



Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board
Quarterly Workforce Board Meeting
October 24, 2024

Board Members Present: Cathy Witherspoon, Chair; Laurie Glidden, At-Large Member/Youth Chair; Sue LeClair; Josh Henry; Trampas Hutches; Chris Winstead, Treasurer & Chair of Resources; Diane Frigon; Grant Provost, Chair of Recruitment; Charlie Woodworth; Chris Waite; Brandi Farrington; Bobbi Avery

Board Members Absent: Razell Ward, Secretary; Kate Durkin; Monique Roy; Kelly Aho; Bruce Tisdale; Billi Mitchell; Sam Hight

Staff Present: Erin Benson, Executive Director; Carrie Parker, Administrative Assistant

Others Present: Sara McLaughlin, Contracted Financial Manager; Tom Fernands, EMDC; Patti Saarinen, EMDC; Sam Giasson, EMDC; Joshua Brown, MDOL; Brittany Reichmann, Pinetree Institute; John Belding, UMaine; Bradley Denholm, UMaine

1. Welcome and Introductions:

Cathy Witherspoon called the meeting to order at 8:30am. All present via ZOOM and in-person gave a brief introduction, this included an introduction by Cathy of the newest board member Bobbi Avery. Bobbi has been an accomplished Chief Administrative Officer and Chief Operations Officer with more than 18-years of distinguished leadership in non-profit, and educational sectors. Bobbi is currently working at Day's Jewelers in the role of Vice-President of Human Resources.

VOTED: To approve July 25, 2024, meeting minutes as written.

Motion: Chris Winstead **Second:** Laurie Glidden **All in Favor**

2. Service Provider Report—Patti Saarinen & Sam Giasson:

Adults: we enrolled 117 of the planned 100 adults which put us at 117% of plan.

We enrolled 51 of the planned 24 new enrollments. Training projects this quarter significantly contributed to our adult enrollments.

Youth: we enrolled 52 youth out of the planned 59 which puts us at 88% of plan.

We enrolled 21 out of the planned 13 new enrollments.

Dislocated workers: we enrolled 30 of the planned 39, putting us at 76.9% of plan.

We enrolled 6 out of the 8 planned new enrollments.

This quarter we participated in 5 Rapid Response sessions (White's Autobody, Nutrien AG, Record Lumber, J C Penney, and the Univ. of Maine System. We also attended the Rapid Response weekly update meetings.)

EMDC received an extension for the ARPA Youth Career Exploration Grant. The new end date of 10/31/2026 and additional funds will allow us to continue to support a greater number of

disadvantaged youth ages 16-24 with career exploration activities. This will include a continuation of our Young Mainers Workforce Program and facilitating meaningful connections to employers.

In an effort to streamline the process, we have assigned one workforce development specialist to focus on registration. She has started with all the Bureau of Employment Services referrals which accounted for 42% of new referrals this quarter.

We connected with 25 businesses this quarter:

- 20 people enrolled in pre/apprenticeship: 18 Adults, 1 Youth and 1 QUEST.
- We had 8 new work experience agreements and 2 that were carried in and completed this quarter. Three sites were new: Pinewood Terrace in Franklin Co., Gaskyl Printing in Oxford Co., and Dana's Heavy Duty Roadside Service in Androscoggin Co.
- We had 3 new on-the-job-training contracts start: Hawkeye Fiber Optics for an Adult; Dana's Heavy Duty Roadside Service for a Youth, and Information Technology Exchange for a Youth. All three of these were new businesses for OJT; Dana's Heavy Duty was a youth work experience that moved into an OJT.

Projects:

- We had 9 new projects start; 1 that is ongoing and 2 that completed this quarter
- For the new projects: 3 were in Somerset, 3 in Oxford, 2 in Franklin and 1 in Androscoggin
- For the two projects that were completed: 6 students completed CMA in Franklin Co., and 14 students completed C N A in Androscoggin
- The new projects represented 46 new enrollments: 31 Adults, 1 DW, 8 Youth, 6 QUEST
- 78 total new enrollments of which 46 were enrolled in projects, which means that 59% of new enrollments were project related.

New Community Partners We Contacted:

United Youth Empowerment Services-Androscoggin; we're now doing youth work experience with them

Travis Collins House-Androscoggin – possible QUEST referrals

Enzo Recovery – Kennebec- possible QUEST referrals

Mid-Maine Technical Center- Kennebec – youth referrals

Fryeburg Academy -Oxford – youth referrals

Lake Region Adult Education-part of Oxford-WIOA referrals

DHHS- Youth Transition Services -Kennebec

Mt. Blue Digital Literacy- Franklin

Adult Program Success Story

Abdinasir is a high school graduate, single with no dependents. He has a consistent work history, with his most recent employment being as a DSP, but he also identified liking to work with his hands and that he was a hands-on learner. His career goal was to become an HVAC

Commented [VR1]: Will the reviewers know what this stands for? Direct service professional?

technician, and he had started one course at MEMA but needed support with the cost of tuition and materials. He was enrolled in the WIOA Adult program which covered his tuition and tools; he needed no other assistance as he worked to support himself while in training. He completed the training along with many additional state licenses required to work as an HVAC technician. He did not secure employment right away but was assisted by the workforce development specialist with updating his resume and cover letter. Shortly after, he secured full time employment with benefits as an HVAC technician at Dave's World earning \$22 an hour.

Dislocated Worker Program Success Story

Jill is single with no dependents and has an older associate's degree which she never used. Her work history consisted of Personal Support Specialist and Phlebotomist. She was laid off from a hospital where she had worked as a phlebotomist earning \$17.48 an hour and was living off her unemployment. She came to WIOA seeking assistance with CNA training through Oxford Hills Adult Education. She was enrolled in the Dislocated Worker program which covered her tuition and all supplies. Upon completion of training, she had multiple job offers. She accepted a position at Winship Green in Bath working full time with benefits and a starting wage of \$26.00 an hour.

Young Adult Program Success Story

Paige is 19 years old and living at home with her mother. She has a high school diploma but was basic skills deficient and struggled in new situations. She has her driver's license and had worked sporadic hours in retail; however, retail was not a field she wanted to pursue. She came to WIOA as an out-of-school-youth because her attempts at employment at other sites were unsuccessful. Her interest was in working with children, but she lacked experience or any credentialing in that sector. She has connected with Tree Street Youth which offers a supportive work environment to develop leadership and self-growth opportunities. Tree Street agreed to a work experience and started her as a Cedar Intern. Over the course of the work experience, she demonstrated significant growth in self-esteem and willingness to take initiative due to greater self-confidence. As a result, she was hired by Tree Street Youth through the On-the-Job-Training program and is very excited about this opportunity.

QUEST

- We have enrolled 14 participants since our last report putting our total enrollments at 94 out of 158 or 59.5% of our goal.
- We enrolled 7 QUEST participants in our projects: (1 CDL and 6 in healthcare)
 - Androscoggin County: Lewiston Adult Education- Healthcare Pathways (this is a pre-apprenticeship program), 2 QUEST students are enrolled.
 - Somerset County: Skowhegan Adult Education – CNA, 2 QUEST students are enrolled.
 - Oxford County – Oxford Hills Adult Education – CDL, 1 QUEST student enrolled.
 - Oxford County – Region 9 Adult Education –CNA, 2 QUEST students are enrolled.
- We also supported a student in the AFL-CIO Women in Construction pre-apprenticeship program.
- EMDC has obtained a jail diversion grant and a Progressive Employment grant which provides braided funding opportunities and co-enrollment for the QUEST grant and will produce more enrollments.

- EMDC has replicated the Peer Connector strategy employed in the Opioid grant and are in the process of hiring Peer Navigators with lived experience in justice involvement/recovery to mentor and guide participants enrolled in WIOA programs and to assist them as they enter work-based learning and with accessing needed resources.

Luzmila is a single woman with a high school diploma and some post-secondary education. Her work history consists of games table dealer and supervisor at a casino, operating a tiling business, and owning rental properties. She became interested in construction while remodeling some of her rental properties and entered the pre-apprenticeship construction training program through the AFL-CIO. Upon completing the pre-apprenticeship, she began an apprenticeship with the Ironworkers Local 7 JAC. The apprenticeship is taking place at Sappi; however, she will also need to complete three one-week trainings over a year in Boston. The QUEST program assisted her with the initiation fee, steel-toed boots, drug screening, and some tools.

Stephanie immigrated to the United States in 2023 from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She is the mother of two small children and speaks limited English. She is enrolled at Lewiston Adult Education in English Language Learning. In her home country, she was employed in customer service. Stephanie's interests and values assessments indicated that healthcare occupations would be a good choice for her. Stephanie applied and was accepted into Phlebotomy training at NTI. Stephanie did not pass the course on her first attempt. NTI allowed her to attend the next session, and she successfully completed the course. She has not taken her National Phlebotomy exam as she felt she needed to increase her English skills and study further for that. She has taken a job as a housekeeper to help her family's financial situation. She is making \$17.00 an hour while she continues to study and do job searches for phlebotomy positions. EMDC provided funding for tuition, supplies and a laptop and updated her cover letter and resume.

3. Finance Update: PY24 Budget—Sara McLaughlin:

Sara shared the cumulative spending by contract through October 11th and detailed changes to no cost extensions and additional funding since the last board meeting. She explained that both QUEST and ARPA received no cost extensions that have been previously discussed and will now have contract end dates of September 2025 for QUEST and December 2026 for ARPA. Though there are no additional funds for these extensions, it does give us more time to spend out the money we have with them. The Career contract that was completed received approximately \$10,000 to perform additional work requested by MDOL and that was extended to March 2025 for completion. The WIOA PY23 spending for the local board is at 93% and EMDC is at 26%, but now that EMDC have spent out the WIOA PY22 funding there will be a quick increase in the spending for the WIOA PY23 funds. Once WIOA PY23 spending is complete we will begin to start spending on the WIOA PY24 funding. Currently, we have about \$6M available. Between the board and EMDC, we have spent \$1.46M or 24% with another \$2.7M remaining to carry into future years.

Sara moved onto the detailed actuals versus the budget through September 30th which accounts for 25% of the budget. She does this more for herself to help put together the budget for a fiscal year, which begins July 1 and ends June 30. Each contract starts and ends at various times, and the local board and EMDC have different components to the budget. She needs to

break down what we've spent in the past and what is planned to be spent in the future if it carries into another year. This provides an annual budget that offers some flexibility. We tend to budget high and spend conservatively, which gives us more ability to spend the following year. The budget for this year is \$474,000, which is high for us, but it is being skewed by the mini grants for QUEST and ARPA. We have currently spent 13.3% of the budget, which taking out those mini grants, we are at 17.4% which is right on track for this time into the fiscal year. The areas where there were frontloaded expenses show like insurance costs or Dues & Subscriptions show at a higher rate within the budget.

Erin mentioned that the ARPA funding and the amount of money that was set aside for the CBO was \$54,000 from the QUEST grant and \$90,000 from ARPA. The QUEST portion has been spent, so CBO funding will be coming out of ARPA and will start to reflect within the budget. The marketing campaign is launching soon, and this will also quickly decrease the ARPA budget.

4. Review Ben Hawkins & Rebecca Bryant Contracts:

In December 2023 the USDOL went through a monitoring process of the Maine Department of Labor. As the board is a subrecipient of MDOL, we in turn went through a monitoring process. The USDOL did not feel we had appropriate procurement policies in place—they lack fairness. The cause was the lack of end dates on some of our contracts, such as the independent contract with Ben Hawkins, who provides marketing and media assistance, and Rebecca Bryant, who provides internal EMDC file monitoring. Without end dates, we would not send out an RFP/RFA so other people/companies might have the opportunity to apply for a service contract. We have created a new verbiage in our procurement policy to include end dates on everything. This means that the contracts for Ben and Rebecca are for a year with the option to extend services for a total of three years. Erin wanted to make certain that the board is aware that this year will be the third year of renewed services with them, and we will need to look into putting out a bid for contract.

5. Youth Committee/Fuseideas Updates:

When we received the \$500,000 ARPA grant, we wrote in a \$90,000 marketing campaign that focuses on disconnected youth in our region. A disconnected youth is defined as 16–19-year-old who is not in school (secondary or postsecondary) and not working. Our 5-county region has the highest rate of disconnected youth in the state and a higher rate than the national average. Currently, Maine has more 55+ citizens than those who are 24 and under. This does not bode well for the workforce of the future. To understand the mindset of this age group and their attitudes toward work, as part of the campaign, the goal was to host five in-person focus groups—one in each county. Working with Fuseideas, our contracted marketing firm, and Pan Atlantic, Fuseideas sub-awardee, our attempts to recruit disconnected youth for the in-person focus groups yielded no results and proved just how hard it is to connect with these young people. Through recruitment with partner programs, we were able to hold two ZOOM focus groups with a total of 12 young people in attendance. The report from Fuseideas is available for anyone who wants to view it. The focus group proved that young people want to work but barriers like transportation, especially within rural areas, are a major problem. Youth in the focus groups also mentioned that misleading information around work hours and pay, location

of the position, open application hunting without actual available positions, and a lack of personal communication versus online application and training are all frustrations that keep many young people from seeking employment. The other area they mentioned that creates an inability to work is requesting experience that cannot be obtained if they can't work to gain experience.

Fuseideas has created four creative designs that were shared with the youth, and they gave opinions on the designs and what they felt worked or didn't work. For example, they all agreed that the wording of "real job" was a bit offensive as any job is a real job, so that piece was changed to "good job". The images that will be used are of 3 young people of varying ethnicity, and campaign ads that will run on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. There will also be radio ads that will run on a few local stations, as well as posters around the region. There will also be a Search Engine Marketing through google where our display ad will come up when certain words are used in the search, such as "find a job." There will also be display ads associated with youth-related sites. The landing page will have client testimonials as well as a form for easy and immediate contact.

The expectation is for over 1M views with at least 7,000 people filling out the form on the landing page. The goal is to enroll 100 youth from the campaign which will run from the end of October through March 2025. If we receive additional funding through another grant, we may be able to continue the campaign for another 30 days. Erin feels that spending this funding and creating a different approach to reach youth is vital in changing the results we continue to see.

Laurie stated that being part of the focus groups was very interesting and informative and she is looking forward to seeing how the campaign progresses and the outcomes we get from it. Erin stated that Laurie has been involved with each step of this campaign from the beginning, and has worked at making it successful. Cathy agreed that the frustrations they described are the same across the board for all ages and should be something businesses investigate more closely. Erin stated that with the decreasing population in Maine and the percentage of disconnected youth, we are going to see the workforce struggle in the future with a lack of eligible employees.

Tom mentioned that EMDC uses the Maine Job Links self-service job seeker report to identify young people, and that while we're identifying the 600 disconnected youth in our region the consistent thing EMDC keeps seeing is that at any time there are between 400 and 450 young people, 16-24 years old, who are registered as active job seekers that Tom would like to see if the full data and the make up of percentages could be cross-sectioned to see who of these individuals are being swept into that number of 600+ as he feels there is some overlap in those numbers.

6. Recovery Friendly Workplaces—Brittany Reichman:

Brittany Reichman from the Pinetree Institute presented a PowerPoint presentation describing the Recovery Friendly Workplace program. This presentation will be sent to everyone to view at their convenience.

Brittany is the statewide business advisor for Maine's Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative and is a long-term recovery person whose dignified employment changed the trajectory of her life. In 2025, she returned to Maine after her 6th attempt at treatment and had been involved in the criminal justice system, feeling very discouraged about employment opportunities and went to cosmetology school convinced she needed to find a profession that wouldn't involve background checks. However, she found an employer that she stayed with for 5 years throughout her recovery and a few reoccurring fallbacks and feels that the workplace is an extremely important place to address substance use and support employees.

In 2018 New Hampshire's Governor Sununu put a lot of time, money and resources into developing a robust recovery friendly workplace initiative, which is the model that Maine works from that recognize employers who are committed to the cultural shift in how they support employees affected by substance use disorders. The program isn't just about employing people in recovery or those who are actively struggling, but also supporting loved ones who might be in the workforce and have someone that is struggling. Pinetree Institute partners with the Portland Recovery Community Center to hold training and work as both business advisors performing outreach and onboarding as well as recovery advisors who provide education and training for businesses. In 2022 Maine released data that showed that approximately 500 employers and employees of high-risk industries were interviewed about their substance use and wellness policies, and 70% of the employees admitted to using alcohol weekly, 48% admitted to using marijuana weekly, and 50% admitted that they had been using illicit substances weekly. Some of those workplaces had as many as 60% of their employees who were in recovery and 47% of the employers had some sort of recovery program at the workplace. The national data indicates that 70% of all adults employed have substance use disorders and many employers, especially smaller scale companies, do not provide EAP or health insurance to assist with this issue.

Maine has places like Sweetser and Central Maine Healthcare that have resources for employees, but it is important that workplaces address SUD and the associated issues that arise in employees like missed workdays, increased disability, etc. which in 2020 showed an increase cost to employers of 30% in three years. Statistics about workers in recovery are that they are generally good employees and can save employers over \$8,000 in turnover and replacement costs. Being designated as a recovery-friendly workplace is completely free of charge and is appropriate for any sector from manufacturing, healthcare, hospitality, etc. as it is customizable for each business. There are also no hard and fast policies and procedures that are required during the designation process but provided help if needed.

RFW has a tailored engagement model that provides business the ability to do the designation process and receive resources and education while other employers have committees that work more closely with RFW and offer support for employees and loved ones that include trainings about recovery, substance use disorder and related topics. RFW provides tools and materials for management as well as a second chance hiring guide and RFW toolkit that have specific resource guides to hang in the workplace with a QR code for anyone who may be struggling to connect to community resources. A few ways that a company can actively engage while going through the process may be to look over current policies and procedures to ensure that they are

not using stigmatizing language, refresh the staff on the current alcohol/tobacco and drug-free workplace policies, look at flexibility and employee scheduling to accommodate someone who may need to flex their time for treatment.

RFW is always attending events and asking employers who are comfortable to share their stories and share information on the RFW resources and program. There are currently 58 designees in Maine who are part of the RFW program. The process of designation is intentionally a very low barrier to ensure that business has a lot going on and the simplicity makes it easier for them to have no disruptions in their daily schedules. By submitting a letter of interest on the RFW website, going through an orientation meeting like the presentation being shown now, and putting out a company-wide declaration informing employees that you're engaging in this initiative so that they feel supported, and they can know you're involved in seeking recovery assistance. Currently, you have a year to perform 4 training courses on SUD and recovery friendly workplaces and related topics within any forum that works best for you and your staff.

Within the next few months, Pinetree Institute will be launching a job board for designees and another one on the website where employers can see the program options and how to join. This is a good way for employers to attract and retain employees. More information can be found on the website rfwmaine.org or by emailing Brittany at Brittany@pinetreeinstitute.org. Charlie asked how they are reaching out or are they reaching out to geographic efforts in the state? He explained that in Franklin County there is the Healthy Community Coalition affiliated with the hospital and has two recovery centers. Brittany explained that in her time with the RFW she has been working on developing all the procedures and presentations for marketing to provide outreach and connection. Erin thanked Brittany and stated that it is very important for the board to connect with employers who participate as we have the QUEST grant and one of the specific populations that are trying to focus on is people in recovery. We also have money to do on the job training where the grant will pay to subsidize somebody's wages. This would ensure that if someone with experience with SUD wanted assistance, we could help them qualify for this QUEST grant, and if hired we could subsidize that wage, which is a benefit to the employer. Brittany said that if we are working with a certain employer to let her know and she would send a letter or communicate with them about the program and its benefits.

Cathy said that she is very motivated to talk with her team about this and Brittany shared that she is presenting at Sugarloaf on Monday. She said that hospitality companies are especially applicable to this program as it is one of the industries that isn't necessarily bound by federal and licensing guidelines and can hire people who have a criminal justice involvement background.

7. Advanced Manufacturing Center—John Belding & Bradley Denholm:

John Belding, Director of the Advanced Manufacturing Center (AMC), and Bradley Denholm, Associate Director for Workforce, shared a PowerPoint presentation on events and opportunities at both the Advanced Manufacturing Center in Orono and Southern Maine Community College. AMD received a \$7 million dollar grant to support the needs of industry needs around things like Industry 4.0, Automation and Robotics, ENI and PLC Communications as well as Motor Control Systems. These are more technical than some of the workforce may be

accustomed to but how can ADC move the needle to allow companies to “up their game” and put more technology and automation into manufacturing.

The Advanced Manufacturing Center was developed in 2002 originally under the College of Engineering and is now part of the UMaine economic development outreach. They work with businesses who put automation into their workplace and may be having challenges doing it on their own. Through sponsored funding, AMC has students work on projects like this so that they see the benefits to it and what’s available in Maine and eventually move on to work for the businesses they’ve helped when they graduate. With this new workforce development grant, AMC is looking at hiring more staff and increasing their footprint in the future.

John explained that a typical project for AMC is one like what they had with a business in Buckfield that makes rolling pins and other turned wood products. The business wants to start using technology within their facility, especially around drilling and cutting off rolling pins in separate operations across the shop floor and wanting to consolidate that into one piece of equipment. AMC sent staff out to meet with them and create a design and plan, budget and contract that met their needs. The staff then worked through the process of designing and building the machine that automated that drilling and cutting operation and then that was integrated, with a robot, and fed into another machine. Through assisting this business, AMC noticed that long-term training and processing of realigning the robot or adjusting for changes to the product that require reprogramming were not done, leaving the company without a long-term success plan. Making sure that there are staff on site who are knowledgeable with these needs and can work through and use the equipment and make changes in the future is vital for businesses to succeed. Part of this successful planning is working with the Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) and being able to utilize their NIST survey process to find out how big an impact can AMC make through its development impacts. In 2023, AMC’s economic development impact was 35.4 million in new sales, retained sales, new investment and cost savings from various companies they worked with, which resulted in 75 new and retained jobs in Maine.

Brad, who has been part of AMC for over 10 years as both a student intern and electrical engineering project manager and now within a leadership role, explained that the workforce development part of AMC is a DOD sponsored project created after the DOD saw needs for industrial-based utilization of automation and technology within manufacturing. DOD awarded a grant in July 2024 that would fund a center at UMaine and Southern Maine Community College to bring new technology training to Maine’s manufacturing companies. This DOD project has looked at aligning various SMCC programs across credentialing standards and targeted different audiences so that instead of focusing on a more traditional associates’ program that targets the operator and entry-level technician positions, the training would look more closely at a higher level of technician engineering type role, which would be able to support technologies across the board.

This is being done in two ways—first through factory authorized training. At the beginning of the grant AMC did a skills gap analysis and survey through Stonia Associates, which surveyed 10 manufacturing companies from various sectors in Maine and gathered information on missing skills needs that they had. A big concern was robot programmers and technicians, employees familiar with automation. As technologies advance and more skills are needed around data analytics and pulling data from manufacturing systems into IT business management systems,

AMC wanted to prioritize supporting robot programming and technician roles. However, a downside to being in the northeast is to get factory authorized training. For most of the robotic manufacturers, you must fly to Detroit or Texas, in the case of Doosan Robotics, there is no one supporting New England regions right now. So, the primary goal was to become an industrial and collaborative robotic training hub for New England regions. The focus is Maine, but if employees can be encouraged to move to Maine and join the workforce here because of the manufacturing training resources that exist, then it's a big bonus for Maine. John stated that these training programs are for companies and businesses. They are not focused on university students but on industry students coming to AMC or SMCC specifically for this training. Brad went on to explain that with micro-credentials, there are opportunities for AMC to integrate what they're doing into their 4-year programming. They are working with different departments to make that happen, and if they can put those micro-credentials into student hands when they get a 3-credit class, they will do that, focusing on the incumbent workforce in Maine. With regards to the factory authorized training, they will be supporting Doosan Robotics, ABB, Fenoke and Universal Robots that are prevalent within the area. If someone in Maine buys a Universal Robot, part of that distributed partnership will align training options for them. AMC will be advertising and marketing the program to vendors and encouraging people from across the country to come to Maine for the program and workforce opportunities. This will lead to the focus on introductory programming classes, like the operator classes and how to start integrating classes with tying in robotics with other pieces of automation technology or business management tools.

The other parallel component is tech and micro credentials. One of the things AMC recognizes when supporting the incumbent workforce is to provide condensed, highly skilled and competency based micro-credentialing systems. There is an industry-driven credentialing system called Smart Automation Certificate Alliance (SACA) who has a large industry board that meets and decides on various credentials around things like electrical systems, motor controls, variable frequency drives, pneumatics, programmable controllers, robots, communications and smart sensors. SACA has a good relationship with a training hardware provider, Amitrol, that allows AMC to break up the teaching into 2 to 3 parts. The first part is what SACA calls their silver credential and is a theory knowledge check portion of the training where AMC can leverage a learning management system that people can attend remotely and does a lot of the groundwork in terms of providing the fundamental knowledge. The second part is called the gold credential and is the hands-on prove it portion where people travel to AMC and get 1-2-day trainings and go through a hands-on practical assessment where the instructor will verify, they have tangible hands-on skills in various topics. AMC is going to leverage UMaine's UMS micro-credentialing system or framework which will allow them to potentially align across the UMaine system as well as the Community College system in Maine. AMC is embedding an industry-driven credential into the UMS micro-credential, micro-credentials that will be kept up by industry annually, to review each of the credentials and make sure it is current and meeting industry needs.

The third component is a practical application of either on-the-job training or reflection assignments, depending on who is taking the class and what their situation is and what they can do. If a student accomplishes those 3 minor badges, they will receive a micro-credential in whatever topic. The reason for going with the micro-credentialing pathway is because it's highly

condensed and way more accessible for people who don't have the time or resources to get involved with a longer-term program. It also allows AMC to customize pathways, so when meeting with a company AMC can look at the skills sets they have in their workforce, do some gap analysis and design a custom pathway for that specific role at that specific company. This will benefit the employer and the employee when aligning things like pay scales and incentives for small pay bumps.

Some partners AMC is working with include the Maine College of Engineering and Computing, MEP, SMCC, Cy Manning which is a cybersecurity and manufacturing innovation institute offering cybersecurity training, CCAP and Vermont's Advanced Manufacturing Center, which focuses more on digital twin training or advanced additive manufacturing technology. Brad gave an overview of the lab that is being renovated and will support up to 6 students per topic and 8 students per topic on the robot side. AMC is looking to offer UR Robotics within the next month and are looking to roll out the silver credentials around March 2025, and gold level within the summer months.

Erin stated that she asked John to present to the board after a conversation with Josh Henry at the July board meeting where they discussed the needs for more qualified and skilled electricians. This started a "specialty electricians" meeting with Sappi, Huhtamaki, Timber HP and Cianbro to discuss what their needs are, what kind of training does this take, and what will E&I entail. After touring Timber HP Erin saw firsthand why short-term E&I trainings were not going to work for everyone in the industry. With the need for more around automation and robotics, Erin spoke with the Manufacturing Association of Maine staff to do a letter of support for a work grant that would focus on rural communities, as well as spoke with John on what can be done through partnerships. One of these partnerships is with Educate Maine on a CDS request called Ignite and with Hudamaki so that the Maine Association of CTE schools will roll out Amitrol's Ignite program, and the career and technical education schools can get students thinking about careers in advanced manufacturing. Any funding that may come to us from grant funding would be invested into finding out what is needed to assist with these types of programs.

Chris Waite stated that he recently took himself and another staff member to the 3D printing and additive manufacturing center at UMaine and was blown away as he was unaware that type of technical developments existed in Maine. He asked John and Brad if any of their services supported the trend developing for residential home building, primarily around pre-cut CNC engineered materials where all the framing lumber is cut to a digital blueprint eliminating on-site cutting and waste. Brad stated that AMC and the state put in an EDA Tech Hub grant on biomaterials, and that everything Chris spoke about falls into the biomaterials piece. So that using advanced manufacturing and biomaterials manufacturing, which would encompass everything from what Timber HP is doing to home building or using natural materials and natural resources, they can see that advanced manufacturing piece would roll all of that together. Brad and John shared their PowerPoint and emails (Bradley.Denholm@maine.edu and John.Belding@maine.edu) which will be shared with the board.

8. Executive Director's Report:

WIOA Partner Workshop: On Friday September 27, 92 people from all 13 required WIOA partners, plus some additional partners, met at the Augusta Civic Center for a WIOA Partner Workshop. Commissioner Fortman and Cathy welcomed everyone, setting the tone for the importance of the meeting. Jennifer Hogan and Betsy Sibley from Community Credit Union facilitated a workshop on Bridges Out of Poverty that explains how poverty affects the way people think, speak and react. Many of our WIOA participants have grown up in or been touched by poverty, so it is important to have a better understanding of their issues to serve them better. Next, we reviewed all of the programs, speed dating style, so everyone could understand when it would be beneficial to reach out to partners on behalf of a client. It ended with case studies that made everyone think about ways to help in different situations. It was a great day and people there responded very positively.

Carrie gave some information around the event and feedback that's been received from the evaluation that went out to all attendees. So far 21 people have responded to the evaluation, and all of those were very positive. Everyone felt that the event was worth holding and would like to see it held annually, which due to costs would not be feasible, but another event will be planned in the future. Many of the comments from the evaluations stated that participants enjoyed learning about the various workforce programs and resources and how to better connect clients to those programs and services. The Bridges Out of Poverty training was very well received and everyone would like to see more training like this at these events. A few things that participants would like to see added are hearing real client success stories and working through other services or resources that could have been provided, more time for breaks that allow mingling and sharing contact information, and a service/resource flow chart. Marianne Young and Carrie are currently working on creating this flowchart that will break down resources within each program in a very easy to read user-friendly checklist. They are hoping to get it out to everyone by the end of November. The only things that were requested to be added moving forward is a "Parking Lot" for Q&A items throughout the event that would be addressed before leaving, and to work on eliminating redundant referral processes.

Local Plan: I've contacted the other two boards and KVCOG and AVCOG about the development of their plans—did they use an internal process or outsource through an RFP process. Coastal Counties outsourced the economic overview section but wrote the plan internally. NWDB will likely write the plan internally using EMDC for the economic overview section. KVCOG was internal as they have a large staff. AVCOG outsourced when they had the funds but did it by committee when funds were tight. The challenge with the latter is that it sounds like several people wrote it. I will be attending three sessions hosted by region 1, ETA Boston Regional Office scheduled for **December 2, 9, and 16 from 3- 4:30 EST**. These will highlight the regulations and how boards might use data to decide what industries and community representatives to include in their board and plan. They will discuss components of highly functioning partnerships and how boards might strengthen overall partnerships, including how state and local boards must align with each other to comply with WIOA requirements. Finally, we will examine methods for measuring a board's impact and showcase promising practices. All this information will influence the local plan. I have not received guidance from the state yet.

My goal is to bring topics to the board at our January meeting to discuss what might be included and share a draft plan at the April meeting.

Reauthorization: WIOA Reauthorization has been put on hold until after the election. To recap events, we learned at the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) annual meeting at the end of March that the House had crafted a reauthorization bill, and it was going up for a vote. The House bill, HR 6656, passed with bipartisan support on April 9, 2024. That version went to the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee (HELP) for consideration. NAWB had concerns with the bill and suggested that boards send a letter to their senators. Maine's three boards and service providers met to discuss how the House version might impact on our ability to serve Maine people. We came up with a unified bulleted document. CCWI sent a letter with the items to Senators Collins and King. NWDB and CWMWDB chose to send a letter together with the same bullet items that also included a chart. Letters were sent to Senators Collins and King and Representative Golden on May 22. These items were shared with the board. NAWB suggested boards host a visit for their respective congressional delegation. ED reached out to Senator Collins' office as she is on the HELP and Appropriations committees, which will have the most impact on reauthorization. Patti Saarinen and I met with two of Senator Collins representatives via zoom—one from Augusta and one from DC.

DOC/CDL-A Update: We have been working with the Department of Corrections (DOC) and Free World to deliver the CDL-A to residents who were still in a correctional facility. Free World was holding conversations with NTI, the trucking company, because the CDL includes both classroom work and driving tests for completion and certification. DOC has entered a working relationship with Washington County Community College, so this partnership has been put on hold. However, we are working with FreeWorld and the Maine Re-Entry program to offer this through the Maine Re-Entry Network's base.

IFA Update: On May 15, IFA signatories attended a virtual meeting to discuss re-negotiating the IFA over the concerns of the non-residents. I requested information from all non-residents on May 19 and again on June 19 regarding their budgets and staff so I could create a tiered payment schedule that seemed fair. Hearing from only two non-residents, I developed a tiered system based on what I thought would be reasonable. On June 28, I sent that tiered system to all six non-residents asking for feedback. When the IFA was initially signed, the aggregated cost to non-residents was \$9,939.08 (\$1497.87 each). This year the bill was reduced to \$7,150.65. In using the same cost structure which assumed non-residents would pay 15% of the information center costs, I figured a cost structure based on 10%. This would mean that non-residents would need to pay \$4800. After receiving a non-resident buy-in, I sent an email on August 12 to Kim Moore of BES, Suzan McKechnie of UI, and Libby Stone-Sterling, Elissa Rowe and Samantha Fenderson of BRS attaching two budgets:

Lewiston FY 24 IFA 5-15-24, the budget that Lisa Haskell sent based on costs she knew at the time using the same split as our first IFA (15% of all costs associated with the information center).

Lewiston FY IFA 10% 6-27-24, the budget that reflected the lowered costs for non-residents (reducing costs from 15% to 10%).

After receiving a thumbs up from Suzan, I received an email from Kim on August 26 stating that there had been some errors in the square footage and needed to be corrected. Kim, Libby, Lisa and I met on August 28 via zoom with a new budget. Basically, the information center is the sticking point. I separated the information center from the rest of the office space. From the discussion that day, it is not just a matter of square footage but who actually uses that space. Kim sent me some traffic figures of who came in during PY23 (below). I sent another email on October 16 attaching the separated budgets and the traffic flow numbers and offering dates and times to meet the following week. I sent another email this morning offering dates for next week.

Lewiston CareerCenter	Number	%
Total in person traffic PY23	6,273	
Bureau of Rehabilitative Services	847	13.50%
Bureau of Employment Services	3,625	57.79%
Division for Blind and Visually Impaired	23	0.37%
WIOA	315	5.02%
Bureau of Unemployment Compensation	800	12.75%
Non-resident partners	627*	10%
Job Corps	36	0.57%

WORC/WANTO/ARPA: We received notice that the Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities grant through the Manufacturing Association of Maine was not successful. The meat of the grant was used by MDOL to submit an application for the Good Jobs Challenge grant, so all was not lost. We did not receive the WANTO grant. We received a letter October 8 from the USDOL regarding the WANTO grant with an attachment titled "unsuccessful letter." Nothing like giving you the information you are seeking in a matter of seconds! The letter stated that 102 entities applied and nine were accepted. While I felt very positive about our submission, the reality is we only had a 9% chance of being selected. I sent an email to all who had written letter of support. I am in talks with three Maine trades women and will be attending two tradeswomen gatherings to gather information for another try next year. Regarding the ARPA funding, we are working with the Community-Based Organization for referrals. The Maine Immigrant & Refugee Services in Lewiston has been the most successful so far. They have referred 28 people of whom 8 have enrolled. Western Maine Community Action has referred 15 of whom 3 have enrolled. The Maine Re-Entry Network has referred 32 with no enrollments. WMCA has done an enormous amount of outreach, but it is not bearing fruit. We meet monthly to discuss strategies, and I did a presentation during a lunch and learn for members of their staff. I met with MERN and EMDC to discuss better ways to work with their referrals. They tend to refer a lot of people who remain unresponsive when EMDC reaches out. This happened with the opioid grant as well. We discussed strategy and came up with some new approaches. The marketing campaign is well underway, and I am beginning talks with GoMaine for the transportation grant

Board Membership: With the addition of Bobbi Avery, we are now at full capacity and have all counties represented. However, there are some people that never show up and we will now work on replacing them. Bruce Tisdale has not been to a meeting since January 2022.

Performance Measures: ED met EMDC and MDOL to review and negotiate the performance measures which happen every two years. There are 5 performance measures that are reviewed which revolve around the success of those we assist. So, when someone exits a program MDOL looks at their success after 6 months, are they still employed, etc. then they look again after 12 months. Another measure they review is the medium income earned by those completing programming, the credential rate of those who earned credentials that we assisted with getting into training. The final measure is measurable skills gains, this includes someone who may be enrolled in the community college system and, after their first semester, did they complete and pass their classes, which would be considered a measurable skills gain. We were very involved with negotiations between the state and feds. For state and board negotiations, we look back with help from Tom Fernands, to see what we have done in the past, what's doable and what we can do to raise the rate. Sometimes the state will ask for something that we feel is not attainable and we will come back to them with a suggestion that we feel works better and it is a reachable goal. Erin updated Cathy and Joe Pietroski, the chair of the county commissioners. Negotiations went without a hitch and the state accepted performances measures from all three boards. Cathy and Joe signed off on September 3.

Results for America (RFA): RFA is a nonprofit organization that, according to their website, "helps government leaders harness the power of evidence and data to fund solutions that work to accelerate economic mobility and improve lives." Celeste Banda from Main Street Skowhegan approached me several months ago asking if she could include us as a partner for an RFA mini bootcamp on Advancing Job Quality for which she was applying. I agreed, as the USDOL is focused on Good Jobs, and have defined those Good Jobs Principles. I asked Susan from EMDC to join. There will be six sessions in total with three already completed. The idea is to use different forms of leverage to advance job quality in the region. The themes of the first three were: procurement, policy, and HR & empowerment. There is an implementation phase where you can apply for their help to manage implementing a project. I have talked with Celeste and the people at RFA. Celeste said she was looking to gain information and not develop a project. While I think it would be good as a board to have a discussion on the Good Jobs Principles and how it may be applicable to our work, I don't think we are ready to discuss a project.

9. Other/New Business:

Chris Winstead asked Erin if a discussion around Congressionally Directed Spending and transportation could be added to a future agenda. He would like to look at the data that came out of the focus groups for the youth marketing campaign, especially around the transportation barriers and the data on disconnected youth. He feels that it would be great framework for CDS around transportation and the possibility of putting vans into circulation in some of the communities that could be used for workforce transportation written from the perspective of

youth but being an impact to all workforces. Erin will send Chris all the data he asked for and hold a discussion at the upcoming meeting.

10. Adjourn Meeting:

Cathy adjourned the meeting at 10:30am.

Next Board Meeting Date: Thursday, January 23, 2025, via ZOOM, 8:30-10:30am

