal year and available to carry out this part are not sufficient to provide an amount equal to at least 90 percent of such allocation percentage to each such area, the amounts allocated to each area shall be ratably reduced.

III. DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) AND BASED ON DATA AND WEIGHTS ASSIGNED

Of the total amount of funds allocated for Dislocated Worker services under WIOA §132(b) (2), the State will reserve 25 percent for statewide rapid response activities as permitted by WIOA §133(a) (2) and will reserve 15 percent for statewide activities including administration as permitted by WIOA.

The remaining amount will be distributed to local areas according to WIOA §133(b) (2) (B). The following four data elements will be used to calculate allocation percentages:

Insured unemployment- The average weekly number of continued unemployment insurance program claims (less partial) during the previous full year for which data is available for each county is aggregated by local area and divided by the total to arrive at a percentage for each local area.

Unemployment concentrations- The annual average of unemployment for each county during the previous full year for which data is available is aggregated by local area and divided by the total to arrive at a percentage for each local area.

Declining industries data- The number of jobs lost between the previous full year for which data is available and the year five years previous to that year in both durable and non-durable goods manufacturing by county is aggregated by local area and divided by the total to arrive at a percentage for each local area.

Long-term unemployment data- The number of unemployment insurance program exhaustees during the previous full year for which data is available for each county is aggregated by local area and divided by the total to arrive at a percentage for each local area.

Data for these elements will be produced by MDOL's Center for Workforce Information Services. Each of the above elements is weighted equally.

The remaining factors named in §133(b)(2)(B)(ii), "plant closing and mass layoff data" and "farmer-rancher economic hardship data" will only be considered if proven to be useful for the distribution of funds to areas of need in Maine. Large plant closings have occurred in some Maine counties, but are not a predictor of the location of future large plant closings. Although ten years ago there were many farmers in certain areas of the state who were leaving agriculture, in the years since, there has been no wholesale dislocations which would require more attention to this occupation than others.

As Maine follows the WIOA local area distribution formula, we are adding the "minimum percentage" component to the plan which delineates how funds are allocated to local areas for the Youth and Dislocated Worker Programs. The wording is exactly the same for both the Youth and Dislocated Worker allocation description.

Minimum Percentage – The local area will not receive an allocation percentage for a fiscal year that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the two preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with the preceding sentence shall be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

Allocation Distribution

MDOL will not exceed the 5 percent limitation of the Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker program allocations allowable for administrative functions, any remaining set aside funds will be used to conduct other required and allowable statewide activities.

Allocation distributions have always been figured according to each individual county within a local area. The formulas for calculating the allocations based on areas of significant unemployment, , excess unemployed, and disadvantaged adults will continue to be used in the county allocation formula.

The following charts provide a summary of the Program Year 2019 WIOA Formula fund distribution to local areas.

Title I Allocation of Distributed Funds Under Three Local Areas

Northeastern Workforce Development Board

Program	County	Program \$	Board Admin \$	Total
Adult	Aroostook	\$154,520	\$17,168	\$171,688
Adult	Hancock	\$84,764	\$9,418	\$94,182
Adult	Penobscot	\$202,718	\$22,524	\$225,242
Adult	Piscataquis	\$31,955	\$3,551	\$35,506
Adult	Washington	\$81,484	\$9,054	\$90,538
Adult Total		\$555,441	\$61,715	\$617,156
DW	Aroostook	\$84,459	\$9,384	\$93,843
DW	Hancock	\$114,444	\$12,716	\$127,160

Program	County	Program \$	Board Admin \$	Total
DW	Penobscot	\$246,466	\$27,385	\$273,851
DW	Piscataquis	\$15,026	\$1,669	\$16,695
DW	Washington	\$36,737	\$4,082	\$40,819
DWTotal		\$497,132	\$55,236	\$552,368
Youth	Aroostook	\$164,673	\$18,297	\$182,970
Youth	Hancock	\$89,992	\$9,999	\$99,991
Youth	Penobscot	\$255,845	\$28,427	\$284,272
Youth	Piscataquis	\$31,927	\$6,548	\$38,475
Youth	Washington	\$89,714	\$9,968	\$99,682
YouthTotal		\$632,151	\$73,239	\$705,390
GrandTotal		\$1,684,724	\$190,190	\$1,874,914

Coastal Counties Workforce Development Board

Program	County	Program \$	Board Admin \$	Total
Adult	Cumberland	\$208,161	\$23,129	\$231,290
Adult	Knox	\$35,718	\$3,969	\$39,687
Adult	Lincoln	\$33,027	\$3,670	\$36,697
Adult	Sagadahoc	\$23,732	\$2,637	\$26,369
Adult	Waldo	\$57,926	\$6,436	\$64,362
Adult	York	\$156,056	\$17,340	\$173,396
Adult Total		\$514,620	\$57,181	\$571,801
DW	Cumberland	\$167,062	\$18,562	\$185,624
DW	Knox	\$27,671	\$3,075	\$30,746
DW	Lincoln	\$25,357	\$2,818	\$28,175
DW	Sagadahoc	\$24,446	\$2,716	\$27,162
DW	Waldo	\$36,993	\$4,110	\$41,103
DW	York	\$183,950	\$20,439	\$204,389
DW Total		\$465,479	\$51,720	\$517,199
Youth	Cumberland	\$249,218	\$27,691	\$276,909
Youth	Knox	\$35,094	\$3,899	\$38,993
Youth	Lincoln	\$31,812	\$3,534	\$35,346

Program	County	Program \$	Board Admin \$	Total
Youth	Sagadahoc	\$22,452	\$2,495	\$24,947
Youth	Waldo	\$61,187	\$6,798	\$67,985
Youth	York	\$161,037	\$17,893	\$178,930
Youth Total		\$560,800	\$62,310	\$623,110
Grand Total		\$1,540,899	\$171,211	\$1,712,110

Central Western Workforce Development Board

Program	County	Program \$	Board Admin \$	Total
Adult	Androscoggin	\$144,204	\$16,022	\$160,226
Adult	Franklin	\$41,633	\$4,626	\$46,259
Adult	Kennebec	\$162,504	\$18,056	\$180,560
Adult	Oxford	\$89,938	\$9,993	\$99,931
Adult	Somerset	\$181,401	\$20,155	\$201,556
Adult Total		\$619,680	\$68,852	\$688,532
DW	Androscoggin	\$86,797	\$9,644	\$96,441
DW	Franklin	\$70,287	\$7,810	\$78,097
DW	Kennebec	\$85,638	\$9,516	\$95,154
DW	Oxford	\$86,069	\$9,563	\$95,632
DW	Somerset	\$112,918	\$12,546	\$125,464
DW Total		\$441,709	\$49,079	\$490,788
Youth	Androscoggin	\$162,747	\$18,083	\$180,830
Youth	Franklin	\$52,333	\$5,815	\$58,148
Youth	Kennebec	\$176,269	\$19,585	\$195,854
Youth	Oxford	\$88,233	\$9,804	\$98,037
Youth	Somerset	\$183,735	\$20,415	\$204,150
Youth Total		\$663,317	\$73,702	\$737,019
Grand Total		\$1,724,706	\$191,633	\$1,916,339

B. FOR TITLE II

I. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL AWARD MULTI-YEAR GRANTS OR CONTRACTS ON A COMPETITIVE BASIS TO ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS IN THE STATE, INCLUDING HOW ELIGIBLE AGENCIES WILL ESTABLISH THAT ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS ARE ORGANIZATIONS OF DEMONSTRATED EFFECTIVENESS

Through a competitive, multi-year grant process, eligible providers apply for funds to provide adult education services. Eligible providers may include: local educational agencies; community-based or faith-based organizations; volunteer literacy organizations; institutions of higher education; public or private nonprofit agencies; libraries; public housing authorities; a nonprofit institution having the ability to provide adult education and literacy services to adults; and a consortium of agencies, organizations, institutions, and libraries described above; a partnership between an employer and an entity described in any of the categories listed above; and other organization types not in the list above that have the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals.

Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy funds are used to provide adult literacy services throughout the state. Historically, adult education services have been provided in a variety of locations (i.e. public schools, libraries, CareerCenters, municipal buildings and other facilities) in each of Maine's 16 counties. Beginning in FY18, the state established nine adult education and career development areas that were aligned with the boundaries of the three local workforce boards. To encourage innovation and maximize efficiencies and resources, local adult education providers within these geographic areas were formed into hubs. The Maine Office of Adult Education awarded one AEFLA grant to each service area with the understanding that the eligible provider would have the capacity and intent to provide adult education services in a variety of locations throughout the service area.

Maine Adult Education released a competitive RFP (request for proposal) on February 21, 2019 to award contracts to eligible agencies for the provision of WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) services to eligible individuals in need of AEFLA services to improve their academic and workforce prospects. It is the purpose of Maine Adult Education under WIOA to provide adult education and literacy services that also align with the goals in the State of Maine 2020-2023 Unified Plan and encourage the growth of educational opportunities and, where applicable, to ensure career, citizenship and college readiness for all Maine adults. The initial grant cycle is for FY20-22 (July 1, 2019-June 30, 2021). Subject to continued availability of funding and demonstrated effectiveness as determined by outcomes, the Department may opt to renew the contracts for two renewal periods, July 2021 through June 30, 2023 and July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024.

Each eligible agency that applied, in order to be considered for funding, had to have demonstrated effectiveness in serving eligible adult learners (low levels of literacy, English language learners, learners with barriers) and the ability to meet the thirteen considerations of WIOA Title II. That effectiveness was determined by the State from the submission of relevant data as part of the proposal process. Required data needed to show numbers of low-level learners served, English language learners, educational gain, transition to employment and/or postsecondary or skills training. Proposals that are unable to provide evidence of adequate effectiveness were not considered.

Proposals were assessed on their ability to meet the thirteen considerations and other requirements of WIOA, demonstrate evidence of successful past performance in providing adult literacy services, programmatic alignment with local workforce board plan priorities, and the ability to successfully address the state's career pathways components. Additional WIOA requirements that must be met include the ability to offer programs that: lead to industry-recognized credentials; lead to postsecondary credentials; meet the educational and training needs of individuals with barriers; relate to in-demand industry sectors and occupations in Maine; and make use of technology to increase accessibility.

As a result of the RFP, nine two-year contracts were awarded to providers, one award to each of the nine service area hubs, as outlined in the RFP. Awardees held in good standing and maintaining demonstrated effectiveness may be eligible to renew the contract for up to two renewal periods. Approximately 90 percent of allocated funding is awarded as a “base amount” with 10 percent of the funding available for incentives. Base funding is calculated by determining a “per student” allocation taking into account both the population density and need for services by hub as indicated by data from the most recent American Community Survey. Incentive funding is distributed equally among all hubs meeting the specific state targets and incentive performance measures identified each year.

II. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE DIRECT AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS TO APPLY AND COMPETE FOR FUNDS AND HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE THAT IT IS USING THE SAME GRANT OR CONTRACT ANNOUNCEMENT AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS

See 5.B.i

C. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

The state legislature distributes funding for vocational rehabilitation services as part of the biennial budget. The amounts are generally based on the prior year allotment with adjustments made for personal services and funding requests submitted by the agency for specific purposes. These funding requests may or may not be approved by the legislature. Each division of the Bureau Rehabilitation Services has their own individual general fund appropriation account within the biennial budget which is the basis of each individual account within the state’s accounting system. The general fund appropriation is not shared between the two divisions.

6. PROGRAM DATA

A. DATA ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

Core partners of this Unified Plan presently utilize disparate case management and management information systems (MIS): Adult Education uses MaineSTARS, Vocational Rehabilitation utilizes AWARE, and Wagner-Peyser and Title I-B formula program providers use the Maine JobLink, a product of America’s Job Link Alliance (AJLA).

Resources for new systems or system enhancements in a small state such as Maine are constrained (states with relatively small populations cannot cover the fixed costs of purchasing and maintaining operating systems as readily as larger states, which receive substantially higher funding allotments). These facts notwithstanding, Maine’s core partners recognize that achieving the type of integrated and efficient service levels articulated in this plan will require ‘breaking down the data siloes’ and achieving greater levels of system integration.

In the autumn of 2016, Maine received a \$1.1 million-dollar Reemployment and Systems Integration (RSI) Dislocated Worker grant (DWG) to investigate and implement a common registration and case management portal across the multiple core programs. The working group for this project gathered information from other states on their pursuit of similar initiatives and worked with vendors to review available options for solutions. A request for proposals (RFP) containing the State’s requirements for a system was developed and a vendor secured through competitive bid. The system, named WORK Services: Workforce Opportunities, Referrals, and Knowledge Services, integrates the disparate case management systems and incorporates a public facing portal.

Currently in a limited release with a plan for statewide rollout in 2020, the system allows some connection of the core partner data systems and sharing of information among partners (with informed consent by the participant). This enhances and streamlines WIOA reporting, reduces duplication for participants and staff, simplifies the registration process, has capacity to add partner agencies over time and ensures data governance that maintains data security and personal privacy compliance. Because of Maine's rural geography, it also provides access for people who may have difficulty traveling to a physical site or need to utilize services outside normal business hours.

The portal allows individuals to submit initial personal information and find programs based on their answers to high level screening questions. These questions identify individuals who might benefit from programs, including identifying people with disabilities and those who have not achieved a secondary education and/or those interested in education and training opportunities.

Further work is anticipated to integrate with the state's unemployment compensation system, ReEmployME into the WORK Services system as intended by the RSI DWG grant.

The Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI), MDOL's labor market information provider, will add data on participants of core partners to the Maine Education and Attainment Research Navigation system or MaineEARNs, thereby linking the records of core program participants with their corresponding wage and employment records for program evaluation and reporting purposes.

MaineEARNs also provides information on employment and wage outcomes for Maine workers who graduated from the University of Maine System and Maine Community College System after July 2008. Students, parents, educators, administrators, policy makers, and anyone interested in earning education credentials and employment in Maine will be able to use this data to research, plan and make informed decisions. Interest has been expressed by at least one private university to join in the collections and reporting. It is this same system which is being used to meet the requirement for the annual Eligible Training Provider reporting requirement. Interest has been expressed from the University of Maine System to begin collecting and reporting on the awarding of micro-credentials and including them in the MaineEARNs system.

Maine has made strides in developing the capacity for core programs and other partners to share an integrated data system that will allow each agency to collect, utilize, protect, and report out data specific to their agency while also being able to share and utilize common data from other partner agencies. Agencies are acutely aware of issues of confidentiality and privacy in the sharing and reporting of information and take measures to ensure that participants provide consent to share information between agencies.

Ultimately, Maine will have to develop the capacity for core programs and other partners to share an integrated data system that will allow each agency to collect, utilize, protect, and report out data specific to their agency while also being able to share and utilize common data from other partner agencies. The core partners are committed to this process and have established a data systems workgroup containing members from each core partner tasked with researching available software and other technology solutions. It is still early in the process for systems alignment, but to date, the group has been formed and begun meeting. First steps in the timeline include researching available software and identifying which data system model might work best in Maine. Additional information regarding specific data system models is included in part two of the data alignment and integration section.

The WORK Services application described in the previous section brings Maine along the path of streamlining intake and delivery services. The plan is for a statewide rollout of the system in 2020 which will increase the availability of information to participants and integration of the state's information management systems.

Work will begin with the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation to evaluate how to integrate Maine's unemployment compensation system with the W.O.R.K. Services application.

The WIOA system partners will work together to identify additional partners who could benefit from integrated systems as well. These could include higher education partners, licensing, and health and human services partners.

Integrating any partner in the W.O.R.K. Services application will take extensive work to:

- Identify the pieces of information within the core program's system that should be shared
- Establish data sharing agreements
- Address the privacy and governance issues surrounding the use of the shared data
- Identify funding to support purchase and implementation of the strategy

The State Workforce Board (SWB) will assist the governor in aligning technology and data systems across partner programs. With the leadership of the SWB a comprehensive strategy for aligning and integrating complex data systems will establish the parameters for new technology systems in order to allow core partner systems to communicate, enable common intake, and other shared front-end system activities. The MDOL is implementing a new management information system, provided by America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA), which facilitates federal reporting. The SWB will also take a leadership role in establishing the parameters for new system software that will enable common intake and other shared front-end system activities.

The SWB will advise the governor on technology systems for tracking benchmark performance indicators of programs and participants. Maine's Workforce Longitudinal Data System will play an integral role in measuring the outcomes of participants over time in order to measure and direct resources more effectively.

The SWB also convenes the WIOA Steering Committee and facilitates discussions in support of creating improved modes of service delivery to individuals, including those with barriers and who are unemployed. The core partners are also represented on the Steering Committee and through numerous meetings and discussions; a comprehensive strategy that reflects their input and the desire of the governor for increased efficiency of operations is being developed.

All core partners currently use wage data from the Unemployment Insurance system to report employment and median earnings performance outcomes required by Section 116 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The Bureau of Unemployment Compensation (BUC), the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), the Bureau of Employment Services (BES), and the Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI) are all housed within the Maine Department of Labor. The BRS contracts with the BUC to conduct employment and earnings match necessary to report participant performance to the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor on a quarterly and annual basis. Through an agreement with the CWRI, Maine Adult Education also partners to conduct employment and earnings match on behalf of their customers. The BES houses the management information system (Maine JobLink) used by the following programs: Title I-B Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, Title III

employment services, the Jobs for Veteran's State grant, Trade Adjustment Assistance, and Title ID National Farmworker Jobs Program. A process has been built into the system to match employment and earnings data necessary to report employment and earnings performance outcomes.

Credential attainment data for Title I-B adult, dislocated worker and youth services are collected through the Maine JobLink system based on data entered by service provider staff and validated through document uploads. Similarly, staff enter and track measurable skills gains for participants enrolled in training or education services. Title I-B programs report on five types of measurable skills gains. Title I-B providers track educational functioning level (EFL) gains through pre- and post-test scores using CASAS.

As a core partner, Maine Adult Education, also works with the Center for Workforce Research and Innovation (CWRI) and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) database through the Maine Department of Labor is able to meet employment and earnings performance data obtained through a data match using participant social security numbers. Although median earnings were not being collected or reported for Adult Education in the past, improved collaboration and integration of data reporting systems processes allow for accurate and complete employment and median wage data for federal reports.

Adult Education also collects performance measures regarding credential attainment and postsecondary outcomes. Credential attainment for secondary school diplomas and high school equivalency is obtained by accessing data through the State's managed information system, MaineSTARS and through the state account of the HiSET Data Access Manager database. Postsecondary enrollment information for adult education is conducted through a data match using the National Student Clearinghouse through the Maine Department of Education. Although the information obtained through the clearinghouse is useful for tracking some postsecondary enrollment, it is not as effective in tracking successful postsecondary completions. Clearinghouse data is incomplete and does not include all recognized postsecondary education or training programs. To enable core programs to collect and report this required data, core partners are examining ways several data sets may be able to be combined to compile the data necessary for the required performance measures. The core partners are also exploring ways to align the Department of Labor's expanded Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) with the new data requirements under WIOA.

Measurable skill gains are currently collected and reported for Adult Education using the federally approved CASAS assessment for the pre-and-post testing of participants. Core partners have agreed to coordinate and align measurable skills assessment by implementing eCASAS as the assessment tool used by all partners. Currently eCASAS assessments are recognized and used by all local Adult Education programs, one-stops, and other eligible training providers. Results are shared where appropriate to reduce duplicative testing.

B. ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS

All Title I-B performance measures, except measurable skill gains, are measured after exit from the program. Credential and employment outcomes may be measured up to one year after exit from the program. Staff continue to work with clients to provide follow-up services that will ensure success in employment and/or education.

In addition to staff-entered credential attainment data, the Bureau of Employment Services works with training providers to gather data on overall completion and credential attainment rates for all students attending approved programs of study listed on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). The ETP report combines participant outcome data tracked in Maine

JobLink with all student data submitted by each training provider to the Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI). Data submitted to CWRI is cycled through their MaineEARNs data base to simplify this reporting requirement for eligible providers and data is combined with Maine JobLink data to produce the annual ETP report required under WIOA and required in Maine for continued approval as an eligible training provider. This report format is very new resulting in sparse data; however, as time moves on it is anticipated this report will be quite robust and promote sound decisions by WIOA participants in regard to how they will invest their training accounts.

Developing long-term participant outcomes is essential to creating a continuous cycle of program and system improvement. Moreover, as discussed in the first section of this Unified Plan (Economic and Workforce Analysis), Maine has a variety of workforce challenges that require measurement, tracking and assessment. As such, Maine's core partners are committed to producing an evaluation system that extends beyond what's required for federal reporting.

MaineEARNs will play an integral role in measuring long-term participant outcomes. It presently measures first year wage and employment outcomes of university and community college graduates at the campus, credential, and area of study level. As part of this plan, the system will be used to measure the outcomes of workforce development system program participants. To do so, the WIOA Steering Committee, core program managers and the SWB will collaborate to define the data that is required to inform decision making and program improvement.

The Department will explore other programs that are not presently using wage data for performance accountability evaluations to be added to the wage-matching system. There is an opportunity for Maine's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to develop a data sharing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Maine Department of Labor for the purposes of evaluating the outcomes of Department of Health and Human Services participants.

C. USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) WAGE RECORD DATA

A Maine Department of Labor Memorandum of Understanding regarding the use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage record data permits the MDOL to use the data in several ways. First, data will be used to measure and manage performance for: Title I-B Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs; Wagner-Peyser Employment Services; Trade Adjustment Assistance; Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC); National Dislocated Worker Grants; and other federal initiatives. Then wage data will be used for customizing and providing services to employers, and finally the data will be utilized to measure and evaluate long term outcomes and performance through the Maine Education and Attainment Research Navigation system (MaineEARNs) on behalf the department, other agencies, and educational institutions.

MDOL uses wage data to monitor the status and progress of participants enrolled in the Title 1-B, Wagner-Peyser and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs to certify work history for the WOTC program. The wage data will also be utilized to determine the initial and continuing eligibility of training providers approved to receive WIOA training funds and to be included on Maine's Eligible Training Provider List. In addition, standard assessments and reports will be posted on the web so that consumers will be able to easily access information that will assist them in making choices about the variety of education and training programs available in Maine, and the providers of those training programs.

By funding MaineEARNs, Maine's policymakers have clearly signaled the move towards data-driven decision making in future rulemaking, goal setting, and program evaluation. Standard reports will be designed to provide information to evaluate the effectiveness of training

programs administered by multiple partners. Standard reports will guide improvement of the workforce system by enabling administrators to evaluate program effectiveness and allocate limited public funds more effectively.

D. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

Personally identifiable information at the individual record level is protected through systems security measures and by having all staff sign a confidentiality agreement and, as necessary, requiring customers to sign release of information forms. In terms of outside agencies personally identifiable information is protected by aggregating individual records and standardized confidentiality screening. MaineEARNs public facing results are aggregated to protect the confidentiality of participants being measured. In addition, outcomes with fewer than 10 participants are suppressed for confidentiality purposes. The Center for Workforce Research and Information is implementing additional privacy protections by adopting a System Security Plan based on FIPS 199/NIST 800-60 Vol2, Rev1 guidelines.

7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS

The State has issued a policy regarding priority of service for veterans, policy PY15-23 Priority of Service for Veterans.

The SWB, the MDOL and local workforce service providers are responsible for developing strategies and implementing the veterans' priority of service as required by 38 U.S.C 4215(b) and 20 CFR Parts 1001 and 1010. Maine's one-stop system is the core mechanism that will support, expand and maintain services to the veteran population throughout the State. Eligible veterans covered persons with significant barriers to employment as defined in Veterans' Program Letter (VPL) 03-14, 03-14 Change 1 & 2 and 03-19.

Priority of service applies to Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act Adult, Dislocated and Youth Grants, Demonstration Grants, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Wagner-Peyser, and other core programs funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and administered in Maine by the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL). Accordingly, MDOL has issued guidance to the State's Local Workforce Boards (LWBs) requiring local policy issuance to WIOA service providers to include priority of service for Veterans requirements in *agreements* (plans, contracts and subcontracts).

The MDOL and one-stop providers will take the necessary actions to ensure that priority of service opportunities are clearly visible and articulated to all customers who engage in one-stop services. At a minimum, priority of service to veterans will include adherence to and implementation of the following guidelines:

Outreach/Recruitment:

- Inclusion of information regarding veterans' priority of service in printed materials targeted to customers and employers
- Inclusion of information regarding veterans' priority of service in presentations made to customers and employers
- Addition of veterans' priority of service information to service providers, Maine one-stop centers and MDOL web sites
- Pro-active recruitment of veterans by targeted strategies that focus on employers as well as job seeking veterans

Notification:

- Addition of a veterans' priority of service rights statement to the complaint procedures provided to a Veteran customer
- Addition of a veterans' priority of service rights statement to the signature portion of the paper intake forms
- Provision of the opportunity for veterans and covered persons to make known their veteran status
- The Maine JobLink job notification system, which will inform eligible veterans of job opportunities before all other registrants

Intake/Registration for Services:

- Written policies to establish that service providers who receive WIOA funds for employment and training programs will be required to identify covered persons at the point of entry to programs and/or services, so that veterans and covered persons can take full advantage of priority of service
- Written policies and procedures to ensure veterans and covered persons understand their entitlement to priority of service, the full array of employment and training services available, the eligibility requirements that veterans and covered persons must meet in order to gain entry into programs and services

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

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

Many veterans face difficulty transitioning to civilian life and may require specialized employment and training services to boost their job prospects. Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) and MDOL have established effective program designs that include other providers, such as the Togus Veteran's Rehabilitation Program. Additionally, veterans with more severe adjustment difficulties may require counseling, social services, and more in-depth support from specialists who are equipped to address their needs.

Maine's Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) generate the Quarterly Report on Services to Veterans, for which content requirements are identified by one-stop center managers. These reports focus on compliance with federal laws and regulations with respect to special services and priorities for veterans.

As new USDOL and MDOL veterans' programs are introduced and implemented, the veterans' team and Wagner-Peyser staff will assist in delivering these services and programs to veterans.

Delivery of services through the one-stop system to veterans and covered persons is standardized to ensure that no veteran or covered person is turned away without receiving

some level of service. All WP staff are (and will continue to be) trained to provide initial assessment and triage for all customers entering our CareerCenters, including veterans. After initial assessment, WP staff will determine if they will provide needed services to the veteran or if a referral to the local DVOP is required. If the veteran does not meet the JVSG target population or if a DVOP is not currently available, CareerCenter staff will provide one-on-one assistance, including individualized career services, to veterans and eligible persons. This may include assessment, planning, advocacy, job development, job matching, referral to other state and federal programs and follow-up. If the veterans meets JVSG eligibility, they are referred to the CareerCenter's Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialists (DVOPs), who work exclusively with veterans and covered persons to facilitate their access to all programs and services for which they are eligible under the priority of service policy. These specialists provide one-on-one assistance that includes case management, assessment, planning, provision of individualized career services, advocacy, job development, job matching, referral to other state and federal programs and follow-up. In addition, at our AJC's 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.

As veterans and eligible spouses may be referred to any available employment and training service open to the general public regardless of funding source, it is important that all one-stop center staff establish and maintain effective working relationships with one-stop system partners and service networks. These relationships will strengthen coordination of interagency efforts to help support veteran service initiatives. Veterans' priority of service language will be integrated into financial and nonfinancial working agreements and Memoranda of Understanding with other organizations to ensure Maine's workforce development system is "Keeping the Promise!"

8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The State Board has implemented the "Accessibility, Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Policy" which codified the State's commitment to universal access and non-discrimination. Going beyond compliance with accessibility requirements, it seeks to provide universally accessible services.

Ensuring the accessibility of one-stop centers and compliance with disability-related regulations is also included in the "One-Stop Certification Criteria Policy", including:

- Making reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities;
- Making reasonable modifications to policies, practices, and procedures where necessary to avoid discrimination against individuals with disabilities;
- Administering programs in the most integrated setting appropriate;
- Communicating with persons with disabilities as effectively as with others;
- Providing appropriate auxiliary aids and services, including assistive technology devices and services to afford individuals with disabilities equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, program activities; and
- Providing for the physical and programmatic accessibility of the one-stop center to individuals with disabilities.

The State will continue to enhance its education and outreach capabilities through the duration of this current plan through the ongoing training and support of partners in the implementation of a universally accessible system.

One facet of this is the enhancement of the Accessibility Guide currently available on the Bureau of Rehabilitation's website. Developed as part of a leadership academy, the site has served as a quick resource on information regarding accessibility and managing some of the potential issues. It provides quick, synthesized information on technical issues for things like documents and presentations, as well as building accessibility and etiquette. The State is working with the Information Technology Accessibility Committee (ITAC) to further develop the website. The site will be updated to ensure current content, re-designed to ensure better usability of the information and moved to provide greater visibility to the content for State agencies and interested partners. The ITAC will take over the monitoring and updating of the content of the site, and the Office of Information Technology web services unit will take over the technical management of the website.

Section 188 Checklist

The WIOA Section 188 Checklist developed by the USDOL Office of Civil Rights will be a guiding document. The checklist is considered a comprehensive overview of requirements and provides reliable advice on achieving and sustaining universal access.

Leveraging existing resources and constituent committees

Maine continues to build and maintain a system that includes access based on language, race, national origin, religion, culture/ethnicity, ability/disability, age, sex/gender identity, and all other protected classes under WIOA, the Americans with Disability Act, applicable state laws, and other federal laws related to public access and civil rights. The working group developed "Priorities for Equal Opportunity/ Non-discrimination/ Accessibility Assessment of One Stops," user friendly guidance based on the Section 188 Checklist and the policy, to help them meet the standards.

The Maine State Workforce Board has several committees designed to address the workforce needs of specific constituencies, including women, older workers, younger workers, veterans, and people with disabilities. As issues or questions arise, these committees will be asked to advise on programmatic and physical access and to assist with policies and operational guidance to assure that the one-stop system and its partners are accessible and meeting requirements. Other organizations serving and representing job-seeking constituencies, including migrant and seasonal workers, "displaced homemakers," formerly incarcerated, populations whose identities are based on culture/ethnicity/religion, youth, people with disabilities, and older Mainers will be consulted and invited to participate in planning, policy review, staff training, testing and evaluating programmatic and physical access, including customer service. The State Rehabilitation Councils for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, as well as the Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened, State Independent Living Council and the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council, will also be included. Focus groups and surveys of customers and larger affected populations will be used to determine if accessibility goals are being met.

Core priorities

Developing a vision and working definition of universal access is essential. Maine does not have all the human and financial resources to implement and sustain universal access without a

commitment to a long-term initiative. Therefore, the initial priority is the development of a five-year strategic initiative, with each year's efforts building on and refining prior efforts. The system's vision of universal access will dictate the goal(s) and will provide the destination for the five-year course. Determining how to best inspire system investment will be part of the working group's charge. Staff training and initial policy development will follow quickly.

Training: Professional development for any major systems or operational change is one of the best guarantors of sustainability. With the goal of sustained competence related to serving diverse populations and with related policies in mind within the workforce development system and among partner agencies, the work group will develop a training plan that is compatible and synchronized with other staff training. The objective of the universal access training efforts is sustained competence related to serving diverse populations and knowledge of related policies across the system and among partner agencies.

Training for employees will include information on locating and providing access to needed resources such as translators and interpreters, transportation services, and alternative formats. The Section 188 Checklist will inform training topics and plans for managers, supervisors, and facility operations staff.

Initial training for staff and partners will include, at a minimum:

- General orientation to universal access, WIOA and other legal requirements
- Customer service-both culturally sensitive service and general customer service
- Resources within the system and in the larger community
- Complaint resolution

A variety of training approaches will be considered and deployed, depending on available financial and human resources, training topics, and other conditions. Co-training with and for partners will be considered to best use resources and help system partners' staffs to "be on the same page." Blending and braiding training resources will be a guiding principle.

All one-stop center staff will be trained and required to demonstrate competency in serving diverse populations and knowledge of related policies across the system and among partner agencies. One-stop center certification will depend on demonstrating that employees have achieved the required competencies in universal access.

Managers and supervisors, in collaboration with our WIOA staff development group, will provide training to new hires, and on an annual or biennial basis to all staff. The training will be recorded and some training will be offered through online training providers, such as the New England ADA Technical Assistance Center and other regional ADATACs. The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Maine Department of Education, and other agencies (such as those named above as Universal Access work group members/resources) will provide, or help provide, training.

Examples of other training to be offered, either concurrently or after initial training has been completed:

- Hidden disabilities
- Deaf culture
- Blind culture

- Mental health first aid
- Service animals
- Accessing community resources
- Creating accessible documents

The WIOA implementation steering team will identify a method for documenting compliance with training requirements for implementation by supervisors and managers. Documentation will be a required element of one-stop certification and monitoring.

Policies: During the implementation of the State's 2016-2020 Unified State Plan, the State Board implemented the Accessibility, Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Policy which codified the State's commitment to universal access and non-discrimination. Going beyond compliance with accessibility requirements, it seeks to provide universally accessible services.

The policies will also reference procedures for filing complaints, which are already contained in our CareerCenter Customer Complaint Manual. Current staff people are familiar with the manual and it is available on the shared drive for reference. Staff training includes customer complaint protocols and is part of the core training that we plan to provide to required partners.

The policy also requires the State and Local Boards to post required notices, meeting agendas and minutes, and other information and to ensure that their websites, meeting spaces, and documents meet current accessibility standards. The requirements are annually monitored.

Compliance with the policies will be required for one-stop certification. WDBs and operators will develop protocols to assist front-line staff in partner agencies on how to identify appropriate services for individuals and deliver them in an accessible and non-discriminatory fashion.

All front-line staff will be informed/reminded of the procedures for handling customer complaints related to discrimination or lack of access. Customer service training will be provided to all front-line staff within three months of hire, and after that annually. Managers, in collaboration with BES and the WIOA staff development group, will be responsible for providing and documenting this training.

Building on the work of the current state plan, the state will continue to develop policies and supportive training around priorities which include assistive technology and equipment responsibility, website/social media accessibility, programmatic and physical accessibility of workshops and events, service animal protocols, prohibition of automatic referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation, alternative formats for required tests/assessments, and consistent use of equal employment and accommodations tag lines. Program participation rules governing required orientation workshops, the RESEA program, and other mandatory programs will be examined to ensure full accessibility, especially access to alternative formats and accommodations. The feasibility of a central accommodations fund and various ways of ensuring/maintaining its solvency will also be explored.

Domestic violence and other challenges to access

Maine is a leader among states in ensuring that domestic violence victims have legal protections to avoid job loss and loss of unemployment insurance benefits due to domestic violence counseling, treatment, and court appointments. The universal access working group will examine how domestic violence affects physical and programmatic access to services and make any necessary changes to address this situation. Similarly, the working group will explore the

potential implications of low literacy, financial hardship, and poor housing/homelessness on access to services. Policies and practices designed to mitigate the most challenging circumstances will be investigated in collaboration with low-income individuals, people who are homeless, and the organizations representing them.

Monitoring progress

The Section 188 checklist, 20 CFR Part 38 and policies will be used to monitor the system's progress toward universal access. Quantitative outcomes will be used, when practical, to assess system accessibility and utilization by WIOA's priority populations. Best practice models from other systems and other states will be researched and tailored to Maine whenever possible.

WDBs and operators will be responsible for developing mechanisms to deliver information on local workforce development system resources in an easy-to-access manner. They will conduct outreach to inform the public of these resources. Workforce development system partners and community agencies will also be informed of these resources and how to assist clients and participants in accessing and navigating the workforce system's resources.

In accordance with §678.800, WDBs will be responsible for ensuring that these provisions are implemented. Monitoring will include compliance with these policies. WDBs will assess their one-stops at least once every three years. They will also review and update any criteria when conducting any program reviews or when updating their local plans.

When monitoring or other activities reveal a need for system-wide technical assistance, policy updates, or concerns related to non-discrimination and accessibility, the Bureau of Employment Services and others may provide or assist with providing the necessary TA.

We will use the Section 188 checklist, Promising Practices In Achieving Universal Access and Equal Opportunity: A Section 188 Disability Reference Guide, other tools and the USDOL's Integrated Service Delivery Toolkit to assist system partners, providers, and local boards with guidance on developing their own monitoring tools.

Implementing and monitoring compliance with these policies will be overseen by a universal access coordinator and a core Universal Access work group of system stakeholders and subject matter experts from the larger community, including the Alpha One (independent living center), Disability Rights Maine, the state ADA coordinator, Maine CITE (designated adaptive technology provider for the Maine Department of Education), NAMI Maine, and other agencies and entities with relevant expertise in both accessibility and non-discrimination. Members of the state or local workforce boards will be included.

The Bureau of Employment Services has a designated Assistive Technology specialist in each one-stop. The specialists' responsibilities include routine inventories of equipment. One-stop managers are responsible for ensuring that all assistive technology and adaptive equipment are functioning, and that adequate resources are available to replace/repair equipment, update assistive software, and obtain new equipment when needed.

9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

English language learners are a growing population of individuals served by the core partners and are a potential area of growth for Maine. Areas of the state and workforce system have more experience in working with individuals who are English language learners than other areas of the state. We plan to leverage the existing experience and knowledge of workforce system partners in enhancing the entire workforce system.

Policies - English language learners are included in the Accessibility, Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination policy established to codify the State's commitment to universal access and programmatic accessibility. This policy will be reviewed and enhanced as needed to address issues which arise. Additional policies will be developed to address the hiring of interpreters,

Training - The core partners and local workforce boards will work together to develop and deliver training programs regarding:

- Assessment of English language learners (language and cultural issues in evaluation and assessment)
- Development of materials in languages other than English
- Cultural awareness
- Hiring and Working with interpreters

The Accessibility Guide will be enhanced to address the unique needs of working with English language learners and assist partners in connecting with the appropriate resources to meet their needs.

IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Maine has the benefit of being relatively lean regarding staff and programs which makes regular coordination with partners a common occurrence.

The core partners, local workforce boards and State Board staff meet monthly to monitor the implementation of the State Unified Plan. In addition to monitoring the implementation, this provides the opportunity to collaborate and share information on activities within the plan and emerging opportunities and events across the state.

Local collaboration happens between the core partners, local workforce boards and service providers on a regular basis through local board meetings, committee work, and local initiatives and events.

In addition to these, there is a Statewide Action Team (SWAT) which meets quarterly to network, share resources and discuss systemic issues. It is facilitated by various partners and moves location to allow the opportunity for statewide partners to attend.

Core partners also participate in a variety of projects and initiatives such as MaineSpark where ongoing collaboration happens with workforce system partners, higher education, employers, and non-profits.

Workforce system partners are also on the regular mailing lists for the State Workforce Board to keep them apprised of the work happening there. Additionally, SWB staff are on the invite list for local board meetings and regional training activities. Local board directors and State staff often participate and attend each other's meetings.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;	Yes
3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;	Yes
4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;	Yes
5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;	Yes
6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);	Yes
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;	Yes
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;	Yes
9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;	Yes
10. The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);	Yes
11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.	Yes

VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B

A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

General Requirements (1) Regions and Local Workforce Development Areas:

Regions: With the assistance of the State and Local Boards and Chief Elected Officials, Maine identified three planning regions; 1) Coastal Counties Region – made up of York, Cumberland, Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox and Waldo Counties; 2) Central Western Region – made up of Androscoggin, Franklin, Oxford, Somerset and Kennebec Counties; and 3) Northeastern Region – made up of Aroostook, Washington, Piscataquis, Penobscot and Hancock Counties.

The three local areas in Maine coincide with the three planning regions. Historically, Local Boards have been actively engaged in regional planning with their economic development district and community development counterparts. The Local Boards play a significant role in the development of each district's Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The following elements were taken into consideration in identifying three distinct regions for the State:

- Equal distribution of Maine's seven economic development districts
- Equal distribution of WIOA formula funds
- Equal distribution of post-secondary education institutions
- Inclusion of a major urban hub
- Similar labor force distribution and commuting patterns
- Equal share of Maine's traditional industry sectors
- Equal distribution of emerging and technology-based industries
- The fact that regional partnerships have already been formed and active for the purpose of
workforce, economic and community development

The three-region configuration is beneficial on a number of scales, not only for the above considerations, but also because of long-standing relationships between workforce development, education and economic development stakeholders. Policy PY15-09 Establishing WIOA Regions identifies the requirements for establishing regions.

Local Areas: The Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment consulted with local boards and chief elected officials regarding the requirements for initial and ongoing designation as a local area under WIOA. The process for requesting initial and ongoing designation is outlined in Policy PY15-01 Initial Designation under WIOA as follows:

As required under the WIA Section 116 and under WIOA Section 106 (b) and as iterated in the State Strategic Plans, the substantive requirements for initial and continued designation of a local workforce development area are as follows:

- The local area is consistent with local labor market area
- The local area has a common economic development area
- The local area has the Federal and non-Federal resources, including appropriate education and training institutions, to administer activities under WIOA subtitle B

A request for local area designation by any unit of general government may be approved at any time provided the State Workforce Board determines that the local area meets the above requirements.

Any local area designated under WIA that has met the substantive requirements listed above and has performed successfully and sustained fiscal integrity, will be approved for initial designation under WIOA.

The term Performed Successfully – means that during the two program years prior to enactment of WIOA, the local area met or exceeded the common measures negotiated under WIA.

- The term **met performance criteria** means the local area attained at least 80 percent of the negotiated performance measure for each or any of the nine common measures categories under WIA
- The term **exceeded performance criteria** means the local area achieved more than 100 percent of the negotiated performance measure for each or any of the nine common measures categories under WIA.
- The term **failed performance criteria** means the local area did not achieve at least 80 percent of the negotiated performance measure for each or any of the nine common measures categories and continued to fail for each of the two years prior to enactment of WIOA.

The term Sustained Fiscal Integrity – means that during the two program years prior to enactment of WIOA, the local area administered WIA funds in a manner consistent with uniform administrative requirements as promulgated in rules of the Federal Office of Management and Budget and in accordance with criteria identified in the MDOL Financial Policy Manual. Sustained fiscal integrity is based on any of the following:

1. **Misexpenditure of funds due to willful disregard of the requirements of the provision involved; which may include expenditure of funds:**
 - For wage and salary costs of individuals whose salaries and fringe exceed the total compensation threshold identified in 2 CFR §170.330 Appendix-A paragraph e.5
 - On any cost deemed unallowable per 2 CFR 200.420 thru 200.520
 - In excess of allowable thresholds per WIA and/or State and/or Local Policy
 - For costs identified as unallowed per 20 CFR 683.250 (*proposed*)

Willful disregard may also include Fraud, Nonfeasance, or Malfeasance. For an expanded definition of this component see page 57 of the MDOL Financial Policy Manual.

1. **Been deemed Grossly Negligent:** Gross negligence or gross mismanagement pertains to actions or situations arising out of management ineptitude or oversight and leading to a major violation of policy, process, regulations or contract/grant provisions. Such actions have the potential to: severely hamper accomplishment of program goals, waste government resources, and jeopardize future support for a particular project, including but not limited to un-auditable records, unsupported costs, highly inaccurate fiscal reports or program reports, payroll discrepancies, payroll deductions not paid to the IRS, and lack of good internal control procedures, per the MDOL Financial Policy Manual.
2. **Complied with Accepted Standards of Administration:** Accepted standards of administration pertain to local area adherence to standards of financial administration as identified throughout 2 CFR 200 and as identified in the MDOL Financial Policy Manual, which include:
 1. Financial Reporting: Accurate, current, and complete disclosure of the financial activities of each grant awarded must be made as required by the terms of the grant. All allowable costs must be traceable to the accounting records. See Section B of the MDOL financial manual for additional reporting requirements.
 2. Accounting Records: Records must be maintained that identify the source and expenditure of grant funds. The records must contain information pertaining to the award and authorization, obligations, unobligated balances, assets, liabilities, outlays or expenditures, and income. The records must be maintained in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.
 3. Internal Control: Effective controls and accountability must be maintained for cash, real and personal property, and other assets. All such assets must be adequately safeguarded and used solely for authorized purposes.
 4. Budget Control: To ensure that overspending does not occur, actual expenditures or outlays must be compared with budgeted amounts for each grant award. Financial information must be related to performance or productivity data, including the development of unit-cost information when specifically required in the grant.
 5. Allowable Costs: The subrecipient must determine what costs are allowable in accordance with OMB cost principles; grant regulations, and the terms of the grant award. In addition, no grant may pay more than its fair share of the costs (allocability). See Section E of the MDOL Financial Manual for further information on cost principles and Section F for further information on allowable costs.
 6. Source Documentation: Accounting records must be supported by source documentation such as cancelled checks, invoices, purchase orders, paid bills, payrolls, time and attendance records, and award documents. The source documentation must relate directly to the costs claimed on the drawdown requests and quarterly financial reports.
 7. Cash Management: Procedures for minimizing cash-on-hand must be established by each subrecipient. See Section D of the MDOL Financial Manual for cash management requirements.
 8. Adherence to Contract Requirements: Subrecipients must adhere to all requirements delineated in the contract/grant including Federal and State requirements as laid out in each Rider of the contract/grant.

Any local government entity that requests but is not granted initial designation, may, within thirty days of denial, submit a written request for appeal to the State Workforce Board. Appellants must submit the appeal in writing and include a copy of the original request for designation, a copy of the denial letter, and provide sufficient evidence to establish that it meets the requirements for local area designation under WIOA. Appeals must be submitted via certified mail to: the current State Workforce Board Director, 120 State House Station, Augusta, Maine 04333-0120. Once the SWB director receives the appeal the formal appeals process is initiated, which is comprised of the following steps:

1. A hearing will be scheduled with an impartial hearing's unit within 45 days of receipt of the appeal, during which the additional evidence in support of local area designation will be reviewed and considered.
2. A formal response to the appellant will be provided by the hearing's unit via certified mail, within 45 days of the hearing. The formal response will cite the criteria considered in either approving or denying the appeal for local area designation.
3. If the appeal does not result in local area designation, the local board may appeal to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor as follows:
4. Appeals to the Secretary must be filed, via certified mail - return receipt, no later than 30 days after receipt of notification of denial by the State Workforce Board and must be submitted to: Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20210, Attention: ASET. A copy of this request must be submitted simultaneously to the State Workforce Board.
5. In the appeal to the Secretary, the appellant must establish that it was not accorded procedural rights under the appeal process set forth in the State Policy/Plan and establish that it meets the requirements for designation in WIOA Sections 106(b)(2) or 106(b)(3) and 20 CFR 679-250.
6. The appellant will also be informed that if the Secretary determines that the appellant has met the burden of establishing that it was not accorded procedural rights under the appeal process set forth in the State Plan, or that it meets the requirements for designation under WIOA, the Secretary may require that the local area be designated as a local workforce investment area. The appellant will also be informed that the Secretary may consider any comments submitted by the State Workforce Board in response to the appeal made to the Secretary.
7. The appellant will also be informed that the Secretary will issue a written decision to the Governor. The appellant will be informed that the Commissioner of the Maine Department of Labor, on behalf of the Governor, will abide by the decision of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor.

The State Funding Mechanism-Appeals Process is part of an overall infrastructure cost sharing policy that is now in the process of review by the State Board and expected to be approved at the June, 2020 meeting. See draft policy PY19-04 Infrastructure Funding Agreement – MOU Phase II, which has been vetted by the WIOA Implementation Policy Committee (WIPC) a subcommittee of the State Board that reviews and prepares WIOA policy for State Board Approval as required under WIOA.

When the local area has informed the State that they are at an impasse regarding infrastructure cost sharing negotiations, the State Funding Mechanism (SFM) will be applied.

Under the SFM, MDOL, in consultation with the chief elected officials, the local workforce board, and the State Workforce Board, will determine each required partner's proportionate share of infrastructure costs for that local area, using guidelines pertaining to the State Funding Mechanism, which will be put forth for the Governor's review and approval as a final determination.

A required partner may appeal the final determination because of a claim that:

- The Governor's determination is inconsistent with the proportionate share requirements of 20 CFR 678.735
 - The Governor's determination is inconsistent with the cost contribution caps described in 20 CFR 678.738
1. An appeal must be made in writing within 21 days of the Governor's determination and must include specific evidence that the amount determined by the Governor is inconsistent with **a.** and/or **b.** above.
 2. Written appeals must be submitted to:

Appeals

State Workforce Board

120 State House Station

Augusta, ME 04333-0120

1. The appeal will be reviewed by the executive committee of the State Workforce Board, and within 30 days of receipt the appellant will receive a letter either denying or accepting the appeal.
2. If the appeal is found to be without merit, it will be denied, and no further action taken.
1. If the appeal is merited, the executive committee will make a revised determination. The executive committee may consult with the chief elected official and local board to attempt to negotiate a mutually agreed upon revised determination. The revised determination will be presented to the State Workforce Board for review and approval.
2. Upon full approval of the State Workforce Board, the revised determination will be considered final throughout the cost sharing agreement period of duration, until such time as local area cost sharing is renegotiated.

Questions pertaining to this appeals process may be addressed to:

SWB.DOL@maine.gov

207-621-5087

TTY users call Maine Relay 711

2. STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

With ever decreasing allotments of Title IB funds over the last several years, Maine set-aside funds have barely been enough to sustain required activities identified in 20 CFR 682.200. A significant portion of the funding goes toward the title IB case management and reporting system for which continuous programming has been necessary to accommodate additions to and changes in PIRL reporting requirements. The state has such limited set-aside funding with

that it has been unable to afford to conduct an evaluation and will be requesting a waiver on this requirement. Set-aside funds are used primarily to support WIOA required activities as follows:

- Conducting rapid response activities
- Disseminating information on eligible training providers, local area performance, effective practices, and more
- Providing technical assistance to local areas and required partners on a variety of topics
- Carrying out fiscal and program monitoring activities
- Operating fiscal and management accountability information systems
- Administering Title IB adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs
- Providing technical assistance and supporting staff development of Title IB service provider staff and local board staff
- Supporting common intake and data sharing across core partners

And allowable activities such as:

- Funding State workforce board staff positions

There have been one or two special projects funded using set-aside funds, including an English language learning pilot, which was a collaboration between title IB service provider Goodwill Industries NNE and Portland Adult Education that developed and delivered training to two cohorts of WIOA eligible immigrants and refugees through an accelerated curricula designed to enable lower level English language learners to obtain English proficiency required to enter employment and helped a second cohort to expand proficiency levels to retain or advance in employment.

Rapid response funds have been used for layoff aversion. One project involved a feasibility study to identify whether an employee buyout would be a possibility for a statewide direct care provider and a second project would have assisted a rural hospital to train and retain nursing staff, but which has been postponed due to COVID-19. Now that Maine is a small-funded state, it is unlikely that these funds will be used for special projects going forward.

Statewide Activities- Rapid Response is a shared responsibility between the State Rapid Response Team, the Dislocated Worker Program service providers, and other state and local stakeholders.

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

Regional Rapid Response services are coordinated by the Rapid Response Coordinator through the Bureau of Employment Services central office. At the local level, two full-time regional Rapid

Response representatives and staff from local CareerCenters provide services to employers and workers affected by lay-offs and mass closures occurring throughout the state.

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

Regional Rapid Response representatives are responsible for coordinating all Rapid Response sessions and ensuing transitional services for the affected workers. However, the full team of representatives may be called upon to act as a statewide team and respond in partnership on behalf of any local area or region that requires expanded assistance with Rapid Response service delivery and initial worker adjustment services.

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

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

A formal Plant Brief guides the initial interview with the company and collects information that prompts specific response steps, as follows:

- Gathering of general company information, including type and sector that is used to track industry patterns
- Reason for downsizing, which prompts a referral to one-stop system business assistance services
- If trade adjustment assistance for firms is warranted, a direct referral to NETAAC (A federal program that provides business assistance to trade-affected companies hoping to avert additional layoffs) may be triggered along with other services that may avert additional layoffs

- Affirmative responses to Trade Petition questions result in facilitation of a petition for trade certification
- Information regarding severance packages (i.e., number of weeks of vacation pay, average cost of health insurance and types of health packages to be offered by the company) provide guidance to prepare UI representatives for specific employee questions that may be fielded
- Demographic information is gathered about the workers who will be attending the session in order to customize each session to the particular worker audience (i.e., age and education levels, length of time with company, language or other barriers, and whether any affected are on active duty)
- Worker task statements are requested and used to scan for skill demand (or lack thereof) in the local labor market and to determine the anticipated retraining or skill development action steps that may be necessary for reemployment purposes
- Company is asked to facilitate a worker needs survey that is examined for coordination of transitional resources and need for allocation of financial resources

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

Maine has incorporated a "Jump Start" approach to Rapid Response allowing workers to pursue immediate readjustment/reemployment pathways. At the close of each initial Rapid Response session, participants are encouraged to sign up for next steps.

For those who feel confident to immediately seek new employment, a series of workshops designed to support this goal is offered. This series explains the labor market and how individual knowledge, skills, and abilities transfer to jobs in demand. It also informs the workers about where and how to look for job openings, how to complete applications, develop resumes, and how to excel at interviewing.

Outplacement is conducted almost immediately via referral to the jobs that have been identified through the initial labor market scan conducted usually by the Center for Workforce Research and Information and via customized job fairs. Often affected companies are inundated with calls from other companies wishing to hire their exiting workers. The affected company is usually too overwhelmed to coordinate such services. The CareerCenters have been instrumental in taking on this additional task by coordinating job fairs that bring interested employers into contact with the specific laid off workers. In several instances these have been offered right at the worksite of the affected company. These job fairs have proved successful with over 25 percent of employees gaining immediate reemployment and the company allowing affected workers to attend the job fairs and workshops while on company time. In a recent event over 75 percent of employees had found new employment prior to their actual layoff date.

The second transition pathway is targeted to those who may have greater difficulty dealing with job loss and/or have broader barriers to immediate reemployment. This pathway links workers to a series of workshops covering such topics as coping with job loss, career decision making and understanding labor market trends, and gaining perspective through individual assessments leading to opportunities and resources for skills upgrade and retraining. These will prepare them for in-demand occupations.

Individual needs surveys are used to customize and schedule all Rapid Response services prior to layoff, and employers are encouraged to allow affected workers to complete the surveys in advance. Many companies have provided long term advance notice; in cases like these, the Rapid Response team is able to work with the company and affected workers on an ongoing basis to provide info sessions, workshops and/or TAA briefings at appropriate times. These are generally on company site and on company time.

The model also allows for exceptional information gathering in the event a National Dislocated Worker Grant is needed, and provides opportunity to collaborate with economic development to identify companies who may be in need of the specific workforce and be willing to relocate to the affected area to hire and train affected workers.

Affected workers from smaller layoffs are offered similar service pathways, but may be referred to existing workshop series offered on an ongoing basis by their local CareerCenters. If the layoff occurs without our notification, each worker is contacted individually and invited to a formal Rapid Response info session or to an orientation to services offered on a regular basis by their regional CareerCenter. It is the goal of Maine's Rapid Response program to contact every laid-off worker regardless of size of company closure or downsizing; each will be invited to access the full array of available services.

In addition to reemployment related services, it has been the custom of Maine's Rapid Response team to link with the local community to launch or participate in Community Transition Teams on behalf of the affected workers. The activities of these teams include the following:

- Production of resource booklets that feature local community programs and services, printed and provided to each of the affected workers
- Coordination of resource fairs that provide an opportunity for affected workers to access a range of services from heating and housing assistance to small business development assistance all in a one-stop location
- Coordination of fundraising events from dinners and barbecues to dances and auctions from which the proceeds can go toward an emergency services fund for affected workers
- Coordination of a variety of non-employment related workshops, such as consumer debt workshops offered by the regional credit union, to health clinics and stress management workshops offered by local health service providers.

Maine's congressional staffers have been outstanding partners in this effort, and recent collaboration between MDOL and congressional staffers has culminated in a formal plan for implementation of Community Action Teams across the state.

In the event of a natural disaster: In addition to utilizing community transition teams, the State Rapid Response lead and team members will work in collaboration with the Maine Emergency Management Association (MEMA), the State Agency with responsibility for lessening the effects of disaster on the lives and property of the people of the State through leadership,

coordination and support in the four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. MEMA currently has a system in place that includes year-round training of County level emergency management teams in emergency management techniques, processes and requirements. The Rapid Response team will deploy Rapid Response funds as appropriate for activities in support of MEMA, including outreach, response and recovery. Training funds will be deployed to hire temporary emergency workers as appropriate. Companies affected by the natural disaster will be provided with Rapid Response information and affected workers will be apprised of information on disaster unemployment assistance.

Coordination with Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA): Members of the Rapid Response team also implement processes to initiate Trade Adjustment services on behalf of affected firms and workers. Team members assist firms and/or affected employees in submitting trade petitions. Affected workers are provided with cursory information about TAA during regular Rapid Response sessions and are apprised of informational activities that will take place if the firm is certified for trade adjustment assistance. Rapid Response and CareerCenter staff members are trained to provide information and ongoing services to trade affected workers and to work collaboratively with staff of the Adult and Dislocated worker programs to coordinate services for trade eligible participants. Prospective participants are informed about timeframes, deadlines, and options for weekly TAA benefits and other services such as Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance, Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance and TAA Relocation Allowance.

Informational materials are provided directly to affected workers for whom a trade petition is pending. These materials explain what the Trade Adjustment Assistance program is and outline the prospective benefits the program can provide and the criteria that affected workers must meet to avail themselves of the services. Once their firm has been certified a series of forums are provided to affected workers to explain the program in full, answer questions, and schedule next steps. Firms that have been affected are also referred to employer trade adjustment assistance for firms and other services as appropriate.

Local areas in need of additional Rapid Response funds to serve affected workers while a trade petition is pending can make a formal request for additional funds using a process identified in Policy PY13-11 Rapid Response Additional Assistance Request. This policy identifies the requirements of the Rapid Response Additional Assistance (RRAA) funds which state that funds requested can only be used for program and not administrative costs, and that Local Areas must have expended at least 70 percent of local area DW funds and document that they have insufficient funds to serve the newly affected population. The RRAA funds may be used to bridge funding gaps pending approval of a trade petition. Local areas may also apply for RRAA funds when the local area has experienced a steady increase in the number of unemployed individuals within a 120-day period due to natural disasters, plant closings, mass layoffs, or other events that don't qualify for a Trade Petition or a National Dislocated Worker Grant.

B. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

1. WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS

Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Requirements: Work-based Training Models: Title IB service providers utilize all work-based training models available to them, including on-the-job training (OJT), customized training (CT), work experience, internships (WE) and transitional jobs (TJ). Each local area has policies in place regarding how much participants are paid and amounts employers can be reimbursed to cover training costs. Providers have also used work-

experience and on-the-job training in conjunction with occupational training to meet the needs of employers for new hire training.

Strategies to Ensure High-Quality Work-Based Learning

Local workforce boards and Title IB providers work closely with employers with openings in high-demand occupations, apprenticeship sponsors, trade associations and trade unions to properly identify the skills demanded by these occupations and to map out career pathways within specific industries so that service providers and participants are aware of the opportunities and expectations of these industries. Title IB service providers carefully assess prospective participants to identify current skills they can transfer into the work-based learning activity and to identify and clearly delineate the skills that they must practice on-the-job. In addition to the on-the-job learning component, industry members are asked to identify related instruction or specific coursework and/or occupational certifications the participants can pursue simultaneously or after they are established with the company through registered apprenticeship or company sponsored training.

Employers offering work-based learning activities such as on-the-job training, customized training, transitional jobs, work experience, and internships are carefully vetted to identify commitment to provide skilled supervision, the full range of skill learning and practice identified in the contract with the employer, safe work sites, adherence to equal opportunity requirements and most importantly commitment to hire participants who successfully complete training.

Many service providers negotiate a wage increase for the participant upon successful completion of training. Staff engage with employers and participants throughout the term of the training to ensure participant success and to identify any supports the participant or employer may require along the way.

New requirements under WIOA for youth work experience that must include both an occupational and academic learning component have resulted in expanded communication with employers providing work-based learning opportunities, better participant/employer matching, and improved outcomes for both employer and participant regarding necessary skill attainment.

Service providers have engaged in a greater number of collaborative partnerships with employers and education providers, including adult education and community colleges, to develop customized training programs that begin with participant assessment, clear on-the-job learning objectives, formal classroom skill development often resulting in an industry credential or courses leading to one and occupationally-focused work ready skills. Testimonials from employers engaged in this fully rounded approach to work-based learning are glowing and encourage additional employers to participate in similar collaborations with the one-stop system.

2. REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

Registered Apprenticeship: Registered apprenticeship has been revitalized in Maine with new agencies acting as sponsors who manage the paperwork and coordinate related instruction on behalf of the employers that hire the apprentices and provide on the job learning.

Title IB partners are aware of apprenticeship as an acceptable WIOA training pathway and understand how their funds can be used to support the cost of related instruction, on the job

learning, and how to identify and document successful outcomes of competency-based tests and completion of segments of apprenticeship as measurable skill gains.

A recent partnership between the Maine Hospitality Association, the Maine Apprenticeship Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation has been launched to support individuals with disabilities to enter employment as apprentices in the restaurant industry.

The Maine Apprenticeship Program has worked closely with high-growth industry sectors in Maine and have been instrumental in establishing career pathways for the healthcare sector that move apprentices from entry level positions, such as Certified Nurse Assistant, to attain stackable credentials that allow them to work in specialty areas, such as dementia, pediatrics, intensive care, and surgical areas.

Resources from the Maine Apprenticeship Program tuition assistance fund, the Title 1-B programs, the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program, the Maine Quality Centers program, and industry partners have all been accessed to support workers entering registered apprenticeship. These programs have also incorporated integrated education training modules that link work readiness, occupational skills, and academic skill development into a single, cohesive program co-designed with the employer.

Registered apprenticeship is promoted to employers who partner to provide on-the-job or customized training opportunities for participants.

3. TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE

Training Provider Eligibility Procedure:

Maine's eligible training provider list is housed in the ProviderLink section of Maine JobLink. The ETPL lists registered apprenticeship programs that have requested to be listed on the site, and by doing so open the door to partner with providers of Title IB services.

The procedure for initial eligibility remains the same, requiring that providers be accredited and/or other-wise endorsed, that they ensure accessibility to programs, that the programs of study offered prepare trainees to enter occupations in demand in Maine, and that programs only offered online provide access to a live instructor. Providers must complete all data requested on the application form and must sign a data sharing agreement assuring they will provide required performance data on all students participating in the approved programs.

The Center for Workforce Research and Information has created a streamlined process by which providers can submit the all-student data that conducts a wage match and converts the data into a format that can be linked with data in the ETPL portion of Maine JobLink to produce the annual Eligible Training Provider report required by USDOL.

Continued eligibility requires provider conformance with requirements for submitting all student data required for annual performance reporting. Continued approval of specific programs of study depend upon relevance to occupations that are still in demand in Maine. ETPL policy PY15-05 is currently under the process of revision to include new requirements pertaining to subsequent approval. Eligible training providers must now provide a data sharing agreement that addresses performance reporting requirements pertaining to all students in approved programs of study and which outlines the specific data on all students that must be provided annually in order to remain on the ETPL. The ETPL application, is housed in Maine's JobLink system under "Provider Link" the initial application requires that the provider submit all information regarding their own accreditation as a provider and full information about each program of study, including costs, locations and methods of delivery (classroom/online), credit

hours, resulting credentials, whether or not the program was developed with input from employers or industry groups, assurance that the training is fully accessible and more. They must also identify at least two occupations the training will prepare the student to enter into, the level of pay the student can expect and the rate of employment of all students completing the course of study.

In addition to initial information, providers must submit reports on all students so that a UI wage match can occur to validate earnings and employment placement and that includes information on the level of completion and subsequent credential each student achieves.

4. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR THE PRIORITY FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS, OTHER LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF WIOA SEC. 134(C)(3)(E), WHICH APPLIES TO INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES AND TRAINING SERVICES FUNDED BY THE ADULT FORMULA PROGRAM

Priority of Service: Policy PY15-03 Adult Priority of Service requiring priority of service for participants of the Adult program has been implemented as follows:

As stated in WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(E), with respect to provision of individualized career services and training services funded with WIOA Title I -Adult funds, priority of service must be given to:

1. Recipients of public assistance
2. Other low-income individuals
3. Individuals who are basic skills deficient

The following sequence of priority will apply:

1. **First priority** will be provided to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient in the local area who are covered persons with respect to veterans' priority. Per 683.230 when past income is an eligibility determinant for a veteran, any amounts received as military pay or allowances by any person who served on active duty and certain other specified benefits must be disregarded for the veteran and for other individuals for whom those amounts would normally be applied in making an eligibility determination for the purpose of determining if the veteran or covered person is a low-income individual.
2. **Second priority** will be provided to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient who are not covered veterans.
3. **Third priority** will be covered persons with respect to the veterans' priority, those covered persons not considered to be recipients of public assistance, low-income or basic skills deficient - who meet one or more of the barriers to employment identified as a priority by the local area, as defined in local board policy.
4. **Fourth priority** will be with respect to non-veterans, who are not recipients of public assistance, low income, or basic skills deficient but who meet one or more of the barriers to employment identified as a priority by the local area, as defined in local board policy.

5. **Fifth priority** will be with respect to adults with other barriers as identified in Local Board policy.

Priority of service does not apply to the dislocated worker or youth populations.

For the purpose of establishing income eligibility for priority of service, people with disabilities are considered a household of one. As outlined in WIOA Section 3(36)(A)(vi), a person with a disability can be considered a low-income individual under the priority of service if the individual's own income meets the income requirement described in WIOA Section 3(36)(A)(ii), even if the individual is a member of a family whose income exceeds the poverty line or is 70 percent of the Lower Living Standard Income Level.

Individualized career services and training services, outlined in WIOA Section 134(c)(2)(A)(xii), are subject to priority of service. Basic career services, outlined in WIOA Section 134(c)(2)(A)(i)-(xi), are not subject to the priority of service as they must be made available to all.

The Local Board has discretion to identify 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. Local Boards must establish local policy regarding the determination and implementation of a priority of service specific to the local area.

5. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S CRITERIA REGARDING LOCAL AREA TRANSFER OF FUNDS BETWEEN THE ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS

Criteria for Transfer of Funds:

The State has implemented policy PY15-04 Change 1 Transfer of Funds on transfer of funds between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, as follows:

WIOA final regulation 20 CFR 683.130 stipulates that the Governor must establish written policy that identifies criteria that will be used for approving a request to transfer adult or dislocated worker employment and training funds. Local areas must still meet the negotiated performance levels of the program from which the funds are being transferred. This policy-revision identifies the criteria that will be considered in approving a request for transfer of funds.

Funds transferred from one program to another adopt the eligibility requirements of the program into which they are placed; for example, DW funds transferred for use in the Adult program adhere to Adult priority of service and eligibility requirements.

The Bureau requires additional information regarding the amounts of funds being identified for transfer at the service provider level. To accommodate this, the Request for Transfer of Funds Form has been revised. Upon Governor approval, WIOA Section 133(b)(4) allows a Local Board to transfer up to 100 percent of the formula funds allocated to the local area for Adult program services and up to 100 percent of funds allocated to the local area for Dislocated Worker formula program services for a fiscal year, between:

1. Adult employment and training activities
2. Dislocated Worker employment and training activities

On behalf of the Governor, MDOL's BES will review and approve requests from a Local Board seeking to transfer funds between the Adult and Dislocated Worker formula programs. Such requests will be reviewed upon receipt, and unless there are extenuating circumstances,

notification of approval will be provided within ten business days or less. Local Areas may not transfer funds to or from the Youth formula program.

Criteria for approval of a local area transfer request:

In order to approve a request for fund transfer the local area must establish they have met one of the following criteria for making the transfer:

1. The local area has significant discretionary funding targeted to serve one population over the other; for example, ample Trade Act and Dislocated Worker Grant funds are available to serve DWs, but only formula funds are available to serve Adults.
2. The local area has fully expended funds in one program that still has unmet need yet has ample unobligated funds in the other program.
3. Other: The local board may explain the rationale for the transfer request, identify the situation necessitating the need, and articulate the benefits that will result from the transfer. Such rationale should be supported by the Local/Regional Plan and include assurance that the target group from which funds will be taken will not suffer negative consequences as a result.

Local Boards seeking to transfer funds must submit the request to the Bureau using the transfer request form and must attach minutes of the local board reflecting local board approval of the transfer request. The policy clarifies that a transfer of funds does not require a fiscal amendment to the contract and explains how transferred funds are to be reported on the quarterly fiscal report.

C. WITH RESPECT TO YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AUTHORIZED IN
SECTION 129 OF WIOA—

1. IDENTIFY THE STATE-DEVELOPED CRITERIA TO BE USED BY LOCAL BOARDS IN
AWARDING GRANTS OR CONTRACTS FOR YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AND
DESCRIBE HOW THE LOCAL BOARDS WILL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE ABILITY OF THE
PROVIDERS TO MEET PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES BASED ON PRIMARY
INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YOUTH PROGRAM AS DESCRIBED IN SECTION
116(B)(2)(A)(II) OF WIOA IN AWARDING SUCH GRANTS OR CONTRACTS.[11]

Criteria identified by the State to be used by local boards in awarding grants to providers of youth services is articulated in policy PY16-03 Youth Service Provider Criteria as follows:

1. For the purpose of identifying appropriate youth service elements and career pathways for each youth participant, the youth provider must be able to **conduct an objective assessment of each youth that includes an evaluation of:**
 - Academic and literacy levels, including English language proficiency
 - Pre-employment competencies and employability skills
 - Prior work experience and transferrable skills
 - Occupational skills, aptitudes (including occupational interests, work preferences, and aptitude for and interest in non-traditional occupations)
 - Developmental needs

- Supportive services necessary to successfully participate in all aspects of the youth program
- Barriers to transition to employment or post-secondary education
- Need for each of the fourteen youth service elements
- Need for comprehensive counseling and coordinated referrals to programs and services such as:

Mental health services

Substance abuse counseling

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Housing and homeless assistance programs

Programs that address juvenile recidivism

Programs providing assistance to individuals with disabilities

Parenting and childcare programs

Programs that provide guidance to youth whose parent/guardian is incarcerated or affected by addiction or mental illness

1. Must show evidence of ability to provide services that are age-, needs-, and ability-appropriate, including provision of suitable accommodations for individuals with disabilities.
1. In partnership with the youth participant, development of youth employment plans articulate goals, benchmarks, activities, and service elements that will launch the youth on a defined career pathway and that will result in the youth meeting or exceeding locally negotiated performance measures. Such plans must include identification of short- and long-term goals, including goals for measurable skill gains, credential attainment, employment, and/or transition to post-secondary training or education.
1. Document active involvement of family members, community service members, and others who play a critical in the youths' success, as part of program service design.
1. Demonstrate how opportunities for youth to practice leadership and citizenship skills, including providing peer mentoring, project leadership, and community service activities are provided.
1. Demonstrate strong business/employer involvement including specific examples of long-term relationships with employers who provide:
 - a. Work experience opportunities that include regular assessment of work readiness and employment competency skills
 - b. Opportunities for job shadowing or informational interviewing
 - c. Occupationally specific internships or On-the-Job Training opportunities
 - d. Practice employment interviews that result in constructive feedback for youth
 - e. Adult mentoring
 - f. Actual employment opportunities
 - g. Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities

- h. Participation in youth career exploration events and job fairs
 - i. Participation in youth committees and other youth advisory boards
1. Demonstrate an atmosphere of inclusion, appreciation of diversity, and commitment to youth advocacy through examples and anecdotal evidence of such.
 1. Demonstrate significant relationships with, and ability to package the services of, a variety of community organizations that serve at-risk youth through formal memoranda of understanding, contracts, or other formal agreements that provide evidence of such relationships, including relationships with Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, the juvenile justice system, DHHS, post-secondary education providers, financial aid providers, employer organizations, and others.
 2. Demonstrate the ability to offer work-based learning experiences that stress the connection between academic knowledge and work activities, through provision of examples of work-site agreements.
 1. Provide evidence accessible facilities, programs, technology, and ability to provide appropriate accommodations for youth with special needs.
 1. Demonstrate ways in which the youth program establishes high expectations for youth participants, including evidence showing most youth participants who enter the program participate in and complete the activities identified on the youth employment plan, and showing the program meets identified performance measures.
 1. Documentation of ability to connect youth participants with all fourteen required youth service elements, either through direct provision or through partnerships, MOUs, or other methods, to include provision of:
 - a. Tutoring and/or Study Skills
 - b. Access to drop out recovery programs or alternative education
 - c. Work-based learning
 - d. Occupational Skills Training
 - e. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as occupational training
 - f. Leadership development
 - g. Adult Mentoring
 - h. Support Services
 - i. Follow-up Services
 - j. Comprehensive guidance and counseling
 - k. Financial Literacy
 - l. Entrepreneurial Skills/ Training
 - m. Career guidance and counseling, including provision of local and state labor market information and information about how to prepare to enter occupations that are in demand in the local area and in Maine

n. Activities that prepare youth for entry into post-secondary education

1. Evidence of employment of professional staff, including requisite credentials and experience and demonstration of a commitment to staff development that prepares staff to deliver the services identified above.

2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH AS DESCRIBED IN 129(A)(1)(B), INCLUDING HOW IT WILL LEVERAGE AND ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS, ANY COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE.

Service providers conduct extensive outreach to identify eligible out-of-school youth for enrollment. They rely on partner agency referrals and strategically place youth staff at outreach posts, such as housing authorities, immigrant welcome centers, community colleges, Job Corps centers, homeless shelters, new parent programs, programs serving homeless youth and county jails where eligible youth participants are accessing other services. Relationships with these agencies to jointly serve, co-enroll and braid resources to better serve youth, have grown significantly as a result.

Youth retention in program activities has always been a challenge with the out-of-school population, partly because of Maine's vast geography, rurality and lack of public transportation but also because of the fleeting nature and caprice of this population. The geography makes it difficult to offer programs to cohorts of youth who can bond with each other through the experience, support their peers through challenges and share in celebrating achievements. Successful cohort approaches have the most significant outcomes, not only in terms of performance but in building personal esteem and providing opportunities for civic engagement. Cohort approaches expand opportunities for team building and life skill attainment such as understanding diversity and social justice.

The agency partnership group approach is also strongly encouraged to ensure youth complete all activities identified in their individual service plans. Involvement of system and community partners in developing and implementing the cohort experience, particularly the agencies that jointly serve youth, such as staff from homeless shelters, mental health and substance programs, mentoring programs and employers have also proven to result in greater numbers completing the program and successfully transitioning to next steps.

In rural areas where group engagement is not possible, service providers are encouraged to keep youth participants fully engaged by packaging a full-time program in which work experience, career counseling and life skills preparation, academic and occupational skill development are all occurring simultaneously. Whenever possible this approach should bring youth participants into group experiences periodically, such as attendance at workshops with other participants in their age category to understand financial literacy.

Clearly outlining goals and the steps to achieve them, then formally celebrating when steps are accomplished and outcomes achieved, keeps youth connected. Formal recognition of achievements can be in the form of public recognition through program newsletters, incentives that reward specific accomplishments, and/or ability to move onto another much needed service, such as driver education.

Collaboration and close relationships with other providers serving the youth, such as adult education, rehabilitation, and employers providing work experience sends a message to youth that the program is formal, connected and focused on their individual success.

3. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT ALL 14 PROGRAM ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN WIOA SECTION 129(C)(2) ARE MADE AVAILABLE AND EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED, INCLUDING QUALITY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS UNDER THE WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM ELEMENT. [12]

A key way of determining whether youth have access to all 14 service elements is through file review and annual monitoring. Monitors review youth files for results of comprehensive assessment and how these are used to develop the youth service plan. Plans are reviewed to ensure that they incorporate appropriate youth service elements and how these are offered to youth. Each local area may approach provision of service elements differently, with some offering most services through direct program staff and others braiding the services of multiple local providers.

Two areas that service providers have had difficulty offering are adult mentoring (to the level required under the act) and entrepreneurship training. State agency staff provide technical assistance to local boards and their service providers and have brainstormed ways these services can be offered. Most areas utilize youth case managers as adult mentors, and many have built mentoring by employers into work experience activities. Again, the rural and vast geography make a formal program of adult mentoring a challenge.

Entrepreneurship training is being included in service plans only if the youth has expressed a specific interest. Technical assistance has been provided to encourage broader understanding among youth service staff of what can be included in entrepreneurship training which doesn't require a youth to be interested in self-employment per se, but that can incorporate entrepreneurial skill development in other ways.

All current youth service providers have formal relationships with providers of mental health and substance use counseling to which youth with these needs are referred. Attendance is supported and monitored by youth staff. Many service providers have hired what they call a service navigator, usually a licensed social worker who can provide some level of counseling and who has the expertise to connect youth directly to appropriate services.

All youth service providers offer work experience opportunities, including paid work-experience that includes academic and occupational skill development, internships, on-the-job training and ensuring young women are aware of nontraditional occupations that pay wages that are significantly higher than traditional female occupations and of apprenticeship as an occupational skill development pathway.

The Maine apprenticeship program accepts youth ages 16 and older and as such most out of school youth can enter apprenticeship directly without the need for pre-apprenticeship training. However, the Maine Apprenticeship Program has recently engaged in collaborations between the secondary Career and Technical Education Centers (CTEs) and trade associations and trade unions to brainstorm possibilities for formal pre-apprenticeship programs for in-school youth seeking to enter apprenticeable occupations in Maine. Both sponsors and educators are cautious, as prior pre-apprenticeship programs haven't always resulted in a direct pathway to registered apprenticeship. Employers must be willing and able to take on the liability of younger workers which is often the key barrier to employer's partnering to provide pre-apprenticeship.

Finally, statewide youth service provider staff attend training to get a clear understanding of each of the youth service elements, how they can be provided, how they must be built into a youth service plan and how they must be documented in Maine JobLink.

4. PROVIDE THE LANGUAGE CONTAINED IN THE STATE POLICY FOR “REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO ENTER OR COMPLETE AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT” CRITERION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(III)(VIII) AND FOR “REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO COMPLETE AN EDUCATION PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT” CRITERION FOR IN-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(IV)(VII). IF THE STATE DOES NOT HAVE A POLICY, DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT LOCAL AREAS WILL HAVE A POLICY FOR THESE CRITERIA.

Criteria for use and documentation of this eligibility component is articulated in policy PY16-05 Youth Requires Additional Assistance. The purpose of the policy is to provide guidance to local boards regarding youth eligibility under the youth barrier for a “Low-income individual who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment” as stated in WIOA. This requires the State or Local Boards to establish definitions for additional youth barriers pertaining to youth most-in-need and places a limitation on the percentage of in-school-youth for which this barrier can be used for eligibility purposes. The policy states eligibility using the locally-defined barrier not to exceed 5% of all ISY enrollments.

For in-school-youth the barrier must pertain to low-income students who require additional assistance to complete an educational program.

For out-of-school-youth the barrier must pertain to low-income youth who require additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program, *or* to secure and hold employment. To accommodate these WIOA changes, local boards must:

- Rescind or revise existing policy to create a new policy for “Low-Income Youth requires additional assistance...” ensuring that the local definition does not duplicate any youth barriers already identified under WIOA and that it identifies barriers faced by youth in the local area
- Title the policy “**Local Definition of Youth Requires Additional Assistance**” and not the “sixth barrier” as it is no longer a sixth barrier
- Clearly define the specific barrier(s) and list the documentation to be used to validate the barrier
- Clearly articulate that the local barrier can only be used as an eligibility barrier for up to 5% of all In-School Youth (ISY)
- Establish a method for tracking ISY enrollments under this barrier to ensure that the 5% limitation is not exceeded
- Provide a copy of the new policy to the Maine Department of Labor’s Bureau of Employment Services, once it has been reviewed and approved by the Local Board
- Provide evidence that local area youth service provider staff have been made aware of the new/revised policy, that they understand the limitation on its use for eligibility for in-school-youth, and they are able to implement it accordingly

Each of the three local areas have revised this policy and identified specific criteria that is not duplicative of WIOA, have identified methods for validating the barriers they have identified and have provided assurance that youth staff understand how this barrier is to be used for eligibility purposes and restrictions for use for in-school-youth.

5. INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION, AS DEFINED IN LAW, FOR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL AND ATTENDING SCHOOL AS SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(I) AND SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(I). IF STATE LAW DOES NOT DEFINE “NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL” OR “ATTENDING SCHOOL,” INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE AND PROVIDE THE STATE POLICY FOR DETERMINING WHETHER A YOUTH IS ATTENDING OR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL.

The Maine Department of Education does not have a definition entitled: not attending or attending school; however, under State Statute Title 20-A, Part 3, Chapter 211, Subchapter 1, Section 5001-A compulsory attendance is defined as:

“Attendance at school shall be required of person in the State as follows:

1. Requirement - Persons 7 years of age or older and persons under 17 years of age shall attend a public day school during the time it is in regular session.
2. Exceptions- Attendance at school shall not be required of the following:
 - a. A person who graduates from high school before that person’s 17th birthday
 - b. A person who has:
 - i. Reached the age of 15 years or completed the 9th grade
 - ii. Permission to leave school from that person’s parent
 - iii. Been approved by the principal for a suitable program of work and study or training
 - iv. Permission to leave school from the school board or its designee
 - v. Agreed in writing with that person’s parent and the school board or its designee to meet annually until that person’s 17th birthday to review that person’s educational needs. When the request to be excused from school has been denied pursuant to this paragraph, the student’s parent may appeal to the commissioner.
 - c. [2003, c. 688, Pt. H, §3, (AFF); 2003, c. 688, Pt. H, §2 (RP).]
 - d. A person who has matriculated and is attending an accredited, post-secondary degree-granting institution as a full-time student. An exception to attendance in public school under this paragraph must be approved by the commissioner.
 - e. A person enrolled in an online learning program or course

6. IF USING THE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION WHICH MUST FURTHER DEFINE HOW TO DETERMINE IF AN INDIVIDUAL IS UNABLE TO COMPUTE OR SOLVE PROBLEMS, OR READ, WRITE, OR SPEAK ENGLISH, AT A LEVEL NECESSARY TO FUNCTION ON THE JOB, IN THE INDIVIDUAL’S FAMILY, OR IN SOCIETY. IF NOT USING THE PORTION OF THE DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE.

The State Workforce Board has implemented policy PY19-02 Expanded Definition of Basic Skills Deficient as follows:

Background: WIOA Sec. 3(5) defines Basic Skills Deficient as follows:

The term “basic skills deficient” means, with respect to an individual –

1. who is a youth, that the individual has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade* level on a generally accepted standardized test
2. who is a youth or adult, that the individual is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family or in society

Standardized tests now use Educational Functioning Level (EFL) scores for the purpose identifying basic academic skill levels. ESL scores are also used to quantify skill gains through post-testing.

Purpose: As required by 20 CFR 681.290(e) this policy further defines the phrase "*Are unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society*" and identifies ways service provider staff may determine and document whether a person meets this definition.

Policy: Determination of whether an individual is basic skills deficient (BSD) may be done using assessment instruments that are valid and appropriate for the target population, such as assessments that determine whether reading, writing, or computing skills are at or below an 8th grade level. System partners must use federally approved, standardized testing instruments to determine educational functioning level (EFL) gains. As applicable, WIOA partners must follow and apply accommodation procedures outlined in the assessment instrument. Certain standardized assessment instruments may be more appropriate dependent upon an individual's unique characteristics such as culture, disability, and/or income level. Qualified individuals with a disability must be able to receive reasonable accommodations upon request.

In addition to standardized assessments, alternative measures may also be used to determine whether an individual meets the definition, including, but not limited to:

- Alternative evaluations (participation in try-out employment or work experience)
- Observation of individual while participating in program activities
- Conversation with individual or his/her family, educators, and/or service providers
- Review of work history with demonstrated deficiency in identified areas

When using alternative evaluations such as those listed above, staff must document the individual's inability to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society, by citing specific examples of how it was determined that the person has such deficiency.

For example: "Individual was provided a simple two step instruction (take handouts and find a seat in the room) and was unable to follow the instruction successfully; at one point during the workshop, the individual went to the restroom and was unable to find his/her way back to the room independently even though the room was just down the hall."

Reasonable accommodation – Testing accommodations are changes to the regular testing environment and auxiliary aids and services that allow individuals with disabilities to demonstrate their true aptitude or achievement level on standardized exams or other high-stakes tests. Testing results must accurately reflect the individual's aptitude or skill achievement the assessment purports to measure. Accommodations should not fundamentally alter the assessment.

D. SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

1. ANY COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD THAT REPRESENT DISAGREEMENT WITH THE PLAN. (WIOA SECTION 108(D)(3).)
2. THE ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISBURSAL OF GRANT FUNDS, AS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNOR, IF DIFFERENT FROM THAT FOR THE STATE. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(15).)
3. A DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPE AND AVAILABILITY OF WIOA TITLE I YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSFUL MODELS, INCLUDING FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(9).)

E. WAIVER REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

While MDOL has no current waivers, we are working on a request for a waiver the 25% spending limitation on in-school-youth. Maine is a vast and rural state, with outlying communities located over 120 miles from the nearest affiliate one-stop. Despite significant and innovative outreach efforts, out-of-school youth recruitment continues to be a challenge. In addition, although a youth may be set to begin postsecondary after graduation, the fact is that many do not get through the first year and by then all connection to them is lost. The goal is to be able to connect youth to services before they complete their senior year.

TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;	Yes
2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;	Yes
3. The State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;	Yes
4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);	Yes
5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;	Yes
6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;	Yes
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);	Yes
8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;	Yes
10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.	Yes
11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);	Yes

ADULT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	72.0%		73.0%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	71.0%		71.5%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4953		\$5203	
Credential Attainment Rate	62.0%		63.0%	
Measurable Skill Gains	45.0%		55.0%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

DISLOCATED PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	79.0%		79.9%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	76.5%		77.0%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$6500		\$6800	

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Credential Attainment Rate	64.0%		65.0%	
Measurable Skill Gains	50.0%		55.0%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	65.0%		65.5%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	70.0%		71.0%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$3685		\$3869	
Credential Attainment Rate	57.0%		57.0%	
Measurable Skill Gains	35.0%		40.0%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM (EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)

A. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL STAFF THE PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES UNDER THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT, SUCH AS THROUGH STATE EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO STATE MERIT STAFF EMPLOYEES, STAFF OF A SUBRECIPIENT, OR SOME COMBINATION THEREOF.

Although recent guidance provides for flexibility now, the State will continue to utilize State, merit-based employees of the Maine Department of Labor to provide Wagner-Peyser Act funded services.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF TO ENSURE STAFF IS ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

Employment Service Professional Staff Development:

The Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment (MDOL,BES) services has established a formal staff-development initiative for all new and existing Wagner-Peyser staff members to ensure staff have an understanding of the requirements of WIOA and the basic and individualized services that are offered by employment services staff to job seekers, workers, and employers.

A formal training curriculum is delivered over several days, that covers:

- Bureau of Employment Services Workplace Culture and Expectations
- Overview of Labor Exchange and provision of Career Services
- Introduction to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
- Overview of the Unified Plan (Plan) and the role of employment services
- Introduction to Maine JobLink (MJL, Maine's labor exchange and case management system
- Introduction to ReEmployME, the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation (BUC) claims system and how to provide support to individuals seeking to file unemployment insurance (UI) claims
- Career information and expectations, including overview of career information tools from labor market and occupational information to career decision making tools.
- Overview of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act and Training Readjustment Act
- Understanding rapid response and layoff aversion
- Understanding WPRS and RESEA reemployment services. Maine had to stop the RESEA program for a couple of years due to lack of federal funding. However, the program recently underwent extensive changes at the federal level and Maine is in the process of updating and restarting the RESEA program in FY 2020. This is a partnership program between the BUC and the Bureau of Employment Services.
- Introduction to standards of procedure in one-stop information centers
- Overview of veteran's services and referral requirements
- Migrant and seasonal farmworker program outreach and partnering with the National Farmworker Jobs Program
- Intro to training programs (Maine Apprenticeship, Competitive Skills Scholarship, Title IB Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs, Job Corps, YouthBuild, and more.
- Overview of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and Federal Bonding Program

3. DESCRIBE STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING

PROVIDED FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND WIOA STAFF ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI
ELIGIBILITY ISSUES AND REFERRAL TO UI STAFF FOR ADJUDICATION

Strategies supporting training and awareness across core programs and U.I.: The BUC and the BES (Wagner-Peyser, Trade, Veteran Program, and State Monitor Advocate) staffers have a strong working relationship.

A minimum of two front-line staff as well as the employment services' CareerCenter manager in each one-stop are fully trained on UI eligibility and UI issue identification as a result of intensive Worker Profiling Reemployment Services (WPRS) and Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)/Re-Employment Eligibility Assessment (REA) staff training.

Designated one-stop staff have received training on Maine's UI web portal and are experienced in assisting individuals with filing for UI and accessing their accounts through the portal. In addition, Maine's BUC has five UI related videos on their website that one-stop staff have access to and are encouraged to view.

The State will develop a training plan to ensure one-stop staff members are familiar with UI basics as well as the UI work requirements and penalties of noncompliance. Training will also be developed to ensure that UI workers are familiar with one-stop services and can make appropriate referrals at the time of initial or subsequent claims.

B. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND MEANINGFUL ASSISTANCE
TO INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN FILING A CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT
COMPENSATION THROUGH ONE-STOP CENTERS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA AS A CAREER
SERVICE

One-stop provision of meaningful assistance in filing claims for unemployment

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

The BUC has dedicated specific staff of the day who can be contacted through each one-stop about a specific UI issue and who will then contact with the customer within 24 hours if not immediately available to address the issue.

C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UI
CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

Strategy for providing reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed

individuals: A major component of Maine's employment services focuses on the UI population. Maine's BUC and BES are committed to working collaboratively to ensure that unemployed workers are treated as job seekers and not just claimants. Claimants are required to register for Maine's JobLink (Maine's labor exchange system). When a claimant files an initial claim for UI benefits through the ReEmployME system, the claimant is automatically registered with the MJL through an interface connection if no such prior registration exists. This provides the UI

claimant with broad access to a wide variety of job opportunities to assist in their work search and efforts to attain new employment.

Through the MJL claimants and other job seekers will develop a resume as part of their registration for labor exchange. The resume will be printable for use in job search and will be added to a resume bank available to employers to search for potential employees. This feature will ensure claimants and other job seekers start their efforts with a professional looking resume and an automatic connection to employers in need of workers.

Maine is implementing a common triage process to ensure that all visitors to a one-stop are given individual attention, made aware of available services, and referred to appropriate information and/or services. This process centers on information that a one-stop staff will gather from each visitor. Answers to questions will trigger what information, services, and/or referrals are immediately offered. Staff across the state will use the same staff interview guide which was developed with suggestions on how to respond to needs identified during interview.

All customers will be informed of the menu of services available to them including information on:

- Upcoming job fairs,
- Job search workshops,
- Job search tools,
- Self-employment,
- Training/college options/opportunities,
- Apprenticeship,
- On the job training information and referrals,
- Veterans services,
- College financial aid information & FASFA workshop referrals,
- Vocational rehabilitation,
- Housing,
- Child care,
- Unemployment compensation,
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF),
- Preparation for Hi-Set exam,
- Health care/Affordable Care Act, and
- General assistance program information and referrals.

The BUC and BES work closely together to ensure unemployed workers return to work, reduce the overall length of unemployment, lower exhaustion rates, reduce improper unemployment compensation (UC) payments, improve employment outcomes and earnings, and result in a higher re-employment rate for those receiving reemployment services through the one-stops than for those who do not. These collaborative efforts provide Maine's unemployed claimants an

entry point to reemployment services and other workforce system programs early in their collection of UC benefits.

Reemployment services are provided through WPRS using Maine's profiling model for selection. Intensive and career services are delivered to those claimants profiled as "most likely to exhaust" their benefits. Although Maine is not currently participating in the RESEA program, as mentioned earlier, Maine is in the process of reintroducing it in FY '20. Maine will incorporate the WPRS profiling model in selecting participants for the new RESEA program model thus satisfying the WPRS requirements, while delivering reemployment services to a broader audience.

Claimants must first meet Maine's profiling model and then will be randomly selected for participation by local American Job Center (AJC) area. All claimants selected are required to participate in WPRS intensive career services (soon to be replaced by RESEA). BES provides selected claimants with relevant reemployment services and assessments to help minimize the length of unemployment and encourage timely reemployment.

BUC will notify identified claimants by letter of their requirement and responsibility to attend RESEA/WPRS intensive and career services provided through the local one-stop service centers. BUC is in the process of incorporating a self-scheduler to allow claimants to select a time and date most suited to their availability in order to increase RESEA attendance rates and reduce rescheduling. Specialized reemployment services CareerCenter consultants are trained by BUC staff to identify potential unemployment compensation eligibility issues. Individuals who fail to attend or complete the required components of the initial RESEA session will automatically be set up for fact finding to determine if benefits will be allowed for good cause or suspended until participation in RESEA has taken place.

BES, operating out of the American Job Centers and affiliate sites, will administer RESEA/WPRS by providing an additional level of service to all selected participants as needed. A variety of reemployment services and options may include; development, expansion, or continuation of individual reemployment plans, provision of a relevant referral based on individual need for completion and intensive case management services.

All participants gain an introduction to a broad spectrum of career services, including:

- Staff assistance in acquiring needed reemployment and training services,
- Counseling in career decision-making and exploration of higher learning,
- Common intake and eligibility determinations for WIOA programs,
- Access to computer based online and job search programs and applications,
- Job search and placement assistance including labor market information and in-demand occupations,
- Information on how to access supportive services, orientations to training, and all other programs offered by WIOA and partners,
- Access to Maine's JobLink and general internet access, and
- Core assessments that link vocational aptitudes and abilities to jobs.

The structured format design of RESEA/WPRS utilizes active engagement in development of individualized reemployment plans, enabling participants to independently activate/update

their MJL profile. Laptops, as needed, are made available for job search activities, including internet job searches and job application submission. Reemployment services consultants work with individual participants to address and define needs and services. Upon comprehensive conclusion of the RESEA, claimants acknowledge and accept their individual needs based “relevant referral” (next steps to their reemployment goal) and complete this portion of the RESEA session.

Each RESEA participant will receive at minimum:

- - An unemployment compensation eligibility review including review of work search activities,
 - Relevant and individualized local labor market information, including live use of Maine’s Center for Workforce Research and Information (CDWRI) website,
 - Enrollment in Wagner Peyser Act funded employment services,
 - Development, review, and recommendations on an individualized reemployment plan (IRP),
 - Individualized and relevant referrals to services, jobs, other agencies, and additional reemployment resources as needed,
 - An introduction and orientation to all the services the CareerCenter has to offer, including self-directed options and specific program eligibility,
 - Enhanced job matching and referral profile assistance in Maine’s JobLink
 - Participation in reemployment services at levels appropriate to meet individual participant needs may include the following:
 - - - Access to to job hunting in Maine guide,
 - Tools, tips, and strategies on conducting a successful job search,
 - Information on how to obtain further skill assessments and individualized job search services,
 - Introduction to USDOL’s online assessment and job search, tools, such as MySkills MyFuture™, O*NET tool, and My Next Move (aka Career Profiler), and
 - Coordination of activities with other programs and services.
- At least one of the following career services based on need:
 - Referral to training or other workforce activities including WIOA,
 - Labor exchange-in-demand industries,
 - Information on availability of community based or WIOA support services,

- Financial aid resources outside of WIOA,
- Financial literacy services, and
- Career readiness including resume writing and interviewing.

D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE W-P FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS, AND THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN W-P AND UI, AS APPROPRIATE INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

Use of Wagner-Peyser funds to support UI claimants: Maine requires all UI claimants to register for Maine's JobLink. Once registered, job seekers will receive notification of job matches, browse for jobs, upload their resume, and receive job referrals. In addition, JobLink registrants are sent email blasts notifying them of job fairs, special recruitments, critical need jobs, and other job search related information. UI call centers are regularly informed of job orders on the JobLink and use this information during claim calls to steer claimants toward immediate job openings and one-stop services.

Claimants visiting one-stops can partake of self-service activities by using resources such as computers and phones to conduct job searches, respond to employment opportunities, and manage their UI claim through Maine's UI portal. In addition to self-service options, claimants can also receive staff-assisted services, such as: job search workshops, assistance accessing and navigating Maine's JobLink and the UI web portal, individualized labor market information, referral to veterans services, and referral to education, training, and supportive services.

There is a dedicated auto-dial UI phone in each one-stop that is monitored by UI staff and available to claimants who have specific UI issues that cannot be addressed by one-stop staff. Maine's one-stop workers provide the public face-to-face interaction for MDOL. Because Maine's UI system is web and call-center based, claimants who desire or require in-person interactions or assistance will visit a one-stop. Wagner-Peyser field staff provide a great deal of UI assistance such as: answering basic questions, supplying written UI information, assisting claimants in creating their UI web portal accounts, filing a claim, using computer or phone to contact the claims center, sorting out paperwork to send/fax to claims center, and providing hope and encouragement to claimants.

In addition, BUC and BES have a strong working relationship. BUC and BES staff are familiar with each other's programs and often communicate on strategies, program-specific issues, and questions. Select UI staff members have privileges to the staff-side of Maine's JobLink.

Maine Revised Statutes Title 26, Chapter 13, Subchapter 6, Section 1192, sets requirements for UI claimants to be registered for work with the employment office as evidenced by the following excerpt from Statute:

"Has registered for work: The individual has registered for work at, and continued to report at, an employment office in accordance with rules the commission adopts, except that the commission may, by rule, waive or alter either or both of the requirements of this subsection as to individuals attached to regular jobs and as to such other types of cases or situations with respect to which the commission finds that compliance with the requirements would be oppressive, or would be inconsistent with the purposes of this chapter. A rule under this subsection may not conflict with section 1191, subsection 1.

The individual must actively seek work each week in which a claim for benefits is filed unless the individual is participating in approved training under subsection 6 or work search has been

waived in accordance with rules adopted by the commission and provide evidence of work search efforts in a manner and form as prescribed by the Department of Labor. Failure to provide required work search documentation results in a denial of benefits in accordance with section 1194, subsection 2 for the week or weeks for which no documentation was provided unless the department determines there is good cause for the individual's failure to comply with this requirement."

Administration of the work test for State UI system: Claimants are required to register with Maine's JobLink (Maine's labor exchange system). When a claimant files an initial claim for UI benefits through the ReEmployME system, the claimant is automatically registered with the MJL through an interface connection if no such prior registration exists. Claimants receive an email with their login details and how to proceed to their MJL profile to edit and add information.

Employment Services (ES) staff are trained in basic unemployment insurance (UI) requirements, including identifying work test issues ensuring that an individual whom a State determines to be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits is able to work, available for work, and actively seeking work in accordance with 20 CFR §652.210, the State's unemployment compensation law or assisting in resolving UI claimant problems in coordination with our UI partner team members. Able and available issues are reported timely and appropriately to Unemployment Compensation.

Job Finding and Placement Services ES staff understand acceptable work search methods to expand the claimants understanding of the many options to actively seeking work but also to encourage a more robust job search that will result in new employment. Active work search methods reviewed with claimants include; contacting an employer directly about a job, having a job interview, submitting a resume or application to an employer or to a job website, using a public or private employment agency, job service, placement firm, or university employment center, contacting a job recruiter or head hunter, placing or answering a job advertisement and checking union or professional registers or seeking assistance through social networks. In addition, claimants receive career services suitable to their reemployment needs including standard labor exchange-based job matching and referral services.

Provision of referrals and assistance with access to tand education programs: All customers visiting the one-stop centers have access to available resources including training and education. Information is available in orientation packets passed out to customers, printed materials stocked in information centers, software, web-links, and documents available on information center computers and Maine's CareerCenter website. A new triage process is being implemented that makes immediate referrals to services and asks the customer to register in Maine's JobLink. Currently, the JobLink registration uploads into the State's one-stop operating system and provides the beginning of a WIOA Title I application. Customers complete an initial application that registers them for Maine's JobLink job bank and case management system, determines eligibility for WIOA Title I programs, and creates a resume. Workshop curriculum includes orientation to CareerCenter services and an opportunity for referral to one-stop and other community services.

E. AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP). EACH STATE AGENCY MUST DEVELOP AN AOP EVERY FOUR YEARS AS PART OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN REQUIRED UNDER SECTIONS 102 OR 103 OF WIOA. THE AOP MUST INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF NEED. AN ASSESSMENT NEED DESCRIBES THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

1. ASSESSMENT OF NEED. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

Maine's migrant seasonal farm workers (MSFWs) cycle through various labor-intensive crop harvests including blueberry, broccoli, diversified vegetable crops, apple, and poultry industry operations during Maine's short agricultural production season (primarily June-September). The blueberry harvest begins in late July early August, broccoli and diversified vegetables August through late September and apples in October. During peak agriculture months, blueberry, diversified vegetable crops, apple, broccoli, and cauliflower operations in Androscoggin, Oxford, Washington, Aroostook, and the mid-coast counties see the bulk of independent MSFWs and Foreign Labor H-2A workers in Maine. MSFWs also work off-season as it relates to holiday wreath making and seafood processing. MSFWs that generally do farm work during the agricultural season in Maine and the Northeast, head for the wreath making operations in Washington County to work in production from early November to mid-December. Due to the success of two large wreath making operations, wreath making operations employ approximately 750 temporary workers, most of whom are MSFWs, most who originate from out of state. In late October to mid-December SWA outreach efforts focus on these workers.

The chart below shows the number of MSFWs that were provided with some level of service during 2018-19. This assistance includes job referral information, answering questions on worker wage deductions, provision of housing standards information and working conditions requirements, and issues pertaining to discrimination.

Services Provided to Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers 2018-2019

2018-2019	Registered In MJL (self-identified)	Referred to jobs	Provided Services	Referred to Supportive Services	Case Management Counseling	Received Job Development Contact	Contacted by SMA Outreach
July-Sept 2018	4	0	4	3	4	0	334
Oct-Dec 2018	1	0	1	1	1	1	181
Jan-Mar 2019	4	1	1	0	0	0	0
April-Jun 2019	1	1	1	1	1	1	8

The numbers above are based on service transactions provided to job seekers who register and self-identify as a MSFW and are active on the Maine JobLink (MJL). Job seekers on the MJL that do not receive services for 90 days become inactive. Returning job seekers who reactivate their accounts count as new registrants with new service transactions. Total number of services is always equal to or greater than the number of individuals served. The quarters above are 'rolling-quarters' in that services reported each quarter are an accumulation of the quarters preceding the reporting period.

Summary of Agricultural Activity in the State; Maine's agricultural sector is large and diverse, contributing significantly to Maine's overall economy. Data in the 2017 Census of Agriculture by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service lists 7,600 farms in Maine managing over 1.3 million acres with the number of farms decreasing by 7 percent since 2012. Most Maine farms are small family-operated enterprises employing few people beyond family members. The average size of farms is 172 acres, with forty-seven percent less than 50 acres in size. The 2017 census indicates 29 percent of Maine farms hire farm labor for a total of 9,324 workers (hired farm labor excluding contract workers). A total of 9,807 unpaid workers (agricultural workers not on the payroll who performed activities or worked on a farm or ranch) reflect the number of family members working on farms. In 2017, 2,191 migrant workers, including contract workers, were hired.

The demand for farm labor remains consistent in an economic climate of low unemployment and a general shortage of workers overall across most industries. From small to large scale farm operations, and across a diversity of types of agricultural products, labor shortage emerges as a dominant concern among agricultural employers. A gradual decline in the numbers of migrant workers only exacerbates the labor challenge for Maine farm operators.

2. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE MEANS: 1) IDENTIFYING THE TOP FIVE LABOR-INTENSIVE CROPS, THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY, AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PRIME ACTIVITY; 2) SUMMARIZE THE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS' NEEDS IN THE STATE (I.E. ARE THEY PREDOMINANTLY HIRING LOCAL OR FOREIGN WORKERS, ARE THEY EXPRESSING THAT THERE IS A SCARCITY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE); AND 3) IDENTIFYING ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT ARE AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE

Factors Affecting Agricultural Activity by Crop: Increasing mechanization and reduction in managed acres in some areas of the state continues to impact the annual number of MSFWs needed by the blueberry harvesting sector, shifting workers to the freezing/packing plants. Broccoli producers' labor needs remain constant, projecting a need for additional labor in the coming year. Apple orchards and packing houses continue to report flat numbers and do not foresee increasing labor need. The larger apple producers use the H-2A program for harvest purposes and rely on returning local seasonal and permanent help in the packing houses. Throughout the state, a select number of growers of diversified crops, including vegetables, use foreign H-2A labor in small quantities to supplement the available returning local seasonal field help. Overall many sectors of Maine's agricultural producers are hiring fewer workers even when it comes to local seasonal labor. This is evident in the conversion of family and larger farms continuing to turn to 'agro-tourism' and 'pick-your-own' systems as a strategy to sustain farms. The conversion to 'pick-your-own' also makes it unnecessary to plan for additional labor needs, with farms able to rely on a small static number of permanent and local seasonal labor. Overall, the improved economy has influenced the number of workers interested in and available to work in agriculture specific jobs. Farm operations are challenged to find workers

when so many alternative job opportunities exist for traditional seasonal and migrant workers looking to transition to a full-time, year-round position.

With the impact of COVID-19 sweeping across the country and the state of Maine, we anticipate this health crisis, though it remains to be seen, will negatively impact the viability of migrant workers making the sometimes long trip to Maine to work, contractor and employer capacity to provide transportation to and from the job site-often provided in vans and buses, locating or adapting safe housing that traditionally is bunk style living arrangements, and provide safe day to day work conditions that are often not easily accessible to critical health care when needed. Already, some northern Maine farms are deploying available young people, dismissed early from their secondary school responsibilities due to the crisis, to help with early growing season preparation.

Projected Maine MSFWs by Crop

Labor Intensive Crops	Projected MSFWs 2020 Agricultural Season
	April - November
Blueberries	1,000
Broccoli/Cauliflower	295
Seafood processing	35
Apple	190
Diversified Crop, mixed vegetable	315

3. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS MEANS SUMMARIZING MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARM WORKER (MSFW) CHARACTERISTICS (INCLUDING IF THEY ARE PREDOMINANTLY FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES, WHAT LANGUAGE(S) THEY SPEAK, THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MSFWs IN THE STATE DURING PEAK SEASON AND DURING LOW SEASON, AND WHETHER THEY TEND TO BE MIGRANT, SEASONAL, OR YEAR-ROUND FARMWORKERS). THIS INFORMATION MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DATA SUPPLIED BY WIOA SECTION 167 NATIONAL FARMWORKER JOBS PROGRAM (NFJP) GRANTEES, OTHER MSFW ORGANIZATIONS, EMPLOYER ORGANIZATIONS, AND STATE AND/OR FEDERAL AGENCY DATA SOURCES SUCH AS THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION

Unique needs of farmworkers:

The unique needs of MSFWs in Maine is based on review of the annual and historical delivery of services by multiple agencies working in long term partnership to assist this population during the harvest season. The projected needs are anticipated to remain consistent for the next four years for farmworkers working in each of the primary crop and geographic areas with agricultural activity. Consistently, workers need support navigating a host of local, state and federally sponsored services. This is often due to language challenges, a lack of awareness of certain services or physical access to services. Services such as: general health, dental and eye care; basic education service including child care for young family members while the parent or guardian works long hours; transportation services to and from the job site or the next out of area job often depending on contractor provided transportation or undependable personal vehicles; auto repairs and maintenance; wage or working condition issues, safe and suitable housing; referral to the next job, or need for education and training to assist the worker secure

full time agricultural work or regular-stable non-agricultural employment. These are long standing and evidence-based needs recognized by the Farmworker Resource Network members, American Job Centers and other service provider partners including the National Farmworkers Jobs Program operator. Peak agricultural work season in Maine is July-September and the approximate number of MSFWs in the State is between 2,000 and 2,500. Low season, which is January through April, the approximate number is 150 to 200 and most of these are workers are employed by farmer owned packing houses and apple cider pressing operations.

Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC), the National Farmworkers Jobs Program (NFJP) grant operator in Maine (WIOA Section 167), was awarded PY 2019 funding to help address the myriad of critical issues faced by farmworkers and their families. NFJP served 91 MSFWs in calendar year 2018 and 68 MSFWs during calendar year PY 2019. The NFJP is a required partner of the one-stop delivery system and is responsible for making the full range of services available to farmworkers.

To ensure that all services are focused on the customer's needs, services are provided through a case-management approach. Services received may include: basic and individualized career services, training services, and support services including emergency assistance. Key issues negatively impacting this population are lack of education; poverty; unstable employment; access to housing, transportation and/or healthcare; and limited English proficiency. Individuals who have earned more than 50 percent of their income from agricultural labor are encouraged, along with their dependents, to apply for services.

Characteristics of migrant workers: Migrant workers travel to Maine from Mexico, Haiti, Canada (New Brunswick and Nova Scotia), Texas, Florida, and California to work. The majority of workers arrive from Mexico, however, Maine continues to see small influxes of workers from Central American countries such as Guatemala. Many workers travel with their families, including young children, as the agriculture seasons in Maine gets underway. Historically, the primary language is Spanish, however, with more workers from Haiti, Maine is beginning to see an increase in Haitian Creole.

The challenges faced by migrant workers remains consistent year to year: language, education and job skills training, housing, reliable transportation, food and nutrition, child care, and school alternatives for the children during the harvest, not to mention the need for assurances and safety nets for safe and fair labor practices.

4. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Outreach activities: Services provided to migrant and seasonal farm workers and agricultural employers are supported by Wagner-Peyser Act merit staff and strong long standing partnerships in the communities where MSFW live and work. The State Monitor Advocate, along with merit outreach staff, provide a full range of services through the American Job Centers and geographic areas of primary agricultural activity throughout the state. Wagner-Peyser Act funding is used to support the State Monitor Advocate position, outreach staff and the delivery of services to MSFWs, other agricultural workers, and agricultural employers through Maine's one-stop American Job Centers.

Maine, as compared to many states, has a very low number of migrant and seasonal farm workers operating in distinct geographic pockets of the state. The State Monitor Advocate position effectively carries out the core State Monitor Advocate functions and responsibilities as defined by USDOL (20 CFR 653.108). The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) also attends to foreign labor certification (FLC) related job orders for H-2A, provides reviews of Agricultural Clearance

Orders (ETA-790) intended for H-2A, and conducts farm labor camp inspections related to H-2A FLC applications.

The chart below shows the number of MSFWs projected to receive services in year one of the approved Plan (2020/2021). Farmworker and MSFW numbers have continued to decline slowly over the last several years. It is anticipated that the number of MSFWs will continue to remain relatively static, with no anticipated change over the next four years. American Job Centers throughout the State are the primary source for provision of Wagner Peyser services to the MSFW population. Examples of these services include: registration with the Maine JobLink (MJL), job referrals, job counseling, and referrals to supportive services.

2020-2021	Registered in MJL (self-identified)	Referred to Jobs	Provided services	Referred to Supportive services	Case Management Counseling	Job Development Contact	Outreach Contact by SMA
July-Sept	90	4	25	2	2	1	295
Oct-Dec	50	6	15	1	1	1	120
Jan-March	50	4	15	0	1	0	10
April-June	90	6	25	2	2	1	20

Contacting farmworkers and improving outreach: Outreach activities will be consistent with 20 CFR Part 653.107 and will serve to implement strategies aimed to identify, document, and track MSFWs as they access the full range of employment and training services within the one-stop centers. Historically, the SMA conducted the majority of the MSFW outreach to workers and agricultural employers. The SWA is transitioning to a collaborative model of outreach and coordination between dedicated outreach workers and the SMA requirements detailed in 20 CFR 653.108. Full time equivalent staff will be deployed to meet employer and farmworker needs during high peak agricultural activity and reduced to part-time on-demand capacity during low agricultural activity. Outreach will focus on locating and contacting farm workers not reached through normal intake activities including field visits, routine follow-up with agriculture employers and posting of public and other social media notices to community organizations and networks such as the Farmworker Resource Network partners about services available. The outreach efforts will implement compliance requirements in providing qualitative equivalent and quantitatively proportionate service delivery to MSFWs

The State Workforce Agency will coordinate MSFW outreach plans with the SMA and local employment service outreach workers serving the greater areas of agricultural activities relative to the crop's peak season. For example, the Machias American Job Center, based in Washington County with proximity to the blueberry barrens, deploys ES staff to labor camps to provide information and employment assistance to migrant workers. Employment Service outreach workers and the SMA will contact MSFWs during the agricultural peak harvest season of blueberry, apple, and broccoli while conducting field visits in Androscoggin, Oxford, Washington, and Aroostook counties. These counties see the bulk of Maine's MSFW population. Additional outreach may take place in other counties based on employer needs and the influx of

workers into those areas, particularly those areas with H-2A local offices whose neighboring agricultural employers file H-2A job orders and may have referrals to those orders. For H2A, the local office outreach workers are encouraged to carry out active referrals until the employer's H2A workers depart for the work site (at least two days before the employer's set start date for work on the job order). During outreach and field visits worker rights and support services informational brochures in Spanish, English, and Haitian Creole are distributed. Information on agricultural employment and referral's to services such as health, education, and legal, are made available to the workers and their families as needed. Table 4 shows the SWA outreach schedule for field visits during PY 2019-2020 and the number of MSFWs estimated to be contacted. These numbers are expected to remain stable over the next couple of years.

Table 24: Outreach Field Visit Schedule

	July September	October – December	January -March	April –June	Total
Field Checks	30	18	0	20	68
# MSFWs contacted	275	110	0	60	445

The number of MSFWs to be contacted each year over the next four-year term is estimated at 445 workers. These contacts occur during outreach and field checks, including random unannounced visits to labor camps and work areas where MSFWs may be present. Outreach staff and the SMA look to identify issues that may include: apparent violations in working conditions, the proper display of mandatory/informational posters, wages, housing standards, water quality, and more. The number of worksites visited, locations and supervisor contact names are recorded. Field reports also record the time of the visit, observations made, available services discussed with MSFWs, number of MSFWs contacted, names of MSFWs requesting services, and follow-up arrangements established. A copy of the field report is filed at the administrative office of the Bureau of Employment Services.

Technical assistance to outreach workers: Outreach functions are tied to the service delivery areas where farm workers and agricultural employers live, work, and congregate. Service delivery strategies aim to assist farm workers' efforts to achieve integration and self-sufficiency. Outreach workers are trained in and seek to provide a full range of American Job Center services and resources to the agricultural communities including, but not limited to; skills assessments, career guidance, basic skills remediation and vocational training, educational opportunities, job search assistance, and supportive services.

Outreach staff will gain extensive knowledge of farm work in order to ensure high levels of awareness and sensitivity to the socio-economic and cultural nuances that exist within the agricultural communities. With a majority of farmworkers working in isolated geographic pockets in Maine and Spanish being the primary language spoken among the farm worker population with an increase of Haitian speaking crews finding work in Maine's service delivery areas, the SWA works closely with the NFJP grantee and other Farmworker Resource Network providers to effectively outreach and serve MSFWs.

In accordance with Part 653.107 (k), outreach workers will be trained in local office procedures and in the services, benefits, and protections afforded MSFWs by the ES. They will also be trained in procedure for the informal resolution of complaints. The program for such training shall be formulated by the State Administrator, pursuant to uniform guidelines developed by the ETA, and each State's program shall be reviewed and commented in advance by the SMA. The SMA, who works in close tandem with outreach workers and American Job Center

partners, annually attends training conferences on a national level offered by the office of the National Monitor Advocate and on a Regional level offered by the Regional Monitor Advocate. Both venues provide opportunity to engage with Federal agencies collaborating with MSFW activities, provide resource materials for reference, review statutory requirements and support development and updating SWA training materials and MSFW service delivery best practices.

Additional Training Considerations for Outreach Workers, Wagner Peyser and One-Stop partners staff:

- Sexual Harassment in the Fields
- Discrimination
- OSHA Compliance
- Apparent Violations
- Human Trafficking
- Food Safety
- Pesticides
- Field Checks and Cultural Diversity

Outreach staff professional development and training: To ensure all staff including our dedicated MSFW outreach workers, are adequately trained and have the professional skills necessary to provide services, the State Workforce Agency (SWA) evaluates and provides the professional development needed to ensure quality services to MSFW's. The SWA provides new and existing employee training on the wide range of state, federal and community-based services available to MSFWs, agency policies and practices, the Complaint System including identifying ES and non-ES complaints and, recording and reporting using proper complaint logs and forms. Wagner Peyser staff act as the primary interface with most job seeker participants entering the one-stop delivery system, whether entrance is through bricks and mortar facilities, virtual on line, while conducting a field visit or through community events sponsored, supported or attended by the SWA. Wagner Peyser funded outreach staff conduct initial triage and provide resource navigation and referral services. Staff are trained in job skill assessment, labor market information and research, resume writing and effective job search strategies, career pathway awareness and community resources. It is imperative that staff have the skills necessary to do this in a customer-centric manner in accordance with Section 188 and the requirements identified in the local area MOUs regarding referrals and access to system partner services. Staff effectively provide or relay all the required information such as that listed under basic career services.

Outreach Worker Training and Awareness Across Core Programs: Training is provided by the State Workforce Agency (SWA). Outreach staff are trained in basic unemployment insurance (UI) requirements, including identifying work test issues ensuring that an individual whom a State determines to be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits is able to work, available for work, and actively seeking work in accordance with the State's unemployment compensation law or assisting in resolving UI claimant problems in coordination with our UI partner team members. State merit staff are educated on WIOA partner services specific to their service area to assist job seekers prepare for and obtain employment, and to help employers fill

job vacancies with qualified job seekers. Outreach staff are familiar with the recruitment and retention challenges the agriculture employer community faces, and are trained to provide the education, training and referrals needed to fill vacancies. Maine has an active statewide action team membership involving partners from community colleges, adult education, rehabilitation services, economic development, WIOA Title 1 service providers, workforce board members, and others to encourage staff education on services, build solid working relationships at the state and regional level, and identify resources to assess and support MSFWs and agricultural and other business workforce needs.

See e.4.C

Collaboration and coordination of services: The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) and outreach staff will partner with organizations and agencies serving the agricultural employment community to ensure that the needs and concerns of these workers receive consideration in the development and implementation of integrated service plans.

The Farmworker Resource Network (Network), a collaborative including the SMA, members of a nearby one-stop centers, National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP), Maine Migrant Health Program, Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) food supplement program, Downeast Health Services' Women Infants and Children (WIC) program, and Maine Department of Education's Migrant Education Program continues to coordinate a full array of critical services in support of Maine's migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The Network providers gather in the heart of the blueberry barrens to provide immediate services to arriving migrant workers, serve as an effective collaborative outreach mechanism, and host a series of small resource fairs during peak harvest to ensure workers receive the services and supports needed, such as educational, occupational, health, and social service supports. MSFWs may receive food assistance, gas vouchers, emergency auto repair, emergency lodging, tents, clothing and personal care items, job search services, and referrals to social services.

5. SERVICES PROVIDED TO FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

Services provided to MSFWs and agricultural employers through the one-stop delivery system: The full range of employment and training services delineated under WIOA Title I-B will be provided to MSFWs. One of the roles of the SMA and the WIOA 167 grantee is to make job opportunities available to workers. In addition to field visits, the SMA monitors the local offices for compliance with regulations in serving MSFWs. The table below shows the SMA's annual schedule for monitoring local offices.

State Monitor Advocate Local Office Monitoring Schedule

ES OFFICE	Monitoring Timeframe
Presque Isle	June-July
Calais, Machias & Bangor	August
Skowhegan, Wilton	September
Rockland	May
Brunswick	May
Portland	July

ES OFFICE	Monitoring Timeframe
Augusta	June
Lewiston	September-October
Springvale	April - May
Norway	September

Services to farmworkers: The SMA coordinates MSFW service plans with local offices nearest the greater area of agricultural activities relative to the crop's peak season. Staff members of the one-stop have full knowledge of local office procedures and the services, benefits, and protections to be afforded to MSFWs. Staff are trained during the annual scheduled one-stop office review by the SMA. Training includes: review of the Judge Ritchey Court Order, definition and identification of MSFWs, and basic outreach field methodology including making oral presentations to groups of MSFWs at their working, living, or gathering areas on the services available at the local one-stop. At their local office, staff are provided with laminated "At a Glance" fact sheets detailing the ES complaint system and identifying MSFWs and migrant food processing workers. Staff also have available printed American Job Center informational material to provide to MSFWs, log sheets to record contacts, and ES complaint information to inform MSFWs of their rights to file complaints. Staff work closely with non-governmental organizations providing services to MSFWs, as well as the NFJP 167 grantee. Several of those organizations utilize extra space at area American Job Centers to conduct meetings with MSFWs.

Merit staff and other one-stop partners who work with farmworkers will gain extensive knowledge of farm work in order to ensure high levels of awareness and sensitivity to the socio-economic and cultural nuances that exist within the agricultural communities. Merit staff of American Job Centers regularly attend trainings and are provided resources on the ES system across core programs, including the UI program. Due to Maine's low MSFW population, even during peak agricultural season, American Job Center staff work closely with the SMA to provide one-stop services to MSFW's and agricultural employers.

Career Centers, in collaboration with the SMA, coordinate service delivery including, but not limited to:

- Provision of a full range of employment services, benefits, and protections on a basis that is qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate to services provided to non-MSFWs,
- Access to, and use of, job order information effectively,
- Assistance in accessing self-assisted services via electronic technologies,
- Individual referrals to agricultural and non-agricultural jobs, occupational training, support services, assessments and testing, career counseling, and other job development services,
- Provision of information on labor rights, protections, and responsibilities with respect to terms and conditions of employment,
- Assistance in the preparation and filing of employment and non-employment related complaints,

- Accepting and referring labor-related complaints and apparent violations in accordance with established policies and procedures,
- Referrals of individuals and family members to supportive services for which they may be eligible,
- Assisting with posting resumes on-line and conducting on-line job searches, and
- Facilitating communication between limited-english proficient individuals referred to jobs and employers.

: The Bureau of Employment Services (BES) implements the Employment Service (ES) Complaint System (per 20 CFR Subpart E §658.400 – 658.418) for retrieval of complaints that are filed at local one-stops and at the central office. The ES Complaint Resolution Administrator (CRA) has direct responsibility for the ES Complaint System, however, the State agency official designated to handle MSFW complaints will be the SMA. The ES CRA and SMA will maintain records of all MSFW complaints as well as correspondence between parties and notes from all investigations for a period of three years. Within 1 month after the end of the calendar quarter the ES office manager must transmit an electronic copy of the quarterly complaint system log to the SMA. The SMA will participate in and monitor the performance of the complaint system. The SMA reviews the ES office's informal resolution of complaints relating to MSFWs and will ensure that the ES office manager transmits copies of the complaint system logs, pursuant to part 658, subpart E, to the CRA. The CRA reviews these files quarterly to ensure compliance with appropriate complaint resolution processes and adherence to customer satisfaction principles. The CRA prepares and submits the Quarterly Complaint System Activity Report (Log) to the ES Bureau Director.

Employer services and agricultural recruitment system: Maine's American Job Centers will continue to help agricultural employers in obtaining workers to harvest their crops and referring job seekers to general agriculture and H-2A job orders Where U.S. workers must be given hiring priority. The range of services to agricultural employers extend beyond assistance with job orders and referrals and incapsulate the full range of American Job Center partner services. Employers are invited to participate in job fairs and to work with a CareerCenter business liaison to create recruitment plans, potential training opportunities, and possible use of the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) to help recruit qualified workers. The SWA intends to work closely with the Maine Department of Agriculture and agriculture employers to promote the use of the ARS to recruit and fill job openings. Maine's labor exchange system connects employers to workers, serving as a bridge between local office staff and employers, facilitating direct service provision for employer account management, job seeker resume review, or job order enhancement. Employer engagement creates the opportunity to assess the quality of services to the employer community. Employer feedback, forums, and satisfaction surveys help identify areas for continuous improvement.

The SWA will also provide technical services and convene informational meetings for foreign labor stakeholders, agricultural employers, and service providers interested in the American Job Center services including the H-2A foreign labor certification program. The SWA will provide assistance to agricultural employers during field visits by: distributing informational brochures and required posters, assessing employer's labor needs, taking job information, and recommending the Agricultural Recruitment System (should local workers not be readily available).

H-2A local offices are those offices whose neighboring agricultural employers file H-2A job orders and may have referrals to those orders. The local office should carry out active referrals

until the employer's H2A workers depart for the work site (at least two days before the employer's set start date for work on the job order). The SWA's Foreign Labor Specialist (FLC) will oversee the foreign labor related activities pertaining to processing the Agricultural Clearance order ETA form 790 for H-2A. In addition, the FLC will be the liaison on this process with the US DOL Office of Foreign Labor Certification and related processing center. The FLC will also provide technical services and convene information meetings for foreign labor stakeholders, agricultural employers, and service providers.

When employers request foreign workers through the H2-A program the FLC oversees procedures described below to advertise the job opening. The H-2A is governed under US DOL ETA 20 CFR Part 655 and Wage & Hour Division 29 CFR Part 501, Temporary Agricultural Employment of H-2A Aliens in the United States; Final Rule February 12, 2010. The H-2A non-immigrant worker visa program enables U.S. agricultural employers to employ foreign workers on a temporary basis to perform agricultural labor or services.

In Maine, the H-2A related job orders are administered through the Bureau of Employment Services (BES) and the Bureau of Labor Standards (BLS) at the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL). Job openings intended for H-2A labor certification program are entered on America's Job Link through the Maine JobLink (MJL). These listings can be seen by potential workers in all 50 states. The FLC reviews the H-2A related Agricultural Clearance Order form ETA 790 for accuracy and compliance with the H-2A federal regulations before the job order is uploaded on the Maine JobLink by H-2A staff, and prior to employers forwarding a request for foreign workers to the USDOL ETA Office of Foreign Labor Certification H-2A National Processing Center. The jobs are also entered into the Interstate Clearance System to Florida, Vermont, and New Hampshire. These are supply states that often have workers who are willing to move to accept employment on a seasonal basis. The Interstate Clearance System is an agreement between states that have a shortage of workers and those states that have a surplus. The state with the shortage sends information on the job and what the employer is willing to provide in order to recruit workers. The surplus state informs local offices that have a surplus of agriculture workers of the job opportunities and see if any wish to relocate for the harvest season.

6. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

A. COLLABORATION

Collaboration and coordination of services: The State Workforce Agency and outreach staff will partner with organizations and agencies serving MSFWs and the agricultural employment community to ensure that the needs and concerns of these workers receive consideration in the development and implementation of integrated service plans.

The SWA is fortunate to be a member of the Farmworker Resource Network, a highly successful and recognized best in practice multi-agency collaborative. During the next four years the SWA will continue to promote, engage and work to improve our collective effort to outreach and serve MSFWs at the highest level. The Farmworker Resource Network (Network), a collaborative including the SMA, members of a nearby one-stop centers, National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP), Maine Migrant Health Program, Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) food supplement program, Downeast Health Services' Women Infants and Children (WIC) program, and Maine Department of Education's Migrant Education Program continues to coordinate a full array of critical services in support of Maine's migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The Network providers gather in the heart of the

blueberry barrens to provide immediate services to arriving migrant workers, serve as an effective collaborative outreach mechanism, and host a series of small resource fairs during peak harvest to ensure workers receive the services and supports needed, such as educational, occupational, health, and social service supports. MSFWs may receive food assistance, gas vouchers, emergency auto repair, emergency lodging, tents, clothing and personal care items, job search services, and referrals to social services.

National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP). The SWA will continue to operate under an executed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) the 167 Grantee for the NFJP. The MOU facilitates the exchange of data pertaining to services provided to MSFWs and ensures farmworkers receive the full complement of American Job Center services necessary to meet their employment, training and support needs.

In the coming year, the SWA will engage with the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry's (DACF) Agricultural Resource Development Division (ARDD). The goal is to join together to ensure the ARDD agriculture employer community accesses the employment and training services of the American Job Center partners, help advance services to MSFWs and promote the Agricultural Recruitment System through social media, direct outreach to employers and through the annual Agricultural Trades Show.

B. REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENT

The state solicited information and suggestions from the WIOA 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations in developing the Agricultural Outreach Plan. The State provided a proposed plan to the following entities: Maine Department of Education-Migrant Education Program, Maine Mobile Health Program, Maine Migrant Health Program, the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic Program, Maine Human Rights Commission, the University of Maine School of Law-Immigrant and Legal Advocacy Project, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Maine Farm Bureau, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Mano en Mano (migrant worker family center), Maine Family Planning, the National Farmworker Jobs Program 167 grantee – Eastern Maine Development Corporation, and Pine Tree Legal (Farm Worker's Division). MDOL operates under an executed MOU with Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC), the 167 Grantee for the NFJP. The Memorandum of Understanding between MDOL and EMDC will facilitate the exchange of data pertaining to services provided to MSFWs. The SWA considered all comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP and informed all commenting parties in writing whether their comments were incorporated. For comments and MDOL response, see Appendix E Response to Comments Regarding 2020-2023 Agricultural Outreach Plan.

Response to Comments Regarding the 2020-2023 Agricultural Outreach Plan

On February 10, 2020, the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL) solicited comments from interested parties on the four-year Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP). The Department received comments from one interested party during the thirty-day comment period ending March 11, 2020. Yvette Meunier, Promotional Coordinator from the Agricultural Resource Development Division of the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry responded. The following includes the comments received and the Department's response to each.

Comment: "I will say that from a layperson's perspective, there is a lot of terminologies undefined or appear to be interchangeable (One-stops, H-2A local offices, American Job Center,

CareerCenters). SWA and ETA acronyms were used but never defined. The ES acronym was used several times before being defined.”

Department Response: The Department agrees the use of acronyms requires additional clarification. Acronym edits were made to the final draft of the plan including an updated appendix of acronyms and definitions.

Comment: “DACF was never mentioned in the plan, is there any interest in identifying areas we can collaborate with as part of their work? One potential area of assistance might be with promoting the Agricultural Recruitment System through social media and direct outreach to employers, as identified in the last sentence of the first paragraph under Assessment of Progress on page 5 of the plan. They could also mention ongoing outreach opportunities with the Farm Labor Link Network at the Ag Trades Show to reach out to farmers to promote the H-2A program.”

Department Response: Although the plan does not specifically name or operationalize specific partners and services, we are fully committed to making sure that these relationships are as strong as possible. This will include working with the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry and others in promoting the Agricultural Recruitment System through social media, and direct outreach to employers as well as outreach to farmers to promote the H-2A program at the Agricultural Trades Show.

C. DATA ASSESSMENT

Data Assessment: Over the last four years, the State focused on meeting goals to provide quantitatively proportionate and qualitatively equivalent services to MSFW’s. Numbers of MSFW’s registered in the Wagner Peyser labor exchange system was remarkably below planned goals. However, the services provided were qualitatively equivalent to the services of non-MSFW’s. Farmworkers served through outreach were primarily migrant workers arriving and departing to the next harvest in Maine or in another state. Analysis of the online self-registration process yielded a lack of systems checks where registrants identify as a seasonal or migrant farmworker. This impacted the actual number of workers identifying as farmworkers, particularly seasonal workers who more frequently incorporate the American Job Center and the use of the labor exchange system in their employment search. The SMA has worked with America’s Job Link Alliance to simplify and clarify farmworker identification requirements in the self-registration process of the Maine JobLink system to accurately capture the number of farmworkers receiving services from the one-stop system network.

D. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

Assessment of Progress: During the last four years, Maine focused on five core objectives which remain key to improving MSFW and agricultural employer services for the next four years.

Increase the number of MSFW’s who participate in labor exchange activities. Migrant and seasonal farmworker one-stop service activity varied between migrant and seasonal workers. Seasonal workers tend to use the American Job Center for assistance with employment and training services, whereas migrant workers receive services as a result of State Monitor Advocate and partner outreach at employer work sites and labor camps. Improvement in the number of workers who self-identify as either migrant or seasonal worker during registration for services continues to trend below expectation despite the past outreach model deployed in Maine and the results illustrated in Table 21. As a national trend, migrant workers are less likely to visit an American Job Center and access needed information and services through field visits

and partner outreach. During the last two years, farmworker contacts increased due to outreach expansion efforts of the SMA however registration for services did not. In 2018, 523 farmworkers were contacted by the SMA. In 2019, 415 workers were contacted with a large influx of these contacts occurring in the third and fourth quarters of the calendar year as a result of MSFWs shifting to wreath making operations. Overall, Maine continues to see gradual decline over the last four years in MSFW workers.

Increase the number of agricultural employers using the labor exchange services and promote the use of the ARS. Although agricultural employers are using all resources to fill positions, including the one-stop service system and requests for H2A positions increased in 2019, they continue to struggle to attract and find workers interested in farm labor opportunity. A marked increase in the use of the Agriculture Recruitment System was not realized given the challenge recruiting workers, especially when the economy was strong and alternative job opportunities were available. Despite efforts to encourage migrant workers to visit an American Job Center to receive services, registration for services did not markedly improve.

Encourage participation of MSFW's seeking transition to higher-wage jobs and permanent non-agricultural employment. The SWA believes farmworkers continue to receive services that lead to higher wage jobs and permanent non-agriculture employment. However, due to the significant numbers of farmworkers and specifically seasonal workers in Maine who do not identify as a "farmworker" when registering for services, assessing our impact on this goal is a challenge. The number of MSFW's who self-identify and engage in American Job Center services, is evident by the success of Eastern Maine Development Corporation, the NFJP grantee and the WIOA Title 1b sub-recipient in transitioning workers to better paying jobs. The SWA supports the NFJP operator and encourages our outreach staff and our partners at all times to promote higher-wage agriculture and non-agriculture employment opportunities.

Enhance collaboration with the MSFW servicing organizations. Collaboration with our MSFW serving organizations remains strong and illustrates a best practice here in Maine.

Maintain and Improve Progress Maine will continue its effort to conduct sound outreach to the employer and farmworker community to enhance the delivery of one-stop services. This effort will continue to capitalize on the strengths of community partnerships, such as the Farmworker Resource Network, to identify and provide the full breadth of services many of the farmworker population require to obtain, retain, or transition to employment- better paying jobs. Maine will advance our promotion of the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) through intra and inter-state clearance orders and available one-stop services through social media and direct outreach to workers, employers, and partners in order to fill seasonal, temporary and permanent agriculture positions. And we will continue to work to improve our tools and efforts to identify seasonal and migrant users of American Job Center services to help illustrate the impact we are having on this important and critical segment of our workforce.

Over the course of the 2020-2023 State Plan, Maine will continue to focus on the following outreach objectives:

- Increase the number of MSFWs who participate in labor exchange activities,
- Increase the number of agricultural employers utilizing the labor exchange services,
- Promote the use of the ARS to agricultural employers through outreach and education, Encourage participation of MSFW's seeking transition to higher-wage jobs and permanent non-agricultural employment, and

- Enhance collaboration with MSFW service provider organizations.

E. STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The State Monitor Advocate was provided the opportunity to review the AOP in its draft and approved the plan submitted.

WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time (sec 121(e)(3));	Yes
2. If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;	Yes
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and	Yes
4. SWA officials: 1) Initiate the discontinuation of services; 2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued; 3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued; 4) Approve corrective action plans; 5) Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days; 6) Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement-agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWAs' behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and 7) Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.	Yes

WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	67.0		68.0	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	65.0		66.0	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$5350.00		\$5600.00	

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAMS

A. ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

Alignment of adult education curricula and instruction with state-adopted academic standards (the Maine Learning Results since 1997) is not new to Maine Adult Education. Providers that issue an adult high school credential must align with the required standards and learning outcomes of their corresponding high school. In 2011, the Maine Learning Results were updated to include Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English language arts and math and were implemented in the 2013-14 school year. This presented a challenge for adult education as the CCSS were not normed for adult learners.

In the spring of 2013, the U.S.D.O.E. Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) released the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) for Adults. These research-based standards are drawn from those common core standards that are most relevant for adults to meet 21st century college and career readiness skills. Maine Adult Education adopted the CCRS and met its goal of statewide integration into instructional practice by SY2016-2017. Extensive professional development in the college and career standards for instructors in the areas of reading, language arts and mathematics has continued since it began in the spring of 2014.

To receive state and federal funding, CCRS implementation must be apparent in lesson plans and instructional delivery. Maine Adult Education also requires local providers to contextualize instruction and make use of research-based best practices in all content areas, including mathematics and reading, and in the implementation of Integrated Education and Training (IET) and Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE). CCRS training is ongoing for both veteran and new instructors.

The adoption and implementation of College and Career Readiness Standards for Adults and other valid, research-based practices has enabled all WIOA and state literacy funded providers to meet both the state and federal requirements for research-based, rigorous instruction that prepares adults for postsecondary education, training and employment. Implementation of CCRS also maintains alignment with State-adopted K-12 content standards and clarifies for students, institutions of higher education, as well as employers, that Maine Adult Education is a research and standards-based pathway to postsecondary education, training and career.

Maintaining high standards of instruction resulting in improved learner outcomes includes rigorous, standards-based classroom instruction; distance, online, and blended learning instructional environments; dual enrollment in postsecondary; and project and community-

based learning. The goals of these strategies, combined with contextualized content relevant to learner needs should enhance learner engagement and attainment of goals.

Specialized support continues to be given to programs striving to integrate CCRS into English language acquisition courses. To determine if progress is being made, the Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol (a research-based and validated model that allows English learners to acquire academic knowledge as they develop English language proficiency) is a part of Maine's College and Career Readiness Implementation plan.

Beginning in the late summer of 2019, Maine Adult Education adopted the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELP) prepared in October 2016 by American Institute of Research. These standards correspond to College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS). Training for instructors and administrators has begun and will be ongoing. Because the need to serve English language learners has been spreading throughout the state, steps will be taken to train all teachers on meeting the needs of English language learners.

B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES (SECTION 203 OF WIOA)

The Maine state office recognized that the adult education system at the time WIOA passed consisted of many small providers with limited services, staff, and other resources necessary to successfully meet WIOA requirements. That long-established method of having many providers (at one point over 100) working independently of each other was not an effective use of resources or improving learner outcomes.

Input from literacy providers and various partners, and a review of performance data led the adult education state office to the concept of grouping area adult education providers into education and career development hubs. To optimize efforts for collaboration within the hubs, criteria required that each hub contain a local workforce board, at least one career center, a University of Maine system site as well as a campus of the Maine Community College system, local libraries, and if possible, not split counties.

The result was the creation of nine hubs located within the boundaries of the three local workforce boards. Each hub, consisting of 5-11 local adult education providers, vary in population density, economics, workforce priorities, number of WIOA eligible learners and distance between programs.

The establishment of the hubs shifted the local providers away from long established patterns of programs working independently and competitively. Hubs are an opportunity to:

- Enhance communication among local providers
- Establish more efficient systems for maximizing resources, including staff expertise; expanding access for learners through use of technology for delivery of instructions and services to all programs within the hub, and developing authentic, reciprocal partnerships with multiple agencies
- Expect high levels of instruction, advising and academic rigor in all programs throughout the hubs and the state
- Promote an approach of collaboration and partnership among all current and perspective adult literacy providers by providing only one AEFLA grant per hub

- Expand the hub concept to include the state funded Maine College and Career Access program
- Use data reflecting the data within the Hub service area for programmatic decision making and problem solving

Section 231 (e) Thirteen Considerations

As required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Maine Department of Education Office of Adult Education conducted a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) to award multi-year funding to eligible agencies for the provision of WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Section 231. The initial grant cycle was for FY20-22 (July 1, 2019-June 30, 2021). Subject to continued availability of funding and demonstrated effectiveness as determined by outcomes, the Department may opt to renew the contract for two renewal periods, July 2021 through June 30, 2023 and July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024.

Maine Adult Education state office determined to use the AEFLA FY20-22 Competitive Grant Application to require, and then ensure through ongoing desk and on-site monitoring that WIOA fund recipients address the requirements of the 13 Considerations and the following adult education and literacy activities identified in Section 203 of WIOA including programs that provide such activities concurrently.

- *Adult education;*
- *Literacy;*
- *Workplace adult education and literacy activities;*
- *Family literacy activities;*
- *English language acquisition activities;*
- *Integrated English literacy and civics education;*
- *Workforce preparation activities; or*
- *Integrated education and training that—*
 1. *Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and*
 2. *Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.*

Each eligible provider must also adhere to the following Special Rule.

Special Rule. *Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.*

As providers comply with these requirements, adult learners throughout the state will have access to high quality, rigorous programming that encompasses the adult education and literacy activities included in Section 203 of WIOA.

Section 231 (e) Thirteen Considerations

Below are the requirements applicants for the 2020-2022 AEFLA RFP had to address. Successful applicants are contractually obligated to:

(1) Be responsive to the regional needs identified in the local board plan and serve individuals identified as most in need of adult education and literacy services. How funded recipients will address the needs of sub-populations with barriers to employment as identified in the local plan had to be described.

(2) Serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities. The processes and procedures in place to assess an individual's current needs and ability; the delivery of programmatic and instructional strategies to provide access and services to learners with physical, emotional, mental and learning disabilities as well as collaborations with other agencies where learners may be co-enrolled had to be explained.

(3) Past Effectiveness. A demonstrated effectiveness form had to be completed that included: performance data from the past two consecutive years related to improving the skills of the target population in English Language Arts, mathematics, English language acquisition and other relevant subjects; and outcomes of participants related to employment, attainment of a high school credential or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training. The form also required evidence of past effectiveness serving eligible individuals who are basic skills deficient, and steps to be taken to meet the state targets each year of the grant.

(4) Extent the applicant demonstrates alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan as well as the activities and services of one-stop partners. Alignment of activities and services with the strategies and goal of the local plan under WIOA Title I, section 108, as well as maintaining alignment with the activities and services of the one-stop partners had to be described. The local adult education providers had to focus on programs, activities and services that expand opportunities for education, employment, training and supports for WIOA eligible individuals. Local boards reviewed the applicants' responses for appropriate evidence of that type of alignment. Local boards, local providers and one-stop partners must work together during the period of this plan to move the activities forward to meet plan goals.

(5) Demonstrate that the program is of sufficient intensity and quality and based on rigorous research so participants will make substantial learning gains as well as use instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction. Grant recipients had to describe the evaluative methods used to ensure instruction is of sufficient intensity and duration to be effective. A description of program design including strategies for outreach, recruitment, retention; evidence-based research used to inform instruction and instructional strategies used to achieve substantial learning gains and how the CCRS for Adults are incorporated into the curricula had to be included. How integrated academics, skills and knowledge learners need to transition successfully to career and postsecondary and steps for the consideration of addressing special learning needs had to be explained. Instructional practices employed to include essential components of reading instruction that takes into consideration diverse learning needs and NRS levels were described. Examples of learning in real life contexts to ensure the learner has the skills necessary to

compete in the workplace and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship were required.

(6) Deliver instruction in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics and English language acquisition that is aligned with the state-adopted College and Career Readiness Standards and based on best practices derived from the most rigorous research available. The scientific research upon which instruction is based to improve literacy skills needed to be described. How the success of such practices will be assessed needed to be included as well as how CCRS will be used to inform instruction, including how best practices will be integrated into classroom instruction.

(7) Describe activities that effectively use technology, services and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance. How the provider will support and ensure the integration of technology *into* instruction, including how software and equipment will expand access to effective learning and increase a learner's digital literacy had to be described.

(8) Deliver activities that provide learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. How the provider will design and implement an Integrated Education and Training (IET) model that combines basic educational, employability and occupational skills had to be defined; including the proposed IET activities that enable participants to acquire skills needed for success in postsecondary education and training programs, employment and citizenship. A description of how the IET is the result of collaborations with workforce, employer and postsecondary partners was also required.

(9) Ensure that activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors and administrators who meet the minimum state qualifications and certifications, where applicable, and how access to high quality professional development, including through electronic means will occur. The number of employees, details regarding their duties, employment status (full or part time), weeks contracted to work, amount budgeted for position and location, certification and expiration date had to be provided. In addition, employees funded by WIOA had to be included in the applicant's plan for instructor and director professional development (PD). Applicants had to describe how PD participants will be identified, how information regarding PD opportunities will be disseminated, and how implementation of PD learning will be assessed. Applicants also had to identify the process for ensuring that each staff/instructor completes high quality professional development (in multiple delivery modalities) and how many hours of paid PD are provided.

(10) Coordinate activities with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce investment boards, one-stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways. The coordination with local resources to develop partnerships needed to be described. The process used to ensure timely and seamless referrals between partner agencies; coordinating with the local one-stop center, local businesses and industry; fulfilling one-stop WIOA requirements; ensuring the transition of learners into Maine

College and Career Access programming and/or to postsecondary institutions; and a description of academic and career related counseling and other support services to improve retention and learner success had to be submitted.

(11) Provide activities that offer flexible schedules and coordination with Federal, State, and local support services (such as child care, transportation, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs. Examples had to be included of: how the needs of individuals, including those with disabilities and/or special needs will be determined and addressed; how coordination for support services will take place to address their needs; how an advisor will be used to assist learners with career planning and in identifying career pathways based on learner interests and aptitude; how barriers to program completion will be identified and addressed; and how the referral process to support services to minimize barriers to learning will be implemented. Applicants also had to provide a sample of a flexible class schedule that enables participants, including those with special needs, to attend and complete programs and describe wrap around services to support participant success and increase completion rates.

(12) Maintain high-quality, accurate data of measurable participant outcomes (consistent with WIOA §116) in the state adult education managed information system and monitor program performance to demonstrate the ability to meet the goals outlined here through a variety of data sources, including academic assessment scores, attendance, and activity data. The data collection process, quality controls, review of data procedures and how data will be used to improve performance, increase recruitment, and retention efforts had to be described.

(13) Deliver additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs in the local areas of demonstrated need. How data is used to describe the population and needs of English language learners in their service area; their experience providing English language acquisition and civics education instruction and services; and how their program model leads to high school completion, postsecondary training and unsubsidized employment had to be explained.

C. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS

Maine Adult Education has a strong collaboration with correctional institutions and has increased both educational programming and instructor professional development opportunities within the past two years. Programs and services are available in state prisons, county correctional institutions, local jails, youth facilities and reentry centers. Examples of this partnership include recent efforts to not only increase educational and career pathway programs, but to also enhance collaborative planning and coordination. As a result of this integrated career planning process, adult education programs providing services to Maine correctional facilities have educational programs that are aligned, are using the same assessment tools, and are entering data in the State's adult education longitudinal data system, MaineSTARS. The inclusion of this learner data in the adult education data system facilitates the continuity of services should a learner be transferred to another or be released.

In the spring of 2019, Maine Adult Education put forth a new AEFLA competition for the initial period of July 1, 2019-June 30, 2021 with the option of two renewal periods between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2024. Beginning in FY18, the state established nine adult education and career development areas that were aligned with the boundaries of the three local workforce boards. To encourage innovation and maximize efficiencies and resources, local adult education

providers within these geographic areas were formed into hubs. With only one award anticipated for each hub, interested applicants were encouraged to collaborate with other eligible service providers. Correctional facilities were involved in the AEFLA competition as part of a hub, and with incarcerated individuals now included in the adult education database, they are included in hub enrollment counts and performance measure targets used in the funding formula to determine AEFLA allocations per hub. While the Department of Corrections has chosen over the last several years to fund its own educational programs and services, hubs are able to calculate the amount of AEFLA funding supporting correctional programming.

In addition to the AEFLA criteria of “eligible providers” (WIOA §203(5), 34 CFR 463 Preamble) applicants proposing to deliver corrections education and education for other institutionalized individuals had to provide evidence of demonstrated past effectiveness in delivering corrections education. An eligible provider could demonstrate past effectiveness by providing two consecutive years of performance data showing their effectiveness in serving eligible individuals in correctional institutions. (*state requirement*)

AEFLA funds are used to provide educational programming to eligible corrections learners in the following areas: adult basic education, literacy, English language acquisition, adult secondary school completion and high school equivalency preparation, concurrent enrollment, college transition, integrated education and training, peer tutoring, workforce preparation and transition services. Individuals expected to be released within five years receive priority of service.

To better serve incarcerated individuals, Maine Adult Education AEFLA recipients are committed to making the partnership with corrections even stronger by focusing efforts on:

- Increasing support and attention to reentry activities. Priority will be given to those who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program. Of those currently incarcerated in local and county jails, 100 percent are scheduled to leave the facility within five years. For those in DOC facilities, 90 percent were sentenced to five years or less. When all sentences to DOC are averaged, the average length of incarceration is 18 months.
- Increasing capacity to serve low level learners. DOC has recently undertaken the goal of administering the CASAS appraisal in math and reading as part of the intake process for all prisoners entering the system. Currently 76 percent of prisoners tested were below the CASAS score of 236 in math and below 236 in reading. There is a need for more intensive service and supports to enable these learners to advance to Adult Secondary Education (ASE low).
- Enhancing access to College and Career Readiness educational opportunities and workforce preparation activities.
- Expanding access to support services that enable these individuals to transition to full, productive members of our communities.

Prisoners in Prerelease are served in five facilities that offer educational programming that include the opportunity to earn a high school credential. Depending on the facility, there are also a variety of vocational programs. Building on the successful integration of educational services, attention will now be given to increasing advising and career pathways services. As part of those career pathways services, WorkReady, a standards-based employment skills program leading to a state recognized credential is presently offered in the Maine State Prison, Maine Correctional Center, Bolduc Correctional Facility, and the Southern Maine Reentry Center

as well as six county jails. To reduce recidivism, the goals of the adult education and DOC partnership include a continued emphasis on an integrated and aligned approach to program services and skills training opportunities to ease the stress of transitioning back into the community, and to create a *gentle handoff* approach.

Maine Adult Education will also increase the integrated, professional development opportunities available to all workforce development partners, including corrections. At the same time, the Department of Corrections made the commitment to have its self-funded educational programs meet all the performance standards of an approved adult education program. Efforts to intensify the integration of professional development between adult education and corrections included a daylong Maine Corrections Education Forum. The forum brought together Corrections and Adult Education personnel and resulted in the establishment of several integrated working groups charged with improving the coordination of intake, assessment, and reentry efforts between the agencies. For the first time in memory, DOC also organized an Education Steering Committee to bring state staff together for planning and training. These efforts are now recognized as part of the way Maine Adult Education and Department of Corrections will work together.

Corrections personnel are invited to and attend adult education professional development programs offered by the state office. Topics have included training in College and Career Readiness Standards, Maine College Transitions, high school equivalency preparation, and use of MaineSTARS. The Department of Corrections has also contracted with local adult education programs to provide assessment services in two of its “unfenced” prerelease centers, with plans in place to contract for those services at the remaining centers. Corrections educational personnel also attend, and present at the Maine Adult Education Association Annual Conference.

To further establish successful alignment with adult education the Maine Department of Corrections Education Steering Committee also chose to use the Career Pathways Plan format and process as a strategic planning tool as they restructure educational programs for the State’s correctional facilities.

D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Section 243 of Title II AEFLA focuses on combining Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education with integrated education and training activities.

Specifically, section 243 states:

(c) Goal. Each program that receives funding under this section shall be designed to— (1) prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency; and (2) integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

It is the purpose of Maine Adult Education under WIOA Title II Section 243 to provide Integrated English Literacy Civics Education (IELCE) and Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs, activities and services that also align with the Strategic Priorities in the Maine Unified State Plan for 2020-23. Specifically, **Strategic Priority #2. Create a system of lifelong learning and employment connection for Maine residents** includes employment goals for New Mainers. This strategy is especially relevant to the work of AEFLA 243.

As required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Maine Department of Education Office of Adult Education conducted a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) to award multi-year funding to eligible agencies for the provision of WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) Section 243, Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education/Integrated Education and Training. The initial grant cycle is for FY20-22 (July 1, 2019-June 30, 2021). Subject to continued availability of funding and demonstrated effectiveness as determined by outcomes, the Department may opt to renew the contracts for two renewal periods, July 2021 through June 30, 2023 and July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024.

Beginning in FY18, the Maine Office of Adult Education established nine adult education and career development areas that aligned with the boundaries of the state's three local workforce boards. To encourage innovation and maximize efficiencies and resources, local adult education providers within these geographic areas were formed into hubs. As a condition of this award process (state requirement), the Maine Office of Adult Education anticipated no more than one award per Adult Education and Career Development Hub (AEC DH) with demonstrated need.

The applications were reviewed and scored (using the state required consensus scoring model) by a team of adult education administrators from other states who possessed knowledge of Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education requirements. The appropriate local workforce board (LWB) also reviewed applications for alignment of proposed grant activities with the LWB plan.

Similar to the AEFLA application and award process, recipients of IELCE (243) funds were required to demonstrate their eligibility to apply, demonstrated effectiveness and need for IELCE/IET services to meet the demands of the grant. Demonstrated need, according to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey, is 50 or more individuals aged 18-64 in the service area whose English is a barrier to employment (*state requirement*). Applicants determined to be ineligible because they did not meet the eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness requirements were not considered for funding. Those applicants were notified in writing that they were ineligible and had appeal rights as outlined in the AEFLA 243 application, PART V, F. Refer to PART V, A for the eligibility review process.

Eligible providers are organizations who have demonstrated effectiveness in two consecutive years (*state requirement*) in providing adult education and literacy activities. Organizations eligible to apply included: local educational agencies; community-based or faith-based organizations; volunteer literacy organizations; institutions of higher education; public or private nonprofit agencies; libraries; public housing authorities; a nonprofit institution having the ability to provide adult education and literacy services to adults; and a consortium of agencies, organizations, institutions, and libraries described above; a partnership between an employer and an entity described in any of the categories listed above (WIOA §203(5)); and other organization types, even if not specifically listed above, to apply if they met the demonstrated effectiveness requirement (34 CFR 463 Preamble).

Eligible providers could demonstrate past effectiveness in two ways:

- a. An **eligible provider** previously funded under Title II of the Act provided two consecutive years (*state requirement*) of performance to demonstrate past effectiveness in the areas listed below.
- b. An **eligible provider** not previously funded under Title II of the Act provided two consecutive years (*state requirement*) of performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals, including evidence of its success in achieving

outcomes listed in the WIOA Title II AEFLA Federal Requirements. *(See WIOA Final Rules Subpart C, §463.24 and 29 U.S.C 3272(5))*

Applicants were also asked to provide data specific to English Language Acquisition, Civics Education, Integrated Education and Training (and similar programs) and/or other relevant activities. If such data was not available, applicants were required to provide data related to an overall ability to provide Adult Education and Literacy activities as such activities are defined in WIOA, the Maine Unified Plan and in the next paragraph.

Evidence of demonstrated effectiveness included program performance data on its record to improve the skills of eligible individuals, in particular, individuals who are basic skills deficient in the content domains of reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to IELCE services, information regarding its outcomes for individuals related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training. (34 CFR 463.24); and enrollment of learners in integrated education and training programs (and similar programs) and/or other relevant activities leading to industry-recognized credentials *(State requirement)*.

In addition, funded applicants responded to the 13 Considerations (WIOA Title II, Subsection 3, Sec.231 e) with some adaptations in language to demonstrate how funds will be used to address the specific activities and programs required under WIOA Title II 243.

- Funded programs were required to provide programming of sufficient intensity and quality for eligible participants to achieve substantial learning gains, build on their existing knowledge and integrate academics, skills and knowledge the learners need to transition successfully to career, postsecondary education and a productive life. Instruction must be delivered in real life contexts to ensure that an individual has the basic English language and workplace skills needed to compete in the workforce and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. This also included describing all factors considered in developing an instructional model that maximizes the opportunities for learners, including those with degrees, professional certifications and work experience, to attend and make progress, and to describe how access to instruction and support services are provided.
- Funded programs also described how they will use the funds for expenditures that are allowable, reasonable and allocable as permitted by EDGAR, Uniform Grant Guidance, and by WIOA Title II, WIOA Title II Rule and Joint Rule. Funding must be used to support the development, planning, and operation of Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education/Integrated Education and Training programs to eligible individuals and across their adult education and career development hub *(state requirement)*.

Integrated English literacy and civics education in combination with integrated education and training 243 funding should be used for:

- (a) co-enrolling participants in integrated education and training as described in 34 CFR 463.35 and 34 CFR 463.36 that is provided with a local workforce development area from sources other than section 243 of WIOA; or
- (b) supporting integrated education and training activities as described in 34 CFR 463.35 and 34 CFR 463.36.

Co-enrollment will be enhanced by funding recipients as they design programs in collaboration with the local workforce development board, career center staff and other one-stop partners.

E. STATE LEADERSHIP

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIRED STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA

(1) Required Activities

A. The alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners, including eligible providers, including the development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities.

Due to Maine's geographic challenges and limited state and federal funding, educational, workforce system and support agencies rely heavily on collaboration, coordination and alignment of services. At the state level, adult education and postsecondary leaders recognize the role adult education can play in addressing the challenge of adult education completion. Adult education participates in the Adult Promise and All Learning Counts (ALC) initiatives supported by grants from the Lumina Foundation. All partners, including representation from the Department of Labor, are working together to address the state goal of 60% of Maine's adults having credentials of value by 2025. The ALC, with its focus on in-demand micro-credentials of value is a means of forming career pathways into Maine's employment sectors. These micro-credentials can be especially effective in engaging learners who need to earn their high school credentials; need to accelerate their academic pathway through contextualized coursework, especially for English language learners; and for adults with some postsecondary credits but no credentials. Literacy assessments often reveal these learners need to improve foundational skills in literacy and numeracy.

After three years of work, Maine Adult Education and the Departments of Labor and Vocational Rehabilitation have gone live with W.O.R.K. Services. This integrated referral and registration system is easily accessible to individuals and provides users with information to assist with education and/or employment. The system will also enable the partner agencies to share participant information (with permission) that will result in the ability to provide appropriate services and information in a coordinated and non-duplicative manner.

Successful full-scale deployment of this joint participant portal will require substantial cross-agency professional development in its use. The core partners will also analyze user data to determine opportunities for additional cross-training at the local program level.

Adult education representation on the state workforce board and on each of the three local boards also strengthens workforce development efforts. It facilitates communication by bringing decision makers together to work on program development that meets the needs of the state and local plans. They also work with partner agencies in the development and honoring of MOUs to support learner transition to college, career and employment.

B. The establishment and operation of high quality professional development programs to improve instruction provided pursuant to required local activities, including instruction incorporating the essential components of reading instruction as such components relate to adults, instruction related to the specific needs of adult learners, instruction provided by volunteers or by personnel,

and dissemination of information about models and promising practices related to such programs.

The goal of Maine Adult Education's leadership efforts is to provide Maine's adult educators with the skills and supports they need to assimilate new learning and effectively implement new content/strategies that result in learner outcomes as associated with WIOA. This type of continual learning environment supports instructors, staff and administrators in their development of professional and leadership skills that in turn, maximize the potential for success of the adults they serve. Technical assistance that is intellectually stimulating, builds confidence, and values the attendees encourages participation. To make the most efficient use of leadership funds, a variety of professional development formats and delivery systems are utilized, including:

- Implementing a teacher-trainer model that builds local capacity;
- Supporting a state office professional development coordinator who creates, delivers, brokers and shares professional development and training opportunities for both paid and volunteer instructional staff. Contract providers are brought in as needed to provide specific areas of expertise;
- Offering a variety of delivery platforms to address the geographic challenges of delivering statewide training in a large, rural, state. These include webinars, video-conferences, blended learning formats, asynchronous courses, and regional meetings.
- Developing and supporting educational leadership in programs in order to build the capacity of administrators to effectively lead their staff and manage their programs;
- Exploring feasibility of enrolling program leaders in a leadership program designed specifically for adult education;
- Using the state's adult education listserv to disseminate information about regional and national training opportunities, articles of interest, and encourage discourse and sharing of best practice among practitioners; and
- Utilizing the Maine Professional Development Portal, a web-based tool used to list professional development opportunities, register participants and serve as a repository for participant transcripts.

Each year the state surveys local program staff to determine professional development needs. Survey results, as well as performance data are used to assess identified needs. The state office offers training in best practices to address areas of weakness evident from program monitoring and alignment with federal adult education initiatives.

Targeted professional development is planned to address CCR standards, implementation of English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards, distance learning and technology integration, IET, instructional strategies, use of data for program improvement and decision making, college transitions, development of micro-credentials, IELCE, Ability to Benefit, and employability skills.

C. The provision of technical assistance to eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities receiving funds under this title, including –

I. The development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on the most rigorous or scientifically valid research available and appropriate in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition programs, distance education, and staff

training;

Based on needs assessments of local program professional development surveys and compliance with federal and state requirements, Maine Adult Education will continue to offer training opportunities in rigorous and scientifically valid instructional practices and learning theories, data collection and management, assessment, academic and career advising, job skills, and college transition.

With the changing demographics of Maine, more local adult education programs are providing services to English Language Learners. For many programs this is a new area of work. The state team provides professional development to help programs and teachers serve them. These professional development opportunities help dedicated teachers of English Language Learners as well as content teachers who are finding an increasing number of ELL's in their classrooms. Courses include:

- Introduction to the English Language Proficiency Standards
- Mathematizing ESOL
- Nexus of Rigor and ESOL Instruction

Technical assistance is also planned in:

- CCRS implementation as approved in Maine's CCR-SIA Sustainability Plan
- Research-based professional development in mathematics. Maine will repeat trainings in Adult Numeracy Instruction (ANI) and AR2. A team of adult educators participated in a year-long process at the request of the community college system to be involved with its math pathways work. Follow up work will be done to align adult education math courses to meet community college expectations of learners. Instructors will be exposed to recent research that has identified conceptual understanding in mathematics as a key concept in mastering the College and Career Readiness Standards. Technical assistance to address this will be provided to help instructors promote conceptual understanding with their students at all levels of mathematics. English language instructors will learn how to deepen their understanding of math and how to integrate math and numeracy into ESOL classrooms. The goal of this training is to offer strategies for making math accessible to all levels of ESOL learners.
- Research-based professional development in reading. Maine will continue to implement the Reading Apprenticeship Program (RAP), a research-based and research-proven instructional framework for improving adult reading. Through a train the trainer model, instructor capacity is built in the essential components of reading instruction or the explicit and systematic instruction including the following: phonemic awareness; phonics; vocabulary development; reading fluency, including oral reading skills; and reading comprehension strategies.
- Maine Adult Education will reach out to neighboring New England states to explore the creation of a regional approach to Student Achievement in Reading (STAR) training. This collaboration may enable Maine and the partner states to share the financial responsibility of expanding STAR and enable each state to increase both the number of certified instructors and the implementation of STAR.
- *The role of eligible providers as a one-stop partner to provide access to employment, education, and training services* – The core partners are committed to cross agency professional development efforts at both the state and local levels. Steps will be taken to

ensure that staff at all agencies is informed of partner services and able to help adults seamlessly access employment and workforce services.

And

- ii. *Assistance in the use of technology, including for staff training, to eligible providers, especially the use of technology to improve system efficiencies.*

Maine Adult Education will continue to make use of technology to provide instruction and professional development. As part of the IDEAL consortium, the state office provides Distance Learning 101 and 102. These combined courses allow programs to become familiar with the characteristics of a successful blended/distance learning experience, learn about best practices for delivering distance education and develop a plan for how their hub/program will deliver distance learning. Professional development is regularly offered to support programs in choosing/creating accessible, engaging distance content and supporting distance learners. Courses such as Learner Accessibility and Universal Design for Learning provide teachers with concrete tools to create/evaluate online learning. Instructors and staff are also provided with opportunities to enhance their own foundational digital literacy skills. This enables them to model/create/facilitate successful blended learning.

D. The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of, and the improvement in, adult education and literacy activities and the dissemination of information about models and proven promises within the State.

Maine Adult Education implements a Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process for evaluating adult education programs. The monitoring process consists of three key components: on-going, data-based desk audits; educational program reviews; and on-site program monitoring. These are all guided by the goal of deepening relationships and understanding between the state office and local programs.

Annual Evaluations

The state office reviews each program for compliance with the Maine State Legislature's definition (LD 1780) of adult education as well as WIOA requirements. Programs that score high on the risk analysis for such things as having a new director, consistent late or incorrect reporting, not meeting objectives, or fiscal irregularities become priorities for monitoring. Programs that are not meeting their responsibilities and/or objectives are provided with additional technical assistance to help them to come into full compliance.

Data-based Desk Audits

Student performance data and other program information are reviewed regularly by the adult education state office data coordinator. This data review guides ongoing conversations with local programs. All programs receiving AEFLA or state funds must enter student data at least monthly into MaineSTARS, an NRS compliant managed information system. Local programs must collect and document student information regarding student goals, educational functioning level, progress and achievements. Programs review data at least quarterly to ensure completeness, accuracy and to determine their standing regarding projected outcome targets. MaineSTARS generates annual reports on student performance measures for submission to OCTAE. The state data coordinator creates and distributes program specific reports which compare local program data with state targets.

On-site Reviews

The State Office conducts on-site reviews at least every five years guided by a review instrument tailored to programs funded by AEFLA. The on-site program reviews provide an additional effective tool for continuous improvement. The key benefits of this monitoring strategy are:

- Self-assessment by local programs,
- Cross fertilization of information for best practices and strategies,
- Development of baseline for program improvement, and
- Staff development and technical assistance.

An on-site visit may also be triggered based on the Maine Adult Education Risk-based Monitoring System indicators.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE

A. The support of State or regional networks of literacy resource centers.

Maine adult education leadership funds are used primarily to fund a state level professional development coordinator position and to implement the train the trainer model for required trainers. The state office has found this to be a much more effective system in terms of costs and use of resources than the former centralized literacy resource center. The current model will continue as it has demonstrated effectiveness in building capacity. Local adult education programs are also grouped into regional hubs. The state office also provides customized technical assistance for needs within specific hubs.

B. The development and implementation of technology applications, translation technology, or distance education, including professional development to support the use of instructional technology.

Maine uses instructional technology as a conventional and standard modality for delivering professional development. Using an industry recognized learning management system, traditional professional development content is being translated into blended, synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities. The state office is modeling effective integration of instructional technology and supporting training for practitioners ready to incorporate this modality into instructional practice. Additionally, the state office has partnered with the Center for Applied Special Technology, or CAST. CAST is a recognized leader in the field of Universal Design for Learning. This partnership involves consultation and training in creating and delivering digital learning experiences that expand access to learning for all individuals. The state office and local programs also partner with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services.

C. Developing and disseminating curricula, including curricula incorporating the essential components of reading instruction as such components relate to adults.

Maine adult education continues to build capacity by training local teachers in the research-based program Reading Apprenticeship program. Because Maine is a local control state and educational statutes assert it is the right of local school units and not the state to develop and/or adopt curricula, the adult education state office does not disseminate curricula, but does make recommendations and provide high quality professional growth opportunities.

D. Developing content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways.

Local programs are working with postsecondary partners and local workforce boards to determine appropriate alignment of educational pathways to career pathways. Their successes

are shared with other providers. As part of the most recent AEFLA competition, each grant recipient is required to offer at least one IET.

E) The provision of assistance to eligible providers in developing and implementing programs that achieve the objectives of this title and in measuring the progress of those programs in achieving such objectives, including meeting the State adjusted levels of performance described in section 116(b)(3).

State assistance is provided to local programs to address required data elements and to implement best practices that will ensure measuring progress accurately. Monthly data driven webinars will be conducted by the state adult education data coordinator as well as regular in-person trainings to address data professional development needs as necessary. Program monitoring is also conducted and includes local site visits and real-time desk audits. Required data reports identify problems as they arise to ensure timely assistance is given to eligible providers. Funding to eligible providers is based on program outcomes including overall educational gain percentages and employment and college placement outcomes as defined in WIOA section 116 (b)(3).

F) The development and implementation of a system to assist in the transition from adult education to postsecondary education, including linkages with postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education.

The goal of the Maine College Transition (MCT) program had been to transition adults into postsecondary without the need for remedial courses once enrolled. Local instructors were trained in the development of courses and experiences to address the areas of successfully integrating into the college culture, gaining sufficient levels of digital literacy, and financing postsecondary education and/or training in a responsible way. These topics chosen in response to requests from postsecondary partners.

Without losing any of the MCT foundations, the program was expanded to serve and engage more learners. The MCT became Maine College and Career Access (MCCA). This rebranding is more than a name change. MCCA addresses the attainment of skills necessary to prepare adults to enter postsecondary and/or employment or training programs. Learners receive the foundational skills they need as well as academic advising and career planning services, financial aid assistance, college planning and tours, ACCUPLACER testing and the World of Work Inventory (WOWI).

Local programs will continue to increase postsecondary collaborations, including the articulation of coursework and presence of adult education providers on higher education campuses.

G) Integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skill training, including promoting linkages with employers.

The role of adult education providers in preparing English language learners for the workforce is expanding. In addition to providing direct instruction and advising, local programs connect learners with other state and local service providers. Both the state office and local providers are much more engaged in meeting with employers, trade associations, and chambers of commerce to learn employer needs and develop appropriate programming. English language learners are relocating to more areas of the state and workplaces. They arrive in Maine with a range of English language, academic and work skills. Some are highly educated professionals

unable to gain meaningful employment due to a lack of English competency. Others need to start with the most basic introduction to the English language. Integrated English language, civics education, work skills and academic training help accelerate entry into employment.

As part of the Maine IELCE program, local providers are expected to integrate employability skills and those who receive 243 funds are to work with employers to develop integrated education and training opportunities leading to unsubsidized employment.

H) Activities to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities.

Maine adult education has offered a Department of Education WorkReady certificate since 2000. This 60-hours standards-based curricula was developed in cooperation with local workforce boards and employers. The core curricula can be enhanced with the addition of hard skills to fit the needs of specific employers. The program is offered by trained facilitators at locations such as adult education programs, career centers, correctional facilities, high schools, career and technical education sites, and social service offices.

The next areas of focus for the FY 2020 plan include broadening the approach to focus on employability skills and the embedding of these skills in all instructional areas and implementing 21st century skills badging to support the work being done in the development of micro-credentials.

I) Identifying curriculum frameworks and aligning rigorous content standards that –

i. specify what adult learners should know and be able to do in the areas of reading and language arts, mathematics, and English language acquisition; and take into consideration the following: state adopted academic standards; the current adult skills and literacy assessments used in the state or outlying area; the primary indicators of performance described in section 116; standards and academic requirements for enrollment in non-remedial, for-credit courses in postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education supported by the state or outlying area; where appropriate, the content of occupational and industry skills standards widely used by business and industry in the state or outlying area.

In 2014, Maine Adult Education adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) with the goal of statewide integration into instructional practices by SY2016-17. These standards focus on high-level reading skills, critical thinking, comprehension of concepts, and applications to real world situations. In mathematics, this looks like mastering underlying concepts, procedures, and applications of math to real world problems. Math lessons are coherent as students develop skills, building on previous knowledge. In ELA/literacy, CCRS manifests itself in teaching for complexity, evidence and knowledge with more complex texts, confirming that students identify evidence in the text to support their ideas and responses. In English language acquisition, local programs are striving to support students in achievement of functional levels of literacy and numeracy that will enable them to gain employment and postsecondary training. Emphasis is on sustainability of CCRS concepts in programs where all teachers are trained and adept at integrating these standards into curricula and lessons.

All local adult education programs in Maine are required to use CASAS tools for student assessment of educational functioning level and diagnostics. CASAS pretesting and posttesting are used to document educational gain as described in Section 116 as a primary indicator of performance. Additional assessments include the CASAS Employability, ACCUPLACER and

HiSET equivalency test to provide specialized diagnostic information for college and career readiness and high school equivalency.

Within the Maine Department of Education, the dialogue between adult education and Career and Technical Education will be expanded to allow for the exploration of career pathways and additional vocational inventories in advising adult learners. The Maine Unified Plan also points to new partnerships and activities between adult education and the Maine Department of Labor that will include cross agency professional development to enhance collaboration and alignment.

J) Developing and piloting of strategies for improving teacher quality and effectiveness.

Maine has updated an asynchronous online course, *Navigating the Waters of Maine Adult Education*, which offers a broad overview of the adult education landscape in Maine to new teachers, administrators and support staff. The state team is also working with the certification office to determine appropriate pathways to qualify teachers of adults to enter the field.

K) The development and implementation of programs and services to meet the needs of adult learners with learning disabilities or English language learners, which may include new and promising assessments tools and strategies that are based on scientifically valid research, and identify the needs and capture the gains of such students at the lowest achievement levels.

Partnerships are crucial in guaranteeing equal access to all learners and in providing high quality services to meet the needs of adult learners with disabilities and those at the most basic literacy levels. As core partners, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and Adult Education work closely to cross develop an effective referral system and train staff to use it appropriately. The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services has in the past and will continue to provide professional development for adult education providers.

The state office of adult education provides CASAS diagnostic training to help other eligible providers identify skill needs to determine targeted instruction and increase the academic gains of learners. Strengthening partnerships with Literacy Volunteers and the Barbara Bush Family Literacy Foundation will continue to be a focus to help local programs access both services and professional development opportunities. Literacy volunteers provide one-on-one learner instructional support to eligible providers.

L) Outreach to instructors, students, and employers.

Due to its large geographic size and areas of low population density, Maine adult education will continue to expand its outreach to instructors, students and employers through increased uses of technology. The professional development portal which lists current and upcoming professional growth opportunities and training events has begun to attract non-adult education teachers who have discovered the quality of the offerings. Practitioners can learn about, register, and track their professional growth experiences through this digital interface. Work has also begun on the establishment of professional development pathways to increase teacher expertise in various program areas.

The Maine Adult Education listserv, moderated by the state team, is a communication board where upcoming events, professional discourse, and relevant news and articles are posted and distributed to practitioners. Members of the list-serv include adult education practitioners as well as employees of partner agencies.

Core partners continue to establish coordinated channels of communication to employers regarding common objectives. Local workforce development boards are key to coordinating the outreach efforts.

M) Other activities of statewide significance that promote the purpose of this title.

1. The state team special projects and workforce development coordinator sits on the one-stop centers service provider committee for each local workforce board. This step expands the partnership between the state office and the local workforce boards in sharing information and alignment of services on a statewide basis. This is in addition to the inclusion of a local literacy program director on the board of each local workforce area.

2. Active engagement of the state adult education office in the Maine Promise Committee. This committee is comprised of representatives from the university and community college system offices, philanthropy, industry and private groups. Its purpose is to increase the number of adults in Maine earning degrees and certifications. The Maine Promise will be working very closely with the All Learning Counts (ALC) committee as the goals of each are closely aligned. ALC is a means for adults to attain degrees and credentials of value.

F. ASSESSING QUALITY

Assessing quality of adult education and literacy activities happens at both the state and local levels.

The AEFLA contract with sub-grantees stipulates that instructors engage in at least 12 hours of professional development annually and to facilitate that happening, the state office provides training opportunities year-round in multiple delivery formats and locations. Meetings for local directors are held annually and a series of trainings for new directors are conducted throughout the year. Webinars on special topics appropriate for administrators, instruction, and administrative staff are provided through technology and face to face. Though electronic means of delivery are relied on due to Maine's geographic challenges, there are still benefits of the state team going to the programs to meet with learners, observe classes and strengthen relationships.

The state disseminates professional development information in a variety of ways. An annual calendar of high-quality professional development offerings to develop or enhance quality of instruction in the required, and many of the permissible leadership activities, is created and distributed prior to the start of each school year and updated as necessary. Local providers are also notified of upcoming trainings and resources through the Maine Adult Education listserv. Maine's professional development portal is utilized to advertise, collect registrations for each training, verify number of professional development hours someone earns, and create transcripts. It is interesting to note that in addition to adult education practitioners, instructors from the K-12 and community college systems, as well as from partner organizations have been in attendance at many of the trainings.

To ensure the trainings meet intended outcomes, participants are required to complete an evaluation at the conclusion of each state sponsored professional development event. The evaluations are used to assess effectiveness and determine any necessary changes. The comments on evaluations often inform the state regarding topics for follow-up trainings. Also taken into consideration in the planning and delivery of these trainings are the results of the professional development needs assessments completed by local providers.

In addition to the calendars and professional development portal, the use of a managed learning system assists in assessing quality. The system provides a means to gather information on instructor, staff and administrator participation in online resources, levels of engagement in facilitated communities of practice, and quality of outcomes. These communities provide the

state with valuable information on areas in need of additional training. The listserv, professional development portal and managed learning system provide the means for widespread dissemination of information on proven or promising national, state and local practices.

In terms of assessing quality at the local level, providers are expected to meet the quality for instructional standards and outcome targets established in the AEFLA RFP. How well providers meet these expectations is determined through a variety of methods, including: participation in professional development; meeting performance goals; monthly expenditure reports to ensure grant funds are only used for eligible activities and as allocated in approved budgets; timely submission of reports; and onsite and desktop monitoring. Annually, each local provider is required to submit a year-end narrative, data and budget report. Depending on the severity, budget reports that reflect inappropriate expenditures or variances from the approved budget will be requested by email or phone to make appropriate budget adjustments, renegotiate the budget, or have funding halted until the matter is reconciled. Any quarterly reports that contain performance outcomes or targets that are below 90%, a plan must be submitted that includes improvement strategies and timeline for implementation and improvement. Examples of targets include post-testing rates, transitions to employment/postsecondary and/or employment, advancement in educational functioning level, and data match percentage. Technical assistance is provided to each provider in response to their submitted plan.

When following the steps above does not result in acceptable levels of improvement, the local provider will need to specify within 30 calendars how the findings will be addressed in a correction action plan. Once the plan is approved, the corrective steps can occur.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;	Yes
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;	Yes
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;	Yes
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;	Yes
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;	Yes
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;	Yes
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and	Yes
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;	Yes

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement);	
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;	Yes
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	Yes
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.	Yes
5. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303).	Yes

AUTHORIZING OR CERTIFYING REPRESENTATIVE

APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION	Enter information in this column
Applicant's Organization	Maine Department of Education
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	Enter information in this column
First Name	A. Pender
Last Name	Makin
Title	Commissioner of Education
Email	Commish.DOE@Maine.gov

SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA)

GEPA Section 427

Maine Adult Education strives to ensure that efforts are made by the state office and local providers to determine the existence of possible barriers that may prevent current or potential students, teachers or others from accessing our federally funded offerings. These barriers include, but may not be limited to gender, race, national origin, color, disability and/or age.

The Maine GEPA plan consists of the following:

1. State office will conduct a GEPA awareness training annually for all local providers administrators and staff.
2. Local providers will be required to do the following annually:

- a. Bring some staff and students together to identify any of the possible barriers to be addressed by GEPA.
- b. Analyze program data to identify possible underserved populations, why, who isn't completing, lack of enrollments in certain populations, drop outs, etc.
- c. Determine root cause of the identified barriers.
- d. Describe the steps taken to identify potential/existing barrier(s)
- e. Identify barrier type (gender, race, national origin, color, disability, age, other)
- f. Describe the potential/existing barrier(s)
- g. Describe how the local provider will mitigate the barrier(s) identified
- h. Indicate how Title II AEFLA funds will be used to support the activities in g. above
- i. Any additional notes (optional)

Each provider will document the above process and submit the findings and next steps to the state office for review and approval.

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	34.0%	34.0%	35.0%	35.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	32.0%	32.0%	33.0%	33.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4250	\$ 4,250	\$4300	\$4300
Credential Attainment Rate	32.0%	32.0%	33.0%	33.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	36.0%	36.0%	37.0%	37.5%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL)

A. INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

1. INPUT PROVIDED BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INCLUDING INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE

PLAN, RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S REPORT, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF
CONSUMER SATISFACTION, AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN
DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS;

All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commissions, must describe the following:

1. input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council's report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as part of the Council's functions;

RSA recently rolled out the Program Year. Due to this, the State Plan is now due March 2, 2020. This leaves little time to read, review and provide meaningful comments on the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation portion of the State Plan. The SRC would have appreciated more time in which to provide useful and succinct comments.

Goal 1: To obtain at least 1000 successful closures for DVR clients in FFY 2018 and 2019 thereby substantially maintaining solid employment outcomes for DVR clients in Maine.

These employment outcomes and goals from 2018 through 2019 will be impacted by the change in serving more youth in school. DVR has seen a decrease in their overall employment outcomes, as DVR will not realize successful outcomes from these in school youth for a few years. In addition, with the focus of DVR's resources to in school youth, there may be fewer VR resources for adults with disabilities.

The SRC feels DVR has done great work on all objectives and strategies to achieve this goal. The SRC suggests DVR keep this goal, along with its objectives and strategies going forward. Preliminary evaluations show improvement with client retention. Great work DVR!

Goal 2: To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities in a timely manner, which means determining eligibilities within 60 days and developing plans for employment for all consumers within the new 90-day time frame.

DVR will continue to maintain no wait list for those individuals in categories 1 and 2 and will monitor the ability to again serve those in category 3 in the future.

DVR has done an awesome job reducing the number of days from application to eligibility and from eligibility to Individual Plan for Employment (IPE), consistently meeting the new standards. They have policies and procedures in place to continue to meet these standards. Is VR able to continue to serve all individuals in categories 1 and 3 given the requirements around Pre-ETs and the lack of a contract award in two regions of the state?

Regarding the objective of determining if DVR can check for proficiencies in how they process the work of providing services. The SRC feels DVR has done this and feels it is part of their philosophy. The SRC does not feel this continues to be an objective.

The objective, and its strategies, for those with significant intellectual disabilities to be able to access the waiver for long term employment supports after closure is a great idea. However, the SRC wonders how this helps reduce the number of days from eligibility to IPE? The SRC wonders if this should be a separate goal.

The last objective under this goal talks of DVR continuing the "Employment First" philosophy and reducing the unemployment rate of people with disabilities by 5%. Once again, the SRC

does not how this helps reduce the number of days from eligibility to IPE. The SRC wonders if this should be a separate.

Goal 3: To ensure that individuals with disabilities who may be unserved or underserved or who have minority status have access to DVR services.

DVR has done great work getting those who are unserved, underserved or have minority status access to VR services. The SRC feels DVR has policies and procedures in place and this work is a part of the core work they do. The SRC feels this needs to continue to be a goal with objective and strategies as it is part of the ongoing work, they are committed to doing.

Goal 4: Maine DVR will partner with the larger workforce development system to improve opportunities and access for DVR clients as measured annually by documented collaborative activities, technical assistance, and training.

The SRC is unsure if Maine's Disability Employment Initiative Grant is still available. This objective was for 2016. The SRC suggest taking this objective out of the DVR portion of the State Plan.

DVR is still in an Order of Selection for Category 3. Therefore, the objective should continue to be a part of DVR's portion of the State Plan.

DVR honors all MOUs so the SRC does not feel this needs to continue to be an objective under this goal.

DVR should continue to look for grant opportunities that are in keeping with the BRS mission.

Goal 5: Maine DVR will partner with Adult Education, the SWIB, and the larger workforce development system to incorporate and apply the new rules related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

This is ongoing.

Goals in the current plan were written prior to implementation of the new employment service delivery model. How will this process change any/all goals?

How will VR ensure consistency across Regions 4/5 where no awards were granted in the new employment services model for those regions?

How is client choice being addressed in Region I, II and III where the new service delivery model is being implemented?

How will VR address the drop in successful employment outcomes for adults with disabilities given the new WIOA requirements for serving youth?

How will VR effectively measure consumer satisfaction with both VRCs, the process, and CRPs?

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS; AND

RSA recently rolled out the Program Year. Due to this, the State Plan is now due March 2, 2020. This leaves little time to read, review and provide meaningful comments on the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation portion of the State Plan. The SRC would have appreciated more time in which to provide useful and succinct comments.

Goal 1: To obtain at least 1000 successful closures for DVR clients in FFY 2018 and 2019 thereby substantially maintaining solid employment outcomes for DVR clients in Maine.

These employment outcomes and goals from 2018 through 2019 will be impacted by the change in serving more youth in school. DVR has seen a decrease in their overall employment outcomes, as DVR will not realize successful outcomes from these in school youth for a few years. In addition, with the focus of DVR's resources to in school youth, there may be fewer VR resources for adults with disabilities.

The SRC feels DVR has done great work on all objectives and strategies to achieve this goal. The SRC suggests DVR keep this goal, along with its objectives and strategies going forward. Preliminary evaluations show improvement with client retention. Great work DVR!

DVR Response: DVR appreciates the SRC's recognition of efforts on this previous goal. DVR makes every effort to maximize employment closures while recognizing that under WIOA, there is also a focus on assisting individuals to access career pathways, so they can reach meaningful employment that meets their goals.

Goal 2: To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities in a timely manner, which means determining eligibilities within 60 days and developing plans for employment for all consumers within the new 90-day time frame.

DVR will continue to maintain no wait list for those individuals in categories 1 and 2 and will monitor the ability to again serve those in category 3 in the future.

DVR has done an awesome job reducing the number of days from application to eligibility and from eligibility to Individual Plan for Employment (IPE), consistently meeting the new standards. They have policies and procedures in place to continue to meet these standards. Is VR able to continue to serve all individuals in categories 1 and 3 given the requirements around Pre-ETs and the lack of a contract award in two regions of the state?

DVR Response: DVR appreciates the recognition of efforts to reduce days from application to eligibility and eligibility to IPE. DVR can continue to serve all individuals in categories 1 and 2 but does not anticipate being able to open the waitlist for category 3 at this time due to resource constraints. The SRC is correct that the requirement to spend 15% of the VR grant award on Pre-Employment Transition Services does mean that the agency must consistently monitor Pre-ETS expenditures, so that this requirement is met. This is done through monthly budget analysis with the Service Center. Due to not receiving satisfactory proposals, DVR was not able to make an award in the northern two regions following an issued RFP for CRP services last year. This means that the payment system in those regions remains unchanged. DVR is currently working with current providers in those regions to discuss other opportunities to ensure that community employment services and supports are available to all clients across the state in a timely manner.

Regarding the objective of determining if DVR can check for proficiencies in how they process the work of providing services. The SRC feels DVR has done this and feels it is part of their philosophy. The SRC does not feel this continues to be an objective.

DVR Response: DVR appreciates the SRC's recognition of efforts made to more efficiently provide services. As operational needs change, DVR will continue to assess systems of service to best meet client needs.

The objective, and its strategies, for those with significant intellectual disabilities to be able to access the waiver for long term employment supports after closure is a great idea. However, the SRC wonders how this helps reduce the number of days from eligibility to IPE? The SRC wonders if this should be a separate goal.

DVR Response: DVR is partnering with the Office of Aging and Disability Services to draft new joint procedural guidance on this topic. DVR will rework this goal in the new state plan.

The last objective under this goal talks of DVR continuing the “Employment First” philosophy and reducing the unemployment rate of people with disabilities by 5%. Once again, the SRC does not how this helps reduce the number of days from eligibility to IPE. The SRC wonders if this should be a separate.

DVR Response: DVR appreciates the feedback and has repositioned this strategy in the new state plan.

Goal 3: To ensure that individuals with disabilities who may be unserved or underserved or who have minority status have access to DVR services.

DVR has done great work getting those who are unserved, underserved or have minority status access to VR services. The SRC feels DVR has policies and procedures in place and this work is a part of the core work they do. The SRC feels this needs to continue to be a goal with objective and strategies as it is part of the ongoing work, they are committed to doing.

DVR Response: DVR appreciates the feedback and will be continuing objectives and strategies related to meeting the needs of unserved, underserved, and individuals who are minorities.

Goal 4: Maine DVR will partner with the larger workforce development system to improve opportunities and access for DVR clients as measured annually by documented collaborative activities, technical assistance, and training.

The SRC is unsure if Maine’s Disability Employment Initiative Grant is still available. This objective was for 2016. The SRC suggest taking this objective out of the DVR portion of the State Plan.

DVR Response: The SRC is correct, the Disability Employment Initiative grant is no longer available, and this strategy will not be in the new plan. Lessons learned from the effort do, however, still inform DVR’s work with its partners.

DVR is still in an Order of Selection for Category 3. Therefore, the objective should continue to be a part of DVR’s portion of the State Plan.

DVR Response: Yes, DVR will continue to examine opportunities to open Category 3 should resources become available.

DVR honors all MOUs so the SRC does not feel this needs to continue to be an objective under this goal.

DVR Response: DVR is pleased to have many partners across state agencies and strives to continue to have Memoranda of Understanding in place that support those relationships.

DVR should continue to look for grant opportunities that are in keeping with the BRS mission.

DVR Response: DVR is always open to new grant opportunities as they fit within the needs and resources of the agency and its clients.

Goal 5: Maine DVR will partner with Adult Education, the SWIB, and the larger workforce development system to incorporate and apply the new rules related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

This is ongoing.

DVR Response: DVR is pleased to have strong relationships with its WIOA partners and continues to work with them to implement WIOA to the benefit of our mutual customers.

Goals in the current plan were written prior to implementation of the new employment service delivery model. How will this process change any/all goals?

DVR Response: Goals in the new plan use a results-based approach which DVR believes will be helpful in aligning with other efforts across the state.

How will VR ensure consistency across Regions 4/5 where no awards were granted in the new employment services model for those regions?

DVR Response: DVR ensures consistency with Community Rehabilitation Provider services through contractual agreements, ongoing joint technical assistance and training and review of new opportunities to meet the needs of clients in those regions.

How is client choice being addressed in Region I, II and III where the new service delivery model is being implemented?

DVR Response: It is a top priority of DVR to ensure client choice across the state. In Region, I, II, III, this is achieved in a number of ways regarding CRP services. In awarding contracts to CRPs, they had to elucidate how they would provide informed choice. Each agency offered strategies including having multiple staff who would be able to serve an individual or looking across to another region if a conflict of interest arose. Because these agencies are responsible for serving all clients in their contracted region, there will be more choice on the side of clients because a CRP will not be able to turn a client down for services.

How will VR address the drop in successful employment outcomes for adults with disabilities given the new WIOA requirements for serving youth?

DVR Response: DVR recognizes that with a focus on Measurable Skill Gains, career pathways and credential attainment, that some individuals will take longer to reach meaningful employment outcomes. This will also be true for youth who may be involved with VR for a longer period (Pre-ETS – through to successful employment closure). Under WIOA, DVR is not incentivized to close individuals in low-level jobs solely to meet employment outcome numbers. DVR is very pleased with this changing focus that supports career pathways and assisting individuals with disabilities to meet their potential.

How will VR effectively measure consumer satisfaction with both VRCs, the process, and CRPs?

DVR Response: Meeting client need and providing a high level of consumer service result in consumer satisfaction. In addition to DVR's work with the SRC, DVR has been very pleased to contract with Market Decisions for its triennial evaluation of consumer satisfaction. Questions on that survey ask about process, outcomes, and CRPs.

3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

We have addressed all the input and recommendations.

B. REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

1. A LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST;

This agency has not requested a waiver of Statewideness. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation can provide Vocational Rehabilitation services statewide under an Order of Selection. Therefore, the waiver request is not necessary.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

See above (a)

3. REQUIREMENTS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN WILL APPLY TO THE SERVICES APPROVED UNDER THE WAIVER.

Requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the services approved under the waiver.

see above (a)

C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

1. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) works with other state agencies and many Councils and Committees whose focus is on individuals with disabilities. Once approved, all agreements and Memoranda of Understanding are considered to be in effect until replaced or discontinued according to the terms of each agreement. At a minimum, DVR reviews MOUs at least annually to determine those that are in need of updating or replacement. DVR convenes teams with broad stakeholder participation to work on MOUs according to the needs of the particular agreement.

DVR has a long-standing relationship and works very closely with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Presently, DVR and DHHS have two memorandums of understanding (MOU); one MOU is with the Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS), which serves individuals with developmental disabilities; the other MOU is with the Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS) which serves individuals with mental health issues. Additionally, DVR, OADS and SAMHS have developed and are implementing joint approaches to the workforce development of community rehabilitation providers and business engagement throughout the state. DVR, the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI), OADS and SAMHS are currently holding work sessions to develop a joint MOU that will develop a cost sharing plan to address current WIOA regulations.

The current MOU's address the combined efforts that DVR and DHHS have initiated and clarify roles to improve the successful outcomes for these jointly served populations. • DHHS Office of Aging and Disability Services and DVR/DBVI MOU (updated June 2014) "This Memorandum is intended to guide the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), through its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) in the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through a system change planning process for the purpose of implementing an aligned service delivery system that promotes evidence-based practices. It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these two entities".

DHHS Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services and DVR MOU (updated August 2013) "This Memorandum is intended to guide the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of

Rehabilitation Services (BRS), through its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through its Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS), in the course of planning and implementing an aligned service delivery system that promotes evidence-based practices. It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these two entities.”

Through these strong partnerships with OADS and SAMHS, DVR has been able to maximize federal and state funding to Maine by drawing down its full federal allotment for public rehabilitation services and accessing employment support services through Medicaid waivers.

- Interagency Support of Benefits Counseling

DVR continues to work closely with many other state partners to ensure that Maine’s benefits counseling services remain available to beneficiaries of SSI/SSDI, and specifically, DVR applicants and eligible clients. DVR currently administers a single contract with Maine’s approved WIPA provider, Maine Medical Center’s Department of Vocational Services, which includes funding from four sources of state and federal funds, including from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, and Office of Aging and Disability Services.

The contract’s scope of work includes direct service provision of benefits counseling, training of VR counselors and case managers, and service capacity building through quarterly system development network meetings, which include representatives from the Disability Rights Center’s Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) and the Bureau of Employment Services.

- Memorandum of Understanding with PJCC (Penobscot Job Corps Center)

In May 2018, Maine DVR finalized a Memorandum of Understanding with PJCC. The purpose of the agreement is to set forth the commitments of PJCC and the Maine DVR to meet the needs of students and young adults with disabilities and to better coordinate the process of student transition to employment. Cross-training opportunities are held annually.

- Veterans Administration and VR MOU

A Memorandum of Understanding between the Maine Department of Labor – Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division for the Blind & Visually Impaired, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services was finalized and signed in November 2011.

“The purpose of this MOU is to set forth the commitments of BRS and VA–VR&E to cooperate to meet the needs of veterans with disabilities... Through the efforts outlined in this agreement, BRS and VA–VR & E will strive to minimize duplication of services, improve information sharing and referral, and coordinate activities in accordance with all applicable statutes and regulations.”

Maine DVR held its annual meeting with the Veterans’ Administration Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services on August 13, 2019. The MOU is currently being updated to reflect new language from WIOA and other changes and is expected to be out early in 2020. Maine DVR has identified staff that operate as veterans’ liaisons in each office

- Department of Corrections and VR MOU – Procedural Guidance

The Maine Department of Labor– Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, DVR/DBVI and the Maine Department of Corrections (DOC) have worked together to establish procedural guidance on collaboration between the agencies. Work thus far has resulted in two procedural directives outlining how the agencies will work together to best meet the needs of individuals who are currently incarcerated or on probation and may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. Employment has been identified as one of the most important factors in reducing recidivism among individuals who are exiting the criminal justice system.

In Maine, there are many individuals who may be eligible for VR services who are currently incarcerated and who could potentially benefit from Vocational Rehabilitation services to obtain and maintain employment upon their release. The Department of Corrections through its prisons and probation systems are committed to working collaboratively with DVR to promote appropriate referrals, as well as the exchange of information and needed documentation to support VR eligibility determination.

In each of the larger offices, a DVR staff member has been identified who serves as the liaison to the correctional facilities in their region.

DVR corrections liaisons meet as a group on a quarterly basis with DOC staff to share updates and best practices.

- Workers Compensation Board and DVR MOU

During 2012, representatives of the Workers Compensation Board (WCB) and Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation worked together to create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU was completed and signed, effective November 2012. DVR and the WCB are committed to working together to improve services and employment outcomes for individuals who, as a result of injury need vocational rehabilitation services to return to employment. Through the efforts outlined in the MOU, DVR and the WCB will strive to maximize employment opportunities for injured Maine workers, minimize duplication of services, improve information sharing and referrals, and coordinate activities in accordance with all applicable statutes and regulations.

Since then, DVR has met annually to review the MOU and to share updates and successes. The MOU is currently out for renewal with anticipated final approval in Spring 2020.

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The Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened is part of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and provides programing and services to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, and late deafened. DVR continues its joint effort with DBVI providing services for co-enrolled clients by coordinating with the University of Southern Maine Linguistics Department, Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) for the Deaf-Blind, and the Maine Deaf-Blind Project, (a project which is a member of the New England Consortium of Deaf Blind Projects, and provides technical assistance for students until the age of 21 and focuses on transition age youth) to improve services for clients who are deaf-blind or dual sensory impaired from hearing and vision loss. Although the program, *"Independence Without Fear"* has discontinued, the collaboration has expanded to include the Department of Health and Human Services, Disability Rights Maine, Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened, and a Tri-state Collaborative with Vermont and New Hampshire.

Efforts have included discussions to recruit, train and maintain a database of specially trained volunteers who can facilitate communication for people with significant vision and hearing

impairments, as well as other services that are available to the dual sensory population. HKNC and OIB-TAC have provided training to staff on services to this targeted population. DVR/DBVI are currently working on accessing the training needs of Community Rehabilitation Providers and coordinating with HKNC to provide training to dual sensory loss clients.

Dual sensory clients are also being provided Support Service Providers (SSP) through a program with USM. SSP's are Linguistic students that provide home/community services for college credit.

2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

Assistive technology services and assistive technology devices are provided to individuals with disabilities as determined by an individual's vocational goal and appear as prescribed services on the respective individual's signed IPE. DVR works closely with Maine cohorts, Alpha One, ALLTECH and Mainely Access and Maine CITE, assistive technology organizations which provide assistive technology technical assistance services, as well as assistive technology devices. Maine CITE is the assistive technology grantee for the state of Maine through the Administration for Community Living.

3. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

BRS supports staff involvement in the USDA's AgrAbility project. Maine AgrAbility is administered by Alpha One and the University of Maine. The liaison to the project ensures that DVR staff is knowledgeable about AgrAbility and related resources. Grant funding continues but may end soon. A separate effort in 2020 will discuss a fee-for-service payment structure for work-based learning opportunities and paid work experience to increase opportunities for youth in farming careers.

4. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

DVR works with other state agencies and many councils and committees, including the Governor's Children's Cabinet which is examining the needs of out-of-school youth.

5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

DVR follows State of Maine Procurement policies and procedures to contract with qualified organizations to provide employment support services for DVR clients. Services procured include: Pre-Employment Transition Services, Job Seeking Skills, Job Skills Training, Job Development and Placement Services; Job Coaching and Supported Employment; and Business Engagement. These services are paid on a fee per service unit cost. DVR also contracts with Maine's sole Center for Independent Living, Alpha One.

D. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

1. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AS WELL AS PROCEDURES FOR THE TIMELY DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL OF INDIVIDUALIZED PLANS FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR THE STUDENTS

1.DVR has a strong partnership with the Maine Department of Education (DOE). This has been demonstrated through collaborative efforts on Employment First legislation, data sharing, joint

training and technical assistance and the launch of interagency efforts, such as the Cross-Agency Council for Transition. A DOE staff member serves on the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the DVR Director serves on the IDEA Part B State Advisory Panel.

The Cooperative Agreement between the Maine Department of Education, Special Services and Maine DVR – and Maine DBVI - was updated in 2018 and now includes language to support implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014. The Agreement was developed using technical assistance available through the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) and the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC).

The purpose of the Cooperative Agreement is to set forth the commitments of DOE and DVR/DBVI to cooperate to meet the needs of students with disabilities and to better coordinate the process of student transition. DOE and DVR/DBVI are committed to the belief that all youth with disabilities can work and that they should have the opportunity to prepare to enter competitive integrated employment through participation in work-based learning and other career preparation activities before high school graduation or exit.

The Designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.

Provide information on the formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency: DVR will assist in transition planning and in the development of each student's individualized education program (IEP). For students eligible for services with an agreed upon vocational goal, DVR is expected to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) before the student leaves the school setting.

In providing transition services, DVR will facilitate the use of available and appropriate community-based services. Services will be provided in the most cost-effective manner. In recognition of the importance of promoting information sharing and in order to ensure an effective and timely system of referrals for DVR services, DVR requests that school personnel adopt the following process: When a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) begins the transition planning process prior to entering ninth grade, the student and his/her parents or guardians will receive general information about VR services, including those Pre-Employment Transition Services available to Potentially Eligible students. This information will introduce VR and will inform the parents/guardians when it is appropriate to make a VR referral. When the student to be referred is within two years of school graduation or exit, the services offered by VR should be re-introduced at the student's IEP or 504 meeting. Both the student and the parents/guardians should have an opportunity to receive materials outlining VR services and to ask questions concerning the referral. If during or after the meeting, they (or the adult student) are interested in having a referral made for services the school will assist in doing so.

Provide information on the formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency with respect to consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services.

The purpose of the Cooperative Agreement is to set forth the commitments of DOE and DVR to cooperate to meet the needs of students with disabilities and to better coordinate the process of student transition. The Agreement also sets forth that consultation and technical assistance will

be provided to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services.

The mission of the MOU is to help students with disabilities achieve full participation in society by ensuring equal opportunity and access to education, employment and community. To achieve this mission: • People will work together for the student's benefit • Students and families will be included and respected • Regular and meaningful communication will be established • Personnel Development will be collaborative • Data will be shared to improve outcomes. The parties shall agree on methods to maintain updated information about best practices and resources related to the transition of students, including the use of Dispatches and maintenance of a copy of the Agreement on the agencies' websites. Consultation and technical assistance to educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services; DOE and DVR will work together to inform the following entities about the existence and intent of this Agreement: • Superintendents of Schools • Directors of Special Education • Parent Training & Information Center • DVR Regional Managers, Supervisors, and Transition Counselors • Directors of Career & Technical Education • Directors of Adult Education • Client Assistance Program • Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) • State Special Education Advisory Panel Effective implementation requires ongoing communication and sharing of information between the parties.

A student with a disability is defined as a student between the ages of 14 and 21 who is enrolled in an educational program and who is eligible for and receiving special education and related services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1411 et seq.); or is an individual with a disability under Section 504. (Note: This definition includes students who may be in an alternative placement, enrolled in post-secondary education or homeschooled, among other settings)

Under the WIOA amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, a youth with a disability may be defined as an individual with a disability who is between the ages of 14 and 24 and who is or is not enrolled in an educational program.

It is especially critical that any changes in resources, regulations, policies and procedures that affect students served jointly by DOE and DVR/DBVI be immediately communicated and that coordinated efforts are made to mitigate any negative impact that may occur as a result of those changes. DVR will provide schools with an orientation video, brochures, and PowerPoint presentation on services for transition-age youth and a representative to serve as a member of the Maine IDEA Part B State Advisory Panel.

DVR will also support VR counselors with transition caseloads to join Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC) and participate in regional and state meetings and training. DVR will provide technical assistance to DOE and school districts on disability-specific information and resources issues and issues concerning eligibility and referral for services as requested. DVR will provide technical assistance and training as requested to DOE and school districts on the Americans with Disabilities Act in conjunction with the State ADA Coordinator. DOE will notify DVR of issues of mutual interest identified during monitoring or as a result of a special education due process finding.

For students who have applied for VR services, DVR staff work closely with students, parents and the LEA to collect and share information (with a signed release) that allows for timely determination of eligibility (60 days) and development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (90 days). Current postsecondary goals identified on Individualized Education

Programs often present excellent starting points for development of the IPE. Training to LEA staff as well as DVR staff helps to reinforce the importance of collaboration to create a coordinate set of activities to promote transition opportunities for the student.

1. PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, VR agencies are required to set aside 15% of their federal grant funding to provide a new set of “Pre-Employment Transition Services” to eligible or potentially eligible students with a disability. Pre-Employment Transition Services must be available statewide to all students with disabilities who need them. Services begin once a request has been made and a Pre -Employment Transition Services registration form has been completed along with documentation of disability.

There are five required services and nine authorized services (that may be provided if funds remain after the required activities are provided) along with pre-employment transition coordination. Pre-Employment Transition Services are to be delivered in conjunction and collaboration with schools and are designed to assist students with identifying career interests.

The required *Pre- Employment Transition Services* are:

- Job exploration counseling
- Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, experiences outside of the traditional school setting, and/or internships
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
- Instruction in self-advocacy

If funds remain, VR agencies may provide the following nine *authorized Pre-Employment Transition Services* to improve the transition of students with disabilities from school to postsecondary education or an employment outcome:

- implement effective strategies that increase independent living and inclusion in their communities and competitive integrated workplaces;
- develop and improve strategies for individuals with intellectual and significant disabilities to live independently, participate in postsecondary education experiences, and obtain and retain competitive integrated employment;
- provide training to vocational rehabilitation counselors, school transition staff, and others supporting students with disabilities;
- disseminate information on innovative, effective, and efficient approaches to implement Pre-Employment Transition Services;
- coordinate activities with transition services provided by local educational agencies under IDEA;
- apply evidence-based findings to improve policy, procedure, practice, and the preparation of personnel;

- develop model transition demonstration projects;
- establish or support multistate or regional partnerships that involve States, local educational agencies, designated State units, developmental disability agencies, private businesses, or others; and
- disseminate information and strategies to improve the transition to postsecondary activities of those who are traditionally unserved.

Funds reserved for pre-employment transition services may be used for the required, authorized, and Pre-Employment Transition Services coordination activities.

Pre-Employment Transition Services coordination consists of:

- Attending individualized education program meetings for students with disabilities, when invited;
- Working with the local workforce development boards, one-stop centers, and employers to develop work opportunities for students with disabilities, including internships, summer employment and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year, and apprenticeships;
- Working with schools, including those carrying out activities under section 614(d) of the IDEA, to coordinate and ensure the provision of pre-employment transition services;
- When invited, attending person-centered planning meetings for individuals receiving services under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.);

Eligibility and Registering for Pre-Employment Transition Services

Potentially Eligible

In addition to authorizing new services, the WIOA amendments also now allows students with disabilities who are “Potentially Eligible” to receive Pre-Employment Transition Services without needing to apply and be found eligible for VR services. Potentially Eligible students are those who meet the definition of a “Student with a Disability” (see below) and who have not yet applied and been found eligible (or ineligible) for VR services. In the event that there is a waitlist for VR services, individuals who have been found eligible and placed on a waitlist may only receive Pre-ETS if they were receiving Pre-ETS services before being found eligible.

Registering for Services

In order for students to receive services as Potentially Eligible they (and their guardian if under age 18) must complete and sign a registration form. The registration form collects basic demographic information that is then inputted into the AWARE case management system to create a case record. The record must reflect that the student has a disability. Documentation that is acceptable includes the following:

- Information from an education official documenting spec ed or 504 status
- Case note documenting counselor observation or review of medical information from the referral source

- Referral from Juvenile Justice with data elements
- IEP
- SSA award letter
- Medical documentation

A *student with a disability* is defined as a student between the ages of 14 and 21 who is enrolled in an educational program and who is eligible for and receiving special education and related services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1411 et seq.); or is an individual with a disability under Section 504. (Note: This definition includes students who may be in an alternative placement, enrolled in post-secondary education or home-schooled, among other settings)

Under the WIOA amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, a *youth with a disability* may be defined as an individual with a disability who is between the ages of 14 and 24 and who is or is not enrolled in an educational program.

If students with a disability require interpreter or reader services or accessible informational materials to ensure equal access to work-based learning experiences or other Pre-Employment Transition Services, those supports may be paid by VR with reserved funds, unless they would customarily be paid by another source, including local education agencies.

It is the expectation that DOE and DVR/DBVI will work closely together to ensure that students, families and schools are aware of the availability of Pre-Employment Transition Services and will jointly promote Pre-Employment Transition Services activities so that students with disabilities have access to these important career preparatory resources.

Schools can aid in increasing access for students with a disability to Pre-Employment Transition Services by:

- identifying students to refer to Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Collecting registration forms for Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Developing and delivering Pre-Employment Transition Services with VR staff.
- Braiding and blending funding for Pre-Employment Transition Services activities.

2. INFORMATION ON THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WITH RESPECT TO:

A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING VR SERVICES;

In order to promote better understanding and implementation of best practices in transition planning, DOE and DVR/DBVI will collaborate to offer technical assistance, cross-training and joint training opportunities. Topics may include transition services, Pre-Employment Transition Services, rehabilitation technology or other. All training and technical assistance will be provided in an accessible format and may be delivered via in-person, conference call, webinar, Zoom, Skype or other appropriate means.

In recognition of the importance of promoting information sharing and in order to ensure an effective and timely system of referrals for DVR services, DVR requests that school personnel adopt the following process: 1. When a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is in the transition planning process prior to entering ninth grade, the student and his/her parents or guardians will receive general information about VR services. 2. When a student is within two years of school graduation or exit from school, the services offered by VR should be re-introduced at the student's IEP or 504 meeting. Both the student and the parents/guardians should have an opportunity to receive VR materials outlining services and to ask questions concerning the referral. 3. VR Counselors should be invited to attend IEP meetings for students who have been determined eligible for services, as well as in cases where the presence of the Counselor at the meeting would assist in determining the appropriateness of a referral to VR.

VR Counselors will provide support to the IEP team to facilitate the IEP process as appropriate. DVR will provide information as requested to school personnel on access to "Long Term Support." DOE will provide guidance to schools on the release of information (including assessment, IEP, Summary of Performance etc.) for students who are working with DVR or who are in the eligibility process. DVR will inform the designated school case manager as to the status of the DVR referral/intake process on individual students with appropriate releases. DVR will determine eligibility and provide services to eligible students within two years prior to expected high school graduation or exit.

If disagreements arise regarding any aspect of the implementation of this Cooperative Agreement, they should first be attempted to be resolved between the specific parties involved. If this is unsuccessful, the dispute should be taken to the next successive leadership level until resolution is achieved.

B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;

DOE and DVR will collaborate on possible grant opportunities that have an impact on services to students. DOE will assist DVR to share information about vocational rehabilitation services with students with disabilities who may be eligible for VR and provide DVR with de-identified data on an annual basis of numbers and demographics of transition-age students with disabilities who have reached ninth grade in public and private schools across Maine. DOE will provide information to DVR on eligibility, availability, and accessibility of CTE (Career and Technical Education) programs.

DOE will provide technical assistance to schools on IEP transition plan development. DVR will participate in DOE's efforts to maintain students in school and to prevent and reduce drop-out rates among students with disabilities. The agency will collaborate with schools on the delivery of the "Career Exploration Workshop" curriculum for eligible students with disabilities. At least annually, an in-house training for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors on topics in best practices in working with transition-age youth will be provided.

DOE and DVR are committed to promoting competitive, integrated employment opportunities for all Maine youth with disabilities as they transition from high school. To meet the requirements of Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act, DVR/ in consultation with DOE will undertake the following process for youth with a disability:

Outreach and Identification – DVR will develop informational materials that describe services available for students and families who may be considering sub-minimum wage employment. These materials will include information on Pre- Employment Transition Services

and individualized transition services available through DVR. DOE will assist by sharing this information with schools and families. **Documentation** – DVR will collect information to satisfy the requirement to document the completion of required activities under Section 511 for youth who are seeking subminimum wage employment. This documentation will include:

- Youth's name;
- Determination made or activity/services completed;
- Name of individual making the determination or providing the service/activity ; date determination made or required service or activity completed
- Applicable signatures of DVR/VRC transmitting documentation to youth and dates; and
- Method via which documentation was transmitted to the youth (including if refusal, youth names, description of refusal and reason, signature of youth or guardian, signature of DVR VRC documenting the refusal, date of signatures, date and method).

VR will provide documentation to the youth of all activities completed (such as the Bridge Career Exploration Workshop or Discovering Personal Genius), regardless of whether they were completed under the VR program or IDEA. DOE will support the schools to provide documentation to VR no later than 30 days (after the completion of each activity) unless there are extenuating circumstances of all transition services completed by the youth under IDEA. It is the expectation that all documentation is exchanged and maintained in a confidential manner. MDOE assures that it will not enter into, nor permit any school to enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity as defined in 34 CFR 397.5 (d) for the purpose of operating a program under which a youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.

Note: On March 18, 2020, Maine's Governor Janet Mills signed into law LD 1874 "An Act to Amend the Laws Governing the Subminimum Wage" which disallowed the payment of subminimum wages to persons with disabilities in the state of Maine and subminimum wage is no longer a possibility for students with disabilities exiting high school. Maine has no individuals working under subminimum wage certificates at the time of this plan.

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;

This agreement does not involve any financial compensation or exchange of funds between DOE and DVR/DBVI. However, it is the expectation that in the development and implementation of services, DOE and DVR/DBVI will provide in-kind resources and will promote cost efficiency and non-duplication through collaboration. Nothing in this agreement relieves either party of the responsibility to provide or pay for any transition service that the agency would otherwise provide to a student with disabilities who meets the eligibility criteria of that agency. If a participating agency, meaning a state or local agency other than the educational agencies responsible for the student's education, that is financially and legally responsible for providing transition services to the student fails to provide the transition services described in the IEP, the education agency shall reconvene the IEP team to identify alternative strategies to meet the transition objectives for the child set out in the IEP.

D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES.

DVR will inform DOE in writing of procedural changes that may impact the eligibility of students with disabilities for vocational rehabilitation services, so that DOE may disseminate the information to local school districts. DOE will notify DVR concerning proposed changes in regulations, policies and procedures at the state or federal level that may impact students with whom DVR works.

DVR will collect de-identified information on informal/formal complaints and due process hearings that involve school-aged youth; this data will be provided on an annual basis to DOE, as well as numbers and demographics of transition-aged students served. DVR will provide a list of Transition Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and the schools they serve to DOE and each school district on an annual basis. A protocol to serve students who are in out-of-district placements in accordance with current policy is currently in development for Spring 2020 release.

E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

While Maine DVR does not have any third-party cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers, the agency does work closely with many non-profit organizations across the state through informal collaborative relationships. Additionally, Maine DVR follows State of Maine procurement policies to contract with private nonprofits to provide services to VR clients where and when appropriate.

F. ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

DVR works closely with the Department of Health and Human Services to support partnerships that benefit individuals in need of supported employment services. One way this is accomplished is by leveraging resources - such as career planning - through the Department of Health and Human Services that help to prepare individuals for supported employment and assist them with accessing long term supports following VR services.

Career planning is a person-centered, comprehensive employment planning and direct support service. It is a focused, time-limited service that helps a person identify a career direction and develop a plan with the goal of achieving competitive, integrated employment at or above the State's minimum wage. The service provides assistance to obtain, maintain, or advance in competitive employment or self-employment. The service is provided up to 60 hours, is not to exceed a six-month period, and must occur in the community in businesses, Career Centers or other community locations.

Career Planning Goals:

- Identify skills, priorities, and capabilities determined through an individualized discovery process
- Provides opportunity to explore self-employment and determine potential steps necessary to develop a business
- Discover a career direction and creation of a career plan to be used in a person's individual plan for employment with VR.
- If applicable, a referral to benefits planning

- If applicable, a referral for an assessment for use of assistive technology to increase independence in the workplace
- Provides information which should be included as part of the application to Vocational Rehabilitation for services

Who can access the Career Planning Service?

The Service is designed for people with disabilities who have had limited experiences with competitive, integrated paid employment and who are unclear about their career direction, skills, interests and abilities. A person may request Career Planning through their individualized planning process; either at OADS or at Vocational Rehabilitation. Career Planning is NOT required for accessing Vocational Rehabilitation Services but may be used as part of the discovery process for a career direction.

Waiver Funded Career Planning

Waiver members can request and be authorized to receive Career Planning funded through Section 18, 20, 21 or 29 of MaineCare as part of their Person-Centered Planning (PCP) Plan of Care (POC) process. The service must be provided by an authorized Provider of waiver services who have staff who are certified to provide Career Planning.

The Service will be authorized up to 60 hours and is not to exceed a six-month period. The Career Planner will schedule at least weekly meetings. These meetings help the planner learn about the person, and their community, as well as explore businesses by completing tours and other activities which will lead to the creation of a Career Plan.

Process and documentation will be through two options (chosen by the person); Discovering Personal Genius™ or Maine Career Planning. The Career Plan will be submitted to OADS QA staff for monitoring, feedback and recommendations three times during the process.

At two weeks the Career Planner will:

- Assist the individual with an application to VR Services including documentation of disability, releases, copy of the PCP/POC, and filling out the health checklist
- Assist with an application for Benefit Counseling Services, including a release
- Assist with a referral for Assistive Technology assessment (if required)

Connecting Career Planning to Vocational Rehabilitation Services

People receiving Career Planning Services through OADS waiver funding are also either recipients of SSI or SSDI benefits. Since disability determination has already occurred by SSA or MaineCare, OADS consumers are presumed eligible for VR or DBVI once the application process has been completed. Case Managers and/or Care Coordinators can provide additional information during the application process to assist DVR/DBVI in this process. The goal is to create a smooth transition from Career Planning to the development of a VR Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The IPE goal could include counseling and guidance which will occur during the Career Planning process. If funded by OADS, the Career Planning Process can also be considered a comparable benefit as a service on VR's IPE. The Career Planner, with the person, will share the Career Plan and be available to review, discuss and share discovery information to inform the development of the CARNs and the IPE.

Career Planning is a discovery-based service designed to explore businesses, careers and skills. A waiver member who receives Career Planning has chosen to seek employment and coordination of services between the OADS and BRS must occur in order to support the person on a path to employment.

The Career Plan will be shared with VR counselors, with a release as part of the application for services and again when it is final by either the Career Planner or the Case Manager/Care Coordinator.

The Career Plan shall be maintained in the person's file and a copy given to the person and team members. If a person requires Career Planning again in the future all prior information will be used and reviewed as part of the development of an updated Career Plan and may not require the full 60 hrs. authorization.

Referral for Long Term Support -

DVR maintains a protocol with DHHS to allow for clients to achieve timely access to long-term supports following stability on the job. This process assists individuals who have an identified need for ongoing job coaching. Steps include DHHS' case manager/care coordinator working with the individual to discuss waiver work support providers and the process for selection of a provider. Following a vendor call, the approved transfer form will be completed identifying key information on the business site, wages, schedule, level of support, technology and natural support plan and selected work support provider. The VR counselor works closely with the individual and case manager to ensure a smooth transition.

G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

1. VR SERVICES; AND

1. VR services; and

Due to budget constraints, positions exclusively supporting business relations have been eliminated with the exception of a Youth Employment Consultant. This position is focused on creating business relationships to benefit the entry of youth – including students with disabilities – into the world of work through work-based learning opportunities and regular employment. The position is also charged with the responsibility of facilitating the Progressive Employment pilot project in Lewiston and Portland.

The Progressive Employment Model is a dual-customer strategy that is designed to assist job-seekers with significant barriers to employment and assist employers who may be averse to hiring with disabilities. The model coordinates rehabilitation counseling with job placement and

business account management. Progressive Employment offers hands-on work-based activities in the community that assist our dual client offering career exploration to students and risk-free opportunities to employers.

The Youth Employment Consultant has worked successfully with employers in Maine's southern and western counties to set up opportunities for summer work experiences for youth – thereby meeting employer needs through introducing them to a new generation of potential workers. In FFY19, 237 clients in the Portland and Lewiston offices took part in the pilot. See it in action, watch the Progressive Employment video below.

- Progressive Employment Model: Jobsville
- Descriptive Video: Progressive Employment Model: Jobsville

Other Employer Engagement - DVR continues to be responsive to employer need through techniques such as:

- Staff outreach to businesses to address their workforce needs
- Partnership with the Career Center business staff to assist in delivery of job fairs
- Documentation of business engagement via the Maine Job Link
- Conducting business development via contracted Community Rehabilitation Providers.
- Participation on a Statewide Workforce Action Team (SWAT) that brings workforce system partners together to plan coordinated activities.
- Membership in Local Workforce Boards.
- Delivery of training and resources to business such as disability etiquette, ADA, and reasonable accommodations.

2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

In addition to Progressive Employment, the Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)'s Transition Work-Based Learning (TWBL) Model Demonstration grant is a partnership with Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG), the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston, American Institutes for Research (AIR), and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). This project is using a quasi-experimental design to conduct rigorous evaluation of two innovative interventions, Enhanced JMG and Progressive Employment. Maine DVR is utilizing the Progressive Employment model to expand employer relationships and align this dual customer community-based strategy with Enhanced JMG programs for students with disabilities.

These interventions are serving students with disabilities that are within two years of graduation from high school to test whether a model of work-based learning improves attainment of competitive integrated post-secondary employment and education outcomes. Specifically, under this grant, JMG has expanded its services to five high schools in the Bangor area and DVR will launch Progressive Employment in the Augusta and Bangor regions.

Maine DVR expects that the TWBL Model Demonstration will enhance statewide collaboration that facilitates the transition process from secondary and postsecondary schools, to competitive integrated employment at or above minimum wage. Within 1 year after graduation, at least 90

percent of study participants will enter postsecondary education or competitive integrated employment.

<https://www.explorevr.org/progressive-employment-maine-transition-work-based-learning-model>

Now in Year Four of five, over 300 students have benefited from TWBL interventions.

Maine DVR works with employers to support activities such as: informational interviews, job shadows, business tours, on-the-job training/apprenticeships and work experiences. Business Development during the pilot project includes identifying potential business leads based on the goals of the individual referrals and contacting the employer; requesting an informational interview; requesting a tour of the business or facility; sharing information about DVR and determining if the employer is willing to allow assessments, informational interviews, job shadows or on-the-job training at this location. Through the business development process, as it is described, the purpose is to gain an understanding of the various positions which this business employs and to ascertain the work environment and work culture.

H. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

1. THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT;

DVR/DBVI, OADS and SAMHS have resumed is currently in negotiations to develop a joint MOU in accordance with WIOA regulations. The MOU is expected to be approved by June of 2020.

Through its collaboration with DHHS and specifically the coordination of Maine's Benefits Counseling Network, DVR/DBVI has been able to develop opportunities and overcome barriers to competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities who are eligible for MaineCare, the State's Medicaid program.

2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

To ensure that individuals with the most significant disabilities receive quality vocational rehabilitation services and equal access to employment opportunities throughout the state of Maine, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation takes a multi-faceted approach that includes workforce development, engagement of business and the availability of support services for clients who need them, as described in the MOU with the DHHS Office of Aging and Disability Services mentioned elsewhere in this state plan.

DVR/DBVI, in collaboration with the Maine Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), continues to contract with Syntiro, a technical assistance and training provider, to administer a comprehensive workforce development system for Employment Specialists in the Community Rehabilitation Provider sector. This project, Employment for ME Workforce Development System, includes basic certification (ACRE) training, advanced topical skills training, maintenance of a comprehensive training calendar and for newly certified employment specialists. The system was launched in July 2011.

Coordinated planning with DHHS' Office of Aging and Disability Services promotes implementation of best practices, smoother transition between systems and improved access.

3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

DVR has a MOU that guides the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), through its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational

Rehabilitation, and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through its Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS), in the course of planning and implementing an aligned service delivery system that promotes evidence-based practices. It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these two entities.”

A new MOU, to reflect all requirements of WIOA, is in final development.

In addition to providing ongoing employment support to more than 200 employed individuals with mental illness through contracts with CRP's, the DHHS Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS) has several initiatives currently underway to promote employment among the individuals they serve:

Community Employment Specialist Program:

SAMHS contracts with Maine Medical Center's Vocational Services to provide Employment Specialists that are embedded in behavioral health organizations across the state to assist individuals living with serious mental illness. They assist with career exploration and securing employment, and provide other supports as needed. In keeping with best practices, these Employment Specialists work as a team with behavioral health professionals to improve outcomes. This service is supplemental and not necessarily a replacement service for Vocational Rehabilitation services through the DOL Bureau of Rehabilitation Services.

The Clubhouse Model of Psychiatric Rehabilitation:

Clubhouses help support members with overcoming barriers to employment by offering a variety of services such as in-house prevocational programs, transitional employment and competitive employment in the community with or without Supported Employment services. Prevocational programs give members the opportunity to contribute to the daily operation of the clubhouse on a volunteer basis while learning valuable skills. Transitional employment offers members the chance to work at temporary part time jobs through Clubhouse partnerships with local employers, with on-the-job support from both the Clubhouse and the employer. Members also work in permanent positions in the community, at a job of their choosing, with SE as needed. There are four clubhouses in Maine.

Business to Business Strategies

In partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services, DVR participates in the newly-launched Maine Workplace & Disability Connection housed at the Maine Retail Association. This business to business platform will connect and support Maine employers hiring and retaining employees with disabilities. Participating employers focus on assisting businesses in attracting and retaining new employees and customers with disabilities, developing business leaders who value diversity and actively work to promote strong communities that include individuals with disabilities, and increasing opportunities for businesses to expand their diversity recruiting efforts, not as a social model but as a business case to recruit talent and better serve their customers.

Promoting Employment Through Traditional Mental Health Services:

Both the primary Community Support Services (Community Integration Services, Assertive Community Treatment and Community Rehabilitation Services), as well as Behavioral Health

Home services, require the development of an Individual Support Plan (ISP). Every 90 days, through the Individual Support Planning process, individuals receiving these services are asked about their vocational status and about unmet vocational needs. SAMHS funds specific employment services and collaborates with the Department of Labor's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to provide resources to address vocational needs. In keeping with the fidelity of the model, all ACT teams are required to have an employment specialist.

Jointly Funded Work Incentives Planning:

Six Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWICs) are available statewide to provide all Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities access to benefits counseling services. This initiative is a collaboration between SAMHS, OADS, and the Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services DVR/DBVI.

Jointly Funded Employment Workforce Development System and Website:

Maine has an Employment Workforce Development System that is jointly funded by DHHS (SAMHS and OADS) and DOL BRS DVR/DBVI. This provides infrastructure for coordinating employment specialist trainings, webinars and advance topical trainings as well as maintaining a database of certified employment specialists.

DHHS (SAMHS and OADS) and DOL BRS DVR/DBVI also collaborate on the development and maintenance of a comprehensive website, www.employmentforme.com, providing information on best practices and resources for employment for people with disabilities. The website is broken into four target audience sections – job seekers, service providers, youth in transition and employers. Another collaboration that is ongoing is the training and certification infrastructure.

DHHS (SAMHS and OADS) also made available Balancing Incentive Program funds to increase system capacity to support individuals with disabilities on the path to employment. This initiative included training for Work and Benefits Navigators, the development of an advanced Work and Benefits Navigator training for Employment Specialists, the development of a Pathways to Employment infographic, and training in Individual Placement and Support and Supported Employment.

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

1. SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS

I. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL WHO ARE EMPLOYED BY THE STATE AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY;

i. the number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category:

At the time of the state plan draft, DVR had 103 staff in the following positions:

Bureau Director - 1

DVR Director - 1

Systems Improvement & Quality Assurance Director - 1

DVR Assistant Director - 1

Regional Manager - 4

Casework Supervisor - 7

Rehabilitation Consultant - 4

Management Analyst - 1

Procurement and Contract specialist - 1

Rehabilitation Counselor II - 59

Rehabilitation Counselor I - 10

Support Staff - 13

Maine DVR averaged a 14 % turnover rate for Rehabilitation Counselor II's (RCII) VR Counselors in FFY 19. There are currently 8 RC II positions that are vacant. Maine's turnover rate continues to be deeply affected by the tight labor market and retirement, given the age of its workforce and less competitive wages when compared to private sector employment. VR Counselors are being actively sought by private sector employers who offer higher pay, work from home positions and other benefits. Assuming retention levels remain consistent, it can be projected that DVR staffing needs could require as many as 19 new Rehabilitation Counselors in the next 5 years. The average turnover rate for non-rehabilitation counselor staff has been relatively consistent, approximately 13-15 percent annually. In examining staffing patterns of all other DVR staff, the turnover rate is approximately 20 percent. During FFY 2019, DVR hired 17 Rehabilitation Counselor II's.

II. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

When applying the average turnover rates, it can be forecasted that Maine DVR will need to replace:

1 Regional Manager,

3 Casework Supervisors,

6 Paraprofessionals,

2 Clerical/Support Personnel and

0 Rehabilitation Consultants

III. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

Within the next five years. The projections for staff vacancies are dependent upon current levels of funding as well as stability in state hiring and contracts. Maine DVR will keep RSA apprised of developments on this issue

Projected vacancies over the next 5 years:

1) Director Vocational Rehabilitation: 0 Vacancies

- 2) Director SIQA: 1 Vacancy
- 3) Director, Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened: 0 Vacancy
- 4) Assistant Director Vocational Rehabilitation: 0 Vacancies
- 5) Regional Manager: 1 Vacancy
- 6) Casework Supervisor: 3 Vacancies.
- 7) Rehabilitation Consultant: 0 Vacancies
- 8) Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II: 18 Vacancies
- 9) Paraprofessional: 2 Vacancies
- 10) Support Personnel: 3 Vacancies

The system for collecting and analyzing data indicates approximately 10,000 individuals with disabilities will be served by Vocational Rehabilitation in PY 2020. Current service delivery is performed by Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) staff, consisting of 59 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, eight Paraprofessionals, eight Casework Supervisors, and three Regional Managers. DVR staff receives administrative and organizational support and guidance from the Director of DVR, the Director of SIQA (Systems Improvement and Quality Assurance), the Director of the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened, DVR Assistant Director, and four Rehabilitation Consultants (program specialists), one management analyst, and clerical/secretarial support services from 22 office personnel. DVR has an additional 7 Rehabilitation Counselor I's. In FFY 17, due to funding from the Transition Work Based Learning Grant, a Grant Manager and 3 Rehabilitation Counselor I's, and .5FTE business account manager were able to be hired as time-limited positions for the five years of the grant.

B. PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

I. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM;

The University of Southern Maine (USM) is the only in-state institution of higher education offering a graduate program which satisfies the standards set forth by the Rehabilitation Act. In the last academic year, 30 students were enrolled full-time or part-time in its Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling Program. USM classes are offered on campus and via distance education. USM did not pursue the recent competition for RSA's Long-term Training Grant. The University of Massachusetts Boston is now the nearest university which received funding under this program.

The University of Maine at Farmington (UMF), in partnership with the University of Southern Maine, began offering an accelerated program in the Fall of 2015 that allows counseling students to graduate with a master's degree a year sooner. Graduates of the five-year program will be able to qualify for both State licensing for counseling and national certification for rehabilitation counseling. The Program is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs and the Council on Rehabilitation Education.

UMF typically graduates 25 to 30 students per year with a B.S. in Rehabilitation Services. When combined with experience, this new program will meet the standards set forth under WIOA. Maine DVR has offered summer internships to UMF undergraduates to expose them to careers in vocational rehabilitation. Maine DVR has limited resources to pay educational/training costs associated with its efforts to develop and maintain a fully qualified staff and, as such, conducts

on-going investigation of distance education programs that offer RSA grant funding to participants.

II. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND

During FFY 2019, Maine DVR had 9 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs) enrolled in the RSA-funded Rehabilitation Counseling program at University of Southern Maine.

Institutions; Students enrolled; Employee sponsored by agency and/or RSA; Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA; Graduates from the previous year;

2019 RSA Graduates sponsored by agency = 8

III. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

2019 University of Southern Maine, RSA Grant Graduates = 8

2019 VR Staff to obtain CRC credential = 4

2019 VR Staff currently enrolled in USM Master's in Rehabilitation Program = 1

2. PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

DVR, with the support of the Commissioner of the Department of Labor, continues to work closely with the State of Maine's Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) to fill vacancies. Recent recruitment efforts have included electronic vacancy postings on national and State of Maine websites, local postings with community providers and information sharing with USM, the only Maine College that offers a rehabilitation program.

Recruitment efforts for fully qualified rehabilitation counselors have become increasingly difficult, in comparison to previous years. With high turnover rates and high demand for the limited graduates exiting from the University of Southern Maine (USM), Maine's sole rehabilitation counseling program, the division has struggled with finding and hiring qualified candidates. DVR continues to welcome interns from both UMF and USM and several interns have been hired as full-time employees upon graduation. A DVR Regional Manager sits on the Advisory Board of the University of Southern Maine's Rehabilitation Counseling program, strengthening and coordinating the relationship between the two organizations. DVR invites USM and UMF faculty to participate in training opportunities throughout the year.

DVR works closely with the Bureau of Human Resources to assist eligible individuals with disabilities to access Maine State Government's "Special Appointment" program. DVR has several employees with disabilities and provides appropriate accessibility accommodations to support employment. The State of Maine is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer.

An area of concern for Maine DVR is the retention of qualified staff. DVR is committed to offering personnel development opportunities that enhance the work environment and support service delivery. DVR continues to review and assess essential job functions within the Division in view of the CSPD requirements and seeks the development of alternative and evidence-based approaches in the provision and maintenance of high-quality service delivery.

3. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND

With the implementation of WIOA and reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act, Maine DVR has revisited its personnel requirements and hiring practices. Maine DVR recognizes that the standards for rehabilitation counseling personnel outlined in WIOA represent the minimum standards for qualification. These standards require a minimum of attainment of a baccalaureate degree in a field of study reasonably related to vocational rehabilitation, to indicate a level of competency and skill demonstrating basic preparation in a field of study such as vocational rehabilitation counseling, social work, psychology, disability studies, business administration, human resources, special education, supported employment, customized employment, economics, or another field that reasonably prepares individuals to work with consumers and employers; and

(2) Demonstrated paid or unpaid experience, for not less than one year, consisting of -

(i) Direct work with individuals with disabilities in a setting such as an independent living center;

(ii) Direct service or advocacy activities that provide such individual with experience and skills in working with individuals with disabilities; or

(iii) Direct experience in competitive integrated employment environments as an employer, as a small business owner or operator, or in self-employment, or other experience in human resources or recruitment, or experience in supervising employees, training, or other activities; or

Maine DVR continues to give priority to applicants and staff who possess master's degrees in counseling or a counseling-related degree, defined as Social Work, Psychology, Special Education, Rehabilitation and Counseling in alignment with WIOA's alternative requirement of attainment of a master's or doctoral degree in a field of study such as vocational rehabilitation counseling, law, social work, psychology, disability studies, business administration, human resources, special education, management, public administration, or another field that reasonably provides competence in the employment sector, in a disability field, or in both business-related and rehabilitation-related fields.

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

When recruiting or hiring new staff, Maine DVR gives preferences to those with a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, a closely related master's degree in Social Work, Psychology, Special Education, or Counseling or having Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRC). Through the interview process, DVR assesses the applicant's ability to demonstrate an understanding of the labor force and needs of individuals with disabilities. Maine DVR supports staff to obtain and practice 21st century skills through opportunities for training through the Technical Assistance Centers and state and local workforce development partners, including Maine DOL's Center for Workforce Research and Information.

DVR partners with DBVI to ensure active participation and representation on regional workforce boards across the State. Information is shared with DVR staff to provide local county workforce trends, high growth and demand industries, career pathways and future workforce needs. DVR's presence on these boards allows for increased awareness of hiring individuals with disabilities to local employers.

DVR is co-located with Bureau of Employment Services statewide in CareerCenters. This co-location allows for increased collaboration on information sharing, co-enrollment opportunities, dual employer engagement and training opportunities.

4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A. A SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

Staff development is delivered through formal and informal modalities, internal and external. DVR employees participate in annual performance reviews, a portion of which specifically addresses personnel development. At these reviews, staff and supervisors jointly identify training required to address performance enhancement.

B. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO DESIGNATED STATE UNIT PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS.

Maine DVR partnered with DBVI to offer a four-part webinar WIOA cross-training series. The series included several Workforce GPS WIOA webcasts to provide a basis of information. They were followed by topics which included Common Performance Measures, Bureau of Employment Services, Career Pathways, Youth Programming and Resources. Presentations were provided by Adult Education, Job Corps, Youth Build, Community College Workforce Development, Center for Workforce Research and Information.

A supervisor training curriculum was developed for new DVR Regional Managers and Casework Supervisors to be offered in conjunction with New Counselor Training. Curriculum includes mentoring from veteran Regional Managers/Casework Supervisor.

DVR and DBVI supervisors completed a three-day Leadership Effective Training Program (L.E.T). The training provided effective ways to communicate and to deal with conflict to create a positive climate.

DVR staff completed a two-day communication training. Staff participated in small groups to enhance active listening skills, conflict resolution skills, I-Messages and shifting gears.

DVR staff completed a two-day Motivational Interviewing training. Training included the basic to advancing practice of MI with the intent of strengthening a client's motivation and commitment to change in their vocational lives.

A sample of trainings that staff attended FY 2019:

Motivational Interviewing

New Counselor Training (24 new staff)

Communication training

Personality Disorders
 BRS Leadership Training
 Brain injury
 Peer Mentoring
 CRP project training (actual services)
 Syntiro Training
 BRS STATEWIDE (2018)
 Apprenticeship
 WOWI / Career Exploration workshop
 IARP New England Fall Conference
 Trauma Informed Care and Compassion Fatigue
 Transitions: Creating great job candidates
 NRE conference
 Fading and Natural Support Strategies for Employment Success
 WIOA Cross Training Series
 Education:
 8 Staff graduated with Master's in Rehabilitation
 4 staff received CRC credential
 1 staff enrolled with USM- Master's in Rehabilitation

5. PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

DVR has four Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (three of whom are Deaf). The Director of the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened (who is Deaf himself) supervises the four Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf and provides direction, education and outreach on issues impacting individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

As a state with a high percentage of older residents, there has been an increasing need to serve individuals who have age-related hearing loss and who wish to remain working. The Division Director has offered many workshops on deaf awareness/etiquette to employers, providers and state agencies this year to help increase awareness of promoting inclusion of employees who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Late Deafened. The Division Director meets once a month with his staff to address topics such as best practices in case management, communication strategies for individuals who use gestural communication for their primary mode of communication, among many other topics.

Staff who are Deaf have videophones at their desks for visual communication with consumers. An additional six employees are proficient in ASL. DVR offices are co-located in Maine's CareerCenter network. CareerCenters offer telecommunications devices including Interprettype, Ubi Duo, Video links, Video Relay and Video Remote Interpreting. Captioning (CART) services are used frequently to ensure access for staff and clients alike and are provided as needed.

An online video introduction to CareerCenter services for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing is available. Spoken language interpreter services are accessed through a statewide contract for both in-person and telephone interpreting. This year a statewide contract for Video Remote Interpreting was signed – allowing for increased access for clients in rural parts of Maine. DVR also employs some bilingual staff.

DVR continues its collaborative efforts with the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, University of Southern Maine Linguistics Department, Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) for the Deaf-Blind, and the Maine Deaf-Blind Project, (a project which is a member of the New England Consortium of Deaf Blind Projects and provides technical assistance for students until the age of 21 and focuses on transition age youth) to improve services for clients who are deaf-blind or dual sensory impaired from hearing and vision loss. Although the program, *"Independence Without Fear"* has discontinued, the collaboration has expanded to include the Department of Health and Human Services, Disability Rights Maine, Division of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened, and A Tri-state Collaborative with Vermont and New Hampshire. Efforts have included discussions to recruit, train and maintain a database of specially trained volunteers who can facilitate communication for people with significant vision and hearing impairments, as well as other services that are available to the dual sensory population. HKNC and OIB-TAC have provided training to staff on services to this targeted population.

DVR, as an agency in the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL), adheres to MDOL Policy No. 009 on Language Access. The Maine Department of Labor (MDOL) recognizes its obligation to provide linguistic access to services for individuals whose primary language is not English. Individuals for whom MDOL staff may need interpreter services include applicants, customers, family members, and/or companions. When MDOL staff does not speak the language needed, staff will inform the applicant/consumer that interpreter services are available to ensure equal access to programs and services provided by this Department and its contractors. Accordingly, it is the policy of MDOL to provide its staff with interpreter resources to be utilized in providing access to programs and services to Limited English Proficient persons as well as to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. This policy outlines guidelines and procedures for the use of such interpreter services. All programs, benefits or services provided by MDOL shall be made available to all eligible persons regardless of their abilities to speak, write and/or understand English and who are deaf or hard of hearing. MDOL will provide interpreter services at no cost to individuals applying for or participating in MDOL programs. MDOL will have policies and procedures which combine the use of in-person and telephone interpreter services as well as translated material necessary for effective communication. MDOL is committed to the continued evaluation and improvement of these services, as well as education of staff in available resources and procedures.

6. COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

As outlined in Section 606 (Employment of Individuals with Disabilities) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, Maine DVR continually makes "positive efforts to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities in programs assisted under this title". Currently 25 Transition VR Counselors are assigned to work with the more than 200 Maine High Schools, as well as with out-of-school youth and youth attending private institutions. Transition-aged youth represent 40% of all DVR cases in Maine and one of the fastest growing populations served by DVR due to increased focus under WIOA on Pre-Employment Transition Services.

Maine DVR has a Statewide Transition Counselor Advisory Group that meets quarterly to promote best practices in the provision of VR transition services. During the last year, this group heard from several guest speakers on disability and employment issues, including benefits counseling, and focused much of its efforts on WIOA implementation and the requirement for increased collaboration with schools and the Maine Department of Education concerning Pre-Employment Transition Services.

As outlined in DVR's current Cooperative Agreement with the Maine Department of Education (DOE), DVR has provided technical assistance to DOE and school districts on disability-specific information and resources issues and issues concerning eligibility and referral for services as requested. The DVR Director is the Chair of the IDEA Part B State Advisory Panel which is responsible for advising DOE on issues related to students with disabilities ages 3–20. The DVR director regularly presents to school groups on best practices for supporting work experience for youth through WIOA.

The DVR Director is also a member of the State Special Education Directors' Association (MADSEC). DVR and DBVI worked closely with the Maine Department of Education and developed an updated interagency Memorandum of Understanding in June 2018. The new version includes language detailing how the state agencies will work together to strengthen transition planning for a broader group of eligible and potentially eligible students.

J. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

1. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, PARTICULARLY THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF THOSE:

A. WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

In June 2014, Maine's legislature enacted the Employment First Maine Act (Sec. A-1. 26 MRSA c.3), which was a natural progression in Maine's focus on competitive integrated employment as a valued outcome for the state's citizens with disabilities. It set forth that the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, and Education must implement employment as a core component of services and supports provided and is the first and preferred service or support option offered to individuals with disabilities.

The Act also convened a time-limited coalition of interested parties, including employers, state agency representatives, advocacy organizations, and people with disabilities, to review and make recommendations regarding the improvement of the administration of employment services and the employment outcomes of people with disabilities. Before its sunset in October 2016, the Employment First Maine Coalition produced a report summarizing the work that was completed and identifying twenty-seven recommendations for consideration by the Governor, the Legislature and state agencies, primarily identifying strategies that encourage the employment of youth and adults with disabilities, engage the business community, and improve EFM performance measures.

DVR is committed to the philosophy of Employment First and this has shaped all procedural guidance and operations since the law's passage in Maine. In particular, DVR has expanded opportunities for work-based learning and paid work experience for students with significant disabilities which has resulted in changing trajectories for young people who may have not been thought of by their families and schools as able to work in the community at a competitive wage.

DHHS currently supports approximately 6,000 people with developmental disabilities, brain injuries, other related conditions and physical disabilities through five Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) 1915c Waivers. Individuals receiving waiver services have significant disabilities and require supports and services to obtain and maintain employment.

The waivers allow individuals who have been found eligible for the Maine Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) Services based on disability/eligibility to become prepared for employment through Community Supports Services that can assist the person to volunteer, increase work-readiness skills, and address issues of health and safety. The Brain Injury waiver expanded to include a Work Ordered Day Clubhouse and the first one opened in the fall of 2017 in southern Maine. Career Planning Services are now available under all four waivers for people who need to spend time exploring interests, skills and abilities prior to going to Vocational Rehabilitation.

The service of Career Planning funded under the waivers has continued to serve 75 to 100 people a year prior to a referral for Vocational Rehabilitation. Furthermore, OADS is providing on-the-job support through the waivers to about 1,000 people who are working throughout Maine. These waivers funded services which provided support to both the individual to maintain employment, including support to the employer.

Beginning in 2018, all Intake and Eligibility staff share information on employment as they meet people and their families for the first time. In the packet OADS provides during intake, there is an Employment Pathway visual, an Employment Services VR brochure, and Work and Benefit Counseling information, all of which show work is possible.

The Department of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with other State Agencies and partners, continues to implement the recommendations that were developed by the Employment First Maine Coalition. The Offices of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, Child and Family Services, and Aging and Disability Services have committed to work together to ensure that the outcome of employment of people with disabilities is a strong focus of the services they provide.

During the past year, DHHS has created new resources, developed additional employment services, and has begun to expand expectations that service providers all have a responsibility to promote employment as the *first and preferred* outcome.

The data shows there are 36,860 SSI recipients and 64,708 SSDI recipients living in Maine. Based on the fact many of these individuals are eligible for both SSI and SSDI, BRS cannot compute a precise total of individuals eligible for Social Security benefits. It is estimated there are approximately 83,603 Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities living in Maine, all of whom would meet the DVR eligibility definition of "substantial impediment to employment." For more information see <https://www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr/stateplan/>

B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

Vocational rehabilitation services to minorities with disabilities in Maine have always been a challenge to DVR because of the state's relatively homogeneous population and low ethnic diversity. Residents are primarily White (94.6%) with small representation of Black (1.6%), Asian (1.2%), and Native American (0.7%) individuals in certain geographical areas of the state. Native Americans represent a historically recognizable group and Maine has nearly 18,500 tribal members who are located both on reservations and defined land, as well as scattered across the state. Tribal members are primarily located in Penobscot, Washington and Aroostook counties. Unemployment figures among Micmac and Maliseet tribes range from 55% to 76%.

DVR continues to work collaboratively with the Houlton Band of Maliseet's, which was recently re-awarded a five-year Section 121 grant. The grant has been extended until 2025.

While Maine's minority population is small, two areas of Maine have seen significant increases in the numbers of non-English speakers due to refugee resettlement programs. According to the 2014 American Community Survey, approximately 65,000 Maine residents speak a language other than English at home. Targeted culturally appropriate outreach may be needed to ensure that information concerning VR resources is available to individuals who belong to potentially underserved minority populations.

The FFY 19 data in the most recent CSNA highlighted that 92% of the VR population is White and 8% identify themselves as being members of a racial or ethnic minority. <https://www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr/stateplan/>

C. WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

Among the groups that DVR considers when examining who has been unserved or underserved by the VR program include: Individuals with minority status (including New Mainers and indigenous populations), Individuals reentering from the corrections system, older workers, Veterans, individuals receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Maine DVR is also beginning to examine the representation of individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ related to access to services.

To estimate the number of people eligible for DVR services in Maine, we use information from the American Community Survey (ACS), conducted each year by the United States Census Bureau. In Maine, among the civilian noninstitutionalized population in 2013-2017, 16% reported a disability. The likelihood of having a disability varied by age – from 7% of people under 18 years of age to 53% of people 18 to 64 years old, and to 40% of those 65 and over. ((ACS), 2013-2017). The ACS is designed to provide both national and State level data on demographic, social, economic and housing characteristics of U.S. households.

Per DVR's most recent CSNA <https://www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr/stateplan/> , the following discrepancies were noted between the population being served by DVR and those who may be eligible for services:

- DVR participants are generally less educated than the eligible population with 20% lacking a high school diploma versus only 18% in the ACS with a disability sample.
- DVR participants are more likely to be make (56% versus 44%)
- DVR serves proportionately few individuals of racial or ethnic minorities than those identified in the ACS work disability population.

D. WHO HAVE BEEN SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

Co-location in Maine's network of Department of Labor (MDOL) One-Stop CareerCenters has provided DVR the opportunity to work in partnership with several other programs that are components of the statewide workforce system and can support the employment of people with disabilities. The CareerCenters provide several employment programs that serve people with disabilities. The newly redesigned Maine Job Link is an online accessible CareerCenter tool to allow job seekers from around the state to be matched with real-time available open (currently over 11,000) positions. The Job Link has 42,700 active job bank registrants of whom 505 are

self-disclosed job seekers with disabilities. This represents 1.1% of total Job Link registrants. Data reported on the ETA 9002 for Program Year 2019 showed that under the Wagner-Peyser Act, Maine served 2,627 individuals who disclosed a disability. This represents only 3.4% of all individuals served – and a significant decrease from the 4,525 individuals served in 2008. However, while the number of individuals with disabilities served was much lower than during the recession, the proportion of those with disabilities served remained almost unchanged.

While the Bureau of Employment Services (BES) collects data on self-reported disability, it does not require that individuals disclose having a disability. As a result of past work through collaborative efforts, including two rounds of the Disability Employment Initiative grant funding, there is increased awareness and attention in the CareerCenter to increasing access to expanded services for customers with disabilities. There are concerns about the accuracy of the current case management database; the system defines disability status within the context of vocational rehabilitation. Individuals who have a disability, which does not constitute a significant barrier to employment, are often not recorded as having a disability at all. Administrative override is required to update a person's disability status when they disclose post-enrollment.

Research has shown that the number of people with disabilities served by CareerCenters is under-reported. According to 2016 estimates from the American Community Survey, people with disabilities comprise 13.7% of Maine's working age population. ((ACS), 2012-2016) . We would be hard pressed to assert that we are serving them in numbers commensurate with their presence in the general population. For additional information see Maine's WIOA State Plan for PY 20-23 and DVR's CSNA <https://www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr/stateplan/>

E. WHO ARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING, AS APPROPRIATE, THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES OR OTHER TRANSITION SERVICES.

Since passage of WIOA and promulgation of the final rules, Maine DVR has worked to develop, adopt and implement procedural guidance, programming and training to support the identification and registration of students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for Pre-Employment Transition Services. Through previously established relationships with school districts and through outreach initiatives and pilot activities, Maine DVR has sought to offer Pre-Employment Transition Services across the state. According to the most recent 2019 data from the Maine Department of Education, there are 10, 450 students from ages 14-20 receiving special education services across the state. Additionally, approximately 3000 students grade 9-12 were identified as having a 504 plan. While overall numbers of school-age students have dropped in Maine, the numbers and percentage of students enrolled in special education services continue to increase. In 2015, 17.25 % of Maine students received special education services; in 2019 this number had risen to 18.9 %. Maine DVR has targeted the problem of early exiters from VR services and is collecting data and implementing targeted initiatives for transition-age youth designed to engage youth with disabilities and get them involved in community-based work experiences and other work-based learning sooner.

- Autism numbers continue to grow with a total number of students (n=859) in 2016, further analysis reveals that this number will be increasing significantly in the coming years.
- While not all of these potentially eligible students will become VR clients, based on most recent analysis, there may be greater capacity in certain areas of the state than others. In

particular, Region I (Cumberland and York) has the potential to be asked to serve a greater number of transition-age clients per counselor in comparison to Region III (Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Somerset, and Waldo) and Region V (Aroostook).

- In Region II (Androscoggin, Franklin, Oxford, and Sagadahoc) and Region IV (Hancock, Piscataquis, Penobscot and Washington), there appears to be more equitable ratio of students to counselors. For more information see CSNA at <https://www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr/stateplan/>

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE; AND

While DVR has not had the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State, the agency has pursued a new payment structure that is designed to better support contractual agreements with community rehabilitation providers while reinforcing the importance to client outcomes of timely and available services.<https://www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr/stateplan/>

3. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

Since the passage of WIOA and promulgation of final rules, DVR has worked closely with the Maine Department of Education to understand the numbers of students with disabilities in Maine who are eligible for Pre-Employment Transition Services. At the local education agency level, this has played out as VR counselors have worked with individual school districts to determine what services are already being provided in the school, what other service providers are involved, and how the LEA can partner with DVR to jointly deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services. Education and outreach to LEA's has focused on the value of starting early, at age 14, with Pre-Employment Transition Services. Maine Department of Education's Special Services IDEA monitoring team has reinforced this message by providing VR materials during monitoring visits along with examples of how Pre-Employment Transition Services can inform the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

With partners at the Institute for Community Inclusion and the American Institutes for Research, Maine DVR is undertaking an evaluation of the impact of delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services on eventual application and eligibility for DVR Transition Services. It is anticipated that by providing a rich array of Pre-Employment Transition Services earlier in students' high school careers, that some students with disabilities may not need individualized transition services through DVR. It is possible, however, that with increased awareness of VR services – through exposure to Pre-Employment Transition Services some students will not need Vocational Rehabilitation services.

Maine DVR continues in its efforts to fully and properly implement of WIOA, working cooperatively with agencies that have the most impact on transition-age students and prepare them well for post-secondary education and employment success.

Maine DVR has assigned a Transition VR Counselor to every high school in the state. Students are offered Pre-Employment Transition Services in conjunction with the LEA on an individualized district by district plan. DVR has developed and made available statewide tools like the Transition Career Exploration

Workshop https://www.maine.gov/rehab/73422/maine_cew/cew_transition/index.html and

the Financial Literacy Guide for Transition Age Youth
https://www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr/youth_transition.shtml. Over 300 transition age youth participated in Paid Work Experiences during 2019. For additional information see <https://www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr/stateplan/>

K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

1. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES

In the Comprehensive Needs Assessment completed for 2018, the estimated number of individuals eligible for services based on the American Community Survey (ACS) (average from 2013 to 2017) was 208,646 DVR-eligible adults in Maine. This is equal to about 15.9% of the civilian non-institutionalized population of 1.3 million. This data, from the ACS, was most recently updated in 2018

2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

A. THE VR PROGRAM;

In FFY 19, DVR served 9,374 individuals. Based on historical data, estimates for FFY 20 and FFY 21 are for 10,000 individuals served each year.

B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

Maine DVR was not able to expend Supported Employment grant funds for FFY 19. In FFY 20, DVR received \$252,000 in Supported Employment grant funding. DVR has struggled to expend Supported Employment funds in recent years due to limitations on how funding may be used. In FFY 2019, DVR served 626 individuals in a Supported Employment plan. DVR anticipates having funding to serve 650 individuals in FFY 2020 and FFY 2021, however due to limited demand and ability to spend Supported Employment funds for youth, DVR is unlikely to be able to fully spend its Supported Employment funds for adults.

C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION.

The expected services provision for FFY 20 and FFY 21 by priority category is as follows:

FFY 20

OOS 1 – 5,480 = 54.8%

OOS 2 – 4,330 = 43.3%

OOS 3 – 190 = 1.9%

FFY 21

OOS 1 - 5,500- 55%

OOS 2 - 4,400 - 44%

OOS 3 - 100 = 1%

3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

At the time of this State Plan - DVR has 436 individuals who are in delayed status in Category OOS3 and are unable to be served.

During FFY 2016, DVR determined that it could no longer serve individuals in OOS Category 3 due to lack of resources. The projected number of clients to receive services after being found eligible is 10,000 of which 6,000 are expected to be served under an employment plan. Since open cases in Category 3 will continue to be served, they are included below.

Maine implemented an Order of Selection for Category 3 on January 18, 2016. One hundred and seventy individuals were served in Category OOS 3 in 2019. With no new individuals coming off the waitlist for Category 3, it would be anticipated that the number of individuals being served in Category 3 would continue to decline as they exit the VR program to employment. A new law requiring hearing aids to be covered by Maine insurance companies is also predicted to reduce applications for VR services for individuals who have fewer barriers to employment and would have been found eligible in Category 3.

4. THE COST OF SERVICES FOR THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS ESTIMATED TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES. IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION, IDENTIFY THE COST OF SERVICES FOR EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY.

During FFY 19, DVR expended \$19,248,550 to serve DVR eligible clients (including supported employment and Pre-ETS but excluding those on the OOS 3 delayed status waitlist). DVR estimates the following costs for each priority category going forward in FFY 20 & 21.

For FFY 2020

OOS Category 1 - 5500 clients = \$ 10,586,702

OOS Category 2 - 4400 clients = \$8,469,362

OOS Category 3 - 100 clients = \$192,485

OOS Category 3 - Delayed (Waitlist) Status - (\$ 769,940) - estimated cost if DVR was able to serve

For FFY 2021

OOS Category 1- 5500 clients = \$11,000,000

OOS Category 2 - 4400 clients = \$ 8,500,000

OOS Category 3 - 100 clients = 200,000

OOS Category 3 - Delayed (Waitlist) Status - (\$850,000) - estimated cost if DVR was able to serve

L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO BY THE STATE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, IF THE STATE HAS A COUNCIL, AND JOINTLY AGREED TO ANY REVISIONS

Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.

Maine DVR, in concert with the DVR SRC has discussed State Plan goals and progress at its meetings throughout the year which has aided development of the plan. The SRC provides data on consumer satisfaction which is reviewed along with DVR's triennial customer satisfaction assessment.

2. IDENTIFY THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Goal 1

Maine DVR clients will reach their employment goals and be valued members of Maine's workforce as measured by a. measurable skill gains, b. credential attainment and c. successful employment closures in competitive integrated employment.

Goal 2

All individuals, including those with the most significant disabilities, will be served in a timely manner -which means determining eligibility within 60 days and developing Individualized Plans for Employment for all eligible clients within the 90-day time frame. DVR will continue to maintain no wait list for those individuals in categories 1 and 2 and will monitor the ability to again serve those in category 3 in the future.

Goal 3

All Individuals served by DVR receive high quality vocational rehabilitation services in an accessible and culturally-competent manner that reflects the principles of universal design and informed choice as measured by consumer feedback and case review.

Goal 4

Maine DVR services will be provided in partnership with Maine's workforce development system as measured annually by documented collaborative activities, co-enrollment, technical assistance, and training - thereby increasing employment and credential attainment opportunities for jobseekers with disabilities.

3. ENSURE THAT THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES ARE BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

A. THE MOST RECENT COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING ANY UPDATES;

Maine DVR completed its comprehensive needs assessment and presented it to the State Rehabilitation Council for comment.

The SRC reviewed the Comprehensive Needs assessment in 2018 and were invited to develop goals and strategies to gaps in the system and services to un-served and underserved individuals.

B. THE STATE'S PERFORMANCE UNDER THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES OF SECTION 116 OF WIOA; AND

Maine tracks progress on Common Performance Measures - as well as some key (former) Standards and Indicators - in the Maine AWARE case management system. This software enables Maine DVR to track its progress in real time. Maine DVR relies heavily on data for informed decision making and has incorporated the quarterly Data Dashboards released by RSA in this data review. DVR collects and analyzes data through the agency's Division for Systems Improvement and Quality Assurance.

Data is shared across the agency (through monthly, quarterly and annual reports) to promote accountability and increased understanding of trends, outcomes, and agency needs. All VR counselors, supervisors, and managers have been trained on Common Performance Measures and Performance Management Forms are being updated to better tie expected performance with the Common Performance Measures.

C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.

No recommendations from SRC to DVR in their most recent Annual Report.

During DVR's 2017 RSA monitoring, two program areas were identified as needing improvement - time to eligibility and time to IPE development. These had also been identified by DVR prior to the monitoring and steps had begun to be taken to demonstrate improvement. These included:

- Targeted and ongoing staff training on strategies to determine eligibility within 60 days
- Targeted and ongoing staff training on strategies to develop an initial IPE within 90 days
- Quarterly reporting by region to assess progress
- Training for supervisors and managers on supporting VR counselors to meet both standards.
- Regular discussion and data sharing with the State Rehabilitation Council regarding these two areas of need.

M. ORDER OF SELECTION

1. WHETHER THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL IMPLEMENT AND ORDER OF SELECTION. IF SO, DESCRIBE:

A. THE ORDER TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES

If services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals who apply, the Director of DVR will implement an Order of Selection (OOS) as set forth in this section. After determining eligibility counselors must assign a priority category and follow the Order of Selection set forth below for the provision of services. Individuals determined eligible prior to the date of implementation of

the Order of Selection will continue to receive cost services. Maine DVR will notify all eligible individuals of the priority categories in the Order of Selection. Eligible individuals in priority categories not currently being served will be notified in writing of their assignment to a category and their right to appeal their category assignment.

Whether in an Order of Selection or not, Maine DVR has assigned all applicants to an OOS category to ensure that DVR continues to serve the most significantly disabled. This was upon the advice of RSA staff during the 2011 Section 107 Monitoring review. The priority category shall be assigned, based on their level of significance of disability; "Level of significance of disability" means one of the following: Priority Category 1, "most significantly disabled"; Priority Category 2, "significantly disabled"; or Priority Category 3, "disabled". Individuals with disabilities shall be served first based on significance of disability and second by date of application. Eligible individuals who do not meet the Order of Selection category currently being served will have access to services through information and referral. Individuals will be appropriately referred to other programs – including those of other core WIOA partners.

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

In late 2015, DVR was made aware of a potential shortfall in funding. Further analysis of the reasons behind the projected shortfall revealed:

- The required 15% Title I set-aside for Pre-Employment Transition Services is reducing the funding available for all other clients other than Students with Disabilities.
- Case service costs and expenditures have increased over the past year by approximately 20%, mostly due to an increase in applications by individuals seeking assistance with hearing aid costs
- DVR has increased the numbers of individuals served and successfully closed in employment in each of the last five years while funding has not increased.
- A high level of staff vacancies over the last year may result in immediate and premature referrals to fee-for-service providers.

When DVR became aware of the situation, the State Rehabilitation Council was advised and offered feedback and support for the implementation of an Order of Selection for Category 3 via their regularly scheduled executive committee and full group meetings. Additionally, in December 2015 two phone calls were held with RSA to apprise them of the situation.

In 2014 and 2015, DVR spent approximately \$567,000 and \$690,000 respectively on individuals with disabilities who were in Category 3. By instituting an Order of Selection for Category 3, DVR believes that it will achieve the cost savings that will allow it to keep serving Categories 1 and 2. Individuals who have the fewest barriers to employment may be served through referrals to other services provided by Maine's workforce development system.

At the time of this plan, DVR fiscal and human resources continue to merit a waitlist for Category 3. DVR regularly reviews the waitlist status and is actively exploring opportunities to ensure that individuals who are found eligible in Category 3 have awareness and access to other resources in the community.

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS

Maine implemented an Order of Selection for Category 3 on January 18, 2016. The projected numbers of clients to be served under an IPE is 6000 in FFY 20 and FFY 21. The proposed case service budget is \$7,400,000. The expected services provision by priority category is as follows:

OOS Category 1 = 55% = \$ 4,070,000

OOS Category 2 = 44% = \$ 3,256,000

OOS Category 3 = 1% = \$ 74,000 (this reflects those already in Category 3 at the time of the OOS implementation)

Maine DVR projects FFY 20 and FFY 21 closures goals to be approximately 1,000.

OOS 1 - 55% = 550 Closures

OOS 2 - 44% = 440 Closures

OOS 3 - 1% = 10 Closures

Total: 1000 Closures

D. TIME WITHIN WHICH THESE GOALS MAY BE ACHIEVED FOR INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY WITHIN THE ORDER; AND

Per FFY 2019 data, DVR estimates that it will take individuals in each OOS category the following time to reach their IPE goals

OOS 1- 24 months (average)

OOS 2 - 18 months (average)

OOS 3 - 39 months (average) (note - given the small number of cases served in OOS 3 due to the waitlist the average is impacted by outlier cases)

E. HOW INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Individuals with disabilities shall be served first based on significance of disability and second by date of application in the following priority order: Priority Category 1, "most significantly disabled"; Priority Category 2, "significantly disabled"; or Priority Category 3, "disabled".

2. IF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF ANY ESTABLISHED ORDER OF SELECTION, WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT

Maine DVR has not selected to serve eligible individuals in this manner.

N. GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS

1. SPECIFY THE STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Goal 1

Maine DVR clients will reach their employment goals and be valued members of Maine's workforce as measured by a. measurable skill gains, b. credential attainment and c. successful employment closures in competitive integrated employment.

Goal 2

All individuals, including those with the most significant disabilities, will be served in a timely manner -which means determining eligibility within 60 days and developing Individualized Plans for Employment for all eligible clients within the 90-day time frame. DVR will continue to maintain no wait list for those individuals in categories 1 and 2 and will monitor the ability to again serve those in category 3 in the future.

Objective 2.3: Maine DVR will address the underemployment of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by assisting them to prepare for, reach, maintain and advance in careers of their choice in keeping with Maine's Employment First law and as documented by measurable skills gains, credential attainment and successful closures in employment.

Strategies:

- a. DVR will partner with Maine DHHS' Office of Aging and Disability Services and the Maine Department of Education to develop a plan to improve employment outcomes of people with disabilities in competitive integrated settings.
- b. DVR will work with DHHS's Office of Aging and Disability Services to provide joint education and outreach to individuals, families, case managers and other providers, on the benefits of employment and the process to access DVR services.
- d. Continue to provide access to and training on the BRIDGE – Career Exploration Workshop

Maine DVR places a priority on serving individuals with the most significant needs including those in need of supported employment. While DVR is able to expend all SE-A funds, the requirements tying SE-A spending to SE-B has been challenging due to the limited need currently to expend SE-B funds in accordance with federal guidelines. Coordination with other state agency partners, focus on employment fit and natural supports, and employer-provided supports have minimized the need to continue to need to expend SE-B funds for extended periods. DVR will continue to work with partners and will continue to provide training for staff on supported employment. DVR's Pre-ETS work will also help to build a pipeline of more youth who are entering employment - including those with the most significant disabilities who may need supported employment supports.

2. DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED, WITH FUNDS RESERVED PURSUANT TO SECTION 603(D), FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING:

A. THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED 4 YEARS; AND

Maine DVR has developed procedural guidance for staff on the use of extended services for youth. This guidance states that DVR will make available extended services for youth with the most significant disabilities in supported employment for a period not to exceed four years or until such time that a youth reaches the age of 25 and no longer meets the definition of a youth with a disability. Extended services are defined as ongoing support services and other appropriate services that are needed to support an individual with the most significant disability in supported employment. During the comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs, and participation in Pre-Employment Transition Services, it may be determined that a youth with a most significant disability will benefit from extended support services.

If the youth does not have access to extended support services through a comparable benefit, and other supports are not available or do not meet the client's needs, the VR counselor will work with the client and guardian such that there is agreement that the employment placement and extended services with or without assistive technology and accommodations will enable the youth to develop adequate natural supports such that other supports are not needed or will connect them with other sources of support.

DVR will authorize one year of extended supports at a time. In limited individualized circumstances, the plan may be updated for an additional time period, up to one year at a time but under no circumstances for longer than four years or after the youth turns 25.

B. HOW THE STATE WILL LEVERAGE OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS TO INCREASE RESOURCES FOR EXTENDED SERVICES AND EXPANDED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

DVR has a close working relationship with our partners at DHHS Office of Aging and Disability Services and Mental Health Services; we have developed a procedural directive, which spells out how waiver services will fund career planning, and once Discovery is completed (waiver services will fund up to 50 hours), a referral is made to DVR who will work with the case manager and agency to proceed with job development and perhaps further exploration as needed. Then, when an individual has been successfully placed in a job and is stable and closed out successfully (may utilize extended services for this as needed), waiver funds will then pick up again and cover long term support services (usually job coaching), which will help the individual continue to remain stable on the job. This agreement is being updated at the time of this State Plan,

O. STATE'S STRATEGIES

1. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

These Goals, Objectives and Strategies to attain PY 2020-2023 goals developed based on the recommendations from the 2018 Statewide Needs Assessment as well as input from the State Rehabilitation Council.

Goal 1

Maine DVR clients will reach their employment goals and be valued members of Maine's workforce as measured by a. measurable skill gains, b. credential attainment and c. successful employment closures in competitive integrated employment

Objective 1.1: To continue to reduce early exit from DVR services from 2,636 in PY 2018 to 2,500 in PY 2020 and further reducing to 2,000 in PY 2023.

Strategies:

- a. Provide staff training on techniques that promote engagement – such as Motivational Interviewing and Progressive Employment
- b. Explore technological options to promote regular communication between clients and VR counselors

Objective 1.2: To promote increased access to and delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services to all students with disabilities from 2,287 reported activities in PY 2018 to 3,000 in PY 2020 and 4000 annually by PY2023 leading to improved post-secondary education and employment readiness.

Strategies:

- a. Through use of Progressive Employment, Summer Work Experience, and other work-based learning opportunities, DVR will support at least 300 students with disabilities to have paid work experiences annually during PY 2020 through PY 2023.
- b. Maine DVR - in collaboration with DBVI and with support from WINTAC – will launch a statewide peer mentoring effort during PY 2020. Peer mentoring will be provided by “near

peers” to support preparation for post-secondary education and employment.

c. In partnership with the Maine Department of Education and Local Education Agencies, Maine DVR will deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services to Potentially Eligible and Eligible students with disabilities across Maine. This will include through joint activities such as job tours, job clubs, Transition Career Exploration Workshop, and delivery of information on labor markets and career pathways.

d. Maine DVR will partner with the Maine Department of Education’s Special Services and Career and Technical Education offices to develop opportunities to increase the delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services to students in Career and Technical Education programs.

e. Maine DVR will partner with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Child and Family Services to ensure access to and participation in Pre-Employment Transition Services of youth served through child welfare and children’s behavioral health services.

f. Maine DVR will expand delivery of strategies to address the needs of rural youth including through online resources and Virtual Job Shadow.

g. Maine DVR will work with Maine’s Parent Training and Information Center to increase family awareness of Pre-Employment Transition Services and the value of early career exploration and planning for students with disabilities

h. Through its Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened, DVR will develop and deliver targeted Pre-Employment Transition Services in conjunction with the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School.

i. Maine DVR will explore opportunities to support delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services in conjunction with Job Corps and YouthBuild programming.

j. Maine DVR will participate in the Cross-Agency Council on Transition and support inclusion of DVR clients in the “Youth Advisory Group” to receive feedback and input on needed transition services and related policies.

k. In keeping with current research, Employment First, and the State of Maine’s Economic Development plan - collect and record data to track progress towards ensuring that all Maine youth have a paid work experience before high school graduation.

l. Maine DVR will implement and sustain promising practices and lessons learned for work-based learning from the RSA-funded Transition Work Based Learning Model Demonstration Grant.

Objective 1.3: To promote careers in high wage-high growth, STEM, and other promising industry sectors through the exploration and inclusion of career pathways in DVR clients’ Individualized Plans for Employment.

Strategies:

a. Deliver joint training opportunities for DVR staff and Community Rehabilitation Providers on best practices in the use of Career Pathways.

b. Provide training for DVR staff on using the Comprehensive Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs to promote use of Apprenticeship and self-employment as approaches to Career Pathways

c. DVR will build on pilot efforts in partnership with the Maine Department of Labor’s Apprenticeship program to develop statewide policies and practices to promote increased use of Apprenticeship as a Career Pathways strategy.

d. DVR will work with DBVI and the Maine Department of Labor’s Apprenticeship Program to ensure that clients who Deaf/Hard of Hearing or who have significant disabilities are included in the growth and expansion of apprenticeships in Maine.

e. Open and closed case reviews will monitor for inclusion of career pathway strategies.

f. DVR will participate in WINTAC-provided technical assistance on utilization of Career Pathways strategies

Objective 1.4: Through lessons learned from the use of Progressive Employment, expand the number of Maine employers who implement diversity hiring activities through engagement with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and workforce system partners.

Strategies:

- a. In partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services, participate in the newly-launched Maine Workplace & Disability Connection housed at the Maine Retail Association. This business to business platform will connect and support Maine employers hiring and retaining employees with disabilities.
- b. Partner with local Chambers of Commerce, the Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM), and others to expand business outreach/network.
- c. Actively participate in the Statewide Workforce Action Team (SWAT) that is made of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core partners and others in the workforce development system to grow and diversify Maine's workforce through targeted outreach to employers.
- d. Develop, support and maintain DVR staff in each region with a specialized knowledge in business relations.

Goal 2

All individuals, including those with the most significant disabilities, will be served in a timely manner -which means determining eligibility within 60 days and developing Individualized Plans for Employment for all eligible clients within the 90-day time frame. DVR will continue to maintain no wait list for those individuals in categories 1 and 2 and will monitor the ability to again serve those in category 3 in the future.

Objective 2.1: To continue progress to reach substantial compliance (94%) in determining eligibility within 60 days of receiving an application for DVR services. DVR will progress from 79.4% in PY2018 to substantial compliance in PY 2020 and maintain substantial compliance or better in PY 2021-2023.

Strategies:

- a. Collect data on eligibility determination and disseminate quarterly to DVR supervisors and managers to support best practices in the field.
- b. Deliver staff training and supervision on best practices in eligibility determination – including use of strategies provided through technical assistance provided by RSA
- c. Provide education and outreach on the use and ease of new electronic options - such as W.O.R.K. Services – to access and submit an application and supporting materials for DVR services.

Objective 2.2: To continue progress to reach substantial compliance (94%) in timely plan development by increasing the percentage of clients who have an Individualized Plan for Employment developed within 90 days from 78.9% in PY 2018 to substantial compliance in PY 2020 and maintain substantial compliance or better in PY 2021-2023.

Strategies:

- a. Collect data on timely plan development and disseminate quarterly to DVR supervisors and managers to support best staff practices in the field.
- b. Deliver staff training and supervision on best practices in IPE plan development and Order of Selection (OOS) determination.
- c. Increase use of the Career Exploration Workshop, which has been shown to decrease case length time.
- d. Work closely with the Maine Department of Education to ensure implementation of the joint Cooperative Agreement and best practice guidelines on referral and timely application for transition age students.

Objective 2.3: Maine DVR will address the underemployment of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities by assisting them to prepare for, reach, maintain and advance in careers of their choice in keeping with Maine's Employment First law and as documented by measurable skills gains, credential attainment and successful closures in employment.

Strategies:

- a. DVR will partner with Maine DHHS' Office of Aging and Disability Services and the Maine Department of Education to develop a plan to improve employment outcomes of people with disabilities in competitive integrated settings.
- b. DVR will work with DHHS's Office of Aging and Disability Services to provide joint education and outreach to individuals, families, case managers and other providers, on the benefits of employment and the process to access DVR services.
- c. Increase post-secondary education and employment participation for high school students on the Autism Spectrum through participation in the DVR-sponsored "Step Up" program – a 5-week summer residential program held on a college campus. Step Up includes a 3-credit undergraduate course, paid work experience, and social skill instruction among other components.
- d. Continue to provide access to and training on the BRIDGE – Career Exploration Workshop

Objective 2.4: Maine DVR clients will have timely access to appropriate Community Employment Services – including the use of qualified Community Rehabilitation Providers.

Strategies:

- a. DVR will maintain and review data quarterly on the use of Community Rehabilitation Providers and related outcomes.
- b. DVR will partner with other state agencies to maintain professional development for employment support providers through Maine's Employment for ME Workforce Development system.

Objective 2.5 Maine DVR will ensure client services reflect access to and best practices in the use of Assistive Technology.

Strategies:

- a. DVR staff will participate in training opportunities provided by Maine CITE, Maine's federally-

funded Assistive Technology program.

b. Individualized Plans for Employment will address the need for Assistive Technology as appropriate.

c. DVR will develop in-house capacity around the use of Assistive Technology to support vocational rehabilitation services through the support of two to three DVR staff in the new University of Maine at Farmington post-bachelor's certificate in Assistive Technology Studies.

Goal 3

All Individuals served by DVR receive high quality vocational rehabilitation services in an accessible and culturally-competent manner that reflects the principles of universal design and informed choice as measured by consumer feedback and case review.

Objective 3.1: Maine DVR will work closely with Maine's Section 121 VR Grant – Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation, to increase co-enrollment from 3 individuals in PY2019 to 10 individuals annually by PY 2023.

Strategies:

a. Maine DVR will include Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation in training and technical assistance opportunities – including New Counselor Training.

b. Wabanaki VR will provide training and technical assistance to Maine DVR on issues related to cultural competency and best practices in Native employment supports.

c. DVR will work with Wabanaki VR to increase opportunities for collaboration on delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services to Native American students with disabilities attending Maine high schools.

d. According to the joint Memorandum of Understanding, Maine DVR and Wabanaki VR will meet at least annually to review the agreement.

Objective 3.2: To address the growing numbers of Maine residents who are “New Mainers” and who may be eligible for DVR services, Maine DVR will strengthen its services to this population through the following strategies:

a. Provide staff training and development to DVR staff to increase cultural competence as measured through pre- and post- training evaluation.

b. Conduct educational and outreach activities to increase awareness of availability of DVR services.

c. Join with other workforce system partners to address common barriers to employment – such as transcript analysis, English language skills, and need for support services.

d. Ensure language access in all DVR-produced and delivered materials.

e. Include best practices in hiring and retaining New Mainers in employer engagement activities.

Objective 3.3: To support the successful reentry of individuals with disabilities exiting the correctional systems and reentering employment, Maine DVR will strengthen its services to this population through the following strategies:

a. Building on a successful pilot effort, Maine DVR will partner with the Department of Corrections and the Bureau of Employment Services to expand delivery of a targeted pre-

release “Career Exploration Workshop” to state and county correctional facilities throughout the state.

b. Strengthen DVR participation in the Reentry Network, leading to increased knowledge of resources and supports to promote employment and reduce recidivism.

c. Maintain “Corrections Liaisons” in each office. Liaisons will be paired with regional correctional facilities leading to increased collaboration and timely pre-release referrals. Liaisons will participate in joint DVR/Department of Corrections quarterly meetings leading to increased coordination of services for mutual clients.

d. Provide annual staff training on best practices leading to successful employment for individuals with a criminal history.

Objective 3.4: To support successful employment of individuals who are Veterans, DVR will strengthen its services to this population through the following strategies:

a. Continue to collaborate with Bureau of Employment Services’ Veterans Services leading to increased co-enrollment opportunities for veterans with disabilities

b. DVR will maintain “Veterans Liaisons” in each office. Liaisons will participate in quarterly Bureau of Employment Services’ Veterans Services team meetings to exchange information and plan joint events (such as targeted job fairs).

c. During PY2020, DVR will update its Memorandum of Understanding with federal Veterans’ Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment leading to increased referrals of Veterans eligible for both services.

d. DVR will provide training to staff on the employment needs of Veterans.

Objective 3.5: To support successful employment and community inclusion of individuals with dual sensory impairments (Deaf/Blind), DVR will strengthen its services to this population through the following strategies:

a. Through its Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened, DVR will work in partnership with DBVI and other community organizations to explore opportunities to build capacity of Support Service Providers across the state.

Objective 3.6: Maine DVR will develop new strategies to increase the employment of people with mental health disabilities:

Strategies:

a. DVR will partner with the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services and MaineCare Services to explore opportunities for collaboration to strengthen and expand employment services to individuals with mental health disabilities

b. DVR will work with the Department of Corrections through its quarterly joint meetings to identify effective practices in referring and supporting individuals for whom mental health is a barrier to employment.

c. DVR will partner with Clubhouses (that are certified or pursuing certification) to provide employment services that meet Clubhouse International standards.

d. DVR will maintain a liaison to the local Clubhouse in each office and work with them on joint training and outreach needs.

e. DVR will provide staff training at least annually on best practices in vocational rehabilitation for individuals with mental health disabilities.

Objective 3.7: Maine DVR will continue implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding with the public Workers' Compensation system in order to better serve injured Maine workers who eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation services.

Strategies:

- a. DVR will maintain a roster of Board-approved Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.
- b. In conjunction with the Board, DVR will ensure at least annual training for all Board-approved VRCs.
- c. DVR will meet at least annually with the Workers' Compensation Board to assess the success of the MOU initiative.

Objective 3.8: Maine DVR will work with state agencies, treatment providers, and other partners to promote and support employment for individuals impacted by substance use.

Strategies:

- a. DVR will provide training to staff, at least annually, on best practices in supporting the employment of individuals impacted by substance use.
- b. DVR will participate in grant advisory and other work groups as requested.
- c. DVR will participate with WIOA and other partners in targeted efforts to promote employment of individuals impacted by substance use.
- d. DVR will explore effective strategies – like Progressive Employment – for use with this population.

Objective 3.9: Maine DVR will provide equitable vocational rehabilitation services to potentially eligible students and eligible youth and adults who identify as LGBTQ+.

Strategies:

- a. DVR will convene a work group to review best practices in serving this population and make recommendations for policy and practice changes.
- b. DVR will provide training to staff and review policies at least annually.

Objective 3.10 Maine DVR will work with Maine's TANF/ASPIRE programs and contracted providers to increase collaboration – leading to improved employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Strategies:

- a. Partnering with the Bureau of Employment Services, the Department of Health and Human Services and FEDCAP, pilot activities in two locations that build interagency collaboration and braid services on behalf of program recipients.
- b. Enhance New Counselor Training with a poverty-informed module targeted to meeting the needs of individuals who receive these benefits.

Goal 4

Maine DVR services will be provided in partnership with Maine's workforce development system as measured annually by documented collaborative activities, co-enrollment, technical assistance, and training – thereby increasing employment and credential attainment opportunities for jobseekers with disabilities.

Objective 4.1: Maine DVR will refer clients to workforce system programs and services to meet their needs and increase access to comparable benefits.

Strategies:

- a. DVR staff will participate in cross-training on WIOA programs and partners to increase knowledge of available resources for clients and employers.
- b. DVR will work with WIOA core partners to increase use of a common referral form.
- c. DVR will work with partners at the local, regional and state level to deliver job fairs, targeted training, and other activities to meet the needs of jobseekers with disabilities.
- d. DVR will work with WIOA partners to promote accessibility of CareerCenter programs and services.

Objective 4.2: Maine DVR will work with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act partners to share data and information leading to increased alignment of program and services and expanded opportunities for DVR clients.

Strategies:

- a. DVR will complete Memoranda of Understanding with all required partners.
- b. DVR, in conjunction with DBVI, will provide representation on Local Workforce Boards.
- c. DVR will engage MDOL's Center for Workforce Research and Information to produce updated disability data on the employment status of Maine people with disabilities.
- d. DVR will develop strategies with WIOA core partners to provide referrals to workforce services for individuals found eligible for DVR under Category 3 but unable to be served by DVR due to waitlist.

2. HOW A BROAD RANGE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND DEVICES WILL BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AT EACH STAGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS AND ON A STATEWIDE BASIS

Assistive technology services and assistive technology devices are provided to individuals with disabilities as determined by each individual's vocational goal and appear as prescribed services on the respective individual's signed IPE. DVR services include assistive technology and assistive technology devices if required for the individual's IPE, necessary for the attainment of the individual's employment goal. DVR works closely with Maine cohorts, Alpha One and ALLTECH, assistive technology organizations which provide assistive technology technical assistance services as well as assistive technology devices.

Objective 2.5 Maine DVR will ensure client services reflect access to and best practices in the use of Assistive Technology

Strategies:

1. DVR staff will participate in training opportunities provided by Maine CITE, Maine's federally-funded Assistive Technology program.

2. Individualized Plans for Employment will address the need for Assistive Technology as appropriate.
 3. DVR will develop in-house capacity around the use of Assistive Technology to support vocational rehabilitation services through the support of two to three DVR staff in the new University of Maine at Farmington post-bachelor's certificate in Assistive Technology Studies.
3. THE OUTREACH PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM

Goal 3

All Individuals served by DVR receive high quality vocational rehabilitation services in an accessible and culturally-competent manner that reflects the principles of universal design and informed choice as measured by consumer feedback and case review.

Objective 3.1: Maine DVR will work closely with Maine's Section 121 VR Grant – Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation, to increase co-enrollment from 3 individuals in PY2019 to 10 individuals annually by PY 2023.

Strategies:

1. Maine DVR will include Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation in training and technical assistance opportunities – including New Counselor Training.
2. Wabanaki VR will provide training and technical assistance to Maine DVR on issues related to cultural competency and best practices in Native employment supports.
3. DVR will work with Wabanaki VR to increase opportunities for collaboration on delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services to Native American students with disabilities attending Maine high schools.
4. According to the joint Memorandum of Understanding, Maine DVR and Wabanaki VR will meet at least annually to review the agreement.

Objective 3.2: To address the growing numbers of Maine residents who are “New Mainers” and who may be eligible for DVR services, Maine DVR will strengthen its services to this population through the following strategies:

1.
 - a. Provide staff training and development to DVR staff to increase cultural competence as measured through pre- and post- training evaluation.
 - b. Conduct educational and outreach activities to increase awareness of availability of DVR services.
 - c. Join with other workforce system partners to address common barriers to employment – such as transcript analysis, English language skills, and need for support services.
 - d. Ensure language access in all DVR-produced and delivered materials.

- e. Include best practices in hiring and retaining New Mainers in employer engagement activities.

Objective 3.3: To support the successful reentry of individuals with disabilities exiting the correctional systems and reentering employment, Maine DVR will strengthen its services to this population through the following strategies:

1. Building on a successful pilot effort, Maine DVR will partner with the Department of Corrections and the Bureau of Employment Services to expand delivery of a targeted pre-release “Career Exploration Workshop” to state and county correctional facilities throughout the state.
2. Strengthen DVR participation in the Reentry Network, leading to increased knowledge of resources and supports to promote employment and reduce recidivism.
3. Maintain “Corrections Liaisons” in each office. Liaisons will be paired with regional correctional facilities leading to increased collaboration and timely pre-release referrals. Liaisons will participate in joint DVR/Department of Corrections quarterly meetings leading to increased coordination of services for mutual clients.
4. Provide annual staff training on best practices leading to successful employment for individuals with a criminal history.

Objective 3.4: To support successful employment of individuals who are Veterans, DVR will strengthen its services to this population through the following strategies:

1. Continue to collaborate with Bureau of Employment Services’ Veterans Services leading to increased co-enrollment opportunities for veterans with disabilities
2. DVR will maintain “Veterans Liaisons” in each office. Liaisons will participate in quarterly Bureau of Employment Services’ Veterans Services team meetings to exchange information and plan joint events (such as targeted job fairs).
3. During PY20, DVR will update its Memorandum of Understanding with federal Veterans’ Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment leading to increased referrals of Veterans eligible for both services.
4. DVR will provide training to staff on the employment needs of Veterans.

Objective 3.5: To support successful employment and community inclusion of individuals with dual sensory impairments (Deaf/Blind), DVR will strengthen its services to this population through the following strategies:

1. Through its Division for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, DVR will work in partnership with DBVI and other community organizations to explore opportunities to build capacity of Support Service Providers across the state.

Objective 3.6: Maine DVR will develop new strategies to increase the employment of people with mental health disabilities:

Strategies:

1. DVR will partner with the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services and MaineCare Services to explore opportunities for collaboration to strengthen and expand employment services to individuals with mental health disabilities

2. DVR will work with the Department of Corrections through its quarterly joint meetings to identify effective practices in referring and supporting individuals for whom mental health is a barrier to employment.
3. DVR will partner with Clubhouses (that are certified or pursuing certification) to provide employment services that meet Clubhouse International standards.
4. DVR will maintain a liaison to the local Clubhouse in each office and work with them on joint training and outreach needs.
5. DVR will provide staff training at least annually on best practices in vocational rehabilitation for individuals with mental health disabilities.

Objective 3.7: Maine DVR will continue implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding with the public Workers' Compensation system in order to better serve injured Maine workers who eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation services.

Strategies:

1. DVR will maintain a roster of Board-approved Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.
2. In conjunction with the Board, DVR will ensure at least annual training for all Board-approved VRCs.
3. DVR will meet at least annually with the Workers' Compensation Board to assess the success of the MOU initiative.

Objective 3.8: Maine DVR will work with state agencies, treatment providers, and other partners to promote and support employment for individuals impacted by substance use.

Strategies:

1. DVR will provide training to staff, at least annually, on best practices in supporting the employment of individuals impacted by substance use
2. DVR will participate in grant advisory and other work groups as requested.
3. DVR will participate with WIOA and other partners in targeted efforts to promote employment of individuals impacted by substance use
4. DVR will explore effective strategies – like Progressive Employment – for use with this population.

Objective 3.9: Maine DVR will provide equitable vocational rehabilitation services to potentially eligible students and eligible youth and adults who identify as LGBTQ+.

Strategies:

1. DVR will convene a work group to review best practices in serving this population and make recommendations for policy and practice changes.
2. DVR will provide training to staff and review policies at least annually.

Objective 3.10 Maine DVR will work with Maine's TANF/ASPIRE programs and contracted providers to increase collaboration – leading to improved employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Strategies:

1. Partnering with the Bureau of Employment Services, the Department of Health and Human Services and FEDCAP, pilot activities in two locations that build interagency collaboration and braid services on behalf of program recipients.
2. Enhance New Counselor Training with a poverty-informed module targeted to meeting the needs of individuals who receive these benefits.

4. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES)

Objective 1.2: To promote increased access to and delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services to all students with disabilities from 2, 287 reported activities in PY 2018 to 3,000 in PY 2020 and 4000 annually by PY2023 leading to improved post-secondary education and employment readiness.

Strategies:

1. Through use of Progressive Employment, Summer Work Experience, and other work-based learning opportunities, DVR will support at least 300 students with disabilities to have paid work experiences annually during PY20 20 through PY 2023.
2. Maine DVR - in collaboration with DBVI and with support from WINTAC – will launch a statewide peer mentoring effort during PY 2020. Peer mentoring will be provided by “near peers” to support preparation for post-secondary education and employment.
3. In partnership with the Maine Department of Education and Local Education Agencies, Maine DVR will deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services to Potentially Eligible and Eligible students with disabilities across Maine. This will include through joint activities such as job tours, job clubs, Transition Career Exploration Workshop, and delivery of information on labor markets and career pathways.
4. Maine DVR will partner with the Maine Department of Education’s Special Services and Career and Technical Education offices to develop opportunities to increase the delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services to students in Career and Technical Education programs.
5. Maine DVR will partner with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Child and Family Services to ensure access to and participation in Pre-Employment Transition Services of youth served through child welfare and children’s behavioral health services.
6. Maine DVR will expand delivery of strategies to address the needs of rural youth including through online resources and Virtual Job Shadow.
7. Maine DVR will work with Maine’s Parent Training and Information Center to increase family awareness of Pre-Employment Transition Services and the value of early career exploration and planning for students with disabilities

8. Through its Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened, DVR will develop and deliver targeted Pre-Employment Transition Services in conjunction with the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School.
9. Maine DVR will explore opportunities to support delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services in conjunction with Job Corps and YouthBuild programming.
10. Maine DVR will participate in the Cross-Agency Council on Transition and support inclusion of DVR clients in the "Youth Advisory Group" to receive feedback and input on needed transition services and related policies.
11. In keeping with current research, Employment First, and the State of Maine's Economic Development plan - collect and record data to track progress towards ensuring that all Maine youth have a paid work experience before high school graduation.
12. Maine DVR will implement and sustain promising practices and lessons learned for work-based learning from the RSA-funded Transition Work Based Learning Model Demonstration Grant.

5. IF APPLICABLE, PLANS FOR ESTABLISHING, DEVELOPING, OR IMPROVING COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE

While DVR has not had the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs with the State, the agency has pursued a new payment structure that is designed to better support contractual agreements with community rehabilitation providers while reinforcing the importance to client outcomes of timely and available services.

6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

Performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA – DVR is a partner with Adult Education, the SWIB, and the larger workforce development system to incorporate and apply the new rules related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), including drafting a unified state plan adopting new performance measures and further collaboration with the One-Stop system. DVR is a member of the Maine WIOA steering committee, which is guiding the Act's implementation, and also has participants on multiple related sub-committees. DVR will be using wage data from the Maine Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance to establish baseline and initial WIOA performance targets for employment outcomes. DVR will be using wage data from the Maine Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance to establish baseline and initial WIOA performance targets for employment outcomes. In addition to Maine UI wage data, Maine will access State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) data by submitting regularly scheduled data requests. BRS has contracted with the National Student Clearinghouse and will access data from that source on a regular basis to document credential attainment, both academic and occupational. BRS is also developing a data sharing agreement with Maine's Department of Education, to assist with documenting adult, secondary and career and technical credentials and measurable skill gains. The agreement is expected to be in place within PY 2019.

DVR presented is providing ongoing training to all staff so that they have a solid working knowledge of WIOA and how it impacts the work they do. Training topics have included: an overview of WIOA partners; common performance measures, career pathways and best practices in serving the needs of employers. BRS has an intensive technical assistance agreement in place with WINTAC to assist with this effort and to further their expertise on

Common Performance Measures, Internal Controls, Career Pathways, Apprenticeships and Peer Mentoring.

BRS and its core partners are using the Maine Job Link as a common data collection tool for performance data regarding Effectiveness in Serving Employers.

7. STRATEGIES FOR ASSISTING OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Goal 4

Maine DVR services will be provided in partnership with Maine's workforce development system as measured annually by documented collaborative activities, co-enrollment, technical assistance, and training – thereby increasing employment and credential attainment opportunities for jobseekers with disabilities.

Objective 4.1: Maine DVR will refer clients to workforce system programs and services to meet their needs and increase access to comparable benefits.

Strategies:

1. DVR staff will participate in cross-training on WIOA programs and partners to increase knowledge of available resources for clients and employers.
2. DVR will work with WIOA core partners to increase use of a common referral form.
3. DVR will work with partners at the local, regional and state level to deliver job fairs, targeted training, and other activities to meet the needs of jobseekers with disabilities.
4. DVR will work with WIOA partners to promote accessibility of CareerCenter programs and services.

Objective 4.2: Maine DVR will work with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act partners to share data and information leading to increased alignment of program and services and expanded opportunities for DVR clients.

Strategies:

1. DVR will complete Memoranda of Understanding with all required partners
2. DVR, in conjunction with DBVI, will provide representation on Local Workforce Boards.
3. DVR will engage MDOL's Center for Workforce Research and Information to produce updated disability data on the employment status of Maine people with disabilities
4. DVR will develop strategies with WIOA core partners to provide referrals to workforce services for individuals found eligible for DVR under Category 3 but unable to be served by DVR due to waitlist.

8. HOW THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

Maine is a large geographical state, which spans 30,843 square miles. The state is primarily rural in nature with a dispersed population of 1.3 million people and a density of 43 people per square mile. The largest population center can be found in southern Maine in the greater Portland area where approximately 91,200 individuals reside. Residents are primarily White

(93.5%) with small representation of Black (1.5%), Asian (1.2%), and Native American (0.7%) individuals in certain geographical areas of the state. Maine's population growth is significantly lower than the rest of the country with a rate of 0.6% between 2010 and 2017 as compared to the national rate of 5.5%.[1] Additionally, the 2017 demographic profile released by the US Census Bureau indicates that Maine's median age is 44.0 years, which is the oldest in the country.

According to the Maine Department of Labor's Center for Workforce Research and Information[2], economic conditions in much of Maine are favorable. The size of the economy and the number of jobs continue to reach new highs, driving unemployment and other measures of labor market slack to new lows. These tight labor market conditions provide a positive environment for individuals with high numbers of job openings and rising wages, but they are a challenge for employers, who are concerned about finding the staff they need. The economy continues to grow. Total output, measured by gross domestic product, has been increasing at an accelerating rate in recent years. GDP in Maine reached \$64 billion in 2018. The statewide seasonally adjusted unemployment rate has been below 4% each month since the beginning of 2016, the longest period on record. Unemployment has been close to 3% throughout the second half of 2019.

The tight labor market is driving wages up. Over the last four years the average wage paid in Maine has increased at the fastest rate in decades after adjusting for inflation. In the 12 months through June 2019 the average wage per job reached \$46,100. Per capita personal income has steadily increased. Over the last two decades, per capita income in Maine relative to the nation was higher in the two recessionary periods (early 2000s and 2008 & 2009) than it was during expansionary periods. That is because the downturns were not as deep here as in much of the country. For the last seven years per capita income in Maine was close to 90% of the national level. The labor force participation rate has declined in Maine for nearly 20 years and the size of the labor force has not changed appreciably in 14 years. The primary reasons labor force participation has declined, and is expected to continue to do so, are the advancing age structure of the population and lower participation in areas of the state where the economic base has eroded.

In an environment in which the labor force is shrinking, Maine does not have the luxury of tens of thousands of people less than fully engaged in the workforce. Many will require education or training intervention to acquire meaningful skills employers need. (CWRI, 2015).

The passage of *The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014* and reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act of 1998, along with the subsequent release of final rules in 2016, has resulted in important changes to the practices of state vocational rehabilitation agencies including increased collaboration with other workforce development system partners and expanded services to students with disabilities.

Many changes designed to help youth and adults with disabilities access employment education, job training and support services, have been made, including:

- Establishing a much larger role for public vocational rehabilitation (VR) as youth with disabilities make the transition from school to adult life. Public VR funds in the amount of a 15% set-aside, must now be used for transition services, specifically pre-employment transitions services that include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on post-secondary opportunities, workplace readiness training, and training on self-advocacy. Each local VR office must also undertake pre-

employment transition coordination activities and they must involve schools and workforce development system in these activities.

- Focusing supported employment state grants to VR agencies on youth. Half the money the state receives under these grants will now have to be used to support youth up to age 24 with the most significant disabilities to achieve supported competitive integrated employment.
- VR may now provide extended supported employment services for up to 24 months (previously the limit was 18 months).
- Limiting the use of sub-minimum wage. Section 511 is specifically intended to reduce the number of transition-age youth entering sheltered workshops and working for sub-minimum wage. The emphasis is on moving young people with significant disabilities into integrated community employment. The bill prohibits individuals with disabilities age 24 and younger from working in jobs paying less than the federal minimum of \$7.25 per hour unless they first apply for and receive vocational rehabilitation services, among other requirements. There are exceptions but only for those already working for subminimum wage and cases where individuals may be deemed ineligible for vocational rehabilitation services. Section 511 also prohibits schools from contracting for services, training or work experiences that involve the use of sub-minimum wage.
- Requiring state VR agencies to have formal agreements with the state Medicaid systems, and the state intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) agency.
- Adding a definition of “customized employment” in federal statute, and an updated definition of “supported employment” that includes customized employment.
- Adding a definition for “competitive integrated employment” as an optimal outcome.
- Enhancing roles and requirements for the general workforce system and One-Stop Career Centers in meeting the needs of people with disabilities, including the expectation of full programmatic accessibility. (Lisa A. Mills, 2015)

This Act regulates a major portion of the state’s rehabilitation services, including consumer-related services that are routinely purchased from community-based service providers.

The Bureau is engaged at all levels as the implementation of WIOA transforms existing systems into a more cohesive, effective and collaborative entity through participation in restructuring the One-Stop Career Center processes, Workforce Boards, training, employment and youth workforce activities. DVR is a full contributor to the unified State Plan and is actively engaged in WIOA implementation across the workforce system.

Demand for community inclusion and access to employment by people with disabilities and their supporters continues to be strong across the country with consumer choice and opportunity for full participation being important for all. The advocacy and advice of the State Rehabilitation Council, Independent Living Council, and Disability Rights Maine, as well as groups, such as Maine APSE and the Alliance for Full Participation, help to ensure that rights are being respected, laws are being followed, and practices are being improved to increase the successful employment of people with disabilities.

In June 2014, Maine’s legislature enacted the Employment First Maine Act (Sec. A-1. 26 MRSA c.3), which was a natural progression in Maine’s focus on competitive integrated employment as

a valued outcome for the state's citizens with disabilities. It set forth that the Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, and Education must implement employment as a core component of services and supports provided and is the first and preferred service or support option offered to individuals with disabilities.

The Act also convened a time-limited coalition of interested parties, including employers, state agency representatives, advocacy organizations, and people with disabilities, to review and make recommendations regarding the improvement of the administration of employment services and the employment outcomes of people with disabilities. Before its sunset in October 2016, the Employment First Maine Coalition produced a report summarizing the work that was completed and identifying twenty-seven recommendations for consideration by the Governor, the Legislature and state agencies, primarily identifying strategies that encourage the employment of youth and adults with disabilities, engage the business community, and improve EFM performance measures. (See complete report at: <http://employmentfirstmaine.org/>). Since that time, the Commission on Disability and Employment, which is a subcommittee of the State Workforce Board, has been monitoring progress on the recommendations with the Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services.

According to the Center for Workforce Research and Information[3], from 2013 through 2017, an average of 208,600 persons with one or more disabilities resided in Maine, equal to about 16% of its civilian non-institutionalized population of 1.3 million. This proportion was higher than that of the United States, where an estimated 13% of residents had a disability. Of additional note, is that the age distribution of civilian noninstitutionalized population with disabilities differs from the general population (with and without disabilities), with higher shares of persons over 64 and lower shares in cohorts 64 or younger. In Maine, nearly 40% of the population with disabilities is over 64 years, more than double the comparable share of the general population (18%).

Workers with disabilities in Maine are less likely to be employed than adults without disabilities. Fewer than half work or seek work; the unemployment rate among adults with disabilities is three times that of other working age adults. From 2013 through 2017, 33% of working-age Mainers with disabilities was employed compared to 80% of those with no disability. Those who do work earn less than those with no disability; median earnings of Maine workers with disabilities were \$18,434 in a twelve-month period, compared median earnings of \$31,217 among Maine workers with no disability.

Adults with a disability are more likely to live in or near poverty, regardless of work status, and are less likely to have postsecondary education than adults with no disability.

While DVR services are an important resource for individuals with disabilities who are looking to enter, or re-enter the Maine workforce, VR services are only one option in an expanding array of employment supports and services. Co-location in Maine's network of Department of Labor (MDOL) One-Stop CareerCenters has provided DVR the opportunity to work in partnership with several other programs that support employment of people with disabilities.

The CareerCenters provide several employment programs that serve people with disabilities. The newly redesigned Maine Job Link is an online accessible CareerCenter tool to allow job seekers from around the state to be matched with real-time available open (currently over 11,000) positions. The Job Link has 42,700 active job bank registrants of whom 505 are self-disclosed job seekers with disabilities. This represents 1.1% of total Job Link registrants. Data reported on the ETA 9002 for Program Year 2019 showed that under the Wagner-Peyser Act, Maine served 2,627 individuals who disclosed a disability. This represents only 3.4% of all

individuals served – and a significant decrease from the 4,525 individuals served in 2008. However, while the number of individuals with disabilities served was much lower than during the recession, the proportion of those with disabilities served remained almost unchanged.

While the Bureau of Employment Services (BES) collects data on self-reported disability, it does not require that individuals disclose having a disability. As a result of past work through collaborative efforts, including two rounds of the Disability Employment Initiative grant funding, there is increased awareness and attention in the CareerCenter to increasing access to expanded services for customers with disabilities. There are concerns about the accuracy of the current case management database; the system defines disability status within the context of vocational rehabilitation. Individuals who have a disability, which does not constitute a significant barrier to employment, are often not recorded as having a disability at all. Administrative override is required to update a person's disability status when they disclose post-enrollment.

Research has shown, that the number of people with disabilities served by CareerCenters is under-reported. According to 2016 estimates from the American Community Survey, people with disabilities comprise 13.7% of Maine's working age population. ((ACS), 2012-2016). We would be hard pressed to assert that we are serving them in numbers commensurate with their presence in the general population.

[1] US Census Bureau. Maine Quick Facts. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/ME>. Retrieved January 24, 2018.

[2] Center for Workforce Research and Information, <https://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/publications/pdf/Maine2019AnnualWorkforceReport.pdf>

[3]<https://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/disabilities/index.html>

B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

State Independent Living Council (SILC) To assist the SILC to increase organizational capacity and member effectiveness, Maine DVR continued to support the SILC to employ an Executive Director to envision and articulate the organization's goals and establish the systems and mechanisms to achieve these goals. The SILC Executive Director is responsible for conducting the work of the SPIL under the supervision and direction of the Maine SILC to accomplish tasks such as a) recruitment and management of members and volunteers b) establish and maintain partnerships with community members and organizations c) market and promote the Maine SILC d) increase and diversify the resources related to the six core areas of the SILC. State Rehabilitation Council Support Innovation & Expansion funds are used to support the activities and administration of the Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Division and the SRC meets monthly as a full council. The SRC has standing committees that meet regularly. These committees include, DVR/SRC Policy Group, CSPD Subcommittee, Membership, Annual Meeting, Website committee, and the Executive Committee. For more information regarding the SRC, please visit www.mainesrc.org.

C. OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM.

DVR does not have separate efforts to provide these services. All services are geared to assist individuals with most significant disabilities.

P. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

1. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

During the last FFY, below are updates on strategies that contributed to achievement of the goals:

Goal 1: This goal was originally established before the full implementation and rules under WIOA were available. Recent success 2018 State Plan Amendment Goals:

Goal 1

To obtain at least 1000 successful closures for DVR clients in FFY 2018 and 2019 thereby substantially maintaining solid employment outcomes for DVR clients in Maine. These employment outcomes and goals from 2018 through 2019 will be impacted by the change in serving more youth in school. DVR has seen a decrease in their overall employment outcomes, as DVR will not realize successful outcomes from these in school youth for a few years. In addition, with the focus of DVR's resources to in school youth, there may be fewer VR resources for adults with disabilities

Goal 2

To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities in a timely manner, which means determining eligibilities within 60 days and developing plans for employment for all consumers within the new 90-day time frame. DVR will continue to maintain no wait list for those individuals in categories 1 and 2 and will monitor the ability to again serve those in category 3 in the future.

Goal 3

To ensure that individuals with disabilities who may be unserved or underserved or who have minority status have access to DVR services.

Goal 4

Maine DVR will partner with the larger workforce development system to improve opportunities and access for DVR clients as measured annually by documented collaborative activities, technical assistance, and training.

Goal 5

Maine DVR will partner with Adult Education, the SWIB, and the larger workforce development system to incorporate and apply the new rules related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.

Goal 1: Maine DVR, while not attaining the number of closures forecast, due in large part to OOS Category 3 closure, has continued to place individuals with significant disabilities in competitive integrated employment. DVR has focused on strategies that engage clients to reduce early exit from VR. Maine has done this through implementation of effective practices and an attention to partnerships both within and outside the workforce system. Pre-Employment Transition Services have introduced VR services to younger clients and have strengthened students with

disabilities' skills and preparation for post-secondary education and employment. Maine has met its annual requirement to expend 15% of grant funds on Pre-Employment Transition Services. For example, a school-based mentoring pilot with the Center for Independent Living is leading to roll-out of a statewide fee for service peer mentoring model for students and youth with disabilities – with WINTAC assistance. A tight labor market coupled with VR's roll-out of dual customer strategies such as Progressive Employment have increased employer awareness of jobseekers with disabilities as an untapped talent pool. DVR continues to work closely with Community Rehabilitation Providers to ensure that they have the training and tools to effectively provide services to VR clients. This is provided in large part through DVR's support with the Department of Health and Human Services of Maine's Employment for ME Workforce Development System that regularly offers ACRE-certified employment specialist training as well as advanced topical training.

Goal 2: DVR has made significant progress with this goal due in large part to regular review of time to eligibility and time to plan data with VRCs, management, and the State Rehabilitation Council. Additionally, training to staff on best practices in determining eligibility and plan development (based on technical assistance from RSA) have supported counselors to change their process for determining eligibility and plan development. DVR has also increased use of work-based learning, paid work experiences, Progressive Employment, and other strategies like use of the Career Exploration Workshop to help individuals find out more about the world of work sooner in the VR process. DVR has embraced the philosophy that “everyone is ready for something” meaning that clients can take steps with VR's support towards their employment goals more rapidly than they would have been able to in the past.

Goal 3: DVR has taken several measures to meet the needs of underserved and minority populations. A Memorandum of Understanding with the Tribal VR 121 Grant has resulted in co-enrollment and cross-training opportunities. Reentry of individuals with disabilities exiting the corrections system is supported by a quarterly working group made up of identified DVR liaisons and Department of Corrections representatives. Recently, in collaboration with the Bureau of Employment Services, DVR delivered a Career Exploration Workshop series to inmates in the Maine Correctional Center to prepare them for employment success after release. Each DVR office has a VR Veterans liaison who has additional knowledge of Veterans services and resources. The liaisons meet quarterly with the Maine's Bureau of Employment Services' VETS team. These meetings often include representatives of the Veterans' Affairs – Vocational Rehabilitation & Education team as well. DVR has contracts with Clubhouse programs across the state to support employment goals of individuals with mental health disabilities. Staff are assigned to each Clubhouse and have scheduled times during each month when they are available on site. Maine continues to see increasing numbers of individuals who are “New Mainers”. DVR has participated in efforts to increase awareness of DVR services among this population. Maine's population typically is the oldest in the nation. DVR routinely assists workers who have age-related acquired disabilities (such as hearing loss) who wish to remain in the workforce. As of April 2019, there were no individuals working at subminimum wage in Maine – nor were any certificates issued to employers or community rehabilitation programs. This reflects Maine's long-standing commitment to competitive integrated employment.

Goal 4: Since the implementation of WIOA – and using lessons learned from previous initiatives like ODEP's Disability Employment Initiative grant - DVR has worked with its WIOA and workforce system partners to provide cross-training and technical assistance on best practices on serving individuals with disabilities. The Director of the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late-Deafened provides Deaf Awareness and Etiquette training within the CareerCenters and in the community for workforce partners like Adult Education. Hires of

individuals with disabilities to work in the CareerCenters has also reinforced the message that individuals with disabilities are welcome. At a state level, partners work together to address access through the Information Technology Accessibility Committee. DVR houses the State ADA Accessibility Coordinator who routinely provides technical assistance formally and informally as new programs, services and physical spaces are developed. The Center for Workforce Research and Information hosts a webpage on Maine Workers with Disabilities <https://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/disabilities/index.html>, which is a useful resource both within and outside the workforce system. Maine DVR continues to maintain a Memorandum of Understanding with the Workers Compensation Board that allows for referral of applicants seeking vocational rehabilitation services via the Board and provides for reimbursement to DVR for those services. That MOU is currently out for updating.

Goal 5: Since the passage of WIOA, DVR has worked to amend and align its rules, policies, procedures. DVR meets regularly with core partners and has engaged in the challenging work of finding new ways to meet client needs through collaboration. This work has been aided by technical assistance from WINTAC, NTACT, JDVRTAC and other targeted resources. Co-location within the Maine Department of Labor has supported progress on development and ongoing support of partnerships. One recent example is use of Maine's Reemployment Systems Integration Dislocated Worker Grant to create an online integrated web portal, called W.O.R.K. Services, across Employment Services, Rehabilitation Services and Adult Education. Currently being piloted, W.O.R.K. Services provides virtual "no wrong door" access to individuals who are seeking employment and training but who may be unaware of state services and programs. Users can select for information to be shared across systems thereby increasing efficiencies and timely access to services.

in this goal was impacted by a continued waitlist in Category 3, which reduced the overall number of successful employment closures. Additionally, increasing focus on serving youth – who may be in services much longer – means that successful closure in employment may be delayed. DVR will continue to explore efficiencies and additional resources that may allow for opening of Category 3, which is currently closed.

Goal 2: Staff turnover and prolonged vacancies have been challenging to timely service. In order to meet clients' needs, casework supervisors have taken on caseloads and VR counselors have taken on extra clients. Recent agency-wide training on effective practices like Motivational Interviewing, changes in the Community Rehabilitation Provider payment system, and repurposing of positions are designed to promote operational efficiencies that lead to improved outcomes for DVR clients.

Goal 3: While progress was made in this goal, turnover rates and related vacancies resulted in additional training needs to support attainment of the goal. During the next State Plan, DVR will increase staff training to promote cultural competencies and will explore opportunities with other state partners to increase diversity in hiring of agency staff.

Goal 4: Turnover among DVR and partner staff makes cross-training an ongoing need. However, use of recorded webinars, video-conferencing and other asynchronous learning is supporting systemic ways to ensure that information and resources are effectively shared.

Goal 5: DVR continues to make progress with its partners of full realization of both the spirit of WIOA and its mandates. Execution of Memoranda of Understanding, cost allocation, and other areas are in development.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Goal 1

To obtain at least 1000 successful closures for DVR clients in FFY 2018 and 2019 thereby substantially maintaining solid employment outcomes for DVR clients in Maine. These employment outcomes and goals from 2018 through 2019 will be impacted by the change in serving more youth in school. DVR has seen a decrease in their overall employment outcomes, as DVR will not realize successful outcomes from these in school youth for a few years. In addition, with the focus of DVR's resources to in-school youth, there may be fewer VR resources for adults with disabilities

Factors that Impeded: Maintaining a waitlist for OOS3 has resulted in fewer employment closures. As DVR has increased focus to youth and students with disabilities, it is expected that cases may stay open longer and will take longer to get to successful employment closure.

Goal 2

To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities in a timely manner, which means determining eligibilities within 60 days and developing plans for employment for all consumers within the new 90-day time frame. DVR will continue to maintain no wait list for those individuals in categories 1 and 2 and will monitor the ability to again serve those in category 3 in the future.

Factors that Impeded: Staff often experience challenges in getting parent signatures and information needed for eligibility and IPE development for youth. Training to staff on strategies to address these challenges will help to improve compliance going forward. Challenges in hiring and retention also negatively impact eligibility determination and IPE development in a timely fashion when staff vacancies require doubling up of caseloads by staff or distribution of cases to supervisors.

Goal 3

To ensure that individuals with disabilities who may be unserved or underserved or who have minority status have access to DVR services.

Factors that Impeded: Maine's largely homogenous and very rural nature can create challenges to recognizing and addressing the needs of unserved or underserved populations. DVR has also experienced challenges in hiring and retaining staff who represent diversity. Training and workgroups are underway to address some of these needs - for example LGBTQ work group and joint training with Tribal VR.

Goal 4

Maine DVR will partner with the larger workforce development system to improve opportunities and access for DVR clients as measured annually by documented collaborative activities, technical assistance, and training.

Factors that Impeded: DVR continues to work closely with the workforce development system, aided by placement within the Maine Department of Labor. The scale of change involved and the number of partners requires regular communication and information sharing which is well underway.

Goal 5

Maine DVR will partner with Adult Education, the SWIB, and the larger workforce development system to incorporate and apply the new rules related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Factors that Impeded: As above, regular communication and information sharing is underway to implement the significant changes in philosophy and practice that are required under WIOA.

2. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUPPLEMENT FOR THE MOST RECENT PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

Goal 1

To obtain at least 1000 successful closures for DVR clients in FFY 2018 and 2019 thereby substantially maintaining solid employment outcomes for DVR clients in Maine. These employment outcomes and goals from 2018 through 2019 will be impacted by the change in serving more youth in school. DVR has seen a decrease in their overall employment outcomes, as DVR will not realize successful outcomes from these in school youth for a few years. In addition, with the focus of DVR's resources to in school youth, there may be fewer VR resources for adults with disabilities

Achievement on Goal 1: Maine DVR closed 767 individuals in competitive integrated employment during FFY 2019, while not attaining the number of closures forecast, due in large part to OOS Category 3 closure, DVR has continued to place individuals with significant disabilities in competitive integrated employment. DVR has focused on strategies that engage clients to reduce early exit from VR. Maine has done this through implementation of effective practices and an attention to partnerships both within and outside the workforce system. Pre-Employment Transition Services have introduced VR services to younger clients and have strengthened students with disabilities' skills and preparation for post-secondary education and employment. Maine has met its annual requirement to expend 15% of grant funds on Pre-Employment Transition Services. For example, a school-based mentoring pilot with the Center for Independent Living is leading to roll-out of a statewide fee for service peer mentoring model for students and youth with disabilities – with WINTAC assistance. A tight labor market coupled with VR's roll-out of dual customer strategies such as Progressive Employment have increased employer awareness of jobseekers with disabilities as an untapped talent pool. DVR continues to work closely with Community Rehabilitation Providers to ensure that they have the training and tools to effectively provide services to VR clients. This is provided in large part through DVR's support with the Department of Health and Human Services of Maine's Employment for ME Workforce Development System that regularly offers ACRE-certified employment specialist training as well as advanced topical training.

Goal 2

To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities in a timely manner, which means determining eligibilities within 60 days and developing plans for employment for all consumers within the new 90-day time frame. DVR will continue to maintain no wait list for those individuals in categories 1 and 2 and will monitor the ability to again serve those in category 3 in the future.

Achievement on Goal 2: DVR has made significant progress with this goal due in large part to regular review of time to eligibility and time to plan data with VRCs, management, and the State Rehabilitation Council. (RSA reported data for PY 18 shows DVR at 79.4% for timely eligibility determination and 78.9 % at timely IPE development). Additionally, training to staff on best practices in determining eligibility and plan development (based on technical assistance from RSA) have supported counselors to change their process for determining eligibility and plan development. DVR has also increased use of work-based learning, paid work experiences, Progressive Employment, and other strategies like use of the Career Exploration Workshop to help individuals find out more about the world of work sooner in the VR process. DVR has embraced the philosophy that “everyone is ready for something” meaning that clients can take steps with VR’s support towards their employment goals more rapidly than they would have been able to in the past.

Increased use of Pre-ETS work-based learning is helping exposure more students with significant disabilities to employment, allowing them to learn earlier about the world of work and change expectations about post-secondary employment for those with the most significant disabilities.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Progress on goals related to Supported Employment has been impeded by the Maine DVR's inability to fully expend Supported Employment Funds given current federal regulation

3. THE VR PROGRAM’S PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

DVR is a partner with Adult Education, the SWIB, and the larger workforce development system to incorporate and apply the new rules related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), including drafting a unified state plan adopting new performance measures and further collaboration with the One-Stop system. DVR is a member of the Maine WIOA steering committee, which is guiding the Act’s implementation, and also has participants on multiple related sub-committees. DVR will be using wage data from the Maine Department of Labor’s Unemployment Insurance to establish baseline and initial WIOA performance targets for employment outcomes. Although it does not provide information on individuals who are placed in self-employment or other jobs, such as federal and out-of-state positions, but DVR has recently gotten access to the State Wage Interface System (SWIS), which will expand access to national wage data.

4. HOW THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I&E) ACTIVITIES WERE UTILIZED

State Rehabilitation Council Support -

Innovation & Expansion funds are used to support the activities and administration of the Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Division. The SRC meets monthly as a full council. For more information regarding the SRC, please visit www.mainesrc.org.

In FFY 19 I & E expenditures were \$13,695.86.

Q. QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

1. THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES

The Division works together with its state partners, community providers and advocacy groups to ensure Supported Employment Services are available to eligible individuals.

A. Quality. Our management information system (AWARE) reports provide information on weekly wages, hours worked, and public assistance at the time of application and closure. The reports also provide information on the type of disabilities being served, the cost per case, and the average cost by counselor, region, and state. This information provides the information necessary to manage resources and ensure quality outcomes are achieved. The development of a joint data tracking system with the Department of Health and Human Services- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAHMS) and Aging and Disability Services (OADS)-continues to be pursued and would increase the ability to monitor ongoing supports provided to an individual to obtain and maintain successful, quality, employment

The Division and the Department of Health and Human Services oversee a comprehensive workforce development system for employment staff such as Employment Specialists, Job Coaches and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, as well as other professionals who support individuals with disabilities in their pursuit of employment, including case managers, education staff, and care coordinators. The Employment Workforce Development System provides basic Employment Specialist certification, Advanced Topical Trainings, monthly webinars and a registry of certified Employment Specialists and Career Planners in the state. The Training Calendar provides a place where employment professionals and other human service professionals can get information on national, state and online options for employment related trainings.

Community Rehabilitation Providers who contract with The Division can be approved to provide services following two different paths to accreditation-- CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) or The Division's In-State approval process. In addition, they are required to employ staff who meet the Accreditation of Community Educators (ACRE) Employment Specialist qualifications, or other Division approved training, and meet ongoing continuing education requirements.

The comprehensive In-State approval process includes evaluating areas such as:

- Mission statement,
- Policies and Procedures (including assuring adherence to APSE standards for Supported Employment)
- Admission Criteria,
- Assessment Policy and Practice,
- Case Coordination,
- Client Input,
- Health and Safety,
- Personnel records documenting staff qualifications and background checks,

- Policies and practices regarding client rights and appeal procedures.
-

The approval process also includes interviews with key stakeholders such as clients, employers, and funding agents.

B. Scope of Supported Employment:

The primary service provided to clients in supported employment is job coaching since funds must be now used to support an individual who is in employment status. These direct services are provided by an Employment Specialist or a Job Coach, who supports the client through activities such as interactions with supervisors and peers, and integration into the workplace culture.

Additional services that may be provided as needed include social skills training, consultation with the employer and facilitation of natural supports.

Individuals with brain injuries, physical disabilities, developmental disabilities and autism that receive assistance from the Division in obtaining employment may require ongoing supports to maintain successful employment. These individuals can access employment related services through one of the four Home and Community Based Waivers (HCBS). Career Planning is available to assist an individual in exploring interests, skills and abilities prior to a referral to VR. All four HCBS waivers offer long term work supports to provide support at the job site. These supports are also available to assist a waiver member with their own business. All employment services are determined by individual need through a person-centered planning approach that can include the VRC.

OADS has expanded available employment services to all 6,000 waiver participants during the last several years. Currently there are an estimated 1,200 of these individuals employed but an additional 3,500 are of working age and have employment funding available to them when they choose to go to work. We anticipate three to four hundred of these individuals will be applying for VR during the next year.

Individuals with Mental Illness who meet diagnostic eligibility criteria for Maine Care Section 17.02 Community Support Services, and/or Maine Care Section 92.03 Behavioral Health Home Services and require ongoing supports to maintain successful employment may access Mental Health Long Term Supported Employment Services funded by the DHHS Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS). SAMHS contracts with Kepro, Inc to administer these services.

The Division also has limited state dollars available to provide long term employment supports through two separate programs to VR consumers with the most significant disabilities who have been closed successfully. The programs are The Basic Extended Support Program (BES) and the Brain Injury Support Program (BIS). The BES program has an annual cap per client of \$3,000 and the BIS program has an annual cap per client of \$8,000.

Employment services are also available to individuals with mental illness through Vocational Clubhouses. There are currently four vocational clubhouses in Maine. Transitional Employment is intended to build on basic job skills and build clubhouse members' confidence in their ability to maintain competitive employment. It is one of several employment options available through the Clubhouse approach. Transitional employment offers part-time positions in integrated worksites in the community, for 6-9 months. The individuals are paid by employers who have an agreement with the clubhouse that if the individual is not able to work their shift, the

position will be covered by staff from the clubhouse. Clubhouse staff are also responsible for the training of the member on the job site, as well as providing job coaching on the job, thereby relieving the employer of these responsibilities. Transitional employment sites are meant to be a bridge on the way to permanent employment within the community, for those who need it.

The Division will continue to work together with its state agency partners and service providers to ensure that supported employment services are provided in a quality manner that supports the outcome of integrated, community-based employment.

2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

The Division's rules state the maximum time period for DVR time-limited services is 24 months, unless the IPE indicates that more than 24 months of services are necessary in order for the individual to achieve job stability prior to transition to extended services. In day-to-day practice, a team approach is used to determine when an individual is ready to transition to extended support.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL) CERTIFICATIONS

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) IS AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (REHABILITATION ACT), AS AMENDED BY WIOA[14], AND ITS SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT[15];

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

2. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY)[16] AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[17], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[18], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER SECTION 111 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Maine Department of Labor

3. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[19], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[20], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

4. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND/OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE REGARDING THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

5. THE STATE LEGALLY MAY CARRY OUT EACH PROVISION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

6. ALL PROVISIONS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW.

7. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO RECEIVE, HOLD, AND DISBURSE FEDERAL FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Laura A. Fortman

8. THE (ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND THE SUPPLEMENT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Commissioner

9. THE AGENCY THAT SUBMITS THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT HAS ADOPTED OR OTHERWISE FORMALLY APPROVED THE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

FOOTNOTES

CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	Laura A. Fortman
Title of Signatory	Commissioner, Maine Department of Labor
Date Signed	June 10, 2020

ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.	
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or	

The State Plan must include	Include
Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.	
3. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to: Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:	
3.a. The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.b. The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (A or B must be selected):	
3.b.(A) "is an independent State commission" (Yes/No)	No
3.b.(B) "has established a State Rehabilitation Council" (Yes/No)	Yes
3.c. Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.d. The financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3)	
3.e. The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds (Yes/No)	No
3.f. The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs (Yes/No)	No
3.g. Statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan	No
3.h. The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.i. All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.j. The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act	

The State Plan must include	Include
3.k. The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.l. The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities	
3.m. The submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:	
4.a. Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.b. Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.c. Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No)	No
4.d. Determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.e. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.g. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.h. Comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.i. Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs	

The State Plan must include	Include
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,	
4.j.i. Has developed and will implement,	
4.j.i.I. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and	
4.j.i.II. Strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and	
4.j.ii. Has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25))	
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:	
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act	
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:	
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act	
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act	
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:	Yes
7.a. The Designated State Agency Assures That it Will Provide Supported Employment Services as Defined in Section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act	

The State Plan must include	Include
7.b. The designated State agency assures that:	
7.b.i. The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b.ii. An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act	

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Credential Attainment Rate	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Measurable Skill Gains	33.8	33.8	33.8	35.0
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (BLIND)

A. INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

1. INPUT PROVIDED BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INCLUDING INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S REPORT, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION, AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS;

). The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) meets at least bi-monthly to review and analyze reports, and activities within the division and advise the Maine Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI). The SRC DBVI has been involved in Maine's development of a Unified State Plan, including the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Portion, through:

- Participation in a visioning event to set the strategic vision, goals and objectives with the WIOA

core partners and other stakeholders, ensuring that people with disabilities were represented;
- Review and identification of recommendations resulting from DBVI's Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment FFY 2015-2017;

RSA recently changed the timeframe of data collection from a federal fiscal year to a Program Year.

The State Plan is due on March 2, 2020 this year. This leaves little time to read, review and provide meaningful comments on the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired VR portion of the State Plan. The SRC would have appreciated more time in which to provide useful and succinct comments.

The SRC looks forward to a continued partnership with DBVI.

Goals in the current plan were written prior to implementation of the new employment service delivery model. How will this process change any/all goals?

How will VR ensure consistency across Regions 4/5 where no awards in those regions were granted in the new employment services model?

How is client choice being addressed in Region I, II and III where the new service delivery model is being implemented?

How will VR address the drop in successful employment outcomes for adults with disabilities given the new WIOA requirements for serving youth?

(L) State Goals and Priorities

Goal 1: To stabilize DBVI's financial situation, ensuring the expenditures are budgeted consistently within existing and available federal and state funds.

DBVI has worked diligently to meet and sustain this goal. They have established internal controls to ensure they are on track in budgeting and committing federal and state funds. The SRC feels this no longer needs to be a Goal in DBVI's State Plan.

(O) State's Strategies

Goal 1: To stabilize DBVI's financial situation, ensuring the expenditures are budgeted consistently within existing and available federal and state funds.

DBVI has worked diligently to meet and sustain this goal. They have established internal controls to ensure they are on track in budgeting and committing federal and state funds. The SRC feels this no longer needs to be a Goal in DBVI's State Plan.

The Objective under Goal 1 reads:

"DBVI's operational expenses will be equal to its federal grant and matching state funds, allowing re-allotment funds to serve as a reserve in times of budget constraints, such as federal continuing resolutions, and a resource for one-time initiatives and will benefit people who are blind and visually impaired in Maine."

While the SRC does not feel this needs to be a goal, it will recommend that DBVI continue to operate with this philosophy in mind.

Goal 2: To increase successful competitive integrated employment outcomes for DBVI clients.

The first Objective seems a little confusing. The SRC wonders how reducing the time it takes to achieve an outcome would help in attaining a successful competitive integrated employment outcome. The SRC recommends taking this objective out of the DBVI portion of the State Plan. Strategies a. and b. do seem like positive avenues of increasing successful competitive integrated employment outcomes.

The second objective seems a little confusing. The SRC wonders how increasing the number of successful competitive integrated outcomes in a year will help attain Goal 2, but instead, should be part of Goal 2. For example, Goal 2 could read "" To achieve successful competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals who receive services from "x" in FFY20"x" to "x" in FFY20"x"". Strategies a. through d. provide great pathways to increasing successful competitive integrated employment outcomes.

Objective 3: Under WIOA, the "homemaker" successful closure is no longer an option. DBVI has made a transition from using this closure to following WIOA regulations. DBVI has worked hard to ensure each individual client has an IPE supported by WIOA regulations, beginning with blindness rehabilitation and attaining independent living skills, both of which are necessary to be successful in attaining, regaining and retaining successful competitive integrated employment outcomes. While Strategy c. should be a part of the DBVI portion of the State Plan, the SRC feels this objective no longer needed.

Goal 3: To deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to youth who are blind and visually impaired, assisting them to successfully live and work independently in the community.

DBVI has been on target with using 15% of federal funds to serve students who are blind and visually impaired. DBVI has established programs, such as College Prep, Living On Your Own, Life 101 and Life 201, to help students transition to competitive integrated employment or to post-secondary education. This is standard operating procedure for DBVI, thus the SRC does not feel this needs to be a goal in DBVI's portion of the State Plan.

Goal 4: To ensure that a large number of individuals, with disabilities, who may be unserved or underserved or have minority status, have access to DBVI services.

The strategy for the first objective says that DBVI staff will provide input regarding accessibility of transportation for DBVI clients. The SRC wonders to whom will they provide this input? WIOA core partners? How will this help transportation needs? The CSNA done in 2018 show that transportation continues to be the number one barrier to employment. Rural areas offer no alternative transportation methods besides family and friends and, in some areas, taxis are not an option. In areas where there is public transportation, they often stop running at 5:00pm which leaves some without transportation to their home after work. The SRC feels DBVI should continue to work with stakeholders to improve transportation options.

The second objective with strategies a. through d. should remain intact.

The third objective talks of cultivating communication for individuals who are dual sensory impaired, providing interpreters and Support Service Providers (SSP). The SRC thought the SSP program is no longer available so suggests that this be taken out of the objective, as well its strategies. DBVI can better report of the SSP program and the SRC defers to them.

The fourth objective and its strategy should remain in the DBVI portion of the State Plan.

Goal 5: To increase awareness to services and resources for individuals who are blind or have low vision.

The SRC, in partnership with DBVI, did work around making DBVI services and resources more visible to the public. The SRC suggests keeping the objectives and strategies in the DBVI portion of the State Plan. DBVI should continue to educate clients and the general public on available services and resources. The CSNA done in 2018 suggests that only 93% knew they were receiving services from DBVI; resources like AT are not well known; and the CSNA also indicates that DBVI needs to do more work on ensuring clients are aware of the Client Assistance Program. One strategy to add may be: for the SRC and DBVI to have a presence at the Maine Optometric Association conferences; for the SRC and DBVI to continue to work with “211” so that DBVI is the first hit; and to maximize the probability of DBVI being the first hit on internet searches.

Both the DVR and the DBVI Plans are well written, integrating into their Plans programs and partnerships they use/have.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS; AND

Goals in the current plan were written prior to implementation of the new employment service delivery model. How will this process change any/all goals?

Agency Response: The employment service delivery continues to be the same for the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The client, through informed choice throughout the rehabilitation process and with the VR counselor, will agree upon an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) based on the employment goal. DBVI will work mainly with two contractors in regions 1, 2 and 3 for clients with IPEs that require employment services.

How is client choice being addressed in Region I, II and III where the new service delivery model is being implemented?

Agency Response: DBVI clients will have informed choice throughout their rehabilitation process. Once the client has agreed to an IPE that includes employment services to attain the employment goal, a referral is made to a provider for those services. Each of the two major providers of employment services in regions 1, 2, and 3 has a process to provide information regarding services so each consumer can make an informed choice on the provision of those services. There is also a process in place to communicate any dissatisfaction with any of the services and come to a resolution.

How will VR address the drop in successful employment outcomes for adults with disabilities given the new WIOA requirements for serving youth?

Agency Response: DBVI will continue to work with consumers 14 and older to provide blindness rehabilitation services in the VR program. Given the new performance measurements within the WIOA regulations, DBVI will have a greater focus on measurable skill gains and credential attainment as consumers work towards a “career” goal, which may take a longer period of time, causing a decline in the number of successful employment outcomes.

Agency Response to SRC input on Goal #1: DBVI is in agreement with the SRC recommendations and has removed this goal from the state plan.

Agency Response to SRC input on Goal #2: DBVI is in agreement with the SRC recommendations and has removed this goal from the current state plan. New goals have been developed that are more relevant and more in line with the requirements within the WIOA regulations.

Agency Response to SRC input on Goal #3: DBVI is in agreement with the SRC that spending 15% of the VR federal funds on Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students aged 14-21 has become part of the standard procedure. It is a requirement for DBVI to report on expenditures made for Pre-ETS activities and is funded based on meeting this requirement. These activities have provided students with many blindness rehabilitation skills, soft skills and better prepared them for employment. Also, parents have been able to see the growth in their children through these activities.

Agency Response to SRC input on Goal #4: The agency agrees that transportation continues to be an unmet need for individuals who are blind or visually impaired and will continue to work with stakeholders to improve transportation options. DBVI continues to work to improve services for consumers with dual sensory loss; one of those services could be an SSP. The Independence Without Fear program is no longer available but SSP services are (on a limited basis) through the University of Southern Maine.

Agency Response to SRC input on Goal #5: The agency will continue to work to increase awareness of DBVI services through various methods and will continue to work with the SRC to provide outreach to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

DBVI values the input of the SRC and will consider all the recommendations provided. Although the division may remove some of the objectives/strategies under goals 3, 4, and 5, DBVI will continue to work on the provision of Pre-ETS services, continue to provide outreach to the unserved and underserved and increase awareness of DBVI services and resources for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

INPUT FROM PUBLIC:

nobody@informe.org

Question: How does the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired hope to provide services to the unserved or underserved populations in rural areas in a timely manner?

Agency response: Once the division has identified an individual(s) who is unserved or underserved, a DBVI staff member will connect with the individual to gain a better understanding of the unmet need(s). Once DBVI has received the appropriate documentation, referrals are made to the appropriate organizations for services, e.g., Vision Rehabilitation Therapists services referral to the Iris Network; Orientation and Mobility referral to the O&M within the appropriate DBVI region. Although the time of service provision can vary due to scheduling or a delay in receipt of documentation, providers generally see clients within a couple weeks wherever they reside.

Question: How does the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired hope to provide services in a timely manner in areas where there is limited staff?

Agency response: The division has experienced a number of vacancies over the last couple of years due to promotions, and retirements. In Maine, unemployment is at an all-time low impacting our ability to fill these vacancies. Many of the vacancies are specialty positions that require the employees to be certified in their field of expertise. This is not just a state dilemma but there is a national shortage of many of these professional positions. In an effort to address

the workforce shortage, the division continues to recruit locally, nationally and work with colleges to offer programs that are economically and logistically (online courses) feasible for staff or new recruits to take advantage of. Simultaneously, the division reviews new referrals and strategically assigns regional areas to staff in order to provide services in a timely manner to all consumers – both new referrals and consumers who continue to work on their employment plan.

B. REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

1. A LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST;

Maine Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired has not requested a waiver of statewideness.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

Maine Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired has not requested a waiver of statewideness.

3. REQUIREMENTS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN WILL APPLY TO THE SERVICES APPROVED UNDER THE WAIVER.

Maine Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired has not requested a waiver of statewideness.

C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

1. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;

The Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired has continued the use of cooperative planning to expand and enhance the work of blindness rehabilitation for consumers who are blind or have low vision. DBVI works in conjunction with other agencies that are not in the statewide workforce development system.

State Agencies

DBVI, along with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), has a long-standing relationship and works very closely with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). DBVI/DVR and DHHS have two memorandums of understanding (MOU). One MOU is with the Office of Aging and Disability Services, which serves individuals with developmental disabilities and the other is with the Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS) which serves individuals with mental health issues. The MOU's address the combined efforts that DBVI/DVR and DHHS have initiated to clarify roles to implement an aligned service delivery system to improve the successful outcomes for these jointly served populations. It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these entities. Through these strong partnerships with OADS and SAMHS, DBVI/DVR has been able to maximize federal and state funding to Maine by drawing down its full federal allotment for public rehabilitation services and accessing employment support services through Medicaid waivers. Additionally, DBVI/DVR, OADS and SAMHS have developed and are implementing joint approaches to the workforce development of community rehabilitation providers and business engagement throughout the state. DBVI/DVR, OADS and

SAMHS are currently in work sessions to develop one MOU that will develop cost sharing plan to address current WIOA regulations.

DBVI continues to work closely with many other state partners to ensure that Maine's benefits counseling services remain available to beneficiaries of SSI/SSDI, and specifically, DBVI applicants and eligible clients. DBVI/DVR currently administers a single contract with Maine's approved WIPA provider, Maine Medical Center's Department of Vocational Services, which includes funding from four sources of state and federal funds, including from DBVI, DVR, SAMHS and OADS. The contract's scope of work includes direct service provision of benefits counseling, training of VR counselors and case managers, and service capacity building through quarterly system development network meetings, which include representatives from the Disability Rights Maine's Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) and the Bureau of Employment Services.

The Division f/t Blind and Visually Impaired, in conjunction with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the **Department of Corrections (DOC)** have developed a 'Procedural Directive' to assist those individuals who are incarcerated and anticipate applying for VR services. Employment has been identified as one of the most important factors in reducing recidivism among individuals who are exiting the criminal justice system. In Maine, there are many individuals who may be eligible for VR services who are currently incarcerated and who could potentially benefit from Vocational Rehabilitation services to obtain and maintain employment upon their release. The Department of Corrections through its prisons and probation systems are committed to working collaboratively with DBVI and DVR to promote appropriate referrals, as well as the exchange of information and needed documentation to support VR eligibility determination. If individuals who are blind or have low vision are identified as having blindness rehabilitation needs, other than for VR services, they will be referred directly to a local DBVI office.

Federal Agencies

DBVI staff has been involved in teaming efforts with the staff at the **Veterans Administration (VA)** Blindness Rehabilitation Program at the Togus, VA hospital in Maine to collaborate on services for veterans who are blind or visually impaired.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the Maine Department of Labor – Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division for the Blind & Visually Impaired, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services was finalized and signed in November 2011.

"The purpose of this MOU is to set forth the commitments of BRS and VA-VR&E to cooperate to meet the needs of veterans with disabilities. Through the efforts outlined in this agreement, BRS and VA-VR & E will strive to minimize duplication of services, improve information sharing and referral, and coordinate activities in accordance with all applicable statutes and regulations."

BRS and VA-VR&E reviewed the MOU and updated language to strengthen communication especially in shared cases to ensure the collaboration on resources and services to be the most effective and cost efficient and to ensure that both entities are working toward the same employment goal with the client. Both agencies agreed to share any pertinent trainings to keep staff current with information. The VA-VR&E is going through the approval process of the revised MOU. Some staffing changes at the VA-VR&E have caused a delay in the signing of the new MOU.

Other

DBVI continues its collaborative efforts with the University of Southern Maine Linguistics Department, Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) for the Deaf-Blind, and the Maine Deaf-Blind Project, (a project which is a member of the New England Consortium of Deaf Blind Projects, and provides technical assistance for students until the age of 21 and focuses on transition age youth) to improve services for clients who are deaf-blind or dual sensory impaired from hearing and vision loss. Although the program, *"Independence Without Fear"* has discontinued, the collaboration has expanded to include the Department of Health and Human Services, Disability Rights Maine, Division of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened, and A Tri-state Collaborative with Vermont and New Hampshire. Efforts have included discussions to recruit, train and maintain a database of specially trained volunteers who can facilitate communication for people with significant vision and hearing impairments, as well as other services that are available to the dual sensory population. HKNC and OIB-TAC have provided training to staff on services to this targeted population.

2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

Assistive technology services and devices are provided to individuals who are blind or visually impaired as determined by the individual's employment goal and appear as prescribed services on the individual's signed Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). DBVI works closely with several assistive technology providers such as Alpha One, All-Tech, Mainely Access, Inc., and Excel Consulting, as well as Maine CITE, the Assistive Technology grantee for Maine, to ensure that the appropriate technical assistance and assistive technology devices are provided.

3. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

DBVI supports staff involvement in the USDA's AgrAbility project. Maine AgrAbility is administered by Alpha One and the University of Maine. The BRS liaison to the project shares information with DBVI staff about AgrAbility and related resources.

Based on results of a special project targeting youth with disabilities and agriculture, Maine AgrAbility evaluated their mission to determine how to support job exploration and development. Out of this project, they discovered gaps not addressed as part of AgrAbility's mission. These are opportunities where Maine AgrAbility could work with VR to support VR clients interested in either job exploration or job development as part of a fee-for-service agreement because Maine AgrAbility cannot provide these additional services at no cost with the current USDA grant funding. One concept was to identify farms that may be interested in having a person with disabilities work on their farm. This would include a farm visit, introduction of AgrAbility and VR, as well as sharing success stories. This would help to develop a better understanding of the type of work, tasks, and expectations of working on the farm. Another concept was to provide "Farm Oversight". This person would help place clients on farms/sites in coordination with VRC.

A separate effort in 2020 will discuss this fee for service for transition age youth to access farms for work trials and prospective employment.

4. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

The Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) works with other state agencies and councils and/or committees, including the Governor's Children's Cabinet which is examining the needs of out-of-school youth. The cabinet was established to promote and

support active, vigorous and frequent interdepartmental collaboration on children and youth policy development and program implementation supporting the provision of services for Maine families, children and youth that are planned, managed and delivered in an integrated manner to support and enhance educational opportunities, self-sufficiency, safety, economic stability, health and well-being. The cabinet is comprised of representatives from the Departments of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Education (DOE), Labor, Public Safety, and Corrections (DOC), in addition to the Governor's office and various staffs. DBVI is represented through the Department of Labor.

Although not done through a cooperative agreement, DBVI is also part of a committee comprised of representatives from DHHS - including the Office of Child and Family Services, DOC, Maine Parent Federation, Maine Cite, DOE, Center for Community Inclusion and Disability, and others to bring youth together as part of a Youth Advisory Council to work on self-advocacy and leadership skills.

5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

The Division contracts with the University of Southern Maine/Maine Small Business Development Centers (SBDC), and Coastal Enterprise, Inc. (CEI) a private, nonprofit Community Development Corporation in assisting and supporting VR consumers who are interested in self-employment opportunities. This contractual relationship is secured through the state contracting process and payment is on a fee for service basis. The SBDC business advisor, client and their vocational rehabilitation counselor work through a self-employment process to determine if self-employment is right for the client and if the business is a viable one.

Historically, a workgroup convened quarterly and included DBVI Staff, DVR staff, SBDC business advisors, and representatives from the CAP program. Currently this process is being revamped in order to make it more accessible to all staff on a statewide basis and encourage more involvement. It is the hope that the group will continue to review processes for improvement and to ensure the success of clients of DBVI with better business plans and reaching their employment goals.

The Division follows the State of Maine contracting processes and procedures to contract with qualified organizations to provide employment support services for DBVI clients. Services procured include: Pre-Employment Transition Services, Job Seeking Skills, Job Skills Training, Job Development and Placement Services; Job Coaching and Supported Employment; and Business Engagement. These services are paid on a fee for service unit cost.

D. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

1. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AS WELL AS PROCEDURES FOR THE TIMELY DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL OF INDIVIDUALIZED PLANS FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR THE STUDENTS

DBVI holds regional meetings at multiple points throughout the calendar year, and one always at the beginning of the school year, in which the entire team - VR Counselor (VRC), Blindness Rehabilitation Specialist (BLRS), Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI), Orientation and Mobility Specialist (O&M) - are present to discuss and review the status, strengths, barriers, and disability and educational needs of every student on the TVI's caseload. Starting at middle

school age, these team discussions focus around students' pre-vocational skill level and needs, potential eligibility, and appropriateness for vocational rehabilitation services. These discussions move into and occur within the school system during 8th grade prior to age 14, with the BLRS and TVI present to explain VR services and make recommendations of pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) that would best prepare the student for future vocational successes. This process facilitates collaboration between the family, student, schools, and VR to begin relevant pre-employment transition services over the summer before 9th grade and to apply for VR services. Students are referred to VR at age 14. The IPE must be developed with 90 days of eligibility (or with an extension that is documented), so the information gathered during the previous year is pertinent to the identification of an employment goal and appropriate services. DBVI fully understands that a student will change their employment goals but the process of learning how to identify and match interests, skills, strengths and labor market information to a career by the end of high school is more likely if the student has services starting at age 14.

DBVI pre-employment transition services (five required activities) may include any number and variety of activities such as year round (Afterschool ECC & Field Trips) and summer work experiences (Life 101 and Life 202); work readiness programs focused on daily living skills and orientation & mobility (LOYO & LOYO on the GO); job shadows, job site tours and informational interviews, individualized adaptive skills training, talking to successfully employed people who are blind and visually impaired; demonstrations of the use of AT in the workplace; self advocacy training and disability disclosure and many more. Most of the DBVI summer programs take place on college campuses (UMO, SMCC & Bowdoin) so students are introduced to post secondary options and have opportunities to meet with the office for students with disabilities.

DBVI provides guidance, consultation and technical assistance to the schools in a number of ways including in person, conference calls, emails, presentations and virtual meetings throughout the transition process. The BLRS and VR counselor attend IEP meetings when invited. They share observations and recommendations from Pre-ETS and transition programming during IEP's and/or with the student's educational team. The BLRS's also support and advocate for parents and guardians outside the school setting to establish rapport and connection that allows, ideally, for more open and consistent communication between team members and parents as their children move into early adolescence and begin to explore the world of work and vocational rehabilitation as possibilities. With the development of this relationship, parents are more engaged, responsive, and more willing to help their child pursue VR. DBVI provides in-service training to teachers, counselors, education technicians, and other related service professionals working with students who are blind and visually impaired. DBVI staff provide guidance, resources, and expertise for developing the skills needed to be successfully employed. DBVI supplements career education with hands on opportunities such as internships and work experiences in the students' field of interest.

The schools (including TVI's) collaborate with DBVI to identify students who are or will be eligible for Pre-ETS and VR. They share student and family contact information as well as student assessment information, transition planning and IEP's and 504 plans. Schools often allow DBVI staff to meet with students in the school setting.

2. INFORMATION ON THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WITH RESPECT TO:

A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING VR SERVICES;

DBVI, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), along with the Department of Education (DOE) first developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) about ten years ago, updating it throughout the years to capture changes in resources and maximize our on-going collaboration between agencies. The most recent MOU, signed June 15, 2018, addresses both individual and shared agency responsibilities across our systems to improve employment outcomes for youth with disabilities. It functions as a guiding tool for services to transition age youth with disabilities that are based on best practices and lead to post-secondary education, training and employment upon graduation.

The agreement focuses upon the needs of the individual student and allows for flexibility and professional judgment to be exercised by personnel. It also spells out the roles of each agency in referral, outreach, and the provision of service. The blindness-specific curriculum services that are identified in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and 504 plans facilitate the achievement of the employment goal, which is further developed in the Vocational Rehabilitation Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). DBVI, the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) develop the IPE, utilizing the interests, strengths, and needs of the student.

Local transition events continue to be effective in connecting employment programs, vocational programs, skills of blindness instruction, and special education programs to employers as an aid to sorting out career options, developing successful work histories, and creating employment opportunities for students. In addition, collaboration with Maine CITE provides education and services for furthering the use of assistive technologies that bridge education and employment.

Examples of some activities relating to transition:

A 2-hour presentation was provided to staff at University of Maine, Learning Center (Bryant Pond). DBVI worked with staff to help them better understand the needs of folks who are blind who attend their programs. DBVI walked through the “school program” that is used and made appropriate recommendations and aided them in some temporary braille signage. The Learning Center is interested in having DBVI staff consult from time/time and would be interested in having students do a field trip to use their outdoor site/staff to do some adventuresome outdoor activities (archery, low & high ropes, zip line, animal and plant exploration, along with basic outdoor education).

A VRT from the Iris Network and DBVI staff presented VRT and O&M Service information to help train the new Career Advisors at Goodwill who will potentially work with DBVI clients. DBVI services were discussed along with demonstrations of items often used with clients with vision loss at home and at worksites to support learning by the staff. Stations were set up to give Goodwill staff time to walk through as teams, one team using vision loss simulators while another team guided them through a task. After this hands-on learning was completed, there was question/answer session to provide a better understanding of when/how DBVI would support a client with vision loss at a jobsite.

B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;

The purpose of this collaboration with DOE is to promote and establish a process that results in an effective working relationship between state agencies on behalf of, and with youth with disabilities, in order to gain the greatest benefit from their respective programs and services. For DBVI, direct services are provided by teams comprised of specially trained blindness professionals, such as Blindness Rehabilitation Specialist, Teacher of the Visually Impaired

(TVI), and Orientation & Mobility Specialist. Specialized training includes (but not limited to) the development of visual and spatial concepts, use of adaptive aids, and instruction in reading and writing Braille (when appropriate). DBVI staff are available to provide group and individual presentations to parents and students who are identified by the schools and/or TVI's. The schools invite DBVI staff to the IEP meetings. DBVI staff are available to provide information and discuss post-secondary training/education and employment opportunities. DBVI staff also make recommendations and provide resources for the transition plan for independent living. The transition planning needs are addressed through the IEP. For example, if the student's goal is to attend college and live in a dorm, the IEP should include courses that are required by colleges. In the same example, a student with vision impairment may need vision rehabilitation therapy training for living independently in a dorm and orientation and mobility to learn the public transit system. DBVI will provide work readiness training, job exploration, work based learning experiences, self advocacy training and counseling on post secondary in collaboration with the school.

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;

The roles and responsibilities of each department are clearly outlined in the MOU under these categories: A.) Outreach & Identification of Students With A Disability; B.) Consultation and Technical Assistance; C.) Information and Referral; D.) Transition Services; and E.) Section 511 and 14 (c) Assurance. Each section describes the activities and which agency is responsible. The MOU describes how various entities will be notified of the MOU and its intent. It also identifies training opportunities to include pre-employment transition services with descriptions of the services. The MOU describes how transition services will be coordinated between the entities. Transition services to mean coordinated activities for a student designed to be a process that focuses on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student with a disability to facilitate student movement from school to post-school activities, i.e., postsecondary, vocational education, adult education, integrated employment, independent living or community participation.

Section E. of the MOU outlines how Section 511 and 14 (c) assurances will be handled by each department. DOE and DBVI are committed to providing competitive, integrated employment opportunities for all Maine youth with a disability as they transition from high school. On March 18, 2020, Maine Governor Janet Mills signed a bill, sponsored by Assistant House Majority Leader Ryan Fecteau, D-Biddeford, forbidding employers from paying workers less than minimum wage if they have a mental or physical disability. It takes take effect June 16, 2020.

The most recent MOU is posted:

https://www.maine.gov/rehab/mou/MOU_MDOE_DVRDBVI_June2018.pdf

It is the expectation that in the development and implementation of services, DOE and DVR/DBVI will provide in-kind resources and will promote cost efficiency and non-duplication through collaboration. Therefore, this agreement does not involve any financial compensation or exchange of funds between DOE and DVR/DBVI. However, nothing in this agreement relieves either party of the responsibility to provide or pay for any transition service that the agency would otherwise provide to a student with a visual impairment who meets the eligibility criteria of that agency. If a participating agency, meaning a state or local agency that is financially or legally responsible for providing transition services to the student (other than the educational agencies responsible for the student's education), fails to provide the transition services to a

student as outlined in the IEP, the education agency shall reconvene the IEP team to identify alternative strategies to meet the transition objectives for the student.

Direct services are provided by specially trained staff - Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Orientation & Mobility Specialists, and Blindness Rehabilitation Specialists. These qualified staff work with the student (and parents), and the school in the development of the IEP. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and sometimes a Vision Rehabilitation Therapist join the student's blindness rehabilitation team to provide transition services.

D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES.

DBVI will provide a list of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and the schools they serve to DOE, and provide outreach material on services for transition-aged students. As students with an IEP begin the transition planning process prior to entering 9th grade, the student (and guardian) will receive general information about VR and pre-employment transition services. The information will inform the guardian how to access services.

DBVI will inform DOE in writing of procedural changes that may impact the eligibility of students with disabilities for vocational rehabilitation services, so that DOE may disseminate the information to local school districts. DOE will notify DBVI concerning proposed changes in regulations, policies and procedures at the state or federal level that may impact students with whom DBVI works.

DBVI contracts with Catholic Charities Maine's, Education Services for Blind and Visually Impaired Children's program, to provide services to children who are blind and visually impaired. DBVI's Blindness Rehabilitation Specialists (BLRS) work with these students and teachers so become familiar with the students who may benefit from VR services early on. Teachers of the Visually Impaired have also been trained on what pre-employment transition services and transition services are, so can involve the BLRS or the VR counselor as appropriate. The list of students is reviewed (as appropriate) at team meetings twice a year.

DBVI will collect de-identified information on informal/formal complaints and due process hearings that involve school-aged youth; this data will be provided on an annual basis to DOE, as well as numbers and demographics of transition-aged students served. A protocol to serve students in out-of-district placements in accordance with current policy will be developed.

E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

When procuring goods and services, the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) follows state procurement processes, which are overseen by the Maine Bureau of Business Management, Division of Procurement Services. The Department of Labor (DOL), DBVI develops a Request for Proposal every five years for Community Based Blindness Rehabilitation Services (CBBRS). DOL seeks proposals that describe how the entity will provide direct instructional services, such as skill development in activities of daily living, communications, and the use of residual vision, to meet rehabilitation needs of adults and students aged 14 and older, who are blind or visually impaired. These blindness rehabilitation skills and pre-

employment transition services are provided to prepare the client for employment. These specialty services are provided by ACVREP Certified and/or State Licensed Rehabilitation professionals, such as certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapists, and highly qualified specialty support staff.

DBVI works closely with the selected contracted community providers to ensure that the contracts address requirements for informed consumer choice, any licensing requirements and for staff who are qualified to deliver rehabilitation services and blindness-specific skills training for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

DBVI continues to require that primary CBBRS for adult blindness rehabilitation services maintain accreditation for delivery of rehabilitation services for people who are blind or visually impaired. The accreditation program, previously managed by the National Accreditation Council Incorporated, is now under the executive management of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired.

F. ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The Division has remained committed to assuring that individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth, receive supported employment services when appropriate. An IPE is written that describes the goal, the planned services, the need for extended services (if appropriate), and an assurance that the individual has been able to make an informed choice in the development of this plan. If long term supports are necessary, the VR counselor is involved in the arrangements from the transition of the VR program to the long-term support program.

DBVI has Memorandums of Understanding and staff participate in meetings with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office of Adult Mental Health Services (OAMHS) and the Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) to work more effectively in assisting consumers in obtaining employment with appropriate and necessary supports. The objective of the meetings is to get people together regularly to provide the opportunity for face-to-face communication so that we can better network services, increase understanding of program and resource limitations, and refine procedures. In conjunction with Community Rehabilitation Providers, DBVI along with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation continue to advocate with DHHS for increased state financial support for extended support and supported employment services. Another outcome of these meetings has been increased collaboration at the local level in troubleshooting individual consumer circumstances, as well as learning about the various service opportunities as they occur.

G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

1. VR SERVICES; AND

Overall collaboration with WIOA requirements in regard to competitive integrated employment and career exploration continues to expand and improve. Currently the Bureau of Employment Services (BES) Apprenticeship Pilot has expanded and is being implemented statewide. In order to facilitate provision of VR services, the expectation is that apprenticeship will be an educational career pathway as the client's Comprehensive Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs (CARNS) and Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) are developed.

DBVI's Vocational Counselors (VRC) and Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) are reporting on their meaningful employer engagements and activities to a designated staff person in DBVI's central office for tracking. One VRC reports discussing potential employment opportunities with a company called SaviLinx, which is a call center in Brunswick that was

looking for 100 new employees and Nouria Energy, concerning paid work assessments for clients and paid summer work experiences. Some other employer engagements/activities included working with HMS Host to develop a placement for a client, which resulted in the client getting hired part time after completing some employment readiness skills. Another client was hired after completing a paid work assessment. While another HS student had their first work experience over a 6 week period.

An increased emphasis of career pathways, or a shift from job attainment to career for economic success, has resulted in use of Labor Management Information (LMI) that is provided to DBVI through the Center for Workforce Research and Information, who derives direct information from their employer contacts.

2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

In facilitating transition services, Pre-Apprenticeship is in its infancy and is currently being explored within the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL). Collaboration with the Maine Apprenticeship Program in BES is leading to increased access to employers.

The Progressive employment model has continued to increase access to business through tours, informational interviews, and career exploration activities, all leading to more employer engagement. Every client regardless of readiness is “ready for something” under this model, e.g., informational interview, tour, job shadow, work experience, OJT, etc. The benefit, of meeting the client where they are at and highly individualized planning, is the ability to “carve” out opportunities, and a system that encourages engagement driven by the client – as well as learning very early the strengths and areas to work on with the client. Another benefit is it allows employers to engage future employees in less formal, more inclusive ways, as well as exposure to a more diverse population. Both youth and adults have benefitted under this model.

DBVI’s Blindness Rehabilitation Specialists/Transition Consultants (BLRS/TC) are using the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) model and are utilizing Maine’s Business Enterprise Program to do more career exploration in the area of small business ownership, further enhancing the facilitation of opportunities of competitive integrated employment.

H. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

1. THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT;

Through its collaboration with DHHS and specifically the coordination of Maine’s Benefits Counseling Network, DBVI has been able to develop opportunities and overcome barriers to competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities who are eligible for MaineCare, the State’s Medicaid program. DBVI/DVR, OADS, and SAMHS have resumed negotiations to develop one joint MOU in accordance with WIOA regulations. The MOU is expected to be completed by June 2020.

2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

DBVI continues to support individuals with Developmental Disabilities to obtain and retain employment and is committed to ensuring their access to employment and meaningful work. DBVI co-enrolls clients with DVR to ensure that all rehabilitation needs are identified and addressed ensuring better employment outcomes. DBVI funds Discovering Personal Genius which is a customized employment program effective with the DD population. DBVI also coordinates with DHHS regarding long term job supports through their Waiver services

programs. DBVI actively coordinates DD services with area agencies providing services to the DD population including Case Management Services, Housing and Day Services.

3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

DBVI has strong partnerships with the Department of Health and Human Services, and specifically the Offices of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS). The MOUs address the combined efforts that DBVI and DHHS have initiated and clarify roles to improve the successful outcomes for these jointly served populations. The MOUs are used to guide these agencies through a system change planning process for the purpose of implementing an aligned service delivery system that promotes evidence-based practices. It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these two entities.

Through these strong partnerships with OADS and SAMHS, DBVI has been able to maximize federal and state funding to Maine by drawing down its full federal allotment for public rehabilitation services and accessing employment support services through Medicaid waivers. Additionally, DBVI, OADS and SAMHS have developed and are implementing joint approaches to the workforce development of community rehabilitation providers and business engagement throughout the state. Currently, DBVI, OADS and SAMHS are in planning meetings to develop one MOU.

In addition to providing ongoing employment support to employed individuals who are blind or visually impaired with mental illness through contracts with CRP's, the DHHS Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS) has the following initiatives currently underway to promote employment among the individuals they serve.

SAMHS contracts with Maine Medical Center's Vocational Services to provide Employment Specialists that are embedded in behavioral health organizations across the state to assist individuals living with serious mental illness. They assist with career exploration and securing employment, and provide other supports as needed. In keeping with best practices, these Employment Specialists work as a team with behavioral health professionals to improve outcomes. This service is supplemental and not necessarily a replacement service for vocational rehabilitation services through the DOL Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, DBVI.

Clubhouses help support members with overcoming barriers to employment by offering a variety of services such as in-house prevocational programs, transitional employment and competitive employment in the community with or without supported employment services. Prevocational programs give members the opportunity to contribute to the daily operation of the clubhouse on a volunteer basis while learning valuable skills. Transitional employment offers members the chance to work at temporary part-time jobs through Clubhouse partnerships with local employers, with on-the-job support from both the Clubhouse and the employer. Members also work in permanent positions in the community, at a job of their choosing, with supported employment as needed. There are five clubhouses in Maine.

Maine's *Workplace & Disability Connection*, which is housed at the Retail Association of Maine and supported by the Maine Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Human Services is focused on assisting businesses in attracting and retaining new employees and

customers with disabilities, developing business leaders who value diversity and actively work to promote strong communities that include individuals with disabilities, and increasing opportunities for businesses to expand their diversity recruiting efforts, not as a social model but as a business case to recruit talent and better serve their customers.

Both the primary Community Support Services (Community Integration Services, Assertive Community Treatment and Community Rehabilitation Services) and Behavioral Health Home services require the development of an Individual Support Plan (ISP). Every 90 days, through the Individual Support Planning process, individuals receiving these services are asked about their vocational status and about unmet vocational needs. SAMHS funds specific employment services and collaborates with the Department of Labor's DBVI/DVR to provide resources to address vocational needs. In keeping with the fidelity of the model, all Assertive Community Treatment teams are required to have an employment specialist.

Six Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWICs) are available statewide to provide all Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities access to benefits counseling services. This initiative is a collaboration between SAMHS, OADS, and the Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services.

Jointly Funded Employment Workforce Development System And Website

Maine has an Employment Workforce Development System that is jointly funded by DHHS (SAMHS and OADS) and DOL (BRS – DBVI/DVR). This provides infrastructure for coordinating employment specialist trainings, webinars and advance topical trainings as well as maintaining a database of certified employment specialists.

DHHS and DOL also collaborate on the development and maintenance of a comprehensive website, www.employmentforme.com, providing information on best practices and resources for employment for people with disabilities. The website is divided into four target audience sections – job seekers, service providers, youth in transition and employers. Another collaboration that is ongoing is the training and certification infrastructure.

DHHS (SAMHS and OADS) also made available Balancing Incentive Program funds to increase system capacity to support individuals with disabilities on the path to employment. This initiative included training for Work and Benefits Navigators, the development of an advanced Work and Benefits Navigator training for Employment Specialists, the development of a Pathways to Employment infographic, and training in Individual Placement and Support and Supported Employment.

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

1. SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS

I. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL WHO ARE EMPLOYED BY THE STATE AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY;

The Maine Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired has procedures and activities in place to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit. Staff in Central office maintain a data system on personnel and personnel development. This is outlined in the areas below.

Qualified Personnel needs – The system for collecting and analyzing annual data on qualified personnel needs is supported within the Department of Labor’s Human Resources and DBVI staff in the central office. The system includes keeping track of the number of personnel within DBVI who serve VR in relation to the number of individuals served by personnel category. In addition, DBVI keeps track of the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services by personnel category and the projections of the number of personnel, by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide VR services in 5 years. This number is based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field and other relevant factors.

Over the past performance period, 35 staff positions in DBVI served 300-400 individuals with visual impairments in the VR program. Personnel categories included: 1 director, 1 assistant director, 3 regional directors, 1 consultant, 7 VRC II, 3 Blindness Rehabilitation Specialists, 5 Paraprofessionals/VRC I, 1 support personnel, 2 BEP staff, and 11 O&M.

II. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

Currently, a number of DBVI’s VRC I and II staff are new to their positions and working with DBVI consumers. Of the 7 designated VRC II staff, 3 are new to DBVI within the past year and there is currently 1 vacancy. Although 2 of these have VRC experience in the general program, the blindness rehabilitation specialty is a steep learning curve. The VRC I’s spend a portion of their time supporting the VRC II staff. There are five VRC I positions, which are statewide and cover each of the regional areas. Of these five, three are new within the last year. Therefore, DBVI has experienced a personnel shortage to work with VR consumers. The new staff have demonstrated ability to learn quickly and it is anticipated that DBVI VR consumers will be well represented over the next performance period.

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected Vacancies over the next 5 years
1	Director	1	0	1
2	Assistant Director	1	0	0
3	Regional Directors	3	0	2
4	Blindness Rehabilitation Specialist	3	1	0
5	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II	7	1	1
6	Paraprofessional VRC 1	5	0	0
7	Support Personnel	1	1	0

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected Vacancies over the next 5 years
8	Rehabilitation Consultant	1	0	0
9	Business Enterprise Program Staff	2	1	0
10	Orientation & Mobility	11	2	3
Total		35	6	7

III. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

It is anticipated that DBVI staffing needs could include approximately 7 new staff within the next five years. The table below highlights the current vacancies within DBVI. These vacancies are currently being covered by existing staff and contracted staff. The chart also depicts anticipated staffing needs for the next five years due to expected vacancies from retirements.

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected Vacancies over the next 5 years
1	Director	1	0	1
2	Assistant Director	1	0	0
3	Regional Directors	3	0	2
4	Blindness Rehabilitation Specialist	3	1	0
5	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II	7	1	1
6	Paraprofessional VRC 1	5	0	0
7	Support Personnel	1	1	0
8	Rehabilitation Consultant	1	0	0
9	Business Enterprise Program Staff	2	1	0
10	Orientation & Mobility	11	2	3
Total		35	6	7

One of the ways that DBVI has been a leader in the field regarding retention of qualified staff is our reimbursement program for certifications. Although DBVI does not pay for initial certifications, we recognize the financial strain to maintain these certifications, especially having multiple certifications. Therefore, we allow staff to request for reimbursement for

ACVREP and CRC certification costs on a yearly basis if they provide those services as part of their DBVI employment during the course of the year.

B. PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

I. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM;

Maine has only one in-state institution of higher education, the University of Southern Maine (USM), that offers an educational program, which satisfies the standards set forth by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) for states lacking a state standard for fully qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors. In addition to this in-state option, there are two other institutions of higher learning, UMass Boston and Assumption College (both in Massachusetts), that also offer such an educational program.

The University of Maine at Farmington (UMF) in partnership with the University of Southern Maine has an accelerated program that allows counseling students to graduate with a master's degree in 5 academic years. Graduates of this program will be able to qualify for both State licensing for counseling and national certification for rehabilitation counseling. The Program is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs and the Council on Rehabilitation Education and meets the standards set forth by RSA for qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors. UMF typically graduates 25 to 30 students per year with a B.S. in Rehabilitation Services. UMF also now offers a certificate in Assistive Technology, which prepares a broad range of professionals to be able to assess, design, research, and implement Assistive Technology (AT). Those completing the certificate will be equipped to support the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in both school and community settings by utilizing assistive technology to increase independence and eliminate or mitigate barriers.

II. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND

DBVI currently has zero staff enrolled in any of these programs.

III. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

DBVI did not have any staff enrolled in the previous year.

	Institutions	Students enrolled	Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates from the previous year
1	University of Southern Maine	0	0	0	0
2	Assumption College	0	0	0	0
3	UMass Boston	0	0	0	0

Institutions	Students enrolled	Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates from the previous year
4 Other	0	0	0	0

2. PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

DBVI continues to have concerns about the ability to recruit and retain qualified staff in Maine due to the low salary scales. Recent recruiting efforts have included electronic vacancy postings on national and State of Maine websites, local postings with community providers, and information sharing with universities and colleges across the country that offer a rehabilitation/blindness program. Recruitment methods used continue to be extensive and include internet postings on a variety of specific and general job bank sites, ongoing contact with graduate programs throughout the country, promotion of DBVI staffing opportunities at national conferences, networking with community rehabilitation providers, other state agencies, our contracted partners and job listings in Maine Career Centers. Additionally, DBVI offers professional internship opportunities to pre and post-graduate level students.

Maine DBVI Leadership Team has recently entered ongoing communications with UMass Boston regarding our current 2 O&M vacancies in order to provide for internships that would potentially lead to increased recruitment efforts for current vacant and anticipated vacant positions in the future. The UMass Vision Studies program is holding recruitment informational meetings for both the TVI and O&M programs. This program also has a newly developed AT certification. A webinar provided by UMass Boston Vision Studies program Northeast Resource Center for vision education is available to discuss graduate career opportunities in vision education and rehabilitation. These types of webinars assist DBVI to encourage undergraduates in Maine to take advantage of the current grants offered that lead to certifications in the Blindness rehabilitation fields and will assist with our recruitment efforts to obtain qualified staff. Viewing these webinars is also an opportunity for staff to encourage clients that we work with to go into the blindness rehabilitation field.

Maine state government continues its efforts to better promote state jobs to person with disabilities. The Bureau of Human Resources provides a system, referred to as 'Special Appointment', to facilitate the recruitment of people from minority backgrounds and individuals with disabilities in filling State government vacancies. Through this initiative, the individual must meet the qualifications for the position and then can be hired under this program in an "acting capacity" for up to one year. The worker receives the same pay as other workers in this classification and earns sick and vacation time after 90 days but does not accumulate seniority time. If at any time during this year the supervisor deems the worker has performed their duties satisfactorily, he/she will be placed in the position as a new employee subject to the usual probationary period of new State employees. A unique feature of this initiative is that the Human Resources Department throughout all of state government is centrally connected to this process, which allows for people with disabilities from anywhere within the state to be contacted at the very first point the state becomes aware that there will be an open position. In this manner we can recruit from across a comprehensive network to fill vacancies within DBVI, providing the applicant meets the minimum qualifications of the State position.

3. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

**A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -
RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE
REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH
PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND**

After the WIOA standards for qualifications of an RC II changed the definition of qualified staff, Maine DBVI has accepted the following qualifications of an RC II: a baccalaureate degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or related field, such as Special Education, Counseling, Psychology, Occupational Therapy or Social Work, and two years of experience directly working with individuals with disabilities; OR a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or related field, such as Special Education, Counseling, Psychology, Occupational Therapy or Social Work.

DBVI will also take advantage of the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) Amnesty Program. Beginning January 1, 2020, the CRCC will offer a one-time CRC Amnesty Program to formerly certified professionals still active in the field who would like to reinstate certification. It is CRCC's intent to bring expired CRCs back to the rehabilitation counseling profession.

**B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE
REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION
ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE
EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.**

DBVI utilizes our close relationship with our CareerCenter partners in order to ensure that we all have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities. DBVI is housed with our CareerCenter partners statewide. We attend joint meetings and provide training to, and get training from, CareerCenter staff on an ongoing basis. Staff participate in One stop Partner quarterly meetings where members of the transition board, Career Center staff and DBVI participate in ongoing core team meetings.

Additionally, DBVI staff are members of the workforce investment boards statewide and participate in ongoing training provided to the boards. Often DBVI staff are invited to attend relevant training. One recent example was a training provided by the regional board for our staff working with consumers in recovery. The training shared important information about the recovery resources and services available for businesses and job seekers to support employees and strengthen the community at large. The training provided staff with information to assist job seekers to maximize their career development opportunities and included our local resource Bangor Area Recovery Network (BARN) which strengthened that partnership. Another training included the Maine Human Rights Commission and addressed strategies for businesses and job seekers to protect themselves and to maximize their career development opportunities.

DBVI works with OUT Maine. OUT Maine provides training for educators and providers who work with LGBTQ+ youth and their families. This training has been provided across the state and works with our staff in order to have the most up to date information working with consumers in the State. Staff have attended trainings in their regions, in the Career Centers and in BRS specific training events.

4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

**A. A SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS
WITHIN THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT,
VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY,**

INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

DBVI utilizes current staff with specific interests and skills as subject matter experts in the area of technology. These technology specialists work with the DBVI leadership to recommend devices and equipment for purchase as demos for the various offices; devices include items such as Sunu Band, Talking Compass, Victor Reader Trek, iPad, and Aftershokz headphones. Consultation with the Buzz clip company occurred to obtain demo devices that are housed in the regional offices. Multiple presentations on Aira app to individual clients and the Maine Low Vision group are/were offered. Consultation is provided to DBVI staff in regard to apps and other technology as requested as well as the provision of AT training/overview for new DBVI staff. Staff attended trainings offered by Maine CITE Adaptive Equipment Financing Program, OIB-TAC, International O&M Online Symposium and Helen Keller Deafblindness Equipment to stay current on new apps and technologies.

B. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO DESIGNATED STATE UNIT PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS.

Training opportunities and conference materials are shared through a number of statewide means, including the BRSNet. A library of training resources, including texts, journals and videotapes addressing vocational rehabilitation and blindness/low vision topic areas are available to be loaned to regional offices as needed. Materials include Institute on Rehabilitation Issues publications, videotapes addressing learning disabilities, Consumer Choice News, National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials, and other documents from the various National Rehabilitation and Research and Training Programs throughout the United States. DBVI also makes full use of many valuable web-based resources such as American Foundation for the Blind, National Federation of the Blind, American Council of the Blind, Texas School for the Blind, ACVREP, CRCC and Hadley. Examples of these materials can be seen in the "Comprehensive onboarding and staff development program" provided at the end of this CSPD reporting section.

DBVI recognizes that staff are the most valuable resource in our work supporting consumers who are blind or visually impaired in the pursuit of their vocational goals. To that end the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development was designed to support the training needs of Division staff. Staff development is delivered through formal and informal modalities and are derived from internal and external sources.

In the past performance period, 339 individuals were served by the Maine DBVI VR system. Maine DBVI currently has 6 occupied VR Counselor II positions (1 vacant this PY) that carry an average caseload of 40-60 individuals, and 3 Blindness Rehabilitation Specialist (1 vacant this PY), in addition to carrying a small caseload, assist the families with children who are blind and visually impaired in accessing needed supports and resources, assisting in advocacy and providing technical assistance to community stakeholders. We expect these staffing numbers to remain consistent going forward. Based on previous reporting of individuals served, we expect to serve between 300-400 individuals over the next five years and anticipate that 100% will be individuals with significant disabilities due to the nature of the population that DBVI serves.

Current service delivery positions include five VR Counselor I positions that assist in facilitating clients through the process, and 11 Orientation and Mobility Specialists throughout the state that work with VR clients. All O&M staff are currently ACVREP certified.

DBVI annually reviews the qualifications of all staff and tracks the educational plans of new hires and personnel requiring education and training to ensure that CSPD standards are achieved to the maximum extent possible. CSPD plans for rehabilitation counselors and other staff working in the DBVI VR program who have not met the state standard are developed with supervisors upon completion of probation and reviewed as part of an annual performance review. CSPD plans reflect a balance between personnel development and operational need. The plans seek optimal training modalities and formats, as well as the most cost-effective methods to utilize those institutions. Upon entering CSPD plans, program and coursework approval must be obtained from the DBVI management team.

Additionally, an annual survey is sent out to staff to determine future training needs. As trainings happen, surveys are sent out to track and monitor staff attendance and achieve credential attainment. Training sponsored by the division is determined by operational need as well as by employee needs to maintain or retain qualified status. DBVI employees participate in annual performance reviews, a portion of which specifically addresses personnel development. At these reviews, staff and supervisors jointly identify specific training required to address individual performance enhancement and operational need. The Regional Managers meet with their staff on an annual basis to review performance and to plan the professional development for the upcoming year. That plan would outline what coursework or credits were beneficial to the agency and/or are required for the employee to continue to be qualified staff. DBVI central office tracks all the courses that employees attend and the credits they earn while supervisors monitor the progress regarding professional development. Employees submit requests for trainings and are evaluated and approved as they relate to the professional development/operational need. Often staff will request to go to a conference such as the New England Association of Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) that allow them to attain many of their required credits.

In an effort to ensure a high level of skilled staff to deliver quality services to consumers, the CSPD plan addresses long-range college training needs for qualified rehabilitation blindness professionals and paraprofessionals. In addition, the CSPD provides short-term training needs that allow for continuous learning and the maintenance of professional certification, including Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credentials, and Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) for Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialists, Vision Rehabilitation Therapists (VRT) and Low Vision Therapists (LVT) and newly developed certification program for Assistive Technology (AT) Specialists. The Division's goal is to encourage staff to pursue a variety of educational choices in a supportive working environment and with the necessary time and financial support. Certifications in all disciplines are encouraged, as well as training plans that support maintaining CRC, O&M and other specific professional certifications.

DBVI also supports educational programming for existing staff seeking to meet fully qualified status and, for those who have achieved CRC status and require on-going CRC training credits. DBVI qualified personnel standards for O&M/VRT/LVT staff are to be certified or certifiable by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals. The ACVREP website explains, "The Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals offers professional certification for vision rehabilitation and education professionals in order to improve service delivery to persons with vision impairments. ACVREP is committed to quality certification programs that meet rigorous recognized standards. Programs are designed to offer applicants the means to demonstrate that professional knowledge and skills that promote the provision of quality service and ethical practice. ACVREP offers certification in three disciplines: Low Vision Therapy, Orientation & Mobility, and Vision

Rehabilitation Therapy. Individuals who possess ACVREP certification demonstrate a level of quality and care that is unmatched in the field.” Often staff will request to go to a conference such as the New England Association of Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) that would allow them to attain many of their required credits. Whenever possible, DBVI acquires the ACVREP endorsement to earn CEU credits for trainings provided in state.

In an effort to maximize training resources, staff often solicit local training resources to provide free or low-cost workshops, attend trainings with a ‘train the trainer’ perspective to provide turn-around training to other staff, and share internal expertise through in-house training opportunities.

DBVI made continuous efforts to seek and identify enhanced learning opportunities, particularly through use of distance learning modalities, in providing educational forums for its staff. Videoconferencing capacity has been established on a statewide basis and has led to an extensive learning collaborative with DVR, the CareerCenter One Stops, the Social Security Administration, external partners such as Maine CITE, the Small Business Development Corporation, and the local workforce development boards. DBVI staff also takes advantage of distance training opportunities through webinars and teleconferences.

One training that has been very successful, and has been provided by videoconferencing, is the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services new counselor training curriculum. This training entails a 10-day, comprehensive overview of the VR process. It includes topic areas such as rehabilitation technology, job placement and assessment, and vocational counseling, such as casework flow and post-secondary education. It is available to all staff and required of new DBVI VR staff. In addition, DBVI utilizes a variety of internet links, on-line videos, and web resources as part of its overall training for new DBVI employees. Training opportunities and conference materials are shared through a number of statewide avenues, including the Internet and Intranet, as well as counselor, managerial and supervisory networking activities and interactions.

DBVI is committed to providing an annual DBVI Day training for all staff. We utilize this opportunity to provide training to assure that all staff are up to date. We are also committed to providing a yearly All Agency/Blindness Systems training for all State of Maine professionals and our contracted partners who are working in the field of blindness rehabilitation. This training has been instrumental in maintaining a positive working relationship with our blindness team and to focus on training specific to blindness rehabilitation.

DBVI worked this past performance period with Mississippi state to develop a comprehensive onboarding and staff development program that has is designed to be a yearlong developmental program for DBVI staff. This four tier course outlines areas in supervision, mentoring, reading, viewing, job shadowing and experiential practice. (An overview of this program is included at the end of the CSPD section)

DBVI takes advantage of the National Research & Training Center free short courses. They are approved for ACVREP, CRC and National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB) credits. These include an Introduction of the Basics of Blindness and Low Vision, Cultural diversity and competence; Fundamental courses on eye conditions; Essentials for working with Individuals with Visual impairments; Visual Impairment and additional health conditions, Courses on Program Effectiveness; Special Topics for VR; Research based short courses related to employment; and the Business Enterprise Program.

In addition, DBVI is committed to work with our partner, DVR, in offering a biennial, two-day statewide training event for all Bureau of Rehabilitation Services staff at which multiple

trainings - identified and prioritized by staff surveys, case reviews and oversight bodies (i.e. State Rehabilitation Council) are offered. Training needs and activities are often identified and offered at the regional/office levels through free or low-cost workshops.

Over the past performance period DBVI has worked with our DVR partners to participate in many Bureau wide training. Training surveys are used, via survey monkey, for staff to complete to receive certificates of attendance and CRC credits. Recent trainings included: 2-day communication/ethics training, Syntiro webinars, World of Work Inventory training, Personality Disorders, Motivational Interviewing, Brain Injury, WIOA Cross-Training Webinars and, specifically for supervisors, a 3-day BRS Leadership training in which the focus was on providing skill training for leaders utilizing challenging supervisory scenarios.

One program that has been recently developed for BRS is a 6-part series with a WIOA overview and partner cross training. There are 13 brief webinar links beginning with "WIOA 101: An introduction to the New Law" and ending with the "Youth Program". Included in the zoom trainings were common performance measures, career pathways, youth programming, Center for Workforce Research and Information, Apprenticeship and working with corrections and Veterans.

Another BRS training included the presentation of the newly developed AWARE QA tool for all management/supervisory staff. It addresses the case review process, types of case reviews, statewide review template, assigning cases, practice cases, how to monitor progress on case reviews and QA reports. For many years, DBVI had been conducting case reviews using survey monkey to collect data. This new QA tool is designed to replace survey monkey and contain the entire data collection process within our case management system, AWARE.

Some regional DBVI staff attended training for WORK Services: Workforce Opportunities, Referrals and Knowledge Services, a common registration and case management portal across the multiple core programs that integrates the disparate case management systems and incorporates a public facing portal. It is being piloted in one region with anticipation of it going live sometime in 2020.

Lastly, the State of Maine is currently working with all employees regarding Workday Maine, an online Human Resource portal where employees can record and code their timesheets, request time off and track accrued earned time. All staff are being provided with Employee Self-Service Town Hall Materials, job aids, quick reference guides, and instructional videos, in order to navigate this new system.

Below is a list of training over the past performance period:

DBVI Day (annual)

DBVI Day Part 2

All Blindness Agency Day

Motivational Interviewing

New Counselor Training

Communication

Personality Disorders

OIB TAC-trainings (dementia, DB, adjustment)

BRS Leadership Training

Brain injury

Peer Mentoring

CRP project training

Syntiro Training

BRS Statewide (2018)

AFB Leadership conference

BLAST Conference (BEP)

AER (NE)

AER Orlando

Helen Keller (fall 2018)

Apprenticeship

WOWI

Comprehensive onboarding and staff development program

Maine Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) - An Introduction to New Employee Training

This training is to be utilized and customized for all DBVI employees for their first year of employment.

Tier One Module (to be completed during the first quarter of employment)

- Arrange for HR orientation for all state employees (DOL policies)
- Get a State ID picture and badge
- Tour of regional and central office
- Central fleet orientation (for state vehicle use before use)
- BRS website & resources <http://inet.state.me.us/rehab/index.shtml>

Note: Sign up for BRS new counselor training for VRC II and customized for others

- Maine AWARE case management
- Safety/Emergency Evacuation Plan (for the pertinent office)
- Utube video run hide
fight https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf
- Link to Lt. Elliot's active shooter
training: <http://inet.state.me.us/labor/safety/index.shtml>

Base Reading & Viewing:

DBVI Rules, Guidance memos, policy, and protocol

http://inet.state.me.us/rehab/casework_resources/dbvi_policies_procedures/index.shtml

- at least: 1 of the publications, 1 of the books, and 1 of the videos identified below
- Older Individuals who are Blind Technical Assistance Center (OIB TAC) website and courses <https://www.oib-tac.org/>

Under resources at least the 3 items listed below:

- Quick Overview of Commonly used Acronyms, Abbreviations and Jargon in the Field of Blindness and Low Vision Older Blind Version
- Information for Working with a Person Who is Visually Impaired or Blind
- Information on specific eye diseases
- Vision Impairment 101 curriculum (book available in each regional office and training if needed by DBVI staff Kim Stumph)
- Maine Senior Guide is a free, on-line resource for older Mainers and their families. Besides the Maine Senior Guide website with hundreds of resources, we publish this newsletter, have an active Facebook page, and also host and produce senior expos around the state.
- The Iris Network <https://www.theiris.org>
- Catholic Charities Maine <https://www.ccmaine.org>
- Maxi Aids Products for independent living www.maxiaids.com

Job Shadow

- At least once with each of the various types of Blindness Professionals within your Region: *VRC*VRT *O&M *TVI *AT
- Client assistance program (CAP) - view the website and meet with the representative

Experiential:

- Human guide by local O&M staff (needs to be in the first week of employment before see clients)
- Work under occlusion to include: Orientation, interpreting surrounding environment, independent travel w/ O&M
- Numerous blindness-specific IL activities geared toward “can do,” with VRT

Mentoring:

- Weekly meetings with DBVI mentor, (face-to-face or zoom or phone)
- Monthly face to face meeting with DBVI mentor to include at least one shadow.

**the shadowing needs to occur in two forms, initially with the new staff observing mentor, and then mentor observing new staff once they begin working with clients.*

Supervision:

- Performance evaluation
- Weekly meetings with supervisor to include regular/weekly observation/shadows; organizational system review; TAMS; Maine Aware, etc.
- Updated “Who’s Who” in DBVI statewide and our partners; include brief bio, certifications and current information.
- Orientation to Career Center staff and resources
- Acronym list review
- Orientation to Business Enterprise Program – (BEP) by DBVI representative
- BRS new counselor training (sign up for VRC II & customized as needed for others)

Tier Two Module (to be completed during second quarter of employment):***Base Reading & Viewing:***

- at least: 1 of the publications, 1 of the books, and 1 of the videos identified below
- The American Council of the Blind (ACB.org) strives to increase the independence, security, equality of opportunity, and quality of life for all blind and visually impaired people
- American Foundation for the Blind *AFB.org*
- American Foundation for the Blind Senior Site afbinfo@afb.org
- ADA Guidelines for Visual Impairment – Eric.Dibner@maine.gov
- Hadley Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired www.hadley.edu
- Helen Keller – DeafBlind Services www.helenkeller.org/hknc
- <https://youtu.be/JtC4ZfMVknU>
- National Federation of the Blind <https://www.nfb.org>
- Pine Tree Guide dog user ellsworthme.org/pinetree
- *MOBALE website* www.MOBALE.org [www.Facebook.com/MOBALEMaine](https://www.facebook.com/MOBALEMaine)
- Information about Winter and Summer Sports Education Camps
- AllPast 24 hoursPast weekPast monthPast yearAlpha 1 www.alphaonenow.org
- *Maine Parent federation*mpf.org

Job Shadow

- At least once with each member of your job classification/discipline in DBVI outside your Region

- Meet with VIST and/or BROS from the V.A. to discuss the program requirements and role with DBVI
- Attend a Low Vision Exam
- Iris network – website and tour the center & Iris Park Apts.

Experiential:

- Participation in at least one “blindness community” and consumer group activity:

(for example) ACB, NFB, *Pine Tree Dog Guide Users*, Support groups, Recreation activities, BVA, MOBALE winter or summer sports education camps

- Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) Training with state representative (Esther Butler)
- State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) training on-line through Regional Services Administration (RSA)
- Low Vision Training – including orientation to low vision kits/devices i.e. magnifiers, CCTV's, *scopes, glare filters, etc.

Mentoring:

- Bi-Weekly check-ins with DBVI mentor, (face to face or via telephone or polycom).

Monthly face to face meeting with DBVI mentor to include at least two shadow opportunities over the course of the quarter.

Supervision:

- Bi-Weekly meetings with supervisor to include regular observation/shadows

Tier Three Module: (to be completed during third quarter of employment):

Base reading & Base viewing

- at least: 1 of the publications, 1 of the books, and 1 of the videos identified below
- AERBVI.org Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired
- American Printing House for the Blind web site www.APH.org
- Perkins School for the Blind web site www.perkins.org
- VISION Aware web site www.visionaware.org
- TSBVI (Texas School for the Blind) <https://www.tsbvi.edu>
- www.carroll.org Carroll Center for the Blind
- napvi.org NAPVI.
- RRTC on VR Practices for Youth and Young Adults and click on “Trainings” to find these online seminars, as well as other webinars: <http://vrpracticesandyouth.org/>
 - The Family Role in Career Planning and Preparation for Youth with Disabilities

- Integrated Employment: Expectation AND Choice
- Introduction to Seamless Transition
- Inclusive Higher Education and VR Common Performance Measures
- 10 Tips for Effective Collaboration Between VR and Higher Education
- Introduction to Inclusive Higher Education and Its Impact on VR Services
- Family and VR Roles in Supporting Higher Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Job Shadows:

- At least one job shadow in another discipline outside your region

Mentoring:

- Monthly check-ins with DBVI mentor, (face-to-face or via telephone or polycom).

Regular face-to-face meeting with DBVI mentor to occur at least every six weeks and should include at least two shadow opportunities over the course of the quarter.

Supervision:

- at least monthly meetings with supervisor to include regular observation/shadows

Tier Four Module (to be completed during fourth quarter of employment):

Base reading & Base Viewing:

- at least: 1 of the publications, 1 of the books, and 1 of the videos identified below
- LEAP, check out the video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVrG1ESESjM>
- LEAP's website: <https://resourcevt.org/training-programs/leap/>
- Flying blind from Larry Lewis – flying blind.org every Thursday (they are achieved & technology driven)
- HR guide for employers under our products – employment products – how to make a PDF accessible – blind.msu.state.edu
- access world by AFB – reviews assistive technology devices
- <https://corporate.comcast.com/values/accessibility>
- RespectAbility feature about Janet LaBreck as part of their honoring Women's History Month: <https://www.respectability.org/2019/03/women-disabilities-janet-labreck/>

Job Shadow:

- Section 121 – read about it and meet with the regional rep

Experiential:

- Listen to a book in audio format
- Listen to a movie with audio description

Mentor: TBD as needed

Supervision: TBD as needed

BOOKS

- Making Life More Livable: Simple Adaptations For Living At Home After Vision Loss. Duffy, M. (2015).
- O&M For Independent Living: Strategies FOR Teaching Orientation And Mobility TO Older Adults. Griffin-Shirley, N & Bozman, L. (2016).
- Pathway to Independence: A guide for people with vision loss. Kersh, Rita (2015).
- No Barriers: A Blind Man's Journey to Kayak the Grand Canyon by Erik Weihenmayer
- The Adversity Advantage: Turning Everyday Struggles Into Everyday Greatness by Paul G. Stoltz, Erik Weihenmayer
- Micheal Nye "my heart is not blind"
- David Feeling your way through life – on Kindle in September
- Tom Sullivan book – seeing lessons – one that is a kid at Perkins and escape Adventures in Darkness –
- Mike May book crashing through

PUBLICATIONS

- Berry, P., Mascia, J., & Steinman, B. A. (2004). Vision and hearing loss in older adults: Double trouble. JOURNAL OF LONG-TERM HOME HEALTH CARE, 5, 35-40.
- Binns, A., Bunce, C., Dickinson, C., Harper, R., Tudor-Edwards, R., Woodhouse, M., et al. (2012). How effective is Low Vision Service Provision? A Systematic Review. SURVEY OF OPHTHALMOLOGY, 57(1), 34-65.
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- Farrow, K., & Steverson, A. (2016). A Summary Of Services Provided By Chapter 2 Programs: A Review Of Older Individuals Who Are Blind Performance Report Data From Years 2008-2013. Journal Of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 110(6), 461-467.
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- Farrow, K., Holden, C., Lecher, E., & Larges, L. (2018). Increasing access to vision rehabilitation services for seniors through collaboration with occupational therapists. Journal Of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 112(3), 301-306.
- LeJeune, B. J. (2010). Aging With Dual Sensory Loss: Thoughts From Consumer Focus Groups. AER Journal: Research And Practice In Visual Impairment And Blindness, 3(4), 146-152
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- McDonnall, M. C., & LeJeune, B. J. (2008). Employment among older adults with combined hearing and vision loss. *Journal Of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*, 39(3), 3-9.
- McDonnall, M. C., Crudden, A., LeJeune, B. J., Steverson, A., & O'Donnell, N. (2016). Needs and challenges of seniors with combined hearing and vision loss. *Journal Of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 110(6), 399-411.
- Moore, J. E. (2003). Using Program Evaluation To Improve Service Delivery For Older Individuals Who Are Blind. *Journal Of Visual Impairment And Blindness*, 97, 42-45.
- Moore, J. E., Giesen, J. M., Weber, J. M., & Crews, J. E. (2001). Functional outcomes reported by consumers of the independent living program for older individuals who are blind. *Journal Of Visual Impairment And Blindness*, 95, 403-417.
- Moore, J. E., Steinman, B. A., Giesen, J. M., & Frank, J. J. (2006). Functional outcomes and consumer satisfaction in the Older Blind Independent Living Program. *Journal Of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 100(5), 285-294.

- VIDEOS

- "What Do You Do When You See A Blind Person?" "Going Blind"
- "When Blindness Occurs" by the Seeing Eye
- "Walking in My Shoes" <http://www.themtsc.org/safety-resources/video.php> select visually impaired resources, then cross the street in my shoes.
- Lives Worth Living video

5. PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

In addressing issues associated with diversity and cultural needs, the Division has staff who are visually impaired who utilize and are well versed in adaptive technology used by our consumers. DBVI has an agreement with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation on referral of individuals who are deaf-blind who use American Sign Language (ASL) as their native language. DBVI also has staff with a background specialty in working with individuals who are Deaf Blind; specialty areas of these staff are low vision, orientation and mobility, and vocational rehabilitation. One individual serves as a subject matter expert and consultant for other staff working with consumers who are Deaf Blind and is supported to attend ongoing training in order to maintain her expertise. Recent training included the Helen Keller National Center on-line training group to include the Helen Keller Confident Living Course and the Haptics course. In addition, they serve on the Helen Keller Deaf Blind Steering Committee, and participate in the Helen Keller Tri-State Collaboration meetings, and Dual Sensory Loss chapter meetings.

DBVI staff participate in webinars that address communication barriers. One such webinar, Assistive Technology for Effective Distance Communications, was provided to staff by the Disability Rights Maine Deaf Services where staff learned about the Maine Relay system, Telecommunication Equipment program and the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Program.

DBVI staff utilizes certified interpreter services for individuals with language barriers, such as Maine State Interpreters, who help communicate clearly and accurately in over 40 languages, and Catholic Charities Maine, who work to bridge language and cultural barriers so that organizations can communicate directly with clients in over 35 languages. Some of the languages include: French, Spanish, German, Somali, Vietnamese, Arabic, Chinese, Korean, and Russian.

As a partner in the CareerCenters, DBVI clients who come to the centers and need language interpretation will have access to telephonic interpretation through Certified Languages International.

6. COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

DBVI staff have received training from the Department of Education to learn more about the educational system and the local schools, including those carrying out activities under section 614 (d) of the IDEA, to learn best practices to coordinate and ensure the provision of pre-employment transition services and/or transition services to potentially eligible or eligible VR students.

J. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

1. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, PARTICULARLY THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF THOSE:

A. WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

The Division and its SRC continue to discuss and explore strategies in an effort to reach out to as many potential consumers as possible. The SRC members represent a broad spectrum of consumer interest groups. These individuals share information pertaining to the constituent groups that they represent. Topics that are discussed are issues related to employment and other vocational rehabilitation services, skills of blindness needed for personal independence and self-sufficiency, mobility and safe travel, personal adjustment to blindness, support groups, braille, adaptive devices and assistive technology, access to the Internet, audio and digital books, recreation and leisure activities and activities within the Business Enterprise Program. Attendance is open to the public and available statewide through conference calls.

DBVI continues to receive input from survey questionnaires that are sent to all closed cases to determine the satisfaction of the consumer for the services that he/she received. In addition, the DBVI Director routinely attends various gatherings of the organized blindness community in Maine (American Council of the Blind of Maine, and National Federation of the Blind of Maine), and various regional meetings with consumers and other stakeholders. DBVI has scheduled meetings throughout the year with a number of partners/stakeholders including Catholic Charities Maine (education for blind children), the Iris Network (blindness rehabilitation), Disability Rights Maine, ALPHA One Center for Independent Living, the DBVI State Rehabilitation Council and members of Maine's three consumer-driven blindness organizations.

DBVI assists eligible individuals with disabilities to prepare for, achieve, and retain employment in competitive integrated employment. DBVI administers the Vocational Rehabilitation program in Maine for the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) specifically for Maine citizens that are blind or visually impaired. A comprehensive needs assessment is required every three years and focuses on the Vocational Rehabilitation program for those that are blind

and visually impaired and on the needs of individuals eligible for those services. The assessment is designed to answer important questions about the population eligible for DBVI services living in Maine and their vocational rehabilitation needs. Information gathered for the assessment will guide DBVI in its strategic plan and goal development for the years 2018 - 2020. Specifically, the report responds to federal regulations (34 CFR 361.29) requiring Maine's Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) to jointly conduct a "comprehensive statewide assessment" with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) every three years that describes the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment.

Survey data showed that it is taking longer to close a case and fewer cases are being closed successfully. Since the average wage at closure is increasing each year from the average wage at application, a conclusion could be made that VRCs are working with consumers longer to better prepare them for quality employment outcomes. Further, an emphasis on Career Pathways and economic self-sufficiency has resulted in additional time spent in achieving successful outcomes.

DBVI works with the Department of Health and Human Services in supporting clients who in addition to having visual impairment have developmental disabilities, brain injuries, other related conditions and physical disabilities through five Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services 1915c Waivers. Individuals receiving waiver services have significant disabilities and require supports and services to obtain and maintain employment.

DBVI's most recent Comprehensive Statement Needs Assessment was completed in March 2018. The entire report is available as a separate document at:
http://www.maine.gov/rehab/dbvi/state_plan/index.shtml.

Here is the summary of the most recent DBVI CSNA:

The majority of the respondents of this survey were over the age of 50 with the highest percentage of them being over the age 70. This is in alignment with Maine's increasing numbers of citizens over the age of 65 which has increased from 15.9% in 2010 to 19.4% in 2016. (www.census.gov)

Transportation has been cited in previous Comprehensive Needs Assessments as a barrier for Maine DBVI clients. This survey also found that to be reported, as a high percentage of respondents listed as relying on "family or friends" for their transportation needs. Also, it should be noted that in this survey the new transportation services of Uber were reported by some respondents to be used. However, while both staff of DBVI, and the contracted staff partners (VRT's and TVI's) as well as the employment seeking clients themselves reported transportation as a huge barrier, the survey results overwhelming (76.47%) report that the transportation methods they are currently utilizing are meeting their needs. Given that most of the respondents are retired, the method of using friends and family may indeed meet their needs, so this may not be a proper reflection of the needs of employment seeking clients. In contrast, 75% of the employment seeking clients in this survey (20 individuals) reported transportation as a barrier to them finding employment.

One of the goals currently in the state plan is to provide more outreach about DBVI services. This survey identified the need to do more outreach to employers about individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Employers need to learn more about the consumer's unique strengths and capabilities and the services provided by DBVI.

Changing technology and keeping devices updated and the training needs of both staff, contracted staff and clients were identified in the survey as a need. However, when asked about preferred methods of communication, a high number (68.29%) reported that they utilize large print to receive information and only a small number self-reported that they prefer electronic communication but cost is prohibiting them from accessing information this way. No one identified that a lack of knowledge or skill is preventing them from electronic communication. Also, interesting to note is that 55% of respondents identified using a sighted reader as a preferred method. Again, this could be indicative of the age of the majority of respondents in this survey pool.

The elimination of Homemaker status will have an impact on the Independent Living (IL) program also administered by DBVI. Many respondents to the survey reported that they did not know about the IL program. Since there is a chance that many of these respondents will need services in the future, outreach should be done to let these individuals know that services will be available through the IL program.

Interestingly, while many (80%) of the survey respondents reported that their rights as a DBVI client were explained to them, an overwhelming (88%) number were not aware of the client assistance program (CAP). CARES, Inc. the current contractor for CAP services in Maine does report a small number of cases involving DBVI clients, thus while the clients feel they know their rights as a client, they may need better explanation of the services available to them through CARES, Inc, should they disagree with the services provided to them from DBVI.

Even though Maine is a large and predominantly rural state with an aging population, DBVI is experiencing an increase in transition-aged and working aged consumers (according to the data). This could be the result of the loss of the homemaker closure coupled with the recent requirement to spend 15% of Title I funds on students with a disability. It could also be that the inverse is true and the increase in the transition-aged consumers is the direct result of the increased focus on activities for pre-employment transition services for students with a disability. This population is technologically savvy so there is a need to keep up with assistive technology and all the changes. Students and adults need to know what technology is available to assist them in their employment.

Throughout the three years, DBVI is serving a higher number of minorities. This past year DBVI has increased its outreach activities so there could be a direct correlation; however, this assessment has validated the need to continue with the outreach in many areas such as DBVI services, and Client Assistance Program and services.

The data shows a decrease in overall case costs. With all the new regulations, there has been an increased awareness of the changes through trainings, webinars, along with a much greater emphasis on being good stewards of the state's funds by analyzing costs for reasonableness, necessities and cost effectiveness.

The data also shows that it is taking longer to close a case and fewer cases are being closed successfully. Since the average wage at closure is increasing each year from the average wage at application, a conclusion could be made that VRCs are working with consumers longer to better prepare them for quality employment outcomes. Maine has experienced a decline in Community Rehabilitation Providers so it could also be deduced that it is taking longer due to service providers availability is limited. However, there are many consumers (self-reported and not disclosed) that have a secondary impairment in addition to their visual impairment. This assessment also demonstrates that there is a need for VRCs and contracted partners to receive more training on secondary disabilities. This knowledge might facilitate a case moving through

the process quicker because the VRC would know more about the appropriate services for the client.

Transportation continues to be an unmet need in the rural state of Maine. While many of our consumers are taking advantage of some of the newer methods of transport such as Uber or Lyft services, Maine will likely never have the public transit systems of some of our more populated neighboring states. DBVI will continue to provide education, advocacy, and outreach, when appropriate, around how to access transportation for getting to work or around communities.

Overall, the information received from the surveys, both through telephone conversations and on-line, the data from the census, along with the data from our case management system validated many known unmet needs as well as identified new areas that DBVI needs to address to ensure that individuals, who are blind or visually impaired, are aware of, and receive the appropriate services to help them obtain or maintain quality employment in an integrated, competitive setting.

B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

Vocational rehabilitation services to minorities with disabilities in Maine have always been a challenge to DBVI because of the state's relatively homogeneous population and low ethnic diversity. According to the US Census, residents are primarily White (94.8%) with small representations of Black (1.5%), Asian (1.2%), and Native American (0.7%) individuals in certain geographical areas of the state. Native Americans represent a historically recognizable group and Maine has nearly 18,500 tribal members who are located both on reservations and defined land, as well as scattered across the state. Tribal members are primarily located in Penobscot, Washington and Aroostook counties. Unemployment figures among Micmac and Maliseet tribes range from 55% to 76%. DBVI continues to work collaboratively with the Houlton Band of Maliseet's, who were recently awarded a five-year Section 121 grant through 2025.

There continues to be an increase of non-English speaking immigrants and refugees in Maine, especially in the southern part of the state. Those who are dealing with vision loss need costly interpreter services to benefit from available blindness rehabilitation services so that they can better access vocational rehabilitation for gaining employment in their new country. Consumers have identified the need to explore culturally specific service delivery models that respond to issues as they related to blindness and visual impairment.

From the FFY 2015-2017 Statewide Needs Assessment in regards to minorities: Throughout the three years, DBVI is serving a higher number of minorities. This past year DBVI has increased its outreach activities so there could be a direct correlation; however, this assessment has validated the need to continue with the outreach in many areas such as DBVI services, and Client Assistance Program and services. Demographic Statistics of Maine- Black/African American-1.5% American Indian-0.7% Asian 1.2% Hispanic/Latino 1.6% Caucasian/White 94.8% (a small % reported being of more than one race). English is the first language in all but 6.5% of Maine homes.

C. WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

Due to the rural demographics of Maine, transportation presents a significant unmet need in most areas of the state. Specific issues include the lack of information on existing transportation that is available, and concerns regarding the timeliness and safety of some publicly funded transportation programs. In many areas of the state, public transportation is non-existent for medical appointments, transportation to work, and travel options for routine daily

activities. Consumers further identified that even in communities where public transportation existed it didn't run during evening hours/weekends and paratransit is not available to those who do not qualify for MaineCare.

Here is a summary of Maine DBVI's most recent CSNA:

The majority of the respondents of this survey were over the age of 50 with the highest percentage of them being over the age 70. This is in alignment with Maine's increasing numbers of citizens over the age of 65 which has increased from 15.9% in 2010 to 19.4% in 2016. (www.census.gov)

Transportation has been cited in previous Comprehensive Needs Assessments as a barrier for Maine DBVI clients. This survey also found that to be reported, as a high percentage of respondents listed as relying on "family or friends" for their transportation needs. Also, it should be noted that in this survey the new transportation services of Uber were reported by some respondents to be used. However, while both staff of DBVI, and the contracted staff partners (VRT's and TVI's) as well as the employment seeking clients themselves reported transportation as a huge barrier, the survey results overwhelming (76.47%) report that the transportation methods they are currently utilizing are meeting their needs. Given that most of the respondents are retired, the method of using friends and family may indeed meet their needs, so this may not be a proper reflection of the needs of employment seeking clients. In contrast, 75% of the employment seeking clients in this survey (20 individuals) reported transportation as a barrier to them finding employment.

One of the goals currently in the state plan is to provide more outreach about DBVI services. This survey identified the need to do more outreach to employers about individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Employers need to learn more about the consumer's unique strengths and capabilities and the services provided by DBVI.

Changing technology and keeping devices updated and the training needs of both staff, contracted staff and clients were identified in the survey as a need. However, when asked about preferred methods of communication, a high number (68.29%) reported that they utilize large print to receive information and only a small number self-reported that they prefer electronic communication but cost is prohibiting them from accessing information this way. No one identified that a lack of knowledge or skill is preventing them from electronic communication. Also, interesting to note is that 55% of respondents identified using a sighted reader as a preferred method. Again, this could be indicative of the age of the majority of respondents in this survey pool.

The elimination of Homemaker status will have an impact on the Independent Living (IL) program also administered by DBVI. Many respondents to the survey reported that they did not know about the IL program. Since there is a chance that many of these respondents will need services in the future, outreach should be done to let these individuals know that services will be available through the IL program.

Interestingly, while many (80%) of the survey respondents reported that their rights as a DBVI client were explained to them, an overwhelming (88%) number were not aware of the client assistance program (CAP). CARES, Inc. the current contractor for CAP services in Maine does report a small number of cases involving DBVI clients, thus while the clients feel they know their rights as a client, they may need better explanation of the services available to them through CARES, Inc, should they disagree with the services provided to them from DBVI.

Even though Maine is a large and predominantly rural state with an aging population, DBVI is experiencing an increase in transition-aged and working aged consumers (according to the data). This could be the result of the loss of the homemaker closure coupled with the recent requirement to spend 15% of Title I funds on students with a disability. It could also be that the inverse is true and the increase in the transition-aged consumers is the direct result of the increased focus on activities for pre-employment transition services for students with a disability. This population is technologically savvy so there is a need to keep up with assistive technology and all the changes. Students and adults need to know what technology is available to assist them in their employment.

Throughout the three years, DBVI is serving a higher number of minorities. This past year DBVI has increased its outreach activities so there could be a direct correlation; however, this assessment has validated the need to continue with the outreach in many areas such as DBVI services, and Client Assistance Program and services.

The data shows a decrease in overall case costs. With all the new regulations, there has been an increased awareness of the changes through trainings, webinars, along with a much greater emphasis on being good stewards of the state's funds by analyzing costs for reasonableness, necessities and cost effectiveness.

The data also shows that it is taking longer to close a case and fewer cases are being closed successfully. Since the average wage at closure is increasing each year from the average wage at application, a conclusion could be made that VRCs are working with consumers longer to better prepare them for quality employment outcomes. Maine has experienced a decline in Community Rehabilitation Providers so it could also be deduced that it is taking longer due to service providers availability is limited. However, there are many consumers (self-reported and not disclosed) that have a secondary impairment in addition to their visual impairment. This assessment also demonstrates that there is a need for VRCs and contracted partners to receive more training on secondary disabilities. This knowledge might facilitate a case moving through the process quicker because the VRC would know more about the appropriate services for the client.

Transportation continues to be an unmet need in the rural state of Maine. While many of our consumers are taking advantage of some of the newer methods of transport such as Uber or Lyft services, Maine will likely never have the public transit systems of some of our more populated neighboring states. DBVI will continue to provide education, advocacy, and outreach, when appropriate, around how to access transportation for getting to work or around communities.

Overall, the information received from the surveys, both through telephone conversations and on-line, the data from the census, along with the data from our case management system validated many known unmet needs as well as identified new areas that DBVI needs to address to ensure that individuals, who are blind or visually impaired, are aware of, and receive the appropriate services to help them obtain or maintain quality employment in an integrated, competitive setting.

D. WHO HAVE BEEN SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

The CSNA survey identified the need to do more outreach to employers about individuals who are blind and visually impaired. Employers will benefit from increased

education about consumer's unique strengths and capabilities and the services provided by DBVI.

Co-location in Maine's network of Department of Labor (MDOL) One-Stop CareerCenters has provided DBVI the opportunity to work in partnership with several other programs that are components of the statewide workforce development system and can support the employment of people with disabilities. The CareerCenters provide several employment programs that serve people with disabilities. The Maine Job Link is an online accessible CareerCenter tool to allow job seekers from around the state to be matched with real-time available open (currently over 11,862) positions. Currently, the Job Link shows 3,298 job seekers.

While the Bureau of Employment Services (BES) collects data on self-reported disability, it does not require that individuals disclose having a disability. As a result of past work through collaborative efforts including two rounds of the Disability Employment Initiative grant funding, there is increased awareness and attention in the CareerCenter to increasing access to expanded services for customers with visual impairments. There are concerns about the accuracy of the Maine Job Link's data collection system. The system is designed to support employers and job seekers without focusing on disabling conditions.

The numbers of individuals with disabilities enrolled in WIOA title IB and III programs during PY18 (PY18 Annual Report data):

Program	Enrolled	Disclosed Disability	%
LEX Self-Service	42,700	Not reported	
LEX Employment Srvs	4819	505	10.48%
ADULT	540	68	12.59%
DISLOCATED WORKER	264	22	8.33%
YOUTH	402	186	46.27%

E. WHO ARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING, AS APPROPRIATE, THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES OR OTHER TRANSITION SERVICES.

DBVI is experiencing an increase in transition-aged and working aged consumers according to the CSNA data. This could be the result of the loss of the homemaker closure coupled with the recent requirement to spend 15% of Title I funds on students with a disability. It could also be that the inverse is true and the increase in the transition-aged consumers is the direct result of the increased focus on activities for pre-employment transition services for students with a disability.

Maine DBVI performs a comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs when developing individual employment plans with all clients including students with a disability, youth and transition clients. In PY19, DBVI worked with 72 students and youth with a disability. As part of this assessment a number of approaches are used including solicitation of youth/families to participate in a BRS youth council; letters are sent to school districts by VRCs discussing Extended Core Curriculum activities seeking input/engagement in the process of school personnel; pre and post assessments are performed with youth/parents who participate in LIFE/LOYO/College Prep and most recently the ACE academy; engagement in peer mentoring

seeking feedback and input from the youth participating; when developing IPEs input from their IEPs, TVIs, O&Ms and VRTs in always included where appropriate. Further, Maine DBVI provides services from Blindness Rehabilitation Specialists who work with many potentially eligible and PreEts clients and their families prior to working with our Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in an effort to better identify and coordinate vocational, educational and rehabilitative needs of these young clients.

Under WIOA an emphasis on Career Pathways and economic self-sufficiency has resulted in additional time spent in achieving successful outcomes. RSA guidance suggested that DBVI staff present students and youth with a career development approach that views minimum wage employment as a work experience and that promotes continuation of vocational rehabilitation guidance and counseling and other services that assist youth in obtaining higher paying careers.

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE; AND

While DBVI has not had the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State, the agency has pursued a new payment structure that is designed to better support contractual agreements with community rehabilitation providers while reinforcing the importance to client outcomes of timely and available services.

3. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

Maine DBVI continues to look at the needs of each individual who is blind or has low vision taking into consideration his/her strengths, preferences, and interests. DBVI will work with schools, including those carrying out activities under section 614 (d) of the IDEA, to coordinate and ensure the provision of pre-employment transition services to potentially eligible or eligible VR students. Other services may include: community experiences, the development of employment in a competitive, integrated setting and other post-school adult living objectives.

Maine DBVI performs a comprehensive assessment when developing individual employment plans with all clients including students with a disability, youth and transition clients. As part of this assessment a number of approaches are used including solicitation of youth/families to participate in a BRS youth council; letters are sent to school districts by VRCs discussing Extended Core Curriculum activities seeking input/engagement in the process of school personnel; pre and post assessments are performed with youth/parents who participate in LIFE/LOYO/College Prep and most recently the ACE academy; engagement in peer mentoring seeking feedback and input from the youth participating; when developing IPEs input from their IEPs, TVIs, O&Ms and VRTs in always included where appropriate. Further, Maine DBVI provides services from Blindness Rehabilitation Specialists who work with many potentially eligible and eligible clients and their families prior to working with our Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in an effort to better identify and coordinate vocational, educational and rehabilitative needs of these young clients.

K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

1. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES

DBVI looked at the total state population of individuals identified as having a 'disability with vision difficulty' according to the most recently published American Community Survey (31,650) when estimating the number of individuals who potentially could be eligible for

services. DBVI then took into consideration the number of referrals, expenditures, and average case costs from prior years to estimate the number of individuals who will actually receive services with funds provided under Title I and Part B of Title VI.

2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

A. THE VR PROGRAM;

DBVI estimates that for FFY20 approximately 300-400 individuals who are blind or visually impaired will be served in Title I by the Division. This number is estimated using the number of individuals served in FFY19 in the VR program.

DBVI estimates that for FFY21, the number of individuals, who are blind or visually impaired, served in the VR program will increase to 450-500. DBVI continues to do outreach and has just recently provided an on-line application which may be used more widely with the newer generations.

B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

The Title VI – Supported Employment regulations were affected with the passing of WIOA, allowing states a longer period of time to provide services to youth with a most significant disability who required supported employment services. Another change was that costs were not captured as supported employment until the individual was placed in employment status. The funds were also specifically earmarked for certain populations, restricting spending to adults if the equivalent expenditures were not made within the youth budget. Therefore, there may not be a direct correlation between the number of eligible individuals to the amount spent in each respective budget. In FFY2019, there were 31 individuals that were identified as needing supported employment services. The costs of these services fell within the Title VI as well as the Title I program as many of the identified individuals were not placed into employment status. Currently, there are approximately 10 DBVI consumers identified as “Youth with a Significant Disability.” DBVI has determined that many consumers are able to work in the competitive labor market without supports.

Maine DBVI estimates that for both FFY20 and FFY21, the number will stay relatively the same or perhaps even decline slightly for those in the supported employment program. The best estimate for both years is between 20-30 individuals for both adults and youth with a significant disability.

C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION.

DBVI is not currently under an Order of Selection.

3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

DBVI is not currently under an Order of Selection.

4. THE COST OF SERVICES FOR THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS ESTIMATED TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES. IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION, IDENTIFY THE COST OF SERVICES FOR EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY.

DBVI looked at FFY19 expenditures for the VR program (including state VR match and all Pre-ETS expenses) in addition to Supported Employment expenses for both youth and adults to

determine what the potential costs of services for the number of estimated individuals for services. In FFY19, the cost of these services was approximately \$3,513,668.11 and DBVI anticipates spending approximately close to this amount for FFY20. DBVI anticipates that the expenditures will be close to that number or decrease in FFY21 for a number of reasons. With the inception of WIOA, there have been a number of changes that impact the VR program, i.e, homemakers are no longer considered an employment outcome and there has been a larger emphasis on the pre-employment transition services for students with a disability. So while some expenditures will be reduced, some will be replaced with expenses for other efforts/activities such as those that are focused on the students with a disability at a early age. Research indicates that early preparation leads to a smoother transition for the SWD to college or into the workforce.

L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO BY THE STATE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, IF THE STATE HAS A COUNCIL, AND JOINTLY AGREED TO ANY REVISIONS

Based upon DBVI's comprehensive statewide assessment, WIOA requirements and reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act, the goals and priorities for the 2020 State Plan were developed and agreed upon by the DBVI and its State Rehabilitation Council.

2. IDENTIFY THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

The following are goals and priorities were developed through the needs identified in the most recent DBVI CSNA, Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 (including the common performance measures of section 116 of WIOA), and input from the State Rehabilitation Council:

Goal (1)

To Engage DBVI clients in Career Pathways that lead to meaningful and quality employment outcomes.

Goal (2)

To increase measurable skill gains and credential attainment of DBVI clients in alignment with WIOA deliverables.

Goal (3)

To deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to youth who are blind and visually impaired, assisting them to successfully live and work independently in the community.

Goal (4)

To ensure that a larger number of individuals with disabilities, who may be underserved or unserved or have minority status, have access to DBVI services.

Goal (5)

To increase awareness of services and resources for individuals who are blind or have low vision.

3. ENSURE THAT THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES ARE BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

A. THE MOST RECENT COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING ANY
UPDATES;

Based on the needs identified in the most recent DBVI CSNA, Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 (including the common performance measures of section 116 of WIOA), and input from the State Rehabilitation Council, the goals and priorities from the previous DBVI VR state plan were modified and updated to reflect new areas of focus for DBVI.

B. THE STATE'S PERFORMANCE UNDER THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES OF
SECTION 116 OF WIOA; AND

Based on the needs identified in the most recent DBVI CSNA, Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 (including the common performance measures of section 116 of WIOA), and input from the State Rehabilitation Council, the goals and priorities from the previous DBVI VR state plan were modified and updated to reflect new areas of focus for DBVI.

A good example is Goal #2:

Goal 2: To increase measurable skill gains and credential attainment of DBVI clients in alignment with WIOA deliverables.

Objective: To become more proficient in identifying and capturing Measurable Skills Gain (MSG) and credential attainment.

Strategies:.

1. DBVI will continue working with WINTAC and/or providers of technical assistance in educating staff to promote understanding of MSG and credential obtainment.
2. CARNs and New Counselor training will have focused components on MSG and credential obtainment. Such training will emphasis career pathways, stackable and stand-alone credentials, as well as how and when these credentials are captured and recorded.
3. DBVI will increase staff competence in use of ME Aware in tracking and recording of MSG and credential obtainment. Training will be offered routinely at VRC Quarterly meetings. Staff competence will be monitored by Regional Managers and CO staff during quarterly case reviews.
4. DBVI will work with HospitalityMaine and other apprenticeship sponsors, including the use of the Workhands App, to track and record MSG and credential obtainment when apprenticeship/OJT is implemented.

C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR
PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION
COUNCIL AND FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES
CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.

Based on the needs identified in the most recent DBVI CSNA, Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 (including

the common performance measures of section 116 of WIOA), and input from the State Rehabilitation Council, the goals and priorities from the previous DBVI VR state plan were modified and updated to reflect new areas of focus for DBVI.

New procedures were implemented as a result of two program findings from the 2017 monitoring review. The findings included time to eligibility and time to plan. There are various levels of checks and balances to review how much time has passed prior to eligibility and then from eligibility to plan. In Aware, the VRCs can review their caseloads to see which cases are getting close to the 60 day requirement to eligibility and the 90 day requirement to plan from eligibility. The regional director also reviews the caseload as well as the Assistant Director(AD). If the AD discovers cases that are getting close to the required time, he seeks information to determine the reason that the client has not been found eligible or that an IPE has not been signed. If it is determined that there is an appropriate reason to extend the time, the proper documentation is completed. If the client is not responding to the VRC, the recommendation is (after the required protocol to reach out to the client is followed) to close the case. The process has proven to be effective in meeting both of these requirements.

M. ORDER OF SELECTION

1. WHETHER THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL IMPLEMENT AND ORDER OF SELECTION. IF SO, DESCRIBE:

A. THE ORDER TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES

DBVI is not implementing an Order of Selection.

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

DBVI is not implementing an Order of Selection.

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS

DBVI is not implementing an Order of Selection.

D. TIME WITHIN WHICH THESE GOALS MAY BE ACHIEVED FOR INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY WITHIN THE ORDER; AND

DBVI is not implementing an Order of Selection.

E. HOW INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

DBVI is not implementing an Order of Selection.

2. IF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF ANY ESTABLISHED ORDER OF SELECTION, WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT

DBVI is not implementing an Order of Selection.

N. GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS

1. SPECIFY THE STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The Division has remained committed to assuring that individuals and youth with most significant disabilities receive supported employment services when this is appropriate. An Individual Plan of Employment (IPE) is developed that describes the services provided, the need for extended services, if appropriate, and an assurance that the individual has been able to make an informed choice in the provision of these services and the goal itself.

Priorities for supported employment are services to individuals who need intensive supported employment services because of the nature and severity of their disabilities. In addition to being blind or having low vision, consumers, with a most significant disability, may also have a secondary disability such as mental illness, traumatic brain injury, cognitive deficits or a physical disability.

For PY2020 and 2021 Maine DBVI seeks to increase engagement with our Community Rehabilitation Providers as well as Progressive Employment opportunities for youth with most significant disabilities, including work experiences, in an effort to increase employment placements in career pathways requiring supported employment and secure successful employment. This should increase capacity for supported employment with our adult population. DBVI will seek to provide at least one work experience for all youth (including youth with most significant disabilities) prior to graduation from High School and, where appropriate, will provide supported employment.

2. DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED, WITH FUNDS RESERVED PURSUANT TO SECTION 603(D), FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING:

A. THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED 4 YEARS; AND

DBVI uses Title VI – Supported Employment funds primarily for job coaching for youth with most significant disabilities with vision impairment and mental illness. DBVI will continue to work with relevant stakeholders, i.e., consumers and CRP's, to expand the availability of supported employment services.

DBVI continues to identify more diversified employment opportunities in the supported employment Title VI program. The division places a small number of consumers who are blind or visually impaired in supported employment settings. Many clients are able to work in the competitive labor market without supports, due to the increased availability of technology, technology adaptations and both technological and natural supports available in today's market.

DBVI is not currently funding any provision of services for youth with most significant disabilities under extended services. However, DBVI has developed guidance for staff on the use of extended services for youth with most significant disabilities. This guidance states that DBVI will make available extended services for youth with most significant disabilities in supported employment for a period not to exceed four years or until such time that a youth with a most significant disability reaches the age of 25 and no longer meets the definition of a youth with a most significant disability. Extended services are defined as ongoing support services and other appropriate services that are needed to support a youth with a most significant disability in supported employment. During the comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs, and participation in Pre-Employment Transition Services, it may be determined that a youth with a most significant disability will benefit from extended support services.

If the youth with a most significant disability does not have access to extended support services through a comparable benefit, and other supports are not available or do not meet the client's needs, the VR counselor will work with the client and guardian such that there is agreement that the employment placement and extended services with or without assistive technology and

accommodations will enable the youth with a most significant disability to develop adequate natural supports such that other supports are not needed or will connect them with other sources of support.

DBVI will authorize one year of extended supports at a time. In limited individualized circumstances, the plan may be updated for an additional time period, up to one year at a time but under no circumstances for longer than four years or after the youth with a most significant disability turns 25.

B. HOW THE STATE WILL LEVERAGE OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS TO INCREASE RESOURCES FOR EXTENDED SERVICES AND EXPANDED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

Based on criteria defined in our VR rules for eligibility for supported employment, and utilizing our case management system, DBVI staff will be able to continue to identify those youth with most significant disabilities who would qualify for supported employment funds. Maine DBVI receives approximately \$48,000 in Supported Employment (SE) funds annually. VR agencies are expected to reserve and expend 50% of these funds for youth with most significant disabilities as well as provide a non-Federal contribution in an amount not less than 10%. Once the SE funds are expended, DBVI can use VR Title I funds in support of activities for youth with most significant disabilities. Also, staff have received trainings on long term supports and the eligibility criteria for consumers for the various state waivers. DBVI continues to have state funds to use for extended services after the VR case is closed.

Further discussion/negotiations of collaboration or leveraging resources will take place when DBVI is working with a youth with a most significant disability that would benefit from extended services.

O. STATE'S STRATEGIES

1. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

DBVI has developed goals and priorities based on identified needs from the most recent DBVI CSNA, Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 (including the common performance measures of section 116 of WIOA), and input from the State Rehabilitation Council. For each goal, objectives and strategies to achieve those objectives were established to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.

Goal 1: To engage Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) clients in Career Pathways that lead to meaningful and quality employment outcomes.

Objective: Increase employment outcomes that lead to self-sufficiency and/or decreased public benefits of DBVI clients through promotion of Career Pathway planning representing a shift in focus of job attainment to one of a career for economic success.

Strategies:

1.
 - a. Continue to promote Career Pathway models through staff trainings and use of technical assistance.

- b. Prepare DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients to be successful in a full range of secondary or post-secondary education options, including apprenticeships.
- c. Improve the Comprehensive Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs (CARNS) of clients by providing training to VR counselors on various assessment tools/databases to include use of Labor Market Information (LMI) and workforce trends, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) arenas, use of O*NET and other occupational databases, as well as accessing Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partner resources.
- d. Increase emphasis in matching skills and abilities of DBVI VR clients with vocational planning that aligns with the skill needs in the economy of the state or regional economy to achieve potential for family sustaining wage growth.

Objective: Increase exposure and use of apprenticeship and self-employment strategies for DBVI VR clients.

Strategies:

- 1.
 - a. As part of CARNS training, promote use of Apprenticeship and Self-Employment as a viable/preferred approach to Career Pathways.
 - b. Work with MDOL Apprenticeship Program and DBVI/DVR partners to ensure that job seekers with visual impairments are included in the growth and expansion of apprenticeships in Maine.
 - c. Introduce use of Apprenticeship models to the Rehabilitation Center located at the Iris Network and the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) program in an effort to develop additional career pathways for persons who are blind and visually impaired.
 - d. Reestablish DBVI/DVR Self-Employment Focus Group(s), comprised of VR counselors, Small Business Development Center business consultants, and Client Assistance Program staff, and provide training and technical assistance to DBVI staff and consumers engaged in Self-Employment.

Goal 2: To increase measurable skill gains and credential attainment of DBVI clients in alignment with WIOA deliverables.

Objective: To become more proficient in identifying and capturing Measurable Skills Gain (MSG) and credential attainment.

Strategies:

- 1. DBVI will continue working with WINTAC for technical assistance and in educating staff regarding understanding of MSG and credential obtainment.
- 2. CARNS and New Counselor training will have focused components on MSG and credential obtainment.
- 3. DBVI will increase staff competence in use of AwareVR in tracking and recording of MSG and credential obtainment.

4. DBVI will work with HospitalityMaine in use of the Workhands App to track and record MSG and credential obtainment.

Goal 3: To deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to youth who are blind and visually impaired, assisting them to successfully live and work independently in the community.

Objective: Increase and expand services to blind and visually impaired youth and students.

Strategies:

1. Continue to work with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) members such as representatives from Catholic Charities Maine, Iris Network, and the Department of Education, to identify Pre-ETS activities/programs that can be provided to potentially eligible or eligible students.
2. Increase the number of students who are referred to the VR program as part of their individualized educational plan (IEP). This will be done in part through consultation with Blindness Rehabilitation Specialists (BLRS) who connect families with transitional and community resources. DBVI staff will be members of the IEP team.
3. Hold regional meetings with DBVI staff, and contracted partners including Catholic Charities Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) toward the beginning of each school year to determine VR eligibility on all students 14 years of age and older.
4. Continue to make optimal use and expansion of Maine-based immersion centers to offer summer programs, including blindness rehabilitation, independent living, work experiences and college preparation. Current programs include College Prep, Living On Your Own (LOYO), Learning, Independence, Fun, Employment (LIFE) 101 and 102, all of which include use of Assistive Technology (AT), Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT), Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC), Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and Orientation and Mobility Instructors (O&M). Sessions for parents to educate them on resources, encourage independence with their kids, and a question and answer (Q&A) sessions are also to be offered.
5. Continued and increased implementation of Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) and Pre-Employment Skills Groups where students are encouraged to engage in community, develop Activities of Daily Living (ADL's) and Interdisciplinary Learning (IDL's,) explore area businesses and event centers, and attend information workshops/seminars. School personnel associated with Blind and Visually Impaired students are contacted early each school year and made aware of these planned events and are invited to attend/provide input. Creation a summer youth employment, job shadow, Community Based Situational Assessment (CBSA), job club and/or work internship experience for all students by age 16.

Goal 4: To ensure that a larger number of individuals, with disabilities, who may be unserved or underserved or have minority status, have access to DBVI services.

Objective: DBVI will work with WIOA core and other Government partners to address the transportation needs regionally.

Strategies:

1. DBVI staff will provide input to DOT, providers of public transportation and to core partners regarding accessibility needs of our consumers. Input shall include for example accessible route maps, large print bus schedules/routes, audible street crossings, tactile pads and lighting/contrast consultation.
2. DBVI has designated staff to consult with transportation departments regarding transit studies, bicycle access, bus programming and staff meetings.
3. DBVI attends Transportation For All and Public Notice meetings issued by DOT.

Objective: DBVI will work with Maine's Section 121 VR Grant – Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation to identify and increased number of individuals eligible to be served by both programs.

Strategies:

1. Maine DBVI will include Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation in training and technical assistance opportunities offered or funded by DBVI.
2. A representative from the Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation will participate on DBVI's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)
3. The Wabanaki VR Program will provide technical assistance to Maine DBVI on issues related to cultural competency and best practices in Native American employment supports.
4. DBVI will provide in-service training to staff at tribal health or community centers of the four Maine tribes (Passamaquoddy Tribe, Penobscot Indian Nation, Houlton Band of Maliseets, and Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians) including DBVI/DVR New Counselor Training upon request.

Objective: DBVI will continue its efforts to cultivate a statewide communication network for consumers who are deaf-blind or dual sensory impaired (hearing and vision) to assist in their endeavors for employment and independent living.

Strategies:

1. Work with collaborative partners to increase training opportunities for Deaf-Blind Interpreters and Support Service Providers (SSP's).
2. Collaborate with Helen Keller National Center on resources, outreach, hearing aid access.and availability of funds..
3. Provide feedback and information on new legislation regarding insurance cost for hearing aids to the Division.
4. Designate DBVI staff to attend regional deaf-blind or dual sensory forums (for example 2019 Tri-State Meeting) and identify funding for Support Service Professionals (SSP).
5. DBVI staff will provide training to Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs), with an emphasis around learning basic, introductory Orientation and Mobility techniques for supporting deaf-blind or dual sensory clients in the workplace.

6. Collaborate on the creation of on-line webinars on Independent Living (IL) equipment and devices to enhance independence for deaf-blind or dual sensory loss clients and increase access to equipment available through ICANCONNECT.org.

Objective: DBVI will work to expand the number of New Mainers, who are receiving services from the agency.

Strategies:

1. DBVI will communicate with advocacy organizations, such as American Council for the Blind, National Federation for the Blind, Pine Tree Guide Dog Users, to identify New Mainers who would benefit from DBVI VR services.
2. DBVI, upon request, provide informational sessions and trainings to service agencies who provide case management and other services to New Mainers. DBVI provides in-person and online orientations describing our eligibility requirements, service delivery and program requirements to job seekers.

Objective: DBVI will continue its efforts to identify minorities with the most significant disabilities who are blind or visually impaired to assist in their endeavors for employment and independent living.

Strategies:

1. DBVI will provide outreach to clinics/medical professionals in communities known to serve immigrant communities, such as Lewiston and Portland.
2. DBVI will provide outreach to community support programs known to work with immigrant populations (i.e. Maine Immigrant and Refugee Services and Catholic Charities)

Goal 5: To increase awareness of services and resources for individuals who are blind or have low vision.

Objective: DBVI will become more publicly visible and recognized as a primary source of information and services for individuals with visual impairments, as well as their families and employers.

Strategies:

1. With input from the SRC, DBVI's website will be updated and made more helpful to end users. DBVI will continue to focus on accessibility as updates are made.
2. DBVI contractors will be required to include acknowledgement of Rehabilitation Services Administration DBVI grant funding on program materials and public documents.
3. DBVI and contracted partners will provide uniform services across the state.

Objective: DBVI will work with the Maine blindness community to promote the services and resources available to individuals who are blind or have low vision.

Strategies:

1. Maine DBVI staff will provide in-service trainings to other service providers, such as Community Rehabilitation Providers, within their region.
2. Maine DBVI Staff will provide service awareness and assistive technology/adaptive device activities for consumers and organizations within their regions.
3. DBVI will coordinate cooperative training with Maine Department of Transportation (DOT).
4. DBVI will work with its contracted partners to create a more organized and centralized public education effort.
5. DBVI will continue to explore collaboration with the Veteran's Administration Blind Rehabilitation program to streamline the referral process between the two agencies.
6. Encourage all staff to regularly attend local Lions Club meetings in an effort to promote DBVI services and resources.
7. Maine DBVI staff and contracted partners will provide service awareness to doctors within their region.

2. HOW A BROAD RANGE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND DEVICES WILL BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AT EACH STAGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS AND ON A STATEWIDE BASIS

Assistive technology needs are identified and provided through a number of channels. For clients entering or actively engaged in the VR process, Orientation and Mobility Instructors and/or Vision Rehabilitation Therapist may be asked to perform an initial or on-going assessment of a clients home or workplace to address barriers to employment. This often results in recommendations of needed equipment/technology to address those barriers. Requests for technology are also received directly from active clients throughout the VR process including when starting employment, from Educational partners when college disability programs are unable to provide the needed technology, from Occupational and/or Physical Therapist working with our clients and from eye doctors/eye specialists. Once a request is made and assessed for need and comparable benefits, technology is then delivered and demonstrated by the appropriate discipline and often involve consultation from an Assistive Technology expert.

DBVI and its contracted partners continue to seek access to and training in assistive technology/devices through its collaboration with training and equipment loan programs such as Maine CITE, AllTech and Alpha One, and through equipment demonstrations offered at conferences, seminars and through on-line videos and product dissemination so staff are knowledgeable regarding technology and able to keep up with the ever evolving changes. This allows each team member to provide assistance with technology to DBVI consumers throughout their rehabilitation process, from the VR counselor to the O&M specialist, as well as the contracted Vision Rehabilitation Specialist. This approach is used for all consumers of all ages and across the state.

3. THE OUTREACH PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST

SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR
UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM

Goal #4 identifies outreach procedures used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities, such as minorities with the most significant disabilities as well as those unserved or underserved:

To ensure that a larger number of individuals, with disabilities, who may be unserved or underserved or have minority status, have access to DBVI services.

Objective: DBVI will work with WIOA core and other Government partners to address the transportation needs regionally.

Strategies:

1.
 - a. DBVI staff will provide input to DOT, providers of public transportation and to core partners regarding accessibility needs of our consumers. Input shall include for example accessible route maps, large print bus schedules/routes, audible street crossings, tactile pads and lighting/contrast consultation.
 - b. DBVI has designated staff to consult with transportation departments regarding transit studies, bicycle access, bus programming and staff meetings.
 - c. DBVI attends Transportation For All and Public Notice meetings issued by DOT.

Objective: DBVI will work with Maine's Section 121 VR Grant – Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation to identify and increased number of individuals eligible to be served by both programs.

Strategies:

1.
 - a. Maine DBVI will include Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation in training and technical assistance opportunities offered or funded by DBVI.
 - b. A representative from the Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation will participate on DBVI's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)
 - c. The Wabanaki VR Program will provide technical assistance to Maine DBVI on issues related to cultural competency and best practices in Native American employment supports.
 - d. DBVI will provide in-service training to staff at tribal health or community centers of the four Maine tribes (Passamaquoddy Tribe, Penobscot Indian Nation, Houlton Band of Maliseets, and Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians) including DBVI/DVR New Counselor Training upon request.

Objective: DBVI will continue its efforts to cultivate a statewide communication network for consumers who are deaf-blind or dual sensory impaired (hearing and vision) to assist in their endeavors for employment and independent living.

Strategies:

1.
 - a. Work with collaborative partners to increase training opportunities for Deaf-Blind Interpreters and Support Service Providers (SSP's).
 - b. Collaborate with Helen Keller National Center on hearing aid access and funding sources.
 - c. Provide feedback and information on new legislation regarding insurance cost for hearing aids to the Division.
 - d. Designate DBVI staff to attend regional deaf-blind or dual sensory forums (for example 2019 Tri-State Meeting) and identify funding for Support Service Professionals (SSP).
 - e. DBVI staff will provide outreach to Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs), with an emphasis around learning basic, introductory Orientation and Mobility techniques for supporting deaf-blind or dual sensory clients in the workplace.
 - f. Collaborate on the creation of on-line webinars on Independent Living (IL) equipment and devices to enhance independence for deaf-blind or dual sensory loss clients and increase access to equipment available through ICANCONNECT.org.

Objective: DBVI attempt to expand the number of New Mainers who are receiving services from the agency.

Strategies:

1.
 - a. DBVI will communicate with advocacy organizations to identify New Mainers who would benefit from DBVI VR services.
 - b. DBVI, upon request, provide informational sessions and trainings to service agencies who provide case management and other services to New Mainers. DBVI provides in-person and online orientations describing our eligibility requirements, service delivery and program requirements to job seekers.

4. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES)

DBVI will focus on Goal 3: To deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to youth who are blind and visually impaired, assisting them to successfully live and work independently in the community as a method to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, postsecondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services).

Objective: Increase and expand services to blind and visually impaired youth and students.

Strategies:

1. Continue to work with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to identify Pre-ETS activities/programs that can be provided to potentially eligible or eligible students.
2. Increase the number of students who are referred to the VR program as part of their educational plan. This will be done in part through the case management by the Blindness Rehabilitation Specialists (BLRS) who connect families with transitional and community resources.
3. Hold regional meetings with DBVI staff, and contracted partners including Catholic Charities Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) toward the beginning of each school year to determine VR eligibility on all students 14 years of age and older.
4. Continue to make optimal use and expansion of Maine-based immersion centers to offer summer programs, including blindness rehabilitation, independent living, work experiences and college preparation. Current programs include College Prep, Living On Your Own (LOYO), Learning, Independence, Fun, Employment (LIFE) 101 and 102, all of which include use of Assistive Technology (AT), Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT), Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC), Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and Orientation and Mobility Instructors (O&M). Sessions for parents to educate them on resources, independence with their kids, and a question and answer (Q&A) sessions are also to be offered.

Continued and increased implementation of Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) and Pre-Employment Skills Groups where students are encouraged to engage in community, develop Activities of Daily Living (ADL's) and Interdisciplinary Learning (IDL's,) explore area businesses and event centers, and attend information workshops/seminars. School personnel associated with Blind and Visually Impaired students are contacted early each school year and made aware of these planned events and are invited to attend/provide input. Creation a summer youth employment, job shadow, Community Based Situational Assessment (CBSA), job club and/or work internship experience for all students by age 16.

5. IF APPLICABLE, PLANS FOR ESTABLISHING, DEVELOPING, OR IMPROVING COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE

While DBVI has not had the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State, the agency has pursued a new payment structure that is designed to better support contractual agreements with community rehabilitation providers while reinforcing the importance to client outcomes of timely and available services.

6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

DBVI is a partner with Adult Education, the SWIB, and the larger workforce development system to incorporate and apply the new rules related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), including drafting a unified state plan adopting new performance measures and further collaboration with the One-Stop system. DBVI is a member of the Maine WIOA steering committee, which is guiding the Act's implementation, and also has staff participating on multiple related sub-committees.

DBVI will be using wage data from the Maine Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance to establish baseline and initial WIOA performance targets for employment outcomes. In addition to Maine UI wage data, Maine will access State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) data by submitting regularly scheduled data requests. BRS has contracted with the National Student Clearinghouse and will access data from that source on a regular basis to document credential attainment, both academic and occupational. BRS is also developing a data sharing agreement with Maine's Department of Education, to assist with documenting adult, secondary and career and technical credentials and measurable skill gains. The agreement is expected to be in place within PY 2019.

DBVI presented a is providing ongoing training to all staff so that they have a solid working knowledge of WIOA and how it impacts the work they do. Training topics have included: an overview of WIOA partners; common performance measures, career pathways and best practices in serving the needs of employers. BRS has an intensive technical assistance agreement in place with WINTAC to assist with this effort and to further their expertise on Common Performance Measures, Internal Controls, Career Pathways, Apprenticeships and Peer Mentoring.

BRS and its core partners are using the Maine Job Link as a common data collection tool for performance data regarding Effectiveness in Serving Employers.

7. STRATEGIES FOR ASSISTING OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

DBVI participated in the development of a 6-part series with a WIOA overview and partner cross training. There are 13 brief webinar links beginning with "WIOA 101: An introduction to the New Law" and ending with the "Youth Program". Included in the zoom trainings were common performance measures, career pathways, youth programming, Center for Workforce Research and Information, Apprenticeship and working with Department of Corrections and the Veterans Administration. This cross training provided partners with information about working with individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

In addition, DBVI meets with WIOA partners to update them on programs/events within DBVI and to discuss strategies for working together to assist individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

W.O.R.K. (Workforce Opportunities Referrals and Knowledge) Services is Maine's new online portal created to provide participants with access to statewide and local employment, education, and disability related resources. Participants of W.O.R.K Services have the option to share basic information with the Bureau of Employment Services, Adult Education, and the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services. DBVI consumers have access to this portal.

8. HOW THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

DBVI developed strategies that will help them attain their goals/objectives. DBVI will continue to educate partners, other state agencies, and private organizations about working with blind or visually impaired consumers. DBVI will communicate with advocacy organizations to identify New Mainers who would benefit from DBVI VR services. DBVI, upon request, will provide informational sessions and trainings to service agencies who provide case management and other services to New Mainers. DBVI provides in-person and online orientations describing our eligibility requirements, service delivery and program requirements to job seekers.

Transportation was identified in the CSNA as an on-going unmet need. DBVI staff will provide input to DOT, providers of public transportation and to core partners regarding accessibility needs of our consumers. Input shall include for example accessible route maps, large print bus schedules/routes, audible street crossings, tactile pads and lighting/contrast consultation. DBVI has designated staff to consult with transportation departments regarding transit studies, bicycle access, bus programming and staff meetings. DBVI attends Transportation For All and Public Notice meetings issued by DOT.

There was a need for increased awareness of the DBVI services identified in the CSNA. Maine DBVI staff will provide in-service trainings to other service providers within their region. DBVI Staff will provide service awareness and assistive technology/adaptive device activities for consumers and the general public within their regions. DBVI will coordinate cooperative training with Maine Department of Transportation (DOT). DBVI will work with its main contractors to create a more organized and centralized public education effort. DBVI will continue to explore collaboration with the Veteran's Administration Blind Rehabilitation program to streamline the referral process between the two agencies. DBVI will encourage all staff to regularly attend local Lions Club meetings. DBVI staff and contracted partners will provide service awareness to doctors within their region.

B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

Title I resources continue to be used for development and expansion of assistive technology and low vision rehabilitation services for DBVI consumers in collaboration with all of our blindness rehabilitation services partners throughout the state.

DBVI continues to seek access and training in assistive technology through its collaboration with training and equipment loan programs such as Maine CITE, AllTech and Alpha One, and through equipment demonstrations offered at conferences, seminars and through on-line videos and product dissemination. DBVI O&M instructors seek and disseminate feedback regarding service and equipment needs, available resources and emerging technologies through quarterly meetings and on-line discussion portals. DBVI recently purchased a number of O & M requested technologies to allow for decreased dependence on loan programs, improved access to technologies for our clients and greater flexibility in providing that access.

C. OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM.

Many DBVI consumers often need assistive technology to overcome barriers to have equitable access to services and employment. VRCs are trained in assistive technology available to consumers who are blind and visually impaired as well as providers available to train on this technology. Orientation and Mobility Specialists and Vision Rehabilitation Therapists are also trained on the assistive technology devices/services that are available. When barriers are identified through working with consumers, staff are knowledgeable and able to make appropriate recommendations for assistive technology/devices for the consumer. One example is when a DBVI consumer was hired for a reception position. Assistive technology (JAWS) was needed for the computer to overcome a barrier, which DBVI staff was able to discuss with the employer and provide information on purchase and any training that would be required. DBVI also provided training and information to other partners/employees within the building to give them a better understanding of working with an individual who is blind or visually impaired.

P. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

1. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

Below are the goals described in the FY 2016 approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan for the most recently completed program year, along with activities that took place and progress made on the goals, and strategies used to help DBVI towards achieving those goals.

Goal 1: To stabilize DBVI's financial situation, ensuring that expenditures are budgeted consistently within existing and available federal and state funds.

Objective: DBVI's operational expenses will be equal to its federal grant award and matching state funds, allowing re-allotment funds to serve as a reserve in times of budget constraints, such as federal continuing resolutions, and a resource for one-time initiatives that will benefit people who are blind and visually impaired in Maine.

Strategies:

1. Further develop budget reports with the Department of Administrative and Financial Services (DAFS) to better monitor and manage expenditures in real time. In accordance with State of Maine procurement policies and procedures, ensure that the required and necessary services for the education of blind children are available July 1, 2016 after the current contract expires.

UPDATE: DBVI and DAFS have worked collaboratively over the last in PY18 through PY20 to improve budget reports to better monitor and manage expenditures for each reporting period. DBVI staff meet with DAFS on a monthly basis (and frequently in between) to review the reports and to ensure that the budgets are accurate and that DBVI is meeting all the federal and state budget requirements.

1. In accordance with State of Maine procurement policies and procedures, ensure that the required and necessary services for community-based vision rehabilitation services are available July 1, 2016 after the current contract expires.

UPDATE: DBVI has continued to secure an annual contract since this one expired. Negotiations took place each year with the Iris Network staff and DBVI staff to ensure that the required and necessary services were available at a reasonable, cost effective price.

Goal 2: To increase successful competitive employment outcomes for DBVI clients.

Objective: Reduce the amount of time it takes to achieve a competitive employment outcome for DBVI clients from 54 months in FFY 2010 to 31 months in FFY 2013, to 27 months in FFY 2015 and to 26 months for FFY2017.

Strategies:

1. Continue re-establishment of a center-based blindness rehabilitation facility in Maine that utilizes an immersion model to teach blindness skills in a manner that can be easily integrated into work activities and transferred to an employment setting.

Update (PY18): The Rehabilitation Center opened in September 2015. Often it takes some time with new programs to determine what is working and what is not working. A group comprised of Iris Network staff, and DBVI staff, both direct service and administrative, meet quarterly to review the progress/program at the center. Modifications are made to improve services to consumers. Since the opening of the Rehabilitation Center, at least 33 individuals were involved in some programming at the center. Some received only assessments while others completed the entire program. Eleven of the twenty-seven graduates have worked since completing the program, which is a 41% success rate. For PY19, there were many individuals that either went through a full program at the Center or a truncated, less comprehensive program to achieve employment targets. DBVI has continued to work with the Iris Network to tailor the program to increase exposure.

1. Expand the use of assistive technology to increase the rate of competitive closures.

UPDATE: Maine DBVI has been successful in using assistive technology in the placement of successful closures. One example is the use of JAWS for two receptionist positions has allowed them to be very successful at their jobs.

Objective: Contribute to Maine's WIOA Performance Accountability and Unified Plan measures by increasing the number of successful competitive employment outcomes for individuals who receive services from DBVI from 30 in FFY 2015 to 36 in FFY 2017.

Strategies:

1. Work with WIOA core partners at MDOL and Adult Education to ensure that job seekers with visual impairments are included in the growth and diversification of Maine's workforce.
2. Increase DBVI's relevance to employers through technical assistance and support regarding vision loss, rehabilitation technology and employment.
3. Refer and support participation of six DBVI clients at the Iris Rehabilitation Center at any given time through Individualized Plans for Employment.
4. Deliver at least one session of the DBVI Employability Skills Program every other year to clients who are long-term unemployed/underemployed or otherwise are stuck in job seeking.

UPDATE: Maine DBVI has been successful in PY20, working with core partners at MDOL and Adult Education to participate in cross-training for staff. This allowed other MDOL staff to gain a better understanding of the services that DBVI provides as well as provided DBVI staff with a greater knowledge of other programs that might benefit DBVI consumers. There was also training on blindness skills/knowledge at the regional levels. DBVI staff provided blindness etiquette and other trainings to many of the core partners.

Objective: Implement new WIOA regulations that affect individuals who have been historically served through DBVI's VR program with the goal of "homemaker."

Strategies:

1. Assist current DBVI clients to achieve the goals outlined in their IPE.
2. Assess newly referred clients to determine if they can be served under the VR program through IPE's that identify competitive employment goals but start with blindness

rehabilitation and independent living skill development services. Provide staff training and supervisory support in the development of these types of plans.

3. For new referrals that cannot be served under the VR program, provide IL case management and track needs that are unmet due to absence of resources.
4. Seek advice and advocacy from the SRC's homemaker workgroup for individuals with visual impairments who may be negatively affected by these changes.

UPDATE: DBVI VR counselors continued to assist clients to achieve their goals. With the implementation of WIOA, DSUs could continue to provide services to individuals with uncompensated employment goals on their IPEs that were approved prior to the effective date of the final regulations through June 30, 2017, unless a longer period of time was required based on the needs of the individual as documented in the individual's service record. After this date, any new applicants who were not interested in work but needed some blindness rehabilitation skills, entered the IL program. Maine DBVI was successful during this period to attain some additional general fund appropriation to either match the federal OIB grant or use for those individuals under the age of 55 that needed independent living services. DBVI worked very closely with the SRC homemaker group through this process. The group was then disbanded.

Goal 3: To deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to youth who are blind and visually impaired, assisting them to successfully live and work independently in the community.

Objective: Use the equivalent of 15% of DBVI's federal allotment to serve students who are blind and visually impaired.

Strategies:

1. Receive assistance from the SRC's workgroup in identifying ways that Pre-ETS can be provided that will make the best use of the funds that must be set aside.
2. Increase the number of students who are referred to the VR program as part of their educational plan. This will be done in part through the case management by the Blindness Rehabilitation Specialists (BLRS) who connect families with transitional and community resources.
3. Hold regional meetings with DBVI staff, and contracted partners toward the beginning of each school year to determine VR eligibility on all students 14 years of age and older.
4. Make optimal use of the existence of a Maine-based immersion center to offer summer programs, including blindness rehabilitation, independent living, work experiences and college preparation. College preparation will include AT, VRT, VRC- vocational, volunteer, O&M. Another planned program is for those 8th – 12th graders not planning on pursuing a college program. Another anticipated program at the immersion center will focus on volunteer, CBSA's, work experiences, job club, VRT, AT, and O&M skills. There is a planned session for parents to educate them on resources, independence with their kids, and a Q&A session.
5. Create a summer youth employment, job shadow, CBSA, job club and/or work internship experience for all students by age 16.

UPDATE: DBVI continues to expand its understanding and engagement of Pre-ETS related activities and services.

The 4th iteration (every other year) of the college prep program was conducted in PY18. The program ran for 5 weeks from July 8 – August 10 for 8 students who are visually impaired. The mission is to identify students who may or may not be ready for college and provide opportunities to help prepare them for secondary education. Students live at the UMaine Orono in Somerset Hall and eat at the Memorial Union and Hilltop commons cafeteria. They are enrolled in a 3 credit English course (Eng. 129) which meets every weekday. They also participate in a 5x per week seminar and 6x per week learning labs. They also participate some evenings and Saturdays in recreational activities in which they can gain and practice their skills in the area of blindness rehabilitation. New in 2018, students participated in a paid work experience for the 5 weeks.

DBVI in collaboration with our contracted partners, CCME and the Iris Network, developed a modified versions of previous summer youth programs (Life 101 & 201). Our Transition Consultants and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors noted a shift in needs for the transition aged youth. Many of these high school students have not had the opportunity to practice skills independently. In fact, many had never been away from home overnight without their families. Most of these students have multiple disabilities and/or protective families who have been reluctant to allow them to participate in typical activities of their peers- overnight sleepovers, staying home alone, grocery shopping, household chores etc. LOYO (Living on Your Own) was developed to address some of these needs and, at minimum, provide an opportunity to “try out” some of these typical adolescent experiences in a safe environment with support.

The first LOYO program was held in the summer of 2018. Five students and staff lived on the Bowdoin College campus. They were required to utilize problem solving skills that could be transferred to home, school and work environments. The teens worked on socialization, group dynamics, self-awareness, personal strengths, peer relationships, decision making, personal safety, home safety and home management. Some of the activities included: grocery shopping, preparing meals, cleaning, changed light bulbs, using a toilet plunger and even climbing out of a window in the Brunswick Fire Dept. smoke house! The program also encouraged parent participation. Prior to the start of the program, parents completed a survey to identify their son/daughter’s level of independence within their home, school and community. Parents participated in facilitated discussion around independence and future goals for their son/daughter. Parents had the opportunity to observe their child’s progress through a closed group Facebook page.

LOYO on the Go 2019 was modeled after the 2018 program but with more focus on travel skills. Students still practiced independent living skills but spent a good portion of the day being introduced and/or practicing the orientation & mobility skills needed to live and work in the community. The development of these “work readiness” skills is an especially important component of the Pre-Employment Transition Services for students who are blind and visually Impaired. Nine students participated in the program.

Students were housed at a Portland hotel and classes and training took place at the Iris Network Rehabilitation Center. A majority of the time was spent out in the community where students worked with Orientation & Mobility Specialists to learn to plan and walk routes, how to use public transportation, introduced to ride share programs (Uber/Lift), safely crossed streets, problem solved travel issues and so much more! Students participated in planning, shopping and preparing meals; using assistive technology to access and process common consumer tasks such as making (secure) online purchases, billing paying and banking. Throughout the program

students will be encouraged to practice self-advocacy and to develop their social skills. They will travel to the Portland Career Center where they will meet with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to discuss interests, goals, strengths and needs relevant to employment. They will also meet with several successfully employed people who are blind and visually impaired.

Pre-Employment Transition Services were an important focus for the LOYO participants in both the 2018 and 2019 programs. There were many opportunities for participants to develop and practice skills that transfer to the work place and community including self-advocacy, work readiness training, independent living skills, “soft” skills and peer mentoring. Creation of a Youth Advisory Committee has been initiated to promote opportunities for youth to influence how DBVI VR approaches and delivers youth and Pre-ETS services.

Maine DBVI has provided Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) for high school students who are blind or visually impaired. The activities were derived from the transition competencies checklist and many students received community service activity credits when they participated. They learned many of the competencies necessary to become a productive member of the workforce as well as to advocate for themselves. These activities have continued to take place over the last few years and have expanded to the northern part of the state.

Goal 4: To ensure that a larger number of individuals, with disabilities, who may be unserved or underserved or have minority status, have access to DBVI services.

Objective: DBVI will work with WIOA core partners to address the transportation needs regionally.

Strategies:

1. DBVI staff will provide input regarding accessibility needs of their consumers.

UPDATE: In PY20, DBVI staff have continued to advocate for their consumers with the WIOA core partners.

Objective: DBVI will work with Maine’s Section 121 VR Grant – Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation to identify an increased number of individuals eligible to be served by both programs.

Strategies:

1. Maine DBVI will include Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation in training and technical assistance opportunities offered or funded by DBVI.
2. A representative from the Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation will participate on DBVI’s State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)
3. The Wabanaki VR Program will provide technical assistance to Maine DBVI on issues related to cultural competency and best practices in Native employment supports.
4. DBVI will provide in-service training to staff at tribal health or community centers of the four Maine tribes (Passamaquoddy Tribe, Penobscot Indian Nation, Houlton Band of Maliseets, and Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians) on an annual basis.

UPDATE: The Director of the Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation program provided training at the 2017 SRC Annual Training.

In PY17, the Acting Director of DBVI and the Director of DVR met with the Director of the Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation to review and revise the MOU. In PY19, the Director of DBVI and the Director of DVR met with the Director of the Wabanaki VR to review and update the MOU.

Maine DBVI and DVR are planning a state diversity training with the Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation program.

Currently the Director of the Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation (WVR) program holds a seat and actively participates on the DBVI SRC. The WVR received another 5-year grant award through 2025.

The Commissioner of Labor, Deputy Commissioner, along with the DVR and DBVI directors met with the Tribal Chief of the Tribal Council, as well as the staff of the Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation program over the summer to discuss collaboration between the two VR programs. Currently DBVI does not have any dual enrolled clients.

Objective: DBVI will continue its efforts to cultivate a communication network for consumers who are deaf-blind or dual sensory impaired (hearing and vision) so there are professional Deaf-Blind Interpreters and Support Service Providers (SSP) available statewide to assist them in their endeavor for employment.

Strategies:

1. Secure funding for coordinated operation of the Maine SSP program.
2. Work with collaborative partners to increase training opportunities for Deaf-Blind Interpreters and SSP's.
3. Encourage more deaf-blind/dual sensory impaired consumers to take an active role on the steering committee working on the interpreting and SSP project.
4. Work with collaborative partners to identify funding for SSP's.
5. Expand the number of trained SSP's in the northern half of the state (Waterville and north).
6. Provide outreach activities in three areas across the state to introduce the SSP project to persons with dual sensory impairment.

UPDATE: In Maine, there continues to be limited SSPs on a volunteer basis through the University of Southern Maine's (USM) programming. There continues to be gaps in the services due to the lack of providers during summer and school breaks. DBVI has continued to meet and have discussions about these services with multiple organizations, e.g., Division of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened, USM, Helen Keller National Center, Department of Human Services, and Disability Rights Maine. Maine DBVI staff attended the initial tri-state collaboration meeting to identify needs of deaf-blind/dual sensory impaired consumers and has plans to continue to attend future meetings.

Objective: DBVI attempt to expand the number of New Mainers who are receiving services from the agency.

Strategies:

1. DBVI will communicate with advocacy organizations to identify New Mainers who would benefit from DBVI VR services.

UPDATE: DBVI discusses VR services to all individuals including New Mainers at the DBVI SRC bi-monthly meetings. This is an opportunity to identify New Mainers or ways to increase referrals for New Mainers.

DBVI, upon request, provide informational sessions and trainings to service agencies who provide case management and other services to New Mainers. DBVI provides in-person and online orientations describing our eligibility requirements, service delivery and program requirements to job seekers.

Goal 5: To increase awareness of services and resources for individuals who are blind or have low vision.

Objective: DBVI will become more publicly visible and recognized as a primary source of information and services for individuals with visual impairments, as well as their families and employers.

Strategies:

1. With input from the SRC, DBVI's website will be updated and made more helpful to end users.
2. DBVI contractors will be required to include acknowledgement of Rehabilitation Services DBVI grant funding on program materials and public documents.
3. DBVI and contracted partners will provide congruent services across the state.

UPDATE: Although DBVI's website has had some minor updates, there are plans to completely redo the current website. DBVI is working with the Communications office of the DOL toward the development of a Facebook page where program information can be shared in an accessible platform.

DBVI contracted partners are acknowledging RSA's grant funding that they receive from DBVI in all public documents. DBVI staff and contracted partners meet regularly to discuss the provision of services for consistency across the state.

Objective: DBVI will work with the Maine blindness community to promote the services and resources available to individuals who are blind or have low visions.

Strategies:

1. Maine DBVI staff will provide in-service trainings to other service providers within their region.
2. Maine DBVI Staff will provide service awareness and assistive technology/adaptive device activities for consumers and the general public within their regions.
3. DBVI will coordinate cooperative training with Maine Department of Transportation.
4. DBVI will work with its main contractors to create a more organized and more centralized public education effort.
5. DBVI will continue to explore collaboration with the Veteran's Administration Blind Rehabilitation program to streamline the referral process between the two agencies.
6. Encourage all staff to regularly attend local Lions Club meetings.

7. Maine DBVI staff and contracted partners will provide service awareness to doctors within their region.

UPDATE: DBVI staff continue to work with the Maine blindness community to promote services and resources to individuals who are blind or have low vision. Some examples are:

In PY18 – DBVI staff provided a 2-hour presentation to staff at University of Maine, Learning Center (Bryant Pond). Staff worked to help them better understand the needs of folks who are blind who attend their programs. They walked through the “school program” that is used and made appropriate recommendations and aided them in some temporary braille signage. The Learning Center is interested in having DBVI consult from time/time and would definitely be interested in having our students do a field trip to use their outdoor site/staff to do some adventuresome outdoor activities (archery, low & high ropes, zip line, animal and plant exploration, along with basic outdoor education).

In PY18 – DBVI staff met for 1.5 hours on the streets of Saco with 3 DOT (one of which is DOT ADA coordinator) and 1 local traffic engineer to look at a recent project on Rte. 1 (downtown Saco) where attempts to be ADA accessible have failed. DOT was looking for expertise and information regarding blind and visually impaired travelers in this area and how best to remedy the accessibility issues.

In PY18 – DBVI presented at the University of Maine, Farmington’s Rehabilitation 102 class. The topic: What is blindness rehabilitation and what careers exist in that field? There was one instructor and 12 undergraduate students majoring in various fields – rehabilitation, special education, psychology, data and statistics – in attendance. The format was lecture and demonstration. Introductory vocabulary was explored. Multiple aids and devices were demonstrated and circulated as well as some of the techniques taught to persons who are blind and visually impaired. There was audience participation. The attendees did various tasks with the aids and devices. A discussion of the various professions in blind rehab were discussed – COMS, CLVT, CVRT, CATIS, TVI, VRC, and Adjustment Counselor.

IN PY19 – A former DBVI VR client and DBVI staff did a 50-minute public outreach at the Watershed School in Camden. There were 20 high school students and two staff members in attendance. The students learned human guide technique and navigated with white canes while wearing simulator goggles.

In PY19 – DBVI and contracted staff completed an in-service with four 4th-grade classes at SeDoMoCha Elementary School. This training focused on general information about what it is like to work with individuals who are blind or visually impaired, what does it actually mean to be blind or visually impaired, the student’s experiences with this population, as well as answering any questions. All the students in the 4 different classes were very engaged and had very thoughtful, appropriate questions and input. The training also focused on White Cane Awareness Day (October 15), and discussed what the white cane is, rules around the white cane (Maine’s White Cane Law), and how it is used by someone who is visually impaired.

In PY19 – DBVI staff completed an in-service training to 3 faculty and 20 University of Maine at Farmington First-Year students. The group participated in a simulation activity, the purpose of which was to expose these students to some of the work in the blindness rehabilitation field as they are contemplating declaring their major.

In PY19 – DBVI O&M staff provided Sensitivity training and O&M presentation to UMaine Residential Advisors (RA) on the Orono campus. There were approximately 80 RAs and UMaine staff present. Discussed was Orientation and Mobility, White Canes, Human Guide, Types of

Visual Impairments and Supportive Strategies, as well as completion of a blindfold sensitivity training. Supportive Strategies Handouts were provided to all in attendance. The blindfold experience was discussed with questions answered. Later, a meeting with the RA staff from Oak Hall occurred to discuss specific issues for incoming student.

In PY19 – DBVI staff presented with a contracted partner at the YWCA in Bar Harbor. Approximately 14 people were in attendance for the presentation. Discussed was Vision Rehabilitation Services, including DBVI, Iris Network, eye conditions, referral process, VRT, and O&M. For O&M specifically, the group reviewed definitions, white canes, various marking tapes, human guide, guide dogs, ways to assist/describe and safe walking practices.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

One factor that impeded DBVI attaining some of the goals and objectives was human resources. The division experienced a large turnover in VRCs during this past performance period, as well as over 50% turnover in the administrative support to the VRCs. The need for training in the new roles and learning regulations, takes away from direct service to clients. VRCs need to learn the VR process, the case management system, and understand the federal regulations, such as pre-employment transition services. Although DBVI will have another staff person cover a caseload during a vacancy, this results in less time for direct service to clients until the new VRC is in place. This generally results in fewer closures and would impact the division's delivery of pre-employment transition services.

Another DBVI goal is to increase awareness of services and resources. Again, there is an impact of new staff on the delivery of this goal. Staff need to be oriented to DBVI services and trained on the resources prior to providing that information to existing or potential clients. This would also have an impact on working with WIOA partners. There was a cross training available to all DBVI staff in PY20 pertaining to all the WIOA partners. The concept is the cross training will allow all the partners to have a better understanding of each other's services, so staff can better serve clients without duplication of services and in the most timely, cost efficient manner.

The division's outreach has an increased focus on transition-aged students (14 -21) and their families. With a larger emphasis on working with/including families to better understand the abilities of their student, scheduling can impede the process causing it to take longer.

Transportation in the rural state of Maine continues to be a challenge and is not always readily available, making it difficult for consumers to get to the outreach opportunities and therefore lack the knowledge of DBVI services. This lack of transportation also makes it difficult for some consumers to get to their place of employment, a job interview, work experience or even a job shadow.

2. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUPPLEMENT FOR THE MOST RECENT PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

Supported Employment Program - The Division has remained committed to assuring that individuals with the most significant disabilities receive supported employment services when

this is appropriate. An Individual Plan of Employment (IPE) is developed that describes the services provided, the need for extended services, if appropriate, and an assurance that the individual has been able to make an informed choice in the provision of these services and the goal itself.

The majority of supported employment services are being provided to individuals who are blind or have low vision along with developmental disabilities or with severe and prolonged mental illness.

The Division identified thirty-one individuals who would benefit from supported employment services in FFY19. Twenty of these were adults and eleven were identified as youth with a significant disability.

Five adults did not achieve their supported employment goals and were closed; one did achieve their goal and was closed successfully; there are three in employed status working towards achieving their goal; and eleven are in service status continuing with their rehabilitation process.

Ten youth with a significant disability are reported in service status and continue to work on achieving employment. One youth with a significant disability did not achieve his goal; his guardian was difficult to reach by both DBVI staff and the TVI and he was closed unsuccessfully.

In Maine, transportation continues to be difficult to obtain. VRCs strategize early on in the process with clients to determine a transportation plan. Having a solid transportation plan in place has proven to be very beneficial for the success of the client's employment.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Supported Employment (SE) regulations were affected with the passing of WIOA, allowing states a longer period of time to provide services to youth with a significant disability who required supported employment services. However, a change that made the spending of SE funds challenging was that costs were not allowed to be captured as SE until the individual was placed in employment status. This meant that many costs building up to that SE placement were no longer allowed as SE, placing a larger burden on Title I funds. The changes were meant to strengthen the SE program but there was an inverse effect in many ways.

Also, the funds were specifically earmarked for certain populations, restricting spending to adults if the equivalent expenditures were not made within the youth budget. This change also put a greater fiscal burden on the Title I funds.

Another factor that impeded the achievement of the goals/priorities was the lack of follow through by the consumers and/or guardians. For the youth with a significant disability, it was often difficult to connect with the guardian thereby causing time delays.

The majority of supported employment services are being provided to individuals who are blind or have low vision along with developmental disabilities or with severe and prolonged mental illness. It could take awhile to find the appropriate placement for some individuals as the goals changed frequently which also would impede the achievement of attaining the goals.

3. THE VR PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

DBVI is a partner with Adult Education, the SWIB, and the larger workforce development system to incorporate and apply the new rules related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), including drafting a unified state plan adopting new performance measures and further collaboration with the One-Stop system. DBVI is a member of the Maine WIOA steering committee, which is guiding the Act's implementation, and also has participants on multiple related sub-committees.

In accordance with Section 116(b) of WIOA, as well as the Rehabilitation Services Administration's TAC 19-01, BRS is updating its internal controls and quality assurance processes to assure the accuracy, validity and reliability of its performance data. As part of this effort, BRS is working with its core partners to develop additional data sources that will provide a more complete report of the outcomes achieved by people with disabilities served by DVR and DBVI. In addition to Maine Unemployment Insurance wage data, Maine will access State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) data by submitting regularly scheduled data requests. BRS has contracted with the National Student Clearinghouse and will access data from that source on a regular basis to document credential attainment, both academic and occupational. BRS is also developing a data sharing agreement with Maine's Department of Education, to assist with documenting adult, secondary and career and technical credentials and measurable skill gains. The agreement is expected to be in place within PY 2019.

BRS is providing ongoing training to all staff so that they have a solid working knowledge of WIOA and how it impacts the work they do. Training topics have included: an overview of WIOA partners; common performance measures, career pathways and best practices in serving the needs of employers. BRS has an intensive technical assistance agreement in place with WINTAC to assist with this effort and to further their expertise on Common Performance Measures, Internal Controls, Career Pathways, Apprenticeships and Peer Mentoring.

BRS and its core partners are using the Maine Job Link as a common data collection tool for performance data regarding Effectiveness in Serving Employers.

4. HOW THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I&E) ACTIVITIES WERE UTILIZED

Title I resources continue to be used for development and expansion of assistive technology and low vision rehabilitation services for DBVI consumers in collaboration with all of our blindness rehabilitation services partners throughout the state.

DBVI continues to seek access and training in assistive technology through its collaboration with training and equipment loan programs such as Maine CITE, AllTech and Alpha One, and through equipment demonstrations offered at conferences, seminars and through on-line videos and product dissemination. DBVI takes advantage of free trainings and courses as much as possible.

DBVI O&M instructors seek and disseminate feedback regarding service and equipment needs, available resources and emerging technologies through quarterly meetings and on-line discussion portals. DBVI recently purchased a number of O & M requested technologies to allow for decreased dependence on loan programs, improved access to technologies for our clients and greater flexibility in providing that access.

Q. QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

1. THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES

The Maine Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired continues to provide and expand supported employment services for individuals or youth with most significant disabilities, who are blind or have low vision. The Division has remained committed to assuring that individuals or youth with most significant disabilities receive supported employment services when this is appropriate. An Individual Plan of Employment (IPE) is developed that describes the services provided, the need for extended services, if appropriate, and an assurance that the individual has made an informed choice in the provision of these services as well as the employment goal and that extended services will be in a competitive, integrated setting. If the individual chooses not to pursue employment in a competitive, integrated setting, he/she will be referred to other systems for services.

Quality of Supported Employment Services:

The Division made the commitment to participate in the further development of its electronic information system – AwareVR, the case management system that captures these services and streamlines the case management process in the VR Program. The staff now have access to up-to-date information on weekly wages, hours worked, public assistance at the time of application and closure, the cost per case, and the average cost by counselor, region, and state. DBVI is now able to track the individuals who are eligible for VR but for whom the lack of long-term support prevents the development of a plan. The system enables us to evaluate who is being served, costs related to supported employment, its benefit to the client, and other systemic issues.

The Division gets technical assistance in supported employment that is available through the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center at Virginia Commonwealth University.

The agency remains committed to continuous quality improvement to provide better services to our customers.

Scope of Supported Employment:

The primary service provided to clients in a supported employment plan continues to be job support. This service is provided by a job coach who also engages with supervisors and peers towards helping the individual integrate into the company's social environment. Other services which are provided when a need has been identified include: supplemental assessments, social skills training, specific skills of blindness training, transportation, support services to parents, spouse and children, and/or facilitation of natural supports. Trial work settings are available to assess the consumer's ability to work in an integrated, competitive setting. The agency provides whatever is required to achieve and maintain integrated, competitive employment.

The majority of supported employment services are being provided to individuals who are blind or have low vision along with developmental disabilities or with severe and prolonged mental illness.

The Division focuses on greater utilization of natural supports and the various SSI/SSDI work incentives as well as trying to explore new ideas for extended support to best utilize the limited resources available.

The Division has access to a state-funded Long-term Support Program, which allows funding for extended support services for individuals who are blind or have low vision after the VR case is closed. In addition, DBVI receives state funds for extended support for individuals with brain

injuries, who are also blind or visually impaired. Both appropriations are very limited in the number of people who can be supported.

Extent of Supported Employment Services:

The Division identified thirty-one individuals who would benefit from supported employment services in FFY19. Twenty of these were adults and eleven were identified as youth with a significant disability. Six individuals were closed during this time period without reaching their goals; one was closed successfully. Three of the adults are currently employed and eleven are in "service" status. Ten youth with a significant disability are in "service" status.

2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

In day-to-day practice, a team approach is used to determine when an individual has stabilized and reached an acceptable level for transitioning to competitive, integrated employment.

Maine DBVI has developed guidance for staff on the use of extended services for youth. This guidance states that DBVI will make available extended services for youth with the most significant disabilities in supported employment for a period not to exceed four years or until such time that a youth reaches the age of 25 and no longer meets the definition of a youth with a disability. Extended services are defined as ongoing support services and other appropriate services that are needed to support an individual with the most significant disability in supported employment. During the comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs, and participation in Pre-Employment Transition Services, it may be determined that a youth with a most significant disability will benefit from extended support services.

If the youth does not have access to extended support services through a comparable benefit, and other supports are not available or do not meet the client's needs, the VR counselor will work with the client and guardian such that there is agreement that the employment placement and extended services with or without assistive technology and accommodations will enable the youth to develop adequate natural supports such that other supports are not needed or will connect them with other sources of support.

DBVI will authorize one year of extended supports at a time. In limited individualized circumstances, the plan may be updated for an additional time period, up to one year at a time but under no circumstances for longer than four years or after the youth turns 25.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (BLIND) CERTIFICATIONS

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) IS AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (REHABILITATION ACT), AS AMENDED BY WIOA[14], AND ITS SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT[15];

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

The Maine Department of Labor

2. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (ENTER THE NAME OF

DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY)[16] AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[17] , THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[18] , POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER SECTION 111 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Maine Department of Labor

3. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[19] , THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[20] , POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

4. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND/OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE REGARDING THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

5. THE STATE LEGALLY MAY CARRY OUT EACH PROVISION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

6. ALL PROVISIONS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW.

7. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO RECEIVE, HOLD, AND DISBURSE FEDERAL FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Laura Fortman

8. THE (ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND THE SUPPLEMENT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Commissioner, Department of Labor

9. THE AGENCY THAT SUBMITS THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT HAS ADOPTED OR OTHERWISE FORMALLY APPROVED THE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

FOOTNOTES

CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	Laura Fortman
Title of Signatory	Commissioner
Date Signed	3/19/20

ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.	
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.	
3. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to: Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:	
3.a. The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.b. The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (A or B must be selected):	
3.b.(A) "is an independent State commission" (Yes/No)	No
3.b.(B) "has established a State Rehabilitation Council" (Yes/No)	Yes
3.c. Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.d. The financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3)	
3.e. The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no,	No

The State Plan must include	Include
as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds (Yes/No)	
3.f. The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs (Yes/No)	No
3.g. Statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan	No
3.h. The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.i. All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.j. The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.k. The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.l. The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities	
3.m. The submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:	
4.a. Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.b. Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.c. Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No)	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
4.d. Determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.e. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.g. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.h. Comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.i. Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs	
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,	
4.j.i. Has developed and will implement,	
4.j.i.I. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and	
4.j.i.II. Strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and	
4.j.ii. Has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25))	
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:	
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act	

The State Plan must include	Include
5.c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act	
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:	
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act	
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act	
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:	Yes
7.a. The Designated State Agency Assures That it Will Provide Supported Employment Services as Defined in Section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b. The designated State agency assures that:	
7.b.i. The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b.ii. An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act	

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline		Baseline	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	Baseline		Baseline	

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline		Baseline	
Credential Attainment Rate	Baseline		Baseline	
Measurable Skill Gains	33.8%	33.8%	33.8%	35.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR APPENDIX

ALL WIOA CORE PROGRAMS

Title I Adult, Dislocated worker and Youth

Adult Performance Goals PY2020 AND PY2021

	Program Year: 2020 Negotiated Level	Program Year: 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	72%	73%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	71%	71.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$4,953	\$5,203
Credential Attainment Rate	62%	63%
Measurable Skill Gains	45%	55%

Dislocated Worker Performance Goals PY2020 AND PY2021

	Program Year: 2020 Negotiated Level	Program Year: 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	79%	79.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	76.5%	77%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$6,500	\$6,800
Credential Attainment Rate	64%	65%
Measurable Skill Gains	50%	55%

Youth Performance Goals PY2020 AND PY2021

	Program Year: 2020 Negotiated Level	Program Year: 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	67%	69%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	70%	71%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	\$3,685	\$3,869
Credential Attainment Rate	57%	57%
Measurable Skill Gains	35%	40%

Title II Adult Education

Adult Education Performance Goals PY2020 AND PY2021

	Program Year: 2020 Expected Level	Program Year: 2020 Negotiated Level	Program Year: 2021 Expected Level	Program Year: 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	34.0%	TBD	35.0%	TBD
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	32.0%	TBD	33.0%	TBD

	Program Year: 2020 Expected Level	Program Year: 2020 Negotiated Level	Program Year: 2021 Expected Level	Program Year: 2021 Negotiated Level
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4250	TBD	\$4300	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	32.0%	TBD	33.0%	TBD
Measurable Skill Gains	36.0%	TBD	37.0%	TBD
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Title III – Wagner-Peyser

Wagner-Peyser Performance Goals PY2020 AND PY2021

	Program Year: 2020 Expected Level	Program Year: 2020 Negotiated Level	Program Year: 2021 Expected Level	Program Year: 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment Q2 after exit	67%		68%	
Employment Q4 after exit	65%		66%	
Median Earnings Q2 after exit	\$5,350		\$5,600	

Title IV Programs—Vocational Rehabilitation

Within the MDOL’s Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), Maine has two federally designated state units, the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), which deliver vocational rehabilitation (VR) services.

For the first two years of the 2020-2023 Unified State Plan, DVR and DBVI have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator and thus have identified an initial expected level of performance on that measure only from which to negotiate with the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The following indicators will be designated as “baseline” for VR programs in PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

- Credential Attainment Rate

Vocational Rehabilitation; Performance Goals PY2020 and PY2021

	Program Year: 2020 Expected Level	Program Year: 2020 Negotiated Level	Program Year: 2021 Expected Level	Program Year: 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Credential Attainment Rate	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Measurable Skill Gains	33.8%	33.8	33.8%	33.8

ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE

Additional Indicators of Performance
N/A

OTHER APPENDICES

Acronym	Definition
ACAP	Aroostook County Action Program
ACCUPLACER	Assessment to identify student academic readiness
ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADATAC	Americans with Disabilities Act Technical Assistance Center
AE	Adult Education; Maine Department of Education

Acronym	Definition
AEFLA	Adult Education and Family Literacy Act
AJC	American Job Centers
AJLA	America's Job Link Alliance, makers of Maine Job Link (MJL)
ALC	All Learning Counts; Grant received by the University of Maine system from the Lumina Foundation
ANI	Adult Numeric Instruction
AOP	Agriculture Outreach Plan
ARS	Agricultural Recruitment System
ASPIRE	Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment
ATEC	Aroostook Training and Education Coalition
BES	Bureau of Employment Services; Maine Department of Labor
BRS	Bureau of Rehabilitation Services; Maine Department of Labor
BUC	Bureau of Unemployment Compensation; Maine Department of Labor
CASAS	Competency-based Assessment System or eCASAS
CAST	Center for Applied Special Technology
CCR-SIA	College Career Readiness- Standards in Actions
CCRS	College and Career Readiness Standards
CCWI	Coastal Counties Workforce Board
CDE	Commission on Disability and Employment; a subcommittee of the State Workforce Board
CEDS	Community Economic Development Strategy
CEO	Chief Elected Officials; County Commissioners who sit on the Local Workforce Boards (LWB)
CRA	Complaint Resolution Administrator
CTE	Career and Technical Education
CTE	Career and Technical Education part of Maine Department of Education
CWMWDB	Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board
CWRI	Center for Workforce Research and Information; Maine Department of Labor
DAFS	Department of Administration and Financial Services
DBVI	Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired; part of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services in the Maine Department of Labor
DECD	Department of Economic and Community Development

Acronym	Definition
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
DOC	Department of Corrections
DVOP	Disabled Veterans Outreach Program
DVR	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; part of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services in the Maine Department of Labor
DWG	Dislocated Worker grant
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EFL	educational functioning level
ELA	English language arts
EMDC	Eastern Maine Development Corporation
EPTL	Education Provider Training List; list of providers approved to provide WIOA funded training
ES	Employment Services
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages aka ELL. Replaces the term ESL (English as a Second Language)
ETA	Employment and Training Administration
ETPL	Eligible Training Provider List
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FAME	Finance Authority of Maine
FLC	Foreign Labor Certification
FSET	Food Supplement Employment & Training
GEPA	General Education Provisions Act
H2A	Temporary work visa for migrant workers
H2B	Temporary visa which used primarily for seasonal workers
HiSet	High school equivalency exam
HOPE	Higher Opportunity for Pathways to Employment
IELCE	Integrated English Literacy Civics Education
IET	Integrated education and training
INA	Indian and Native American (programs)
IRP	Individualized Reemployment Plan
IT	Information Technology

Acronym	Definition
ITAC	Information Technology Accessibility Committee
JVSG	Jobs for Veterans State Grant
LIFT	Leveraging Investments in Families for Tomorrow
LVER	Local Veterans Employment Representatives
LWB	Local Workforce Board
MaineEARNs	Maine Education and Attainment Research Navigation System
MAP	Maine Apprenticeship Program
MCC /MCCS	Maine Community College (system)
MCCA	Maine College and Career Access is a program offered by Maine Adult Education
MCT	Maine College Transition
MDOL	Maine Department of Labor
MEMA	Maine Emergency Management Association
MEP	Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnerships
MIS	management information systems
MJL	Maine Job Link system which is used as case management system by CareerCenters. Built by AJLA and replaced Maine's JobBank system.
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MQC	Maine Quality Centers a program of the Maine Community College System
MSFW	Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers
NAMI	National Alliance on Mental Illness
NASWA	National Association of State Workforce Agencies
NCCER	National Center for Construction Education and Research
NEG	National Emergency Grant
NETAAC	New England Trade Adjustment Assistance Center
NFJP	Farmworkers Jobs Program
NIST	National Institute of Standards and Technology
NRS	National Reporting System for Adult Education
NVME	New Ventures Maine
NWDB	Northeastern Workforce Development Board
OCTAE	Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education; US Department of Education
OJT	On the Job Training

Acronym	Definition
OSHA-10	Occupational Safety and Health Administration training
OWC	Older Worker Committee; a subcommittee of the State Workforce Board
RAP	Reading Apprenticeship Program
RESEA /REA	Reemployment Service and Eligibility Assessment
RFP	Request for Proposal
RSA	Rehabilitation Services Administration
RSI	Reemployment and Systems Integration
SBE	Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment
SCSEP	Senior Community Services Employment Program
SMA	State Monitor Advocate
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SNAP E&T	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education and Training
SSI/ SSDI	Social Security Insurance/ Social Security Disability Insurance
STAR	Student Achievement in Reading training
SWA	State Workforce Agency
SWAT	State Workforce Assistance Team
SWB	State Workforce Board
SWIS	State Wage Interchange System
TAA	Trade Adjustment Assistance
TAC	Technical Assistance Circular document provided by USDOL to expand or clarify regulations
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; a DHHS program
UI	Unemployment insurance may refer to either the program and the agency
UMS	University of Maine System
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture (federal)
USDOL	United States Department of Labor (federal)
VETS	Veterans Employment and Training Services
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation; could stand for either the agency Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or the service provided.
WARN Act	Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act
WDQI	Workforce Data Quality Initiative

Acronym	Definition
WDS	Workforce Development System
WEC	Women's Employment Committee; a subcommittee of the State Workforce Board
WIA	Workforce Investment Act, predecessor to WIOA
WIC	Women Infants and Children program
WINTAC	Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
WIPC	WIOA Implementation Policy Committee
W.O.R.K. Services	Workforce Opportunities, Referrals and Knowledge services is a software application connecting the systems of Adult Education, Bureau of Employment Services and Vocational Rehabilitation
WOTC	Work Opportunity Tax Credit
WOWI	World of Work Inventory; career assessment
WPRS	Worker Profiling Reemployment Services
YBA	Youth Build

Member	Affiliation	Position
Kimberly Moore	MDOL	Director, Bureau of Employment Services
Dawn Mealey	MDOL	Deputy Director, Bureau of Employment Services
Dave Klein	MDOL	Division Director, Bureau of Employment Services
Ginny Carroll	MDOL	Division Director, Policy & Evaluation, Bureau of Employment Services
Gail Senese	MDOE	State Director, Adult Education & Family Literacy
Kelley Heath	MDOE	Coordinator, Data and High School Completion
Karen Fraser	MDOL	Director, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
Libby Stone-Sterling	MDOL	Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Brenda Drummond	MDOL	Director, Division for the Blind & Visually Impaired
Joanna Russell	LWB	Executive Director, Northeastern Workforce Development Board

Member	Affiliation	Position
Stacy Kilroy	LWB	Executive Director, Central/Western Maine Workforce Development Board
Antoinette Mancusi	LWB	Executive Director, Coastal Counties Workforce Inc.
Jillian Sample	LWB	Director of Operations, Coastal Counties Workforce Inc.
Christopher Quint	MDOL	Director, State Workforce Board
Joshua Howe	MDOL	Workforce Development Program Coordinator, State Workforce Board
Cheryl Moran	MDOL	Labor Program Specialist, State Workforce Board

This group meets monthly to monitor and review progress of the implementation of the plan, update necessary elements, and provide strategic support when required. Using a matrix of initiatives, the group can track the progress of elements as they move towards completion.

11/12/2019

Central Western Workforce Development Board

Central Maine Community College, Auburn, ME

Name	Organization
Joy Gould	Community Concepts
Michelle Hawley	Central Maine Community College
Diane Frigon	Maine Department of Labor
Mary LaFontaine	Maine Department of Labor
Jim Trundy	Western Maine Community Action
Jeff Sneddon	Kennebec Valley Community College
Tina Christophenson	Maine School Administrative District 17 Adult Education
Sean Crothers	Maine Prisoner Re-entry Network
Patti Gray	Maine Department of Labor
Joan Dolan	Maine Department of Labor
Kelly Aho	Bonney Staffing
Cary Tyson	Kennebec Valley Council of Governments
Dale Merrell	Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board

Name	Organization
Deputy Commissioner Kimberly Smith	Maine Department of Labor
Commissioner Laura Fortman	Maine Department of Labor
Jane Gilbert	Maine Department of Labor
Grant Provost	Iron Workers Local 7
Amy Landry	Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments
Julia Sleeper	Tree Street Youth Center
Bill Grant	Lewiston Adult Education

11/14/2019

Northeastern Workforce Development Board

Brewer Community Center, Brewer, ME

Name	Organization
Susan Cerini	Eastern Maine Development Corporation
Jon Farley	Eastern Maine Development Corporation
Lisa Shaw	Maine State Library
Nichole Sawyer	Washington County Community College
Rob Brown	Cooperative Development Institute
Leah Buck	Northern Maine Community College
Erin Benson	Aroostook County Action Program
Liz Russell	Eastern Maine Community College
Michael Carroll	Associates for Training and Development
Ander Theboud	Regional School District 24 Adult Education
Renee Doble	City of Brewer
Christina Breen	Senator Angus King
Joanna Russell	Northeastern Workforce Development Board
Rebecca Bryant	Northeastern Workforce Development Board
Dawn Mealy	Maine Department of Labor
Patty Perry	Maine Department of Labor
Deputy Commissioner Kimberly Smith	Maine Department of Labor

Name	Organization
Paul Ruggiero	Maine Department of Labor
Melissa Harvey	Maine Department of Labor
Andrea Bickford	Maine Department of Labor
Commissioner Laura Fortman	Maine Department of Labor
Megan Dichter	Maine Department of Education

11/15/2019

State Workforce Board;

MDOL Augusta, ME

Guy Langevin	Dead River
Tracey Cooley	Job Corps
John Fortier	State Farm Insurance
Mary LaFontaine	Maine Department of Labor
Jason Shedlock	Maine Building and Construction Trades Council
Steve Gorden	Cumberland County Commissioner
Mary Kate Reny	Renys
Jen Fullmer	Boots 2 Roots
Nathan Pelsma	Jobs for Maine Graduates
Gail Senese	Maine Department of Education
Karen Fraser	Maine Department of Labor
Ashley Pringle	Maine & Company
John Herweh	MMG Insurance
Jon Mason	Bath Iron Works
Jim Nimon	Sanford Regional Economic Growth Council
Colleen Hilton	Northern Light Health
Peter Baldacci	Penobscot County Commissioner
Dan Belyea	Maine Community College System
Deputy Commissioner Sarah Gagne-Holmes	Maine Department of Health and Human Services

Guy Langevin	Dead River
Deputy Commissioner Denise Garland	Maine Department of Economic and Community Development
Grant Provost	Iron Workers Local 7
Greg Sweetser	Sweetser Orchards
Luanne Ballesteros	The Jackson Laboratory
Mike Sylvester	State Representative, Maine Legislature
Commissioner Laura Fortman	Maine Department of Labor
Joshua Howe	State Workforce Board/Maine Department of Labor
Christopher Quint	State Workforce Board/Maine Department of Labor

11/15/2019

Commissioner Designees from State Agencies

MDOL Commerce Drive, Augusta, ME

Name	Organization
Joan Cohen	Maine Department of Professional and Financial Regulation
Dawn Mealey	Maine Department of Labor
Commissioner Randy Liberty	Maine Department of Corrections
Deputy Commissioner Denise Garland	Maine Department of Economic and Community Development
Deputy Commissioner Kimberly Smith	Maine Department of Labor
Evelyn de Frees	Maine Department of Labor
Joshua Howe	State Workforce Board/Maine Department of Labor
Holly Pomelow	Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services
Anna Black	Maine Department of Corrections
Liz Ray	Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Tamara Ranger	Maine Department of Education
Emily Doughty	Maine Department of Education
Commissioner Laura Fortman	Maine Department of Labor

Name	Organization
Christopher Quint	State Workforce Board/Maine Department of Labor
Mary Anne Turowski	Governor Janet Mills
Dan Belyea	Maine Community College System

11/21/2019

Coastal Counties Workforce Development Board

MRRA Community Room, Brunswick, ME

Name	Organization
Dawn Self Cooper	Maine Department of Labor
Damas Rvpaba	Greater Portland Immigrant Welcome Center
Christopher Arbour	Maine Department of Corrections
Kim Moore	United Way of Greater Portland
Deputy Commissioner Kimberly Smith	Maine Department of Labor
Jason Shedlock	Maine State Building and Construction Trades Council
Joni Boissonneault	Portland Housing Authority
Mary Ellen Barnes	Lincoln County Regional Planning Council
Mary Bouvier	Westbrook Housing Authority
David Wurm	Goodwill Industries of Northern New England
Julia Trujillo	City of Portland
Kaylin Kerina	Learning Works
Scott Christman	Bath Iron Works
Richard Clark	York County Commissioner
Mufalo Chitam	Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition
Thomas Nickerson	University of Maine at Augusta
Beth Campbell	United Way of Greater Portland
Jim Whitten	Southern Maine Community College
Antoinette Mancusi	Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc.
Shelli Pride	Gorham Adult Education
Michelle Love	Androscoggin Bank

Name	Organization
Samantha Fenderson	Maine Department of Labor
Mary LaFontaine	Maine Department of Labor
Commissioner Laura Fortman	Maine Department of Labor
Deputy Commissioner Kimberly Smith	Maine Department of Labor
Joshua Howe	State Workforce Board/Maine Department of Labor

12/18/2019

State Workforce Board

Dead River Company, South Portland, ME

Name	Organization
Guy Langevin	Dead River
Peter Anania	Anania & Associates
Tarlan Ahmadov	Catholic Charities of Maine
John Fortier	State Farm Insurance
Ned Claxton	State Senator, Maine Legislature
Jason Shedlock	Maine Building and Construction Trades Council
Steve Gorden	Cumberland County Commissioner
Mary Kate Reny	Renys
Jen Fullmer	Boots 2 Roots
Nathan Pelsma	Jobs for Maine Graduates
Gail Senese	Maine Department of Education
Karen Fraser	Maine Department of Labor
Ashley Pringle	Maine & Company
John Herweh	MMG Insurance
Jon Mason	Bath Iron Works
Jim Nimon	Sanford Regional Economic Growth Council
Colleen Hilton	Northern Light Health
Bob Dorko	Sappi North America
Dan Belyea	Maine Community College System

Name	Organization
Deputy Commissioner Sarah Gagne-Holmes	Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Deputy Commissioner Denise Garland	Maine Department of Economic and Community Development
Grant Provost	Iron Workers Local 7
Greg Sweetser	Sweetser Orchards
Luanne Ballesteros	The Jackson Laboratory
Scott Good	Crescendo Consulting
Robert Sezak	Somerset County Commissioner
Rosa Redonnett	University of Maine System
Commissioner Laura Fortman	Maine Department of Labor
Joshua Howe	State Workforce Board/Maine Department of Labor
Christopher Quint	State Workforce Board/Maine Department of Labor

12/18/2019

Youth Focused

Florence House, Portland, ME

Name	Organization
Adrian Cohen	Goodwill Industries of Northern New England
David Dorr	Somerset Career & Technical Center
Mercedes Pour	Maine Community College System
Nikki Williams	State Workforce Board - Youth Committee
Robyn Raymond	Spruce Mountain Adult Education
Tracie Travers	Jobs For Maine Grads
Nate Pelsma	Jobs For Maine Grads
Sandra Goss	Goodwill Industries of Northern New England/Take Two YouthBuild
Karen MacDonald	Boys & Girls Clubs of Maine
Kaylin Kerina	Learning Works/Youth Building Alternatives
J. Duke Albanese	Great Schools Partnership

Name	Organization
Karen Keim	Maine Educational Opportunity Center
Heather Stott	Goodwill - Workforce Solutions
Phoenix Escobedo-Winkle	Youth from JMG
Ryan Morris	Youth from JMG
Angie Hassapelis	Youth from JMG
Nathan Heatley	Youth from JMG
Carlo Bufano	Jobs For Maine Grads
Marquise Parland	Learning Works/Youth Building Alternatives
Shirley Palma	Learning Works/Youth Building Alternatives
Jeff Nevers	University of New England
Kim Moore	United Way of Greater Portland/Greater Portland Workforce Initiative
Rebecca Bryant	Northeastern Workforce Development Board
Joanna Russell	Northeastern Workforce Development Board
Commissioner Laura Fortman	Maine Department of Labor
Christopher Quint	State Workforce Board/Maine Department of Labor
Joshua Howe	State Workforce Board/Maine Department of Labor

12/19/2019

Employer Focused

MDOL 45 Commerce Drive, Augusta, ME

Name	Organization
Peter Gore	Maine State Chamber of Commerce
Steve Hewins	Hospitality Maine
Hope Perkins	Associated Builders & Contractors
Brian Whitney	Maine Technology Institute
Steven Michaud	Maine Hospital Association
Rick Erb	Maine Health Care Association
Lisa Martin	Manufacturers Association of Maine

Name	Organization
Jan Kearce	Maine Development Foundation
Curtis Picard	Retail Association of Maine
Elizabeth Vanderweide	Finance Authority of Maine
Cynthia Murphy	Coastal Enterprises
Dan Coffey	Cianbro
Jennifer O'Leary	MaineHealth
Commissioner Laura Fortman	Maine Department of Labor
Christopher Quint	State Workforce Board/Maine Department of Labor

12/19/2019

Advocate Focused

MDOL 45 Commerce Drive, Augusta, ME

Name	Organization
Chris Hastedt	Maine Equal Justice Partners
Ann Danforth	Maine Equal Justice Partners
Jennifer Hutchins	Maine Association of Non-Profits
Kim Moody	Disability Rights Maine
Gilda Nardone	SWB - Women's Employment Committee
Darcy Shargo	Maine Primary Care Association
Don Harden	Catholic Charities
Barbara Babkirk	SWB - Older Workers Committee
Dwight Littlefield	Department of Education - State Director for CTE
Joanna Russell	Northern Maine Workforce Development Board
Jeff Nevers	University of New England
Holly Couturier	Maine Principals Association
Kate Leveille	MaineSpark
Beth Stickney	Maine Business Immigration Coalition
Jared Cash	University of Southern Maine
Claire Sullivan	University of Maine System
Rosa Redonnett	University of Maine System

Name	Organization
Cherie Galyean	Maine Community Foundation
Joy Gould	Community Concepts
Jim Horn	Auburn School District
Luisa Deprez	University of Southern Maine
Jonathan Henry	University of Maine at Augusta
Lisa Cooper	Maine Development Foundation
James Myall	ME CEP
Rachel Knight	Destination Occupation
Dick Dyer	Destination Occupation
Rhonda Corson	Destination Occupation
Rebecca Conrad	RSC Consulting/Maine Business Immigrant Coalition
LeeAnne Larsen	Department of Education
Debbie Gilmer	Syntiro - Gear Up
Nate Wildes	Live & Work in Maine
Kelley Heath	Maine Adult Education
Karen Keim	MEOC
Mary Adley	Maine Department of Education
Amy Winston	Coastal Enterprises
Commissioner Laura Fortman	Maine Department of Labor
Christopher Quint	State Workforce Board/Maine Department of Labor

Public

Maine Community College System <https://www.mccs.me.edu/>

- [Central Maine Community College https://www.cmcc.edu/](https://www.cmcc.edu/)
- [Eastern Maine Community College https://www.emcc.edu/](https://www.emcc.edu/)
- [Kennebec Valley Community College https://www.kvcc.me.edu/](https://www.kvcc.me.edu/)
- [Northern Maine Community College https://www.nmcc.edu/](https://www.nmcc.edu/)
- [Southern Maine Community College https://www.smccme.edu/](https://www.smccme.edu/)
- [Washington County Community College https://www.wccc.me.edu/](https://www.wccc.me.edu/)

- York County Community College <https://www.yccc.edu/>

Maine Maritime Academy <https://mainemaritime.edu/>

University of Maine System <https://www.maine.edu/>

- University of Maine - Orono <https://umaine.edu/>
- University of Maine at Augusta <https://www.uma.edu/>
- University of Maine at Farmington <https://www.umf.maine.edu/>
- University of Maine at Fort Kent <https://www.umfk.edu/>
- University of Maine at Machias <https://machias.edu/>
- University of Maine at Presque Isle <https://www.umpi.edu/>
- University of Southern Maine <https://usm.maine.edu/>

Private

Bates College <https://www.bates.edu/>

Beal College <https://bealcollege.edu/>

Bowdoin College <https://www.bowdoin.edu/>

Colby College <http://www.colby.edu/>

College of the Atlantic <https://www.coa.edu/>

Husson University <https://www.husson.edu/>

Purdue Global <https://www.purdueglobal.edu/>

Maine College of Art <https://www.meca.edu/>

Maine College of Health Professions <https://www.mchp.edu/>

Maine Media College <https://www.mainemedia.edu/>

New England Bible College <https://www.nebc.edu/>

Saint Joseph's College <https://www.sjcme.edu/>

Southern New Hampshire University - Brunswick/Winter Harbor <https://www.snhu.edu/>

Thomas College <https://www.thomas.edu/>

Unity College <https://www.unity.edu/>

University of New England <https://www.une.edu/>