

Strategic Plan

2026-2030

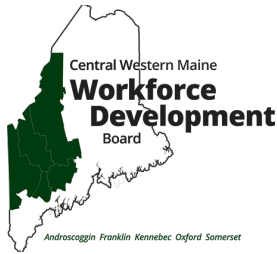


Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Executive Summary	5
CWMWDB Strategic Plan	12
Section 1: Strategic Planning / Regional Analysis.....	12
Section 2: Local Workforce Development System.....	39
Section 3: Local One-Stop Delivery System	56
Section 4: Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Program Services	68
Section 5: Wagner-Peyser Services	82
Section 7: Co-operative Agreements	97
Section 8: Jobs for Veterans State Grants.....	102
Section 9: Fiscal, Performance, and Other Functions	106
Section 10: Performance Accountability	115
Section 11: Local Board Assurances.....	116

Introduction

The Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board (CWMWDB) serves Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, and Somerset Counties. CWMWDB is one part of a workforce development system that includes a variety of partners and stakeholders. This network of partners presents opportunities to leverage additional resources and more effectively provide services to all customers.

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

Core Partners for CWMWDB and their corresponding WIOA Titles are:

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

CWMWDB, with support from Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC), conducted extensive outreach to employers, workforce partners, community organizations, and workforce participants throughout the region. Surveys were distributed to gather input on workforce challenges, labor force participation, skills gaps, training needs, and economic development opportunities. A total of 36 responses were received from employers and businesses across the region. An additional participant survey generated 27 responses, reflecting generally positive experiences with workforce services while also identifying opportunities to improve service delivery and participant engagement.

CWMWDB also convened stakeholder focus groups in Waterville and Lewiston to gather qualitative feedback from workforce system partners and community stakeholders. As part of these sessions, participants completed a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and

Threats) analysis to identify key workforce assets, challenges, emerging opportunities, and external factors impacting the region's workforce and economy.

Targeted discussions were held with Adult Education providers, CareerCenter staff, vocational rehabilitation representatives, community action agencies, training providers, and other required WIOA partners. These conversations focused on service delivery challenges, coordination opportunities, barriers faced by job seekers, and strategies to improve outcomes for priority populations, including individuals with disabilities, veterans, youth, low-income individuals, and others facing barriers to employment. Feedback gathered through these engagement efforts helped inform the Board's strategic priorities and workforce development strategies for the planning period.

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

The CWMWDB Plan aligns with the vision and goals of the State of Maine 2024-2027 Unified Plan Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The State Plan is based on the following premise: “By 2030, Maine will be an international leader with a vibrant, sustainable, environmentally responsible economy. All across the state, the people of Maine will have access to an unmatched quality of life and good paying jobs.” The State Plan lays out the following vision:

Maine’s residents and businesses will have economic opportunity and contribute to the growth of the state through a responsive, networked, and coordinated workforce development system across public and private sectors. The system will integrate all services into a seamless continuum resulting in increased educational and employment attainment for residents with a focus on careers and support Maine’s business sectors with skilled and qualified workers.”

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

- Maine’s untapped labor pool will enter employment and advance into high-demand occupations of their choice through private and public investment in training, education, and support. In addition to three primary industries (Healthcare, Education, and Manufacturing), CWMWDB will address emerging industries and associated job opportunities, such as solar and wind technicians.
- Current and future workers will be prepared for in-demand careers through accessible education, training, and work-based learning opportunities that result in industry-recognized credentials and sustainable employment.

- Create a networked, aligned and demand-driven workforce system across public and private partners that fosters the growth of Maine’s economy while supporting equitable, safe, and productive employment opportunities.

The Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board has produced a new Strategic Plan for 2026-2030 that shares the vision and goals set by the State of Maine.

Executive Summary

CWMWDB and its Partners engaged in a process for the completion of this consolidated regional plan. The following is an executive summary of the CWMWDB Plan. The summary focuses on the big picture vision and strategies of the CWMWDB and the related findings upon which they are based.

Vision: The Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board’s vision emphasizes equitable access to education, training, career pathways, and supportive services, while strengthening communication, collaboration, and referral processes among workforce partners to better leverage shared resources, improve service coordination, and ensure individuals receive the full range of supports needed to achieve economic self-sufficiency and long-term career success.

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

Through engagement with workforce development partners, stakeholders affirmed that while the core goals for job seekers remain consistent, including access to training, career pathways, and quality employment, the strategies to achieve them must continue to evolve. Rapid technological advancement, increased use of artificial intelligence and automation, the expansion of remote and hybrid work, and growing demand in emerging industries are reshaping workforce needs across the region. These changes require workforce systems to be more flexible, responsive, and adaptable to both current and future labor market demands. Ensuring consistent access to technology, digital and AI skills development, and career advancement opportunities will be critical to preparing workers for an increasingly technology-driven economy. Clear, coordinated communication among job seekers, employers, educators, and workforce partners will be essential to building shared understanding, expanding access to services, and aligning workforce investments with real-world demand.

The CWMWDB continues to strengthen and expand partnerships throughout the region to address evolving workforce challenges and opportunities. Efforts have included increased collaboration to support justice-involved individuals transitioning back into the workforce

through training, employment, and supportive services. As the Board serves a diverse five-county region, it recognizes both the opportunities created through broader regional collaboration and the importance of maintaining programs, initiatives, and resources that respond to the unique workforce needs of individual communities.

The strategic goals of the CWMWDB and its partners are outlined below:

Key Priorities

- Align training pathways and workforce investments with employer demand
- Expand workforce participation and reduce barriers to employment
- Strengthen collaboration, communication, and coordinated service delivery
- Address workforce sustainability, retention, and replacement demand

Key Priority 1: Align Training Pathways and Workforce Investments with Employer Demand

Employers across the region continue to report workforce shortages, recruitment challenges, and skill gaps in high-demand industries. Workforce data, employer engagement, and stakeholder feedback identified the need for stronger alignment between training investments, workforce programming, and real-time labor market demand to ensure limited resources are being utilized effectively and strategically.

- Align training cohorts, credential programs, and workforce investments with high-demand occupations and regional labor market data
- Expand apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and work experiences in priority sectors
- Strengthen partnerships with employers, community colleges, Adult Education, CareerCenters, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) providers
- Increase access to short-term credentialing and industry-recognized training opportunities connected directly to employer demand
- Utilize employer feedback, job posting analytics, and labor market information to guide workforce training priorities and sector strategies
- Coordinate workforce and education partners to reduce duplication of training offerings and improve resource utilization

Key Priority 2: Expand Workforce Participation and Reduce Barriers to Employment

The region continues to face workforce participation challenges connected to housing, transportation, childcare, digital access, healthcare access, and rural isolation. Aging workforce

trends and declining labor force participation further increase the need to engage individuals currently disconnected from employment and training opportunities.

- Improve coordination of supportive services related to transportation, childcare, housing, recovery supports, and digital access
- Expand outreach and workforce participation strategies for priority populations and individuals facing barriers to employment
- Increase access to virtual and hybrid workforce services to improve participation in rural communities
- Support flexible workforce and training models that improve access and retention
- Continue integrating supportive services and workforce readiness strategies into workforce programming

Key Priority 3: Strengthen Collaboration, Communication, and Coordinated Service Delivery

Stakeholder engagement, particularly with One-Stop Partners, identified communication gaps, inconsistent referral processes, and duplication of services as ongoing workforce system challenges. Workforce partners emphasized the need for stronger coordination, streamlined referrals, and improved communication to ensure participants are connected efficiently to available services and do not fall through service gaps.

- Develop and implement a system-wide referral form and referral tracking process across workforce partners
- Improve communication and resource-sharing practices among WIOA Core Programs, all One Stop Partners and community organizations.
- Expand co-enrollment and coordinated case management strategies to maximize limited funding resources and participant supports
- Strengthen integrated service delivery through regular partner meetings, shared planning, and collaborative problem-solving
- Increase awareness of available workforce services, partner programs, and supportive resources among both staff and participants
- Continue utilizing the “no wrong door” approach to improve access to workforce services across the region

Key Priority 4: Address Workforce Sustainability, Retention, and Replacement Demand

The region faces long-term workforce sustainability challenges related to an aging workforce, population decline, labor shortages, and continued workforce attrition. Stakeholders identified retention, succession planning, and workforce attraction as critical regional needs.

- Support succession planning, mentorship, and incumbent worker training strategies with employers
- Expand youth engagement, career awareness, and early workforce exposure opportunities
- Promote retention strategies that support long-term workforce attachment and career advancement
- Strengthen recruitment pipelines into healthcare, education, manufacturing, transportation, and skilled trades occupations
- Support strategies that help retain older workers and preserve institutional knowledge within the workforce

Key Priority 5: Support Entrepreneurship, Self-Employment, and Emerging Workforce Models

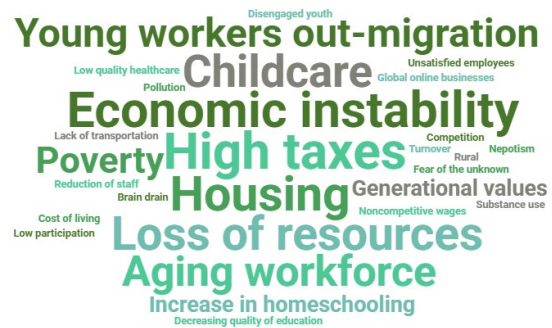
Stakeholder engagement and regional workforce discussions identified growing interest in entrepreneurship, self-employment, freelance work, and skilled trades-based business ownership, particularly among youth and individuals in rural communities. CWMWDB will explore strategies to better integrate entrepreneurial training and self-employment pathways into workforce development efforts consistent with allowable WIOA activities.

- Expand entrepreneurial training, financial literacy, and small business readiness opportunities within workforce and youth programming
- Increase exposure to entrepreneurship, skilled trades business ownership, and self-employment career pathways through work-based learning and employer engagement activities
- Strengthen partnerships with Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), economic development organizations, Adult Education providers, community colleges, and entrepreneurial support programs
- Support youth entrepreneurship initiatives and career exploration opportunities connected to regional industries and local business development

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



OPPORTUNITIES



THREATS

Summary

The Board recognizes that addressing the region’s workforce challenges requires active collaboration of all workforce partners. CWMWDB will continue to convene these partners, facilitate shared planning, and align resources to meet the needs of job seekers and employers across the region.

The following strategies will guide CWMWDB’s collaboration with Core Programs, all One-Stop Partners, employers, educators, and community-based organizations to support the Board’s strategic vision while maximizing limited workforce resources and funding opportunities through coordinated service delivery and shared investment strategies:

- Continue to convene regular meetings among WIOA Core Programs, One-Stop Partners, Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, CareerCenters, and workforce providers to strengthen coordination, improve referrals, and reduce duplication of services.
- Expand co-enrollment and cross-program service strategies to maximize limited funding resources and improve participant access to workforce and support programs.
- Align workforce, education, and economic development resources around high-demand sectors including healthcare, manufacturing, construction, transportation, education, and skilled trades.
- Continue expanding apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and work experiences through employer and education partnerships.
- Expand efforts to engage and retain older workers through encouraging employers to offer flexible work arrangements, phased retirement options, and mentorship roles that help preserve institutional knowledge.
- Support digital access and literacy initiatives in rural communities, especially for

older adults and those disconnected from education and training due to technology gaps.

- Pursue collaborative grants and funding opportunities that support workforce training, digital literacy, supportive services, and work-based learning initiatives.
- Improve communication systems, referral tracking, and resource-sharing practices among workforce partners to ensure individuals are connected efficiently to available services and supports.
- Continue to support flexible and accessible training opportunities, including short-term credentialing, hybrid learning, adult education, and virtual service delivery models.
- Coordinate with education and training providers to align curriculum, credentialing opportunities, and career pathways with labor market demand and emerging industry needs.
- Encourage cross-participation among workforce, education, economic development, and community organizations to strengthen regional collaboration and maximize shared resources.

Section 1: Strategic Planning / Regional Analysis

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

A summary of regional economic and workforce data analysis is provided in this Section. The full data analysis along with findings are contained in Appendix 1 - Economic and Workforce Data. This summary and the data appendix include data on socio-economic indicators, employment, wages, establishments, and occupations within the Region. Data is summarized for the CWMWDB, which includes the Counties of Androscoggin, Franklin, Somerset, Kennebec, and Oxford.

It is important to state that while there will be some growth in healthcare and education, workforce demand will be driven largely by the demand for replacement workers (workers retiring or otherwise leaving the workforce). This has significant implications for the workforce system as a whole and will drive the responses of education and training programs as well as institutions and employers alike.

Overall Business Demand by Industry Sector

In 2024 there were a total of 165,042 jobs (compared to 161,847 in 2021) in the CWMWDB region. In the past five years, the region has experienced an increase in unemployment, similar to increases in unemployment in Maine and the US.

Over the next ten years, the CWMWDB region is projected to experience a 0% annual change in total employment. However, there will still be a need for workforce development resulting from replacement demand (demand resulting from retirements and persons leaving the workforce), which will create the need to fill 175,516 jobs over the next ten years.

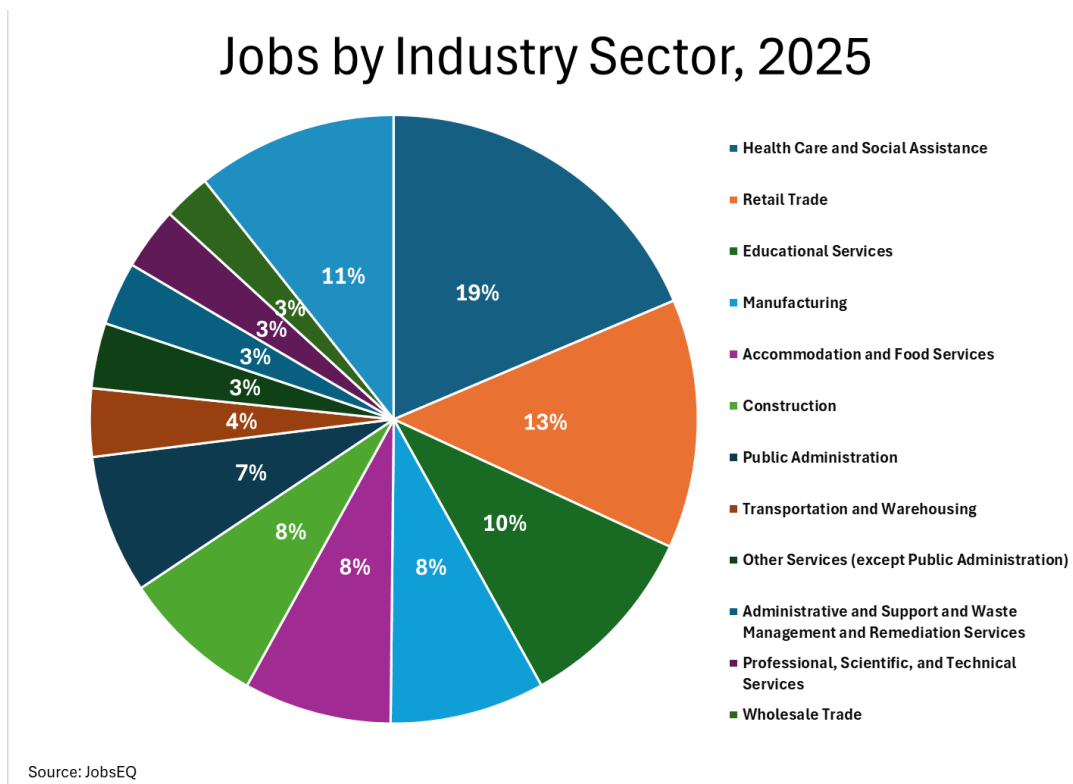
Health Care & Social Assistance, along with Retail Trade, are the two largest industries within the CWMWDB region, providing over 30,739 jobs and 21,861 jobs, respectively. Health Care and Social Assistance is projected to grow at an average annual growth rate of 0.4% in the next 10 years. Other industries that represent considerable portions of jobs in the region include Educational Services (16,609 jobs), Manufacturing (13,583), Accommodation and Food Services (12,970 jobs), Construction (12,568 jobs), and Public Administration (12,177 jobs).

Retail, though the second-largest sector, is both projected to decline by more than 0.5% and pays lower than average annual wages. It therefore is not a strong sector to target. Additionally, the sector is experiencing recent and projected future transformations, including introduction of new

technologies, including artificial intelligence, making it susceptible to further employment declines.

Health Care and Social Assistance, along with Retail Trade industries have a location quotient (LQ-measure of the degree to which a region has a concentration in an industry) of 1.21 and 1.38, respectively showing these industries are slightly more concentrated in the CWMWDB region compared to the United States. Other industries in which the CWMWDB region exhibits a greater than average concentration (above average LQ) include Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting (1.76); Public Administration (1.56) Education Services (1.24); and Construction (1.27).

Note: a LQ of 1.0 indicates equal concentration to the U.S., with greater numbers indicating a higher concentration and lower numbers indicating a lower concentration.



In Demand Industries

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

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

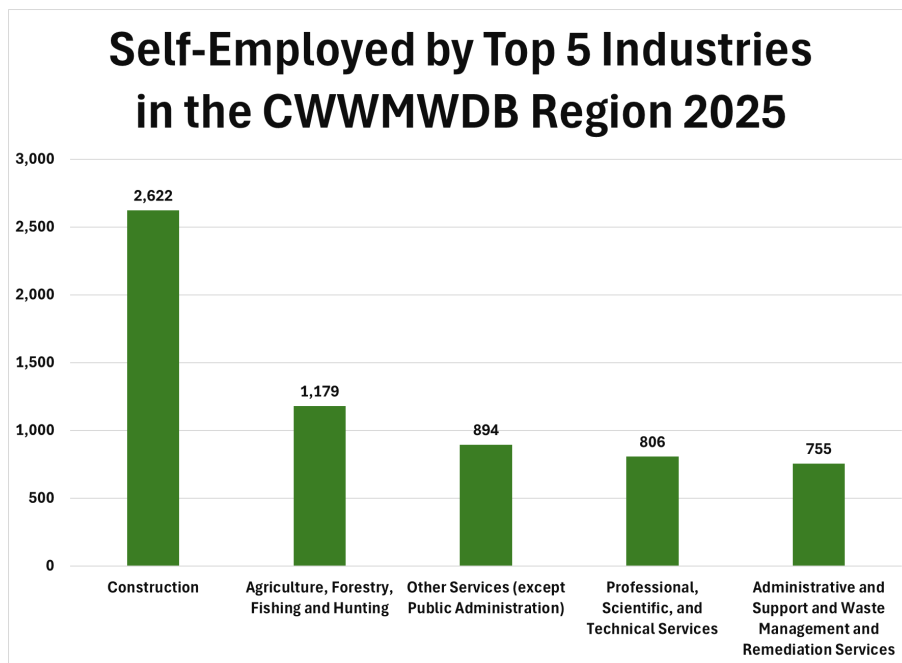
- Construction
- Public Administration

Self-Employment and Emerging Sectors

In addition to the traditional industry alignment in the region, the CWMWDB region has a vital entrepreneurial sector of an estimated 10,068 total self-employed individuals, which represents approximately 6.07% of total jobs. These individuals earn an average \$38,728 annually. Within the entire CWMWDB region, the industries with the most self-employed persons are in Construction with 2,622 self-employed and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting with 1,179 self-employed.

Across the CWMWDB region, self-employed individuals in the Construction industry earn an average annual wage of approximately \$42,937, while those self-employed in the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting sector earn an average annual wage of approximately \$35,167.

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



Source: JobsEQ

Emerging industries will continue to shape workforce development efforts in our region. As demand for skilled workers increases, CWMWDB anticipates new opportunities to collaborate with education providers and employers to develop training programs that prepare local job seekers for careers in high demand fields.

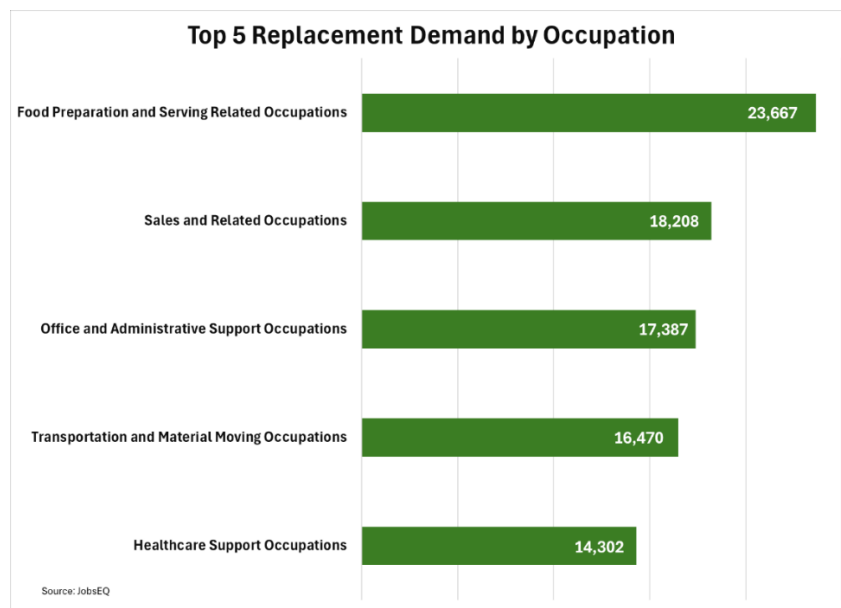
Occupations and Employment Demand

In terms of occupations, of the region’s 165,042 jobs, Office and Administrative Support have the highest number of jobs with 17,706. This is followed by Sales and Related with 14,502, Transportation and Material Moving with 13,260, Food Preparation and Serving with 12,864, Management Occupations with 12,055, Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations with 11,514, and Education, Training, and Library with 11,513.

Growth in occupational demand due to industry growth (new jobs) in the next ten years is projected to be driven by the occupations of Healthcare Support (653) followed by Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations (429).

At the more detailed 4-digit SOC occupational level, Laborers and Material Movers has the most jobs with 5,649 and a growth rate of 0.2%, followed by Home Health and Personal Care Aides (4,943, 1.1%), Registered Nurses (4,466, 0.1%), Retail Salesperson (4,408), and Cashiers (4,178). Retail Salespersons and Cashiers will not be prioritized by the Board due to their stagnant growth combined with the low wages offered to employees.

As depicted in the chart below it is projected that replacement demand will drive the need for 177,151 positions with the highest occupations being Food Preparation and Serving (23,667 jobs), Sales and Related Occupations (18,208 jobs), Office and Administrative Support (17,387 jobs), Transportation and Material Moving (16,470 jobs), Healthcare Support Occupations (14,302), and Educational Instruction and Library Occupations (10,463). Regional workforce outreach strategies should include information, programs, and services to support industry and interested job applicants, both employed and underemployed, in filling this replacement demand.



Targeted Industry Sector Based on Employer Demand

These industries play a significant role in regional employment, offer opportunities for wage growth, or face significant workforce needs driven by retirements and replacement demand.

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

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

CWMWDB has identified Healthcare, Education, and Manufacturing as the region's priority sectors for targeted workforce, training, and employer engagement strategies.

In addition to these priority sectors, CWMWDB and its partners will continue supporting workforce initiatives in Construction, Transportation and Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting, where self-employment and replacement needs also play a vital role in the regional economy.

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

Healthcare

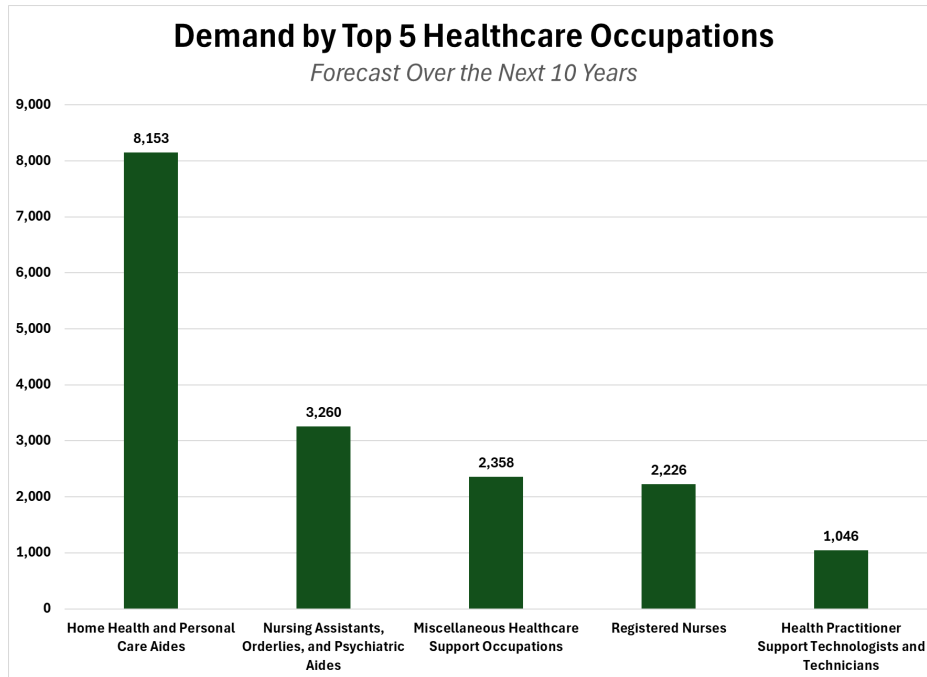
The Healthcare industry sector has over 20,942 jobs within the CWMWDB region, representing 12.69% of the 165,042 total jobs across all industries in the Region.

The sector has shown growth over the past 5 years, gaining 831 jobs, which is an average annual increase of 0.8%. The Healthcare industry is projected to grow over the next 10 years at an average annual rate of 0.5%. The greatest workforce need within healthcare is the projected replacement demand of 20,821 workers in Healthcare industries over the course of the next ten years.

Within the Healthcare industry sector, the highest number of jobs can be found in Home Health and Personal Care Aides (4,943), followed by Registered Nurses (4,466), and Nursing Assistants (2,413).

Home Health and Personal Care Aides is expected to grow by 1.1% (547 jobs), Registered Nurses is expected to grow by 0.1%, and Nursing Assistants will decline by 0.2%.

The occupations with the highest projected healthcare demand are identified below:



Source: JobsEQ

The average annual wage for workers in this specific sector is \$62,700. The sector wage average is influenced by high-wage doctoral and specialty occupations. The range of earnings starts with Home Health Aides and Personal Care Aides averaging \$40,000 per year up to Surgeons with average annual earnings of \$401,400.

Occupation Snapshot – Health Care Support Occupations

Occupation Distribution for Health Care and Social Assistance in CWMWDB							
JobsEQ		Current		1-Year Demand			
SOC	Occupation	Empl.	Avg Ann Wages	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl. Growth
29-1141	Registered Nurses	4,108	\$91,200	204	115	86	2
31-1122	Personal Care Aides	3,495	\$39,600	536	266	234	36
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	2,171	\$46,700	294	142	155	-4
31-1121	Home Health Aides	1,239	\$39,600	156	69	74	13

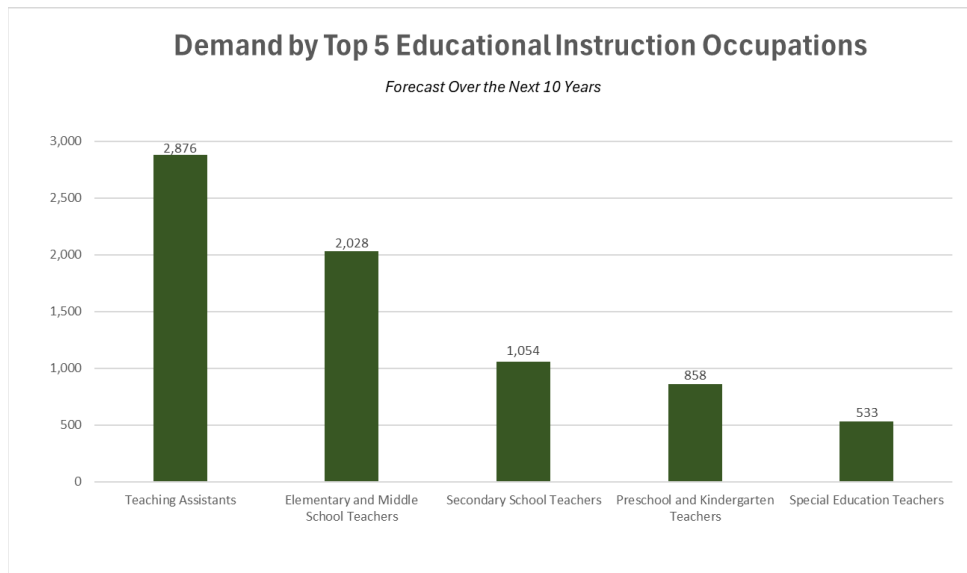
43-6013	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	922	\$46,300	88	43	45	1
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Education

The Education sector supports more than 11,500 jobs within the CWMWDB region, representing 7.01% of the 165,042 total jobs across all industries.

The Education industry sector has expanded over the past 5 years, adding 1,015 jobs at an average annual growth rate of 1.9%. Total workforce demand over the next ten years is projected at more than 10,400 positions, driven primarily by replacement needs. 48.8% of total demand is represented by workers exiting current roles, while 49.9% is due to transfers between educational roles. The sector is projected to continue modest growth over the next 10 years at an average annual rate of 0.1% for a total of 144 new jobs projected by 2036.

Within the Education industry sector, the highest number of jobs can be found in Teaching Assistants with 2,876 jobs. This occupation has grown over the past 5 years, at an average annual increase of 1.5%. The next highest occupation, Elementary and Middle School Teachers, currently has 2,028 jobs, at an average annual increase of 1.8% over the last 5 years.



The average annual wage within the Education sector is nearly \$59,900, which is lower than the average annual wage for all industries in the region at \$62,700.

Occupation Snapshot – Educational Instruction Occupations

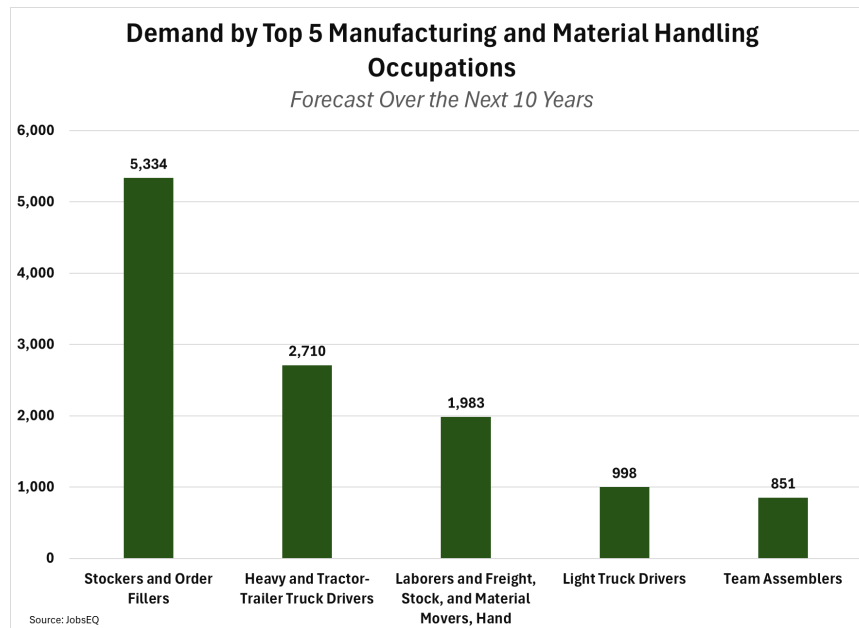
Occupation Distribution for Educational Instruction and Library Occupations in CWMWDB			
<i>JobsEQ</i>		Current	1-Year Demand

SOC	Occupation	Empl.	Avg Ann Wages	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl. Growth
25-2020	Elementary and Middle School Teachers	2,958	\$63,300	202	101	98	3
25-9040	Teaching Assistants	2,318	\$44,000	287	135	151	1
25-2030	Secondary School Teachers	1,628	\$63,000	105	51	52	2
25-2010	Preschool and Kindergarten Teachers	744	\$48,100	85	35	48	2
25-2050	Special Education Teachers	743	\$61,300	53	26	26	1

Manufacturing

The Manufacturing industry sector has 22,500 jobs within the region, representing 13.63% of the region’s 165,042 total jobs. Although overall employment is projected to decline slightly over the next 10 years, it remains a key focus for the workforce system. This reflects the sector’s competitive wages, accessibility to workers with varying education levels, and continued importance to rural economies.

The largest manufacturing-related occupations include Stock and Order Fillers with 3,200 jobs followed by Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers with 2,726 jobs, Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Handling at 1,620 jobs, and Light Truck Drivers at 964.



Although total employment in manufacturing is projected to decline, replacement demand driven by retirements and workforce exits is expected to create 25,686 job openings in the sector over the next ten years, with the largest concentration of openings projected in Stock and Order Filler occupations.

Occupation Snapshot – Manufacturing Occupations

Occupation Distribution for Educational Instruction and Library Occupations in CWMWDB							
<i>JobsEQ</i>		Current		1-Year Demand			
SOC	Occupation	Empl.	Avg Ann Wages	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl. Growth
51-2092	Team Assemblers	707	\$47,800	29	53	-3	80
51-9196	Paper Goods Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	570	\$55,300	20	30	-7	43
51-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	568	\$75,200	20	33	-3	50
51-6042	Shoe Machine Operators and Tenders	328	\$44,700	15	18	-3	30
53-7051	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	326	\$47,700	11	20	-2	29

These sector priorities will guide CWMWDB’s workforce investments, apprenticeship expansion efforts, career pathway development, and employer engagement strategies to ensure workforce programming remains aligned with regional labor market demand and replacement workforce needs.

Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Workforce

Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI, is expected to become increasingly integrated across nearly every industry sector and occupation within Maine’s workforce. According to the U.S. Department of Labor’s AI Literacy Framework, AI is already transforming how work is completed in offices, manufacturing facilities, healthcare settings, education, logistics, customer service, and skilled trades environments. The framework emphasizes that “every worker will need baseline AI literacy skills to succeed, regardless of industry or occupation.”

AI is predicted to be used to support productivity, automate repetitive tasks, assist with decision-making, organize and analyze information, draft written content, support customer interaction, improve scheduling and logistics, and streamline administrative processes. AI is expected to augment, rather than replace, many occupations by increasing efficiency and changing how workers interact with technology within daily workflows.

As AI adoption accelerates, workforce and education systems will need to move quickly to ensure workers, employers, educators, and workforce providers are prepared for evolving skill requirements. AI literacy must become a foundational workforce competency, similar to digital literacy, and should be embedded throughout workforce development, education, apprenticeship, and career pathway programs.

The framework identifies five foundational AI literacy competency areas that should be incorporated into workforce training programs:

- Understanding AI principles, capabilities, and limitations;
- Exploring practical AI uses within workplace settings;
- Learning how to direct AI effectively through prompting and contextual input;
- Evaluating AI outputs for accuracy, quality, and relevance; and
- Using AI responsibly, including data privacy, ethics, and workplace accountability.

Business Composition in the CWMWDB Region

Another element of the analysis of the regional economy and employment opportunity landscape is the composition of the businesses in the region. As typical of the Maine economy, most businesses in the CWMWDB region are small with 78% having fewer than 20 employees and a mere 1% having 100 or more employees. The number of business establishments in the region by key industry sector can be seen below:

Establishments by Industry within the CWMWDB Region, 2024 <i>JobsEQ</i>		
NAICS	Industry	Establishments
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	322
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	14
22	Utilities	94
23	Construction	1,563
31	Manufacturing	415
42	Wholesale Trade	429
44	Retail Trade	1,469

48	Transportation and Warehousing	466
51	Information	216
52	Finance and Insurance	434
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	381
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,460
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	301
56	Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services	671
61	Educational Services	326
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	1,335
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	205
72	Accommodation and Food Services	923
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	826
92	Public Administration	336
99	Unclassified	3
	Total - All Industries	12,189

Wages by Industry Sector

Wages and benefits are crucial ingredients for the overall health and vitality of the regional economy and of particular interest to the workforce development system when considering where to invest in training and education of workers. As of the fourth quarter of 2025, wages for all industries in the region averaged \$58,140. Utilities had the highest average wages (\$95,986), followed by Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (\$85,366), Professional, Scientific, and Technical (\$85,157), Finance and Insurance (\$81,534), and Public Administration (\$74,629).



Summary of the Economic Analysis

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

Opportunities

- Replacement demand is projected to create more than 175,000 job openings over the next ten years.
- Healthcare remains the region’s strongest sector, with continued demand for Registered Nurses, Home Health Aides, Personal Care Aides, and Nursing Assistants.
- Education is a critical sector due to rising replacement demand and continued need for teachers, teaching assistants, and other educational support occupations.
- Manufacturing continues to provide strong employment opportunities due to high replacement demand, competitive wages, and its importance to rural economies.
- The region has a strong entrepreneurial base, particularly within construction and agriculture.

- High-wage industries such as utilities, finance and insurance, professional and technical services, and public administration provide opportunities for career advancement.
- The region benefits from a strong network of workforce, adult education, community college, and technical training providers.
- Continued growth in technology, digital services, and AI-supported workplace systems may create new workforce and training opportunities across industries.

Challenges

- Population decline and an aging workforce continue to reduce labor force availability across the region.
- Healthcare, manufacturing, education, and public administration are expected to experience significant workforce turnover due to retirements and worker exits.
- Overall employment growth is projected to remain limited, increasing the importance of workforce participation and upskilling efforts.
- Workforce barriers, including transportation, childcare, housing, digital access, rising cost of living, and rural isolation, continue to impact employment participation.
- Many of the region's highest-paying industries employ smaller portions of the workforce, requiring stronger career pathway development.
- Employers continue to report challenges related to recruitment, retention, soft skills, and workforce readiness.
- Advancements in technology, automation, and artificial intelligence are expected to continue reshaping workforce skill requirements and training needs across industries.
- Limited training capacity, instructor shortages, and constrained workforce funding resources may impact the region's ability to fully respond to workforce demand.

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

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

Employers across the CWMWDB region continue to report challenges finding and hiring qualified workers. This gap highlights the need for stronger alignment between the skills of the workforce and the needs of local employers. In addition to technical skill shortages, employers continue to identify gaps in foundational employability skills such as communication, reliability, professionalism, adaptability, and problem-solving.

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

These gaps can be seen in data for job posting for high wage occupation openings in the CWMWDB region below:

Skill Gaps in the CWMWDB Region			
Skill Name	Candidates	Openings	Gap
Microsoft Office	600	862	-262
Microsoft Excel	828	1,085	-257
Sales	329	486	-157
Teaching/Training, Job	264	418	-154
Hospitality	114	263	-149
Ability to Lift 51-100 lbs.	5	132	-127
Microsoft Word	284	396	-112
Microsoft Outlook	264	362	-98
Microsoft PowerPoint	204	292	-88
Forklifts	216	296	-80
Spanish	237	159	78
Certification in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	385	300	85

Culinary Arts	177	90	87
First Aid Certification	282	168	113
Working With Children	242	125	117
English	266	145	120
Cash Registers	433	313	120
Food Preparation	304	182	122
Manufacturing	388	263	124
Food Service	391	186	205

The skill gap analysis above reflects the mismatch between employer hiring requirements and the skills currently available within the regional workforce, as identified through labor market information, job posting analytics, employer surveys, stakeholder engagement, and workforce partner feedback. This disconnect demonstrates the need for stronger alignment between workforce training efforts and the evolving needs of employers across the CWMWDB region.

The most significant gaps identified through labor market and job posting data include digital literacy and proficiency in Microsoft Office applications. These skills are increasingly required across nearly every industry sector, including healthcare, manufacturing, education, finance, administrative support, and customer service occupations, demonstrating the growing importance of foundational digital competency within the workforce.

Additional skill gaps identified through the analysis include sales, hospitality, teaching and training, forklift operation, manufacturing, food service, and physically demanding occupations requiring lifting and material handling capabilities. Healthcare-related skill shortages also continue to be reflected in demand for CPR certification, First Aid certification, and experience working with children. Employers further identified ongoing need for communication, professionalism, reliability, adaptability, teamwork, and customer service skills, particularly among younger and entry-level workers.

While historic labor market data related specifically to AI literacy skill gaps is still limited, workforce and education systems are increasingly recognizing AI literacy as an emerging foundational workforce competency. As AI tools become more integrated into daily workplace operations across industries, digital literacy expectations are expected to expand beyond basic software proficiency to include understanding how to effectively and responsibly use AI-supported technologies. Current workforce trends indicate growing need for AI-related competencies including critical thinking, problem-solving, digital adaptability, evaluation of AI-generated information, and the ability to utilize AI tools within workplace settings.

Stakeholder feedback and employer engagement reinforced the importance of both technical and employability skills across industries. Employers consistently identified the need for stronger workplace readiness, digital competency, and hands-on work experience. Workforce partners and stakeholders also emphasized the importance of career awareness, work-based learning opportunities, and exposure to career pathways earlier in the education and workforce development process.

Feedback gathered through surveys, stakeholder meetings, and employer discussions identified several recurring workforce priorities, including:

- Increased emphasis on soft skill development, including communication, professionalism, reliability, and teamwork.
- Expanded access to apprenticeships, internships, work experiences, and other work-based learning opportunities.
- Increased digital literacy, technology skill development, and emerging AI literacy competencies across industries.
- Greater awareness of career pathways within healthcare, manufacturing, skilled trades, education, and emerging industries.
- Earlier exposure to career options through career fairs, job tours, and other direct connections between youth and employers.
- Increased access to short-term, industry-recognized credentialing opportunities aligned with employer demand.
- Continued support services to address barriers to workforce participation, including transportation, childcare, housing, and digital access.

These findings reinforce the importance of a demand-driven workforce system that aligns education, training, and workforce services with employer needs and labor market trends. CWMWDB and its partners will continue collaborating with employers, education providers, workforce agencies, and community organizations to strengthen workforce readiness, expand career pathway opportunities, and address the evolving skill needs of the regional economy.

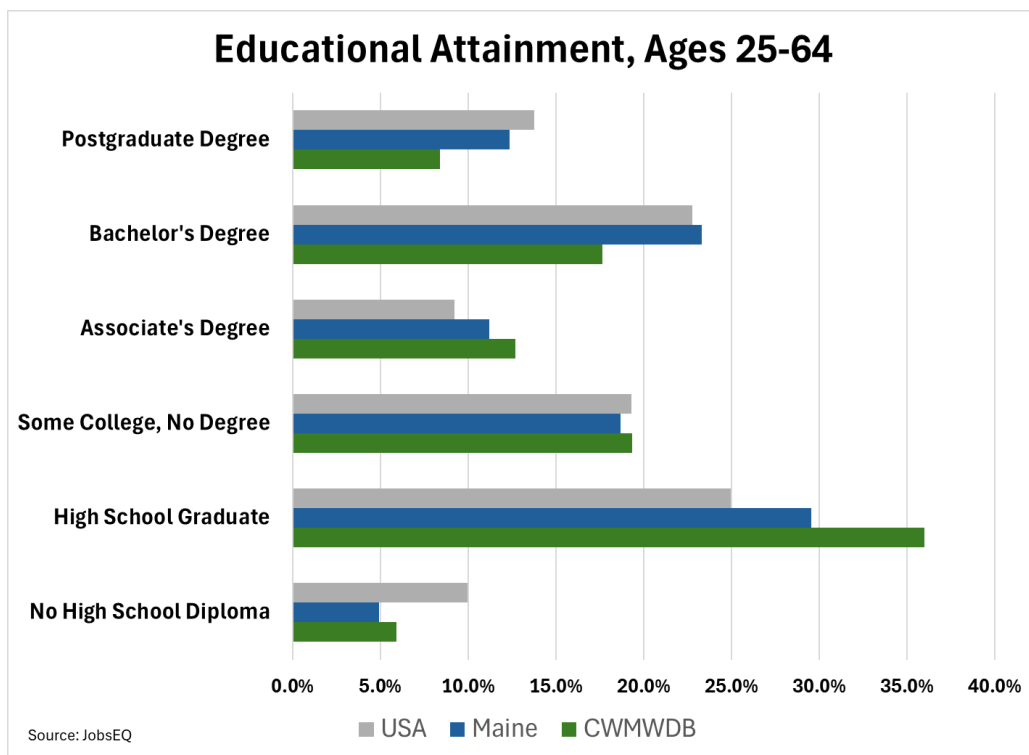
C. An analysis of the workforce in the local area, including current labor force employment and unemployment data; information on labor market trends and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in the local area, including individuals with barriers to employment. Plans must describe the data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

The population in the CWMWDB region in 2024 was 380,858, increasing by 2.8% since 2010. Population trends by age, as well as population trends by race/ethnicity within

the CWMWDB region, are comparable to the trends occurring within Maine. The population of the CWMWDB region and Maine are older and less ethnically/racially diverse than the U.S.

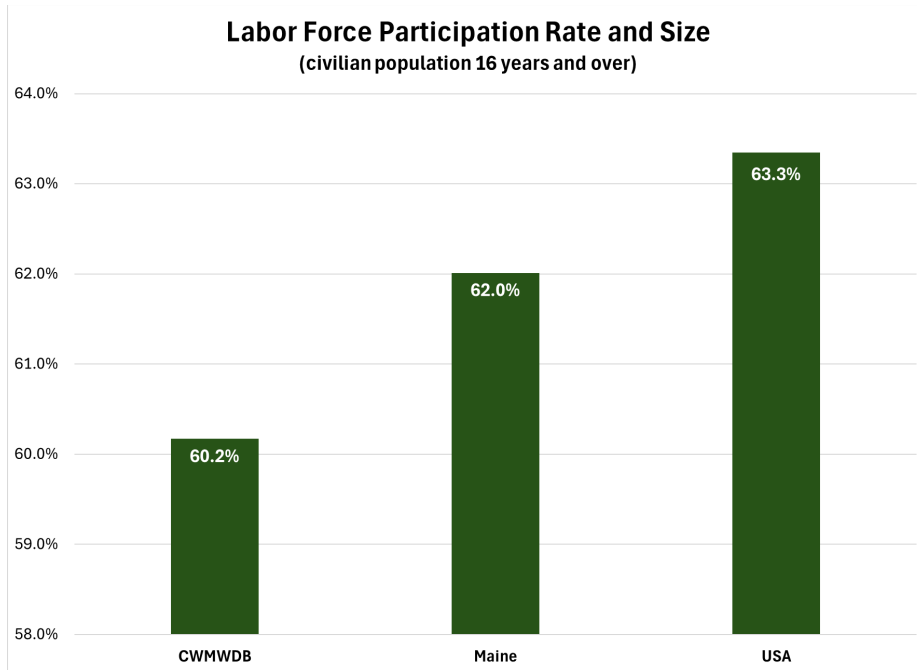
Within the CWMWDB region, 26% of people between the ages of 25 and 64 have a bachelor’s degree or higher. However, the region reports lower than the rates of 35.7% in Maine and 36.5% in the U.S. A total of 12.7% within the CWMWDB region have an associate’s degree, which is higher than Maine (11.2%) and the U.S. at 9.2%. This makes the region best able to support businesses and occupations demanding middle-skill jobs including those requiring at least a high school diploma but less than a 4-year degree.

The CWMWDB region stands out due to its 36% high school completion rate compared to Maine (29.5) and the U.S. (25%). Many entry level jobs require only a high school diploma, positioning the Board to support apprenticeships, On-the-job trainings, and skill-specific training courses.

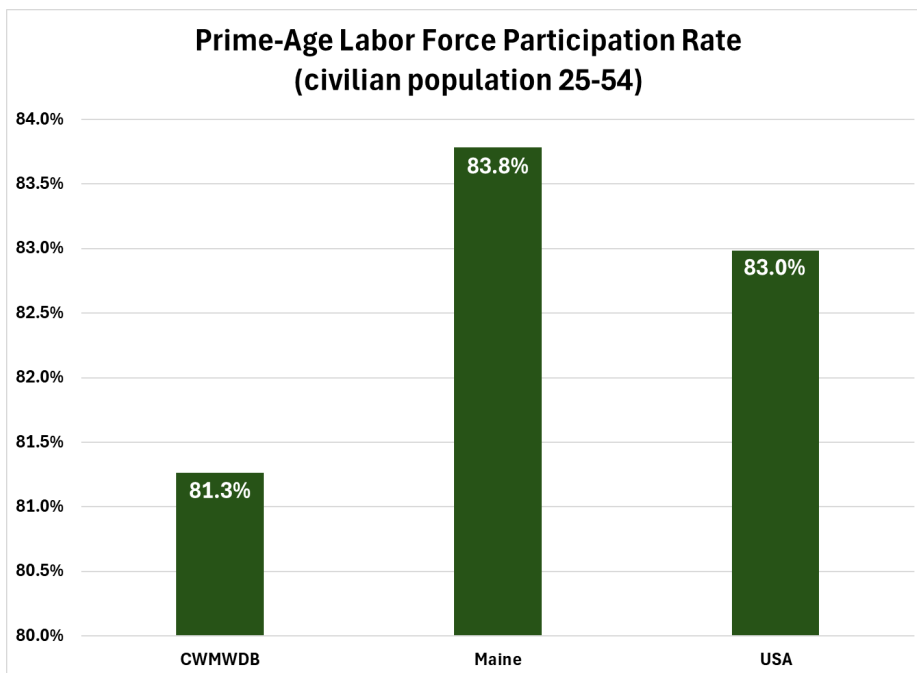


Unemployment and Labor Participation

The unemployment rate for the CWMWDB region was 3.3% as of 2024, which is lower than the state average of 3.4% and the national rate of 4.1% for this timeframe. Within the CWMWDB region, the civilian labor force is estimated at nearly 188,680 with a 60.2% labor force participation in 2024. The participation rate in the CWMWDB is 1.8% lower than that of Maine at 62% and 2.1% lower than the U.S. rate of 63.3%.



Alternatively, the prime-age labor force participation rate is measured as the civilian population between the ages of 25-54. While still lagging behind Maine (83.8%) and U.S. (83%), CWMWDB's prime-age labor force participation rate increases to 81.3%.



This lower participation in the job market is both a challenge and an opportunity for the workforce system. Underlying conditions of poverty, absence of affordable childcare and transportation, lack of education and skills, disability or other barriers may be preventing individuals from entering the workforce. The opportunity resides in the strategies that can be

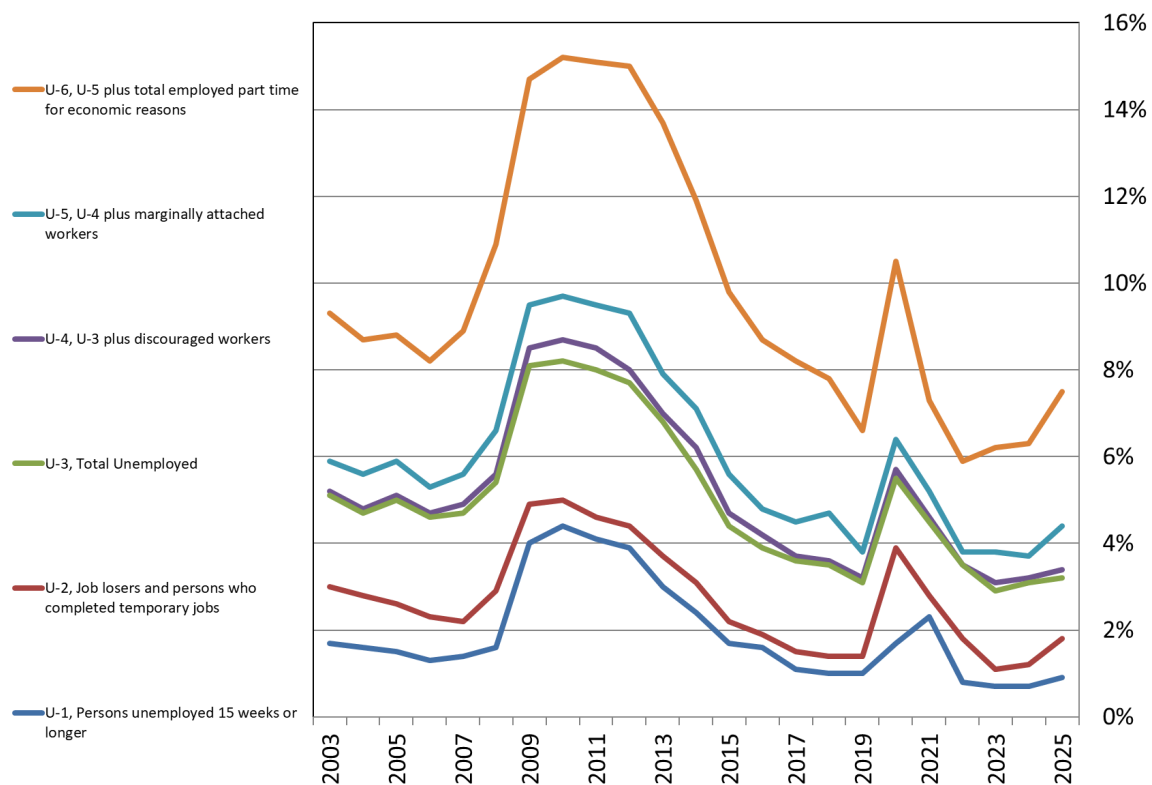
developed to alleviate these barriers and provide access to education, training, and other employment supports that encourage entry or re-entry into employment.

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

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

While commonly reported unemployment rates have returned to pre-pandemic levels, the U-6 rate remains elevated, measured at 7.5% compared to 6.6% in 2019. U-6 does not fully reflect underemployment, particularly among full-time workers in positions that do not match their skills or pay levels. These individuals may remain counted as fully employed, though they are not fully utilized in the labor market.

Alternative Measures of Labor Underutilization - Maine



Source: US Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Other Demographic Factors: Income, Public Assistance and Housing

The median household income in the CWMWDB region is \$62,882, lower than that of both Maine and the US, at \$71,773 and \$78,538, respectively. Both the percentage of people below the poverty level as well as the percentage of households receiving food stamps are higher in the CWMWDB region than in Maine and the U.S. The regional poverty rate is 13.2%, compared to 10.8% in Maine and 12.4% nationwide. Similarly, 15.2% of households in the CWMWDB region receive food stamps, which is 3.3 percentage points higher than the rate for both Maine and the U.S., each at 11.8%.

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

The findings as part of the CWMWDB Plan are consistent with key findings from the State of Maine Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Unified Plan - https://www.maine.gov/swb/docs/2024/2024-2027_WIOA_Maine_Unified_State_Plan_Master_Document.pdf which are summarized as follows:

- Workforce shortages, stagnant population growth, and widening skill gaps remain significant challenges statewide and within the CWMWDB region, particularly in rural communities and high-demand sectors.
- An aging population and declining birth rates continue to reduce the number of younger workers entering the labor force, increasing replacement demand across industries such as healthcare, education, manufacturing, and food service.
- Labor force participation continues to be impacted by barriers including housing shortages, transportation limitations, childcare access, mental health concerns, substance use disorders, and limited broadband or digital access in some areas.
- Economic and technological changes continue to alter workforce demands, particularly in occupations associated with routine administrative work and manual labor, increasing the need for upskilling, credential attainment, and career pathway development.
- Underemployment and workforce reengagement challenges remain concerns for many populations, including older workers, individuals with barriers to employment, and workers needing additional digital literacy or technical skills.
- Maine's workforce system continues to emphasize engagement of all working-age individuals through strategies that increase workforce participation, reduce barriers to employment, and improve access to workforce and training opportunities.
- The State Board continues to prioritize inclusive workforce strategies through initiatives focused on older workers, women, youth, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and people impacted by the justice and recovery systems. CWMWDB aligns with these goals

through partnerships, sector-based strategies, and data-informed planning designed to build a more resilient, skilled, and inclusive labor force in the region.

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

The Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board (CWMWDB) and its partners continue to provide workforce development services that support employment, skill attainment, credentialing, and career pathway development throughout the region. Workforce development activities remain aligned with employer demand, labor market trends, and regional economic development priorities, with continued emphasis on serving individuals with barriers to employment and supporting industry workforce needs.

Over the past several years, CWMWDB has continued strengthening coordination among workforce, education, economic development, and community partners to improve access to workforce services and training opportunities. The One-Stop Partner system remains central to service delivery, supported through formal partnerships and collaboration among WIOA core partners, Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Maine Department of Labor CareerCenters, community colleges, Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, and other regional stakeholders.

Strengths of Workforce Development Activities

- **Industry-Aligned Training Programs:** The region benefits from a broad network of community colleges, adult education programs, and CTE schools that provide training aligned with employer demand in healthcare, manufacturing, construction, transportation, education, and skilled trades occupations.
- **Expansion of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning:** Apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships continue to be a significant workforce strategy within the region, providing participants with paid, hands-on learning opportunities connected directly to employer demand. CWMWDB and its partners continue to support apprenticeship development across healthcare, construction, manufacturing, transportation, education, and other skilled trades sectors. Additional work-based learning opportunities, including on-the-job training and work experiences, continue to help participants gain practical workforce skills, industry-recognized credentials, and direct connections to employment.
- **Flexible Training Options:** Training providers continue to expand short-term credentialing programs, hybrid learning models, and virtual training opportunities to improve accessibility for participants across the region.

- **Supportive Service Integration:** Workforce programs increasingly incorporate supportive services such as transportation assistance, childcare support, digital access, housing referrals, and recovery supports to improve participation and employment outcomes.

Weaknesses and Capacity Challenges

- **Partner Communication and Referral Coordination:** While strong partnerships exist across the workforce system, partners continue working to strengthen communication, referral tracking, and cross-program coordination to ensure individuals do not fall through service gaps and are connected efficiently to the full range of available supports and workforce services.
- **Transportation and Rural Access Barriers:** Transportation limitations, housing shortages, childcare access, and the rural nature of portions of the region continue to create barriers to workforce participation and access to training opportunities.
- **Digital Literacy and Broadband Gaps:** While broadband access has been improved across the state, full internet access is not readily available throughout the region, and digital literacy challenges continue to impact participation in virtual services and training, particularly for rural residents, older adults, and individuals reentering the workforce.
- **Workforce Participation Challenges:** Participation remains limited among some populations facing barriers to employment, including individuals in recovery, justice-involved individuals, individuals with disabilities, and disconnected youth.
- **Training Capacity Constraints:** Some training programs within high-demand sectors remain limited by instructor shortages, funding constraints, equipment needs, and enrollment capacity, particularly in healthcare and skilled trades occupations.
- **Awareness of Available Services:** Employers, youth, and job seekers continue to report limited awareness of available workforce programs, training opportunities, career pathways, and supportive services.

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

Vision: The Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board's vision emphasizes equitable access to education, training, career pathways, and supportive services, while strengthening communication, collaboration, and referral processes among workforce partners to better leverage shared resources, improve service coordination, and ensure individuals receive

the full range of supports needed to achieve economic self-sufficiency and long-term career success.

The Board's updated vision recognizes the increasing need to address workforce shortages driven by retirements, barriers impacting labor force participation, and changing workforce expectations related to workplace culture, technology, and skill requirements. Through strengthened partnerships, improved coordination among workforce system partners, and sector-based workforce strategies, CWMWDB will lead efforts to scale education, training, supportive services, and career pathways that support sustainable employment and long-term regional economic growth.

Key Priorities

- Align training pathways and workforce investments with employer demand
- Expand workforce participation and reduce barriers to employment
- Strengthen collaboration, communication, and coordinated service delivery
- Address workforce sustainability, retention, and replacement demand

Key Priority 1: Align Training Pathways and Workforce Investments with Employer Demand

Employers across the region continue to report workforce shortages, recruitment challenges, and skill gaps in high-demand industries. Workforce data, employer engagement, and stakeholder feedback identified the need for stronger alignment between training investments, workforce programming, and real-time labor market demand to ensure limited resources are being utilized effectively and strategically.

- Align training cohorts, credential programs, and workforce investments with high-demand occupations and regional labor market data
- Expand apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, internships, on-the-job training, and work experiences in priority sectors
- Strengthen partnerships with employers, community colleges, Adult Education, CareerCenters, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) providers
- Increase access to short-term credentialing and industry-recognized training opportunities connected directly to employer demand
- Utilize employer feedback, job posting analytics, and labor market information to guide workforce training priorities and sector strategies
- Coordinate workforce and education partners to reduce duplication of training offerings and improve resource utilization

Key Priority 2: Expand Workforce Participation and Reduce Barriers to Employment

The region continues to face workforce participation challenges connected to housing, transportation, childcare, digital access, healthcare access, and rural isolation. Aging workforce

trends and declining labor force participation further increase the need to engage individuals currently disconnected from employment and training opportunities.

- Improve coordination of supportive services related to transportation, childcare, housing, recovery supports, and digital access
- Expand outreach and workforce participation strategies for priority populations and individuals facing barriers to employment
- Increase access to virtual and hybrid workforce services to improve participation in rural communities
- Support flexible workforce and training models that improve access and retention
- Continue integrating supportive services and workforce readiness strategies into workforce programming

Key Priority 3: Strengthen Collaboration, Communication, and Coordinated Service Delivery

Stakeholder engagement, particularly with One-Stop Partners, identified communication gaps, inconsistent referral processes, and duplication of services as ongoing workforce system challenges. Workforce partners emphasized the need for stronger coordination, streamlined referrals, and improved communication to ensure participants are connected efficiently to available services and do not fall through service gaps.

- Develop and implement a system-wide referral form and referral tracking process across workforce partners
- Improve communication and resource-sharing practices among WIOA Core Programs, One-Stop Partners, Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, CareerCenters, and community organizations
- Expand co-enrollment and coordinated case management strategies to maximize limited funding resources and participant supports
- Strengthen integrated service delivery through regular partner meetings, shared planning, and collaborative problem-solving
- Increase awareness of available workforce services, partner programs, and supportive resources among both staff and participants
- Continue utilizing the “no wrong door” approach to improve access to workforce services across the region

Key Priority 4: Address Workforce Sustainability, Retention, and Replacement Demand

The region faces long-term workforce sustainability challenges related to an aging workforce, population decline, labor shortages, and continued workforce attrition. Stakeholders identified retention, succession planning, and workforce attraction as critical regional needs.

- Support succession planning, mentorship, and incumbent worker training strategies with employers

- Expand youth engagement, career awareness, and early workforce exposure opportunities
- Promote retention strategies that support long-term workforce attachment and career advancement
- Strengthen recruitment pipelines into healthcare, education, manufacturing, transportation, and skilled trades occupations
- Support strategies that help retain older workers and preserve institutional knowledge within the workforce

Key Priority 5: Support Entrepreneurship, Self-Employment, and Emerging Workforce Models

Stakeholder engagement and regional workforce discussions identified growing interest in entrepreneurship, self-employment, freelance work, and skilled trades-based business ownership, particularly among youth and individuals in rural communities. CWMWDB will explore strategies to better integrate entrepreneurial training and self-employment pathways into workforce development efforts consistent with allowable WIOA activities.

- Expand entrepreneurial training, financial literacy, and small business readiness opportunities within workforce and youth programming
- Increase exposure to entrepreneurship, skilled trades business ownership, and self-employment career pathways through work-based learning and employer engagement activities
- Strengthen partnerships with Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), economic development organizations, Adult Education providers, community colleges, and entrepreneurial support programs
- Support youth entrepreneurship initiatives and career exploration opportunities connected to regional industries and local business development

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

The Board recognizes that addressing the region’s workforce challenges requires active collaboration of all workforce partners. CWMWDB will continue to convene these partners, facilitate shared planning, and align resources to meet the needs of job seekers and employers across the region.

The following strategies will guide CWMWDB’s collaboration with Core Programs, One-Stop Partners, employers, educators, and community-based organizations to support the Board’s strategic vision while maximizing limited workforce resources and funding opportunities through coordinated service delivery and shared investment strategies:

- Continue to convene regular meetings among WIOA Core Programs, One-Stop Partners, Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, CareerCenters, and workforce providers to strengthen coordination, improve referrals, and reduce duplication of services.
- Expand co-enrollment and cross-program service strategies to maximize limited funding resources and improve participant access to workforce and support programs.
- Align workforce, education, and economic development resources around high-demand sectors including healthcare, manufacturing, construction, transportation, education, and skilled trades.
- Continue expanding apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, on-the-job training, internships, and work experiences through employer and education partnerships.
- Expand efforts to engage and retain older workers through encouraging employers to offer flexible work arrangements, phased retirement options, and mentorship roles that help preserve institutional knowledge.
- Support digital access and literacy initiatives in rural communities, especially for older adults and those disconnected from education and training due to technology gaps.
- Pursue collaborative grants and funding opportunities that support workforce training, digital literacy, supportive services, and work-based learning initiatives.
- Improve communication systems, referral tracking, and resource-sharing practices among workforce partners to ensure individuals are connected efficiently to available services and supports.
- Continue to support flexible and accessible training opportunities, including short-term credentialing, hybrid learning, adult education, and virtual service delivery models.
- Coordinate with education and training providers to align curriculum, credentialing opportunities, and career pathways with labor market demand and emerging industry needs.
- Encourage cross-participation among workforce, education, economic development, and community organizations to strengthen regional collaboration and maximize shared resources.

CWMWDB's findings, priorities, and workforce strategies align with broader regional and statewide economic development efforts, including the AVCOG Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), KVCOG Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), and Maine's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy. These efforts share a common focus on workforce development, economic resiliency, infrastructure investment, business growth, and expanding access to economic opportunity.

Regional CEDS priorities emphasize:

- Workforce and education
- Transportation and infrastructure
- Broadband and digital access
- Economic resilience
- Housing and community development
- Business growth and entrepreneurship

CWMWDB's strategic goals support these priorities by strengthening workforce readiness, expanding apprenticeships and career pathways, increasing access to training and supportive services, and improving coordination among workforce, education, and economic development partners. The Board's focus on sector partnerships, work-based learning, digital literacy, and barrier reduction supports regional efforts to address workforce shortages, strengthen employer competitiveness, and improve economic opportunity throughout the region.

Section 2: Local Workforce Development System

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

The Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board is one part of a broad workforce development system that includes a variety of required WIOA partners and additional stakeholders.

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

One-Stop Operator: The Board has contracted with EMDC to help manage the many partners through the Comprehensive One-Stop Center in Lewiston and its affiliate sites throughout the region. The One-Stop Operator strives to ensure that partners work collaboratively while delivering services seamlessly. The Centers are more than "a place". They are the means for providing access to coordinated programs, and services through a network of staff, Partners, and stakeholders. Currently, this coordination occurs through regularly scheduled meetings between the Service Providers and the core partners. Additionally, the Service Providers regularly report to the Board, providing updates and documenting progress to reach performance goals. Follow up reports are shared at CWMWDB quarterly board meetings.

WIOA REQUIRED PARTNERS

Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) – WIOA 1B:

EMDC serves as the WIOA Title I service provider for the region, delivering workforce services to adults, dislocated workers, and youth. EMDC administers intake, assessment, case management, training coordination, work-based learning opportunities, and supportive services. As the One-Stop Operator, EMDC also facilitates coordination among required partners to support integrated service delivery.

MDOL Bureau of Employment Services – Labor Exchange & Employment Services:

BES provides employment and reemployment services within the region, including job search assistance, career counseling, unemployment insurance access, and employer-facing services such as recruitment support and job matching through Maine JobLink. These services are

delivered through the CareerCenter system and are a central component of the One-Stop delivery model in Central Western Maine.

MDOL Bureau of Employment Services – Jobs for Veterans:

Veterans’ representatives within the CareerCenter system provide targeted services to veterans and eligible spouses, including priority of service, job placement assistance, and connection to training opportunities.

MDOL Bureau of Rehabilitation Services – Rehabilitation Programs:

Vocational Rehabilitation staff work with individuals with disabilities to develop individualized employment plans and coordinate training and placement services. Coordination with WIOA services supports co-enrollment and access to additional resources.

MDOE Adult Education – Adult Education & Family Literacy:

Under WIOA, Adult Education partners throughout the region are an integral part of the workforce development system and inter-agency collaboration. These providers deliver literacy services, adult basic education, English language acquisition, workforce preparation, and transition services to postsecondary education and training. Adult Education programs also support career pathways development by preparing individuals with the foundational skills needed to enter training and employment. Many Adult Education programs serve individuals who face multiple barriers to employment, including at-risk youth, individuals without a high school credential, and those needing basic skill development.

MDOL Bureau of Unemployment Compensation:

The Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Unemployment Compensation is the grant administrator of the Unemployment Insurance Program including Unemployment Benefits, Tax and Appeal services. Besides providing unemployment compensation to eligible people who have lost their jobs, the Bureau also administers the RESEA (Re-Employment Services and Eligibility Assessment) program. RESEA provides selected unemployment claimants with mandatory one-on-one coaching, career planning, and job search assistance. These services can be combined with other WIOA programs to ensure that the unemployed individual has the best chance for success.

Maine Community College System – Career & Technical Education:

The CWMWDB is fortunate to have strong community college partners serving the region through the Maine Community College System, including Central Maine Community College and Kennebec Valley Community College. These institutions provide a wide range of certificate and degree programs aligned with workforce needs, as well as short-term training and workforce development programming designed to respond to changing labor market demands.

Community colleges play a critical role in the workforce system by offering industry-recognized credentials, credit and non-credit training opportunities, and flexible program delivery options that support both traditional students and working adults. Through initiatives such as the Harold Alfond Center for the Advancement of Maine’s Workforce and other workforce-focused programs, community colleges are expanding access to short-term training, stackable credentials, and accelerated pathways that lead directly to employment in in-demand occupations.

MDHHS Office of Child & Family Services – Employment and training services under the Community Services Block Grant:

OCFS supports employment and self-sufficiency initiatives through Community Services Block Grant-funded programs delivered by Maine’s Community Action Agencies. Services may include employment readiness activities, career coaching, financial literacy education, supportive services, and referrals to workforce training and employment opportunities for low-income individuals and families.

MDHHS Office of Family Independence – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF):

The Office of Family Independence administers the ASPIRE-TANF program, which provides employment and training services to eligible public assistance recipients. Services include career planning, education and training support, work experience opportunities, case management, and supportive services designed to help participants obtain employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Equus Workforce Solutions & Career Systems Development Corporation – Job Corps:

Job Corps provides education, career technical training, workforce preparation, and employment placement services for eligible youth and young adults. Participants may earn academic credentials, industry-recognized certifications, and receive career counseling, work-based learning opportunities, and transition support into employment, apprenticeships, military service, or postsecondary education.

Associates for Training and Development (A4TD) – Senior Community Service Employment Grant:

A4TD administers the Senior Community Service Employment Program, which provides paid community service assignments, job training, and employment assistance to eligible older workers. Participants gain work experience and develop skills that support transition into unsubsidized employment while contributing to community organizations throughout the region.

Pathstone – National Farmworker Jobs Program:

PathStone delivers workforce development and supportive services to eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families. Services may include career counseling, occupational

skills training, employment assistance, supportive services, and educational opportunities designed to improve long-term employment outcomes and economic stability.

Additional Partners:

The CWMWDB partners with several other agencies and entities that help advance workforce development in the region. Among those include the University of Maine System (UMS), the Maine Apprenticeship Program, and local Chambers of Commerce, and the federally designated Economic Development Districts that serve the five-county region.

The UMS and other higher education providers offer access to postsecondary education and advanced training opportunities within the region. Key institutions include the University of Maine at Farmington, the University of Maine at Augusta, and the University of Southern Maine's Lewiston-Auburn campus, all of which provide degree programs and professional certifications aligned with a range of industry sectors. These institutions offer flexible program delivery options such as online and hybrid learning formats. These options are particularly important in rural areas of the region, where geographic barriers can limit access to traditional campus-based programs. Through these models, individuals are able to pursue degree completion, credential attainment, and skill development that aligns with evolving workforce needs.

CWMWDB works with the Maine Apprenticeship Program (MAP) to encourage businesses, Career and Technical Education (CTE) centers, and industry organizations to expand work-based learning opportunities across the region through registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. These partnerships are an important component of the workforce development system, providing hands-on training that connects job seekers directly to employment while meeting the talent needs of employers.

Partnerships include collaboration with organizations such as Educate Maine, Associated General Contractors (AGC) Maine, and labor-affiliated apprenticeship programs, as well as engagement with employers who sponsor or participate in work-based learning initiatives. These efforts support the development of structured career pathways that allow individuals to enter employment and progress through clearly defined skills and wage advancement opportunities, reducing financial barriers to training while increasing retention and completion rates. They also provide employers with the ability to train workers in alignment with specific occupational and industry needs. The Board will align workforce funding with work-based training models when appropriate.

Kennebec Valley Council of Government (KVCOG) and Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG) are the Economic Development Districts that serve the central western region. Both entities' Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plans were reviewed to ensure appropriate alignment with the Board's local plan. AVCOG's executive director previously served as a CWMWDB member, and the current Board executive director

serves on KVCOG's CEDS committee. These connections create an alignment of economic development in the region, and make certain that businesses can thrive and grow.

Other important partnerships are the region's local chambers of commerce. Chambers play a pivotal role representing the business community and can be a great source of information regarding WIOA programs. Board staff attend meetings and events of different chambers and have given presentations on the public workforce system that can help the businesses that chambers serve.

The Board works with all these entities, both required WIOA partners and ancillary organizations, in carrying out its workforce development initiatives. As for WIOA partners, the Board works to align and integrate programs and services to customers by ensuring that all required partners understand the role each partner plays and how co-enrollment can expand the support system for all job seekers and businesses. In tandem with the One-Stop Operator, the Board invites all partners to quarterly meetings to share information and learn of partnership opportunities. All frontline staff have access to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that clearly articulates the services of each partner. Staff also have an abbreviated Access Guide for appropriately referring clients to WIOA partner programs. CWMWDB hosted a workshop in September of 2024 that brought direct staff from all required partners together to learn from each other and talk about ways to utilize the services of their fellow WIOA programs. Due to an overwhelming positive response, the Board will host this workshop on a biennial basis to further the collaboration of the people on the front lines.

Outreach is a key strategy for the Board and its staff to ensure the business, education and human service communities understand the expansive network of supports available through WIOA. The Board promotes awareness of training opportunities and supportive services to organizations that work with potential participants, i.e. youth organizations, community action agencies, and recovery and reentry networks. Board and service provider staff meet with businesses to discuss work-based learning programs to fill their workforce needs, such as apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and work experiences. And staff have presented to chambers, recovery organizations, county jails, general assistance programs, and community gatherings, as well as serving on community and industry committees, to ensure the programs and services that can help job seekers and businesses are known and utilized across the region.

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

Through the strategic planning process, the CWMWDB has identified Maine's aging workforce and lower labor force participation rates as key factors contributing to a shrinking labor force and ongoing challenges for employers. To address these conditions, the workforce development system must prioritize expanding access to employment and training opportunities for individuals who are not currently fully participating in the labor force.

These populations include, but are not limited to, individuals with disabilities, low-income adults, youth, individuals in recovery from substance use disorder, individuals re-entering from incarceration, veterans, New Mainers, and others facing barriers to employment. This approach aligns with priority populations identified in the State's Unified Plan and reflects the Board's commitment to increasing equitable access to workforce services.

To effectively serve these populations, the Board works with its service provider and partner network to tailor services to meet individual needs, develop appropriate training opportunities, and leverage partnerships to reduce barriers to participation. Through its Policy Committee, the Board regularly reviews supportive service and training policies to ensure resources are being used effectively and in a manner that supports participant success.

Additional strategies include:

- **No Wrong Door Approach:**
By promoting a coordinated intake and referral process across partners, the Board ensures that individuals can access services regardless of their initial point of entry into the workforce system. Customers are connected to appropriate programs and resources, including WIOA services, Adult Education, CareerCenters, and community-based organizations.
- **Co-Enrollment and Partner Coordination:**
The Board supports increased co-enrollment across WIOA and partner programs to expand access to services and funding streams. Coordination with programs such as Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Education, and other workforce and human service partners allows participants to receive comprehensive support that addresses both employment and barrier-related needs.
- **Career Pathway Development:**
CWMWDB works with education and training providers, including Adult Education, community colleges, and other partners, to support the development of career pathways that are aligned with employer demand. These pathways are designed to provide clear progression from entry-level training to advanced credentials and employment opportunities, including access to industry-recognized, portable, and stackable credentials. The Board also encourages the use of the Work Source Maine website that explores career pathways in Maine's key industries.

- Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning:**
The Board promotes registered apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, on-the-job training, and other work-based learning models as key strategies for expanding access to employment and training. These approaches provide participants with opportunities to gain skills while earning wages and support employers in developing a skilled workforce.
- Access to Postsecondary Credentials:**
Through coordination with training providers and higher education institutions, the Board works to improve access to programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials. This includes short-term training programs, certificate programs, and other credentialing opportunities that align with in-demand occupations and support long-term career advancement.
- Technology and Outreach:**
The Board supports the use of digital tools and targeted outreach strategies to engage individuals who are not currently connected to the workforce system. This includes expanding awareness of available services and improving access for individuals in rural areas or those facing transportation and other access barriers.

Through these coordinated strategies, the CWMWDB aims to increase participation in the workforce system, improve access to training and employment opportunities, and support individuals in achieving sustainable employment and career advancement.

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

To develop this strategic plan, the Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board (CWMWDB) engaged extensively with workforce system partners, employers, educators, community organizations, and stakeholders throughout the five-county region of Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, and Somerset Counties.

As part of the planning process, CWMWDB conducted multiple stakeholder engagement sessions designed to gather input on regional workforce challenges, opportunities, and priorities. Participants included Board members, One-Stop Partners, workforce service providers,

educational institutions, employers, economic development organizations, and other community stakeholders. Engagement meetings included:

- One-Stop Partner Meeting (4/15/2026)
- CWMWDB Quarterly Board Meeting (4/23/2026)
- CWMWDB Stakeholder Focus Groups – Waterville (5/1/2026)
- CWMWDB Stakeholder Focus Group – Lewiston (5/4/2026)

Discussions focused on workforce system strengths and gaps, emerging labor market trends, employer workforce needs, barriers to employment, education and training opportunities, transportation and housing challenges, and strategies to strengthen workforce participation across the region. Stakeholders were also asked to identify new initiatives, partnerships, and system improvements that could better support job seekers, employers, and priority populations.

CWMWDB, with support from Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC), also conducted outreach, through a digital survey, to employers, workforce partners, and community organizations to gather additional feedback regarding workforce challenges, labor force participation, skills gaps, workforce training needs, and economic development opportunities. A total of 36 responses were completed and returned from businesses and employers in the region. Another survey was sent to CWMWDB participants to learn more about their individual experiences with the workforce system. A total of 27 responses reflected an overall positive experience from participants, with additional feedback on how the Board could improve the process. The results of both surveys are shared in the appendices, and outcomes have been addressed throughout the plan.

CWMWDB also convened stakeholder focus groups in Waterville and Lewiston to gather qualitative feedback from workforce system partners and community stakeholders. As part of these sessions, participants completed a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to identify key workforce assets, challenges, emerging opportunities, and external factors impacting the region's workforce and economy.

In addition to stakeholder meetings, targeted discussions were conducted with workforce system partners, including Adult Education providers, CareerCenter staff, vocational rehabilitation representatives, community action agencies, training providers, and other required WIOA partners. Participants were asked to identify service delivery challenges, opportunities for increased collaboration, barriers experienced by job seekers, and strategies for improving outcomes for priority populations, including individuals with disabilities, veterans, youth, low-income individuals, and other populations facing barriers to employment.

Following development of the draft plan, CWMWDB will provide stakeholders and partners an opportunity to review the document and offer feedback.

To ensure the strategic plan is implemented throughout the four-year period, regular engagement activities include:

- **Board Meetings:** Quarterly Board meetings serve as a central forum for discussion of workforce system performance, emerging needs, and strategic priorities. Board membership includes representatives from business and industry, education, economic development, and community organizations, ensuring diverse input into plan development.
- **One-Stop Operator and Partner Coordination Meetings:** Regular coordination meetings with the One-Stop Operator and required partners support alignment of service delivery and provide an opportunity to gather input on system operations, customer needs, and opportunities for improvement.
- **Policy Committee Meetings:** The Board’s Policy Committee meets as needed to review and inform policies related to service delivery, supportive services, and program implementation. These discussions contribute to the development of strategies that support participant success and system effectiveness.
- **State and Regional Workforce Engagement:** CWMWDB participates in statewide workforce meetings and regional discussions facilitated by the Maine Department of Labor and other partners. These engagements provide additional input on workforce trends, policy direction, and best practices that inform the local plan.
- **Industry and Partner Engagement:** Input from business and industry, education providers, social service agencies, and economic development partners is incorporated through ongoing communication, participation in meetings, and collaboration on workforce initiatives. These stakeholders contribute to identifying workforce needs, informing training priorities, and shaping strategies to address regional challenges.

D. A description of the strategies and services that will be used in the local area to:

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

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

CWMWDB uses a sector-based and partner-driven approach to engage employers, focusing on key industries including healthcare, education, manufacturing, with additional attention to construction, transportation, and agriculture.

Key strategies include:

- Collaboration with chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, and industry associations that regularly engage with employers
- Participation in regional and statewide workforce and industry discussions to stay informed of employer needs and trends
- Promotion of workforce system services, including Maine JobLink, to support recruitment, hiring, and job matching
- Ongoing communication with employers through meetings, events, and partner networks to gather feedback on workforce challenges and hiring needs
- New Board Member orientation to help Board members serve more effectively while enabling them to fully utilize the workforce system for their own businesses and spread information about the workforce system to other employers.

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

The Board supports a responsive workforce system by leveraging partner expertise and incorporating employer feedback into program design and implementation. Strategies include:

- Coordinating with workforce, education, and economic development partners to align services with employer demand
- Utilizing labor market information and partner insights to identify in-demand industries and occupations
- Supporting training opportunities that lead to industry-recognized credentials aligned with employer needs
- Pursuing grant opportunities and initiatives that address workforce shortages and support employer demand

Through these efforts, CWMWDB works to ensure that workforce programs remain aligned with current and emerging business needs.

To better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development:

CWMWDB recognizes the importance of aligning workforce and economic development efforts to support regional growth. Strategies include:

- Coordination with regional economic development organizations, including Economic Development Districts, to align workforce priorities with Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) goals
- Participation in regional planning efforts and collaboration with economic development partners to identify shared priorities
- Ongoing communication between workforce and economic development entities to improve alignment of services, resources, and strategies
- Continued development of opportunities to convene workforce and economic development partners, such as partner workshops or joint discussions, to strengthen collaboration

These efforts support a more integrated approach to addressing workforce and economic challenges in the region.

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

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

CWMWDB works to strengthen coordination between the One-Stop system and partner programs to improve access to services and streamline service delivery. Strategies include:

- Coordination with Maine Department of Labor programs, including CareerCenters and unemployment insurance services, to support job seekers in accessing employment and reemployment services
- Promotion of Maine JobLink as a shared system for connecting job seekers and employers
- Ongoing communication among One-Stop Partners to improve referrals, co-enrollment, and service alignment
- Support for integrated service delivery through partner coordination meetings and shared planning efforts

Through these strategies, the Board aims to improve access to workforce services, enhance coordination among partners, and support more efficient service delivery for both job seekers and employers.

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

- Work more closely with chambers, economic development organizations, and industry groups (such as Manufacturer’s Association of Maine) to understand the needs of businesses and market workforce resources to employers.
- Work with employers directly to understand career pathways within their industry and develop information about career pathways that can be shared with job seekers and educators.
- Market to employers, state and federal programs that provide training funds that are stackable and targeted to various industries. Investments in training incumbent workers will help them move up the career ladder and create opportunities to backfill jobs.
- Maintain and disseminate current and robust data resources to better understand the most in-demand occupations and skill needs.
- Assess job seekers to determine their eligibility for work-based training opportunities
- Connect current participants to internships and other direct experience opportunities as they are completing degrees.

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

CWMWDB supports the use of work-based learning approaches as a primary strategy to connect job seekers to employment and to meet the workforce needs of businesses in the local area. These approaches provide individuals with opportunities to gain skills in real-world settings while supporting employers in developing a qualified workforce aligned with industry needs.

The Board works with its service provider and partner network to promote and expand work-based learning models, including registered apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, on-the-job training (OJT), customized training, internships, and work experience opportunities. These models support participants in gaining practical skills while earning wages and provide employers with the ability to train workers in alignment with specific job requirements.

Strategies to support and expand work-based learning include:

- Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship:**
CWMWDB supports the expansion of registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs in collaboration with employers, industry organizations, Career and Technical Education (CTE) centers, and other partners. These programs provide structured pathways into in-demand occupations and align with state workforce priorities to increase apprenticeship participation.
- On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Customized Training:**
The Board promotes OJT and customized training opportunities that allow employers to train new or incumbent workers based on specific business needs. These training models support skill development while reducing hiring risk for employers and improving employment outcomes for participants.
- Internships and Work Experience:**
CWMWDB works with employers and training providers to support internships and work experience opportunities, particularly for youth and individuals entering new industries. These opportunities provide exposure to career pathways and help participants build work readiness skills.
- Career Pathways Alignment:**
Work-based learning strategies are aligned with career pathway development efforts to ensure participants can progress from entry-level positions to higher-skilled, higher-wage employment. This includes coordination with education and training providers to connect classroom learning with practical work experience.
- Employer Engagement and Support:**
The Board works with employers to identify workforce needs and promote participation in work-based learning programs. This includes providing information on available workforce services and supporting employers in accessing training resources.
- Use of Labor Market Information:**
CWMWDB utilizes labor market data and partner input to identify in-demand occupations and prioritize work-based learning opportunities in key sectors.

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

As the economy continues to evolve, entrepreneurship represents an important component of the workforce development system. For some individuals, particularly those with specific skills or experience, creating a job through self-employment may be a viable pathway to economic stability and advancement.

While CWMWDB does not directly provide entrepreneurship training or business development services, the Board plays an important role in identifying individuals who may be interested in pursuing self-employment and connecting them to appropriate resources within the region. The Board works to ensure that participants are aware of available supports and have access to services that can assist in developing business skills and exploring entrepreneurial opportunities.

The Board will coordinate with partners to promote access to short-term training opportunities that result in badges, micro-credentials, or other skill-based certifications that may support entrepreneurial pathways, particularly in skilled trades and other in-demand sectors.

CWMWDB serves as a conduit for information and referrals, connecting interested individuals to state, regional, and local partners that provide small business and entrepreneurship support. These partners include Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), New Ventures Maine, Maine SCORE, the Department of Economic and Community Development, local chambers of commerce, and other economic development organizations.

In addition, the Board will support coordination between workforce and economic development partners by:

- Promoting awareness of entrepreneurship resources available through partner organizations
- Referring participants to appropriate business development and training services
- Encouraging collaboration among workforce and economic development partners to support small business development
- Supporting outreach and communication efforts that connect job seekers to entrepreneurial opportunities

Through these efforts, CWMWDB helps ensure that individuals interested in entrepreneurship are connected to the resources and supports needed to pursue self-employment and business development.

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

CWMWDB works with its service provider and partner network to ensure that job seekers have access to the supportive services necessary to complete training and retain employment. These services are a critical component of the workforce system, particularly for individuals with barriers to employment.

Goal:

To provide job seekers with the support required to successfully participate in workforce programs, complete training, and transition into and retain employment by leveraging both WIOA resources and partner services.

Process:

Through the WIOA Title I intake process, the service provider develops an Individual Service Strategy (ISS) for each participant. This strategy assesses participant needs, identifies barriers to employment, and determines appropriate services and resources to support the individual's employment goals.

Based on this assessment, participants may access supportive services funded through WIOA or be referred to partner organizations for additional assistance. Coordination occurs with programs such as Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Education, CareerCenters, and other community-based service providers to ensure participants receive comprehensive support.

Supportive services may include assistance with transportation, childcare, work-related expenses, and other needs that may impact an individual's ability to participate in training or employment.

Strategies:

In addition to the ISS process, CWMWDB supports the following strategies through its service provider and partner network:

- Ongoing communication with participants to assess needs and provide appropriate referrals as circumstances change
- Coordination with training providers and, when appropriate, employers to monitor participant progress
- Development of success stories to demonstrate the impact of supportive services on participant outcomes
- Collaboration with partner organizations to identify and leverage available resources across the region
- Continued exploration of opportunities to improve coordination and access to supportive services across programs

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

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

- CWMWDB staff conduct orientations for new Board members to ensure they understand the workforce system and expectations of Board members. With this information, they can contribute most effectively to developing the strategies and priorities of the Board.
- CWMWDB staff engage directly with employers by participating in chamber events, collaborating with economic development organizations, and partnering with industry groups. Additionally, the Board’s website and social media strategies are designed to continuously communicate emerging workforce trends, issues and opportunities helping to inform and support employers in real time with resources and assistance. The Board also has asked private-sector Board members and employers to speak at events and promote workforce resources within their companies and industries.
- Additionally, by engaging closely with chambers and economic development groups, and other strategic planning processes such as the CEDS and other efforts, the Board will learn what feedback they are hearing from their business partners and use that information to develop new programs and strategies.
- The CWMWDB is business-friendly with an engaging approach to providing a simple explanation of the workforce system and the benefits it offers employers and job seekers that encourages businesses to engage with the Board and its partners to solve their problems through direct recruitment, hiring and training initiatives.
- The Board has and will continue to engage with employers using on-line surveys, specialized employer focused trainings and seminars that address critical workforce needs including hiring and retention of at-risk populations.

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

CWMWDB supports the development of industry-informed career pathways that align workforce training with employer demand. The Board works with employers, education providers, and system partners to ensure training investments lead to employment in in-demand occupations and support long-term career progression.

Strategies include:

Industry Engagement: CWMWDB engages employers across key sectors, including healthcare, education, manufacturing, information technology, construction, and hospitality. Engagement occurs through employer roundtables, direct outreach, and coordination with chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, and industry associations. These efforts are used to identify workforce challenges, hiring needs, and skill gaps.

Career Pathway Development: The Board collaborates with community colleges, adult education providers, Career and Technical Education (CTE) centers, and apprenticeship sponsors

to develop and align career pathways. Pathways are designed to provide multiple entry and exit points and include industry-recognized credentials that are portable and stackable.

Work-Based Learning Integration: Career pathways incorporate work-based learning opportunities, including registered apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, on-the-job training (OJT), internships, and work experience. These approaches allow participants to gain practical skills while progressing along a defined career pathway.

Labor Market Data Utilization: CWMWDB uses state and regional labor market information to identify in-demand occupations, wage thresholds, and projected growth sectors. This data informs training investments, program design, and prioritization of career pathways.

Alignment with Education and Training Providers: The Board works with education and training providers to ensure curriculum aligns with employer needs and leads to recognized credentials. This includes supporting credit and non-credit programs, prior learning assessment, and accelerated training models where appropriate.

Co-Enrollment and System Coordination: Career pathway development is supported through coordination across WIOA and partner programs. Co-enrollment strategies are used to provide participants with access to multiple funding streams and services, including supportive services, education, and training.

Continuous Feedback and Improvement: Employer and partner feedback is used on an ongoing basis to refine training programs and career pathways. This includes adjusting program offerings, identifying gaps in training capacity, and responding to changes in labor market conditions.

Where formal sector partnerships or industry groups are active, CWMWDB will continue to support and leverage those structures. In areas where formal partnerships are limited, the Board will utilize alternative engagement strategies, including targeted employer outreach and partner coordination meetings, to ensure industry input informs workforce system decisions.

Section 3: Local One-Stop Delivery System

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

Existing One-Stop Centers located at:

Comprehensive One-Stop CareerCenter

Lewiston CareerCenter

This Comprehensive Center is:

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

Affiliate One-Stop CareerCenters

Wilton CareerCenter

Northern Kennebec Valley CareerCenter

Augusta CareerCenter

All Affiliate Sites are:

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

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

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

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

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

Track 1:

- Initial Triage:
 - Customers fill out a career center form to help determine possible services and appropriate referrals. If customer is seeking information about Unemployment Insurance, they are provided with an option to meet with someone. Those looking for all other services are directed to an informational session. If customers seek services through the virtual chat, they are assessed of their needs and referred to appropriate services.
 - Maine JobLink setup: If necessary, help customers that are inexperienced on computers and review the created profile for efficiency.
 - Informational Sessions: (for new customers and returning customers that are interested). The session provides information on participating partners. Next steps are discussed once the session is complete.
 - Initial assessment: CareerCenter staff hold a conversation with the customer to determine how best to address customer needs using initial interview outline as guide. This same assessment could be completed by a career center partner.
 - Referral to appropriate programs or services.
- Intake/Application: determination of eligibility with one or more WIOA partners (Vocational Rehabilitation, WIOA 1B Provider, Adult Education, BES, Others)
- Develop individual service strategy (ISS) that identifies employment, training, and supportive service needs, as applicable.

- Comprehensive assessment by appropriate program

Track 2:

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

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

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

- The CWMWDB will work with Vocational Rehabilitation to ensure all American Job Center services are available to individuals with disabilities at the Comprehensive One Stop Center and all affiliated sites
- The CWMWDB will partner with other organizations in the region to ensure a range of services are available to customers that help them overcome barriers to job training and access to support services by providing space and other resources to those organizations to provide services to participants.
- Utilize technology and other resources to offer virtual services whenever possible to enable individuals living in the more rural areas to access career development, job training, and support services at the same level of quality and consistency afforded all job seekers.
- Utilize language lines and digital translation technology for individuals whose primary language is not English, ensuring accessibility for all customers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The One-Stop system participated in a comprehensive certification process including meetings between partners to consider current methods of communication, service delivery, accessibility, outcomes, assessments, and co-enrollments. The CWMWDB reviewed findings, coordinated assessment of the One-Stop center and affiliate sites and recommended actions to enhance the customer experience and accessibility of services. Recommended actions include a combined menu of services for all programs, cross-training for accessibility and interpretation tools to improve access for individuals with disabilities and non-English speaking customers. Further recommendations include assessing service delivery to ensure inclusive delivery to all customers.

Collaboration with One-Stop Partners

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

The Board uses its One-Stop Operator (OSO) Agreement as one tool to meet its performance requirements, develop new solutions to customer challenges, and collaborate effectively with partners to deliver services efficiently.

In addition to the agreement with the One-Stop Operator, we developed an MOU governing the One-Stop partners. The MOU document specifically outlines the contributions and expectations of partners. This document is also used to facilitate constant improvement within the system. As the One-Stop Operator and One-Stop Partners must work together to effectively

serve customers, all benefit when standards improve. The One-Stop MOU mandates regular meetings among the partners and the One-Stop Operator to ensure that any challenges or bottlenecks are mitigated, and operations are improved. Additionally, these regular meetings serve as a valuable opportunity for partners to share information about their resources, priorities, and feedback they have received from employers and job seekers.

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

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

Assessing Eligible Training Providers

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

Conduct Annual Monitoring

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

Finally, the Board will develop and implement a data analysis framework, or scorecard to measure how the system is functioning and evaluate how well the One-Stops are performing against various performance measures. Once developed, the scorecard will be used to assess how the Board and its partners are performing and what adjustments should be made to improve performance. Findings will be reviewed by the Board during one of its quarterly meetings and shared with the One-Stop Operator and One-Stop Partners.

In addition to program monitoring, financial monitoring will also be conducted annually. This monitoring will review spending and outcomes to determine that program goals are

being met and appropriate follow-up is being conducted. The review of finances and accounting system is conducted by an outside firm while the Board is responsible for monitoring for financial and programmatic compliance of sub-consultants and funding recipients.

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

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

Workforce services are offered through four American Job Centers located throughout the region. Additionally, services and programs are networked and coordinated by partners located in offices around the five counties. All staff members in the American Job Centers have an Access Guide for referring clients to WIOA partner programs throughout the area.

By working with partners to institute a “no wrong door” policy, customers can enter the workforce system by accessing Adult Education and community college partners throughout the region, further increasing the reach of workforce services. Several One-Stop Partners utilize space and technology throughout the region to meet the needs of customers without access to the Comprehensive One-Stop Center or the affiliated sites.

The CWMWDB website serves as a portal for job seekers to connect with workforce resources. The website includes concise descriptions of available services that job seekers and other customers can access.

In addition, job seekers and employers can access the workforce system through WorkSource Maine and the Virtual CareerCenter, which provide centralized access to workforce resources and services. These platforms offer job seekers access to information, tools, and support services, including the ability to explore careers, access training resources, and connect with workforce programs.

Job seekers and employers can also access the workforce system through Maine JobLink. This system provides a virtual portal to a wide array of workforce and employability services, allowing job seekers to search and apply for jobs, access workforce resources, and connect to training opportunities without entering one of the career centers. Employers can use Maine JobLink to post jobs and connect with qualified candidates.

The Maine Bureau of Employment Services (BES), an essential One-Stop partner, also utilizes technology to improve access to services. For example, certain workshops, including Unemployment Insurance-related services and resume assistance, may be offered virtually, expanding access for customers who are unable to attend in person. BES is also offering virtual career fairs that expand access for people in rural locations or those that lack transportation.

Both the Board and its partners utilize digital communication tools, including social media, to share information about workforce services, workshops, and employment opportunities. These tools help expand outreach and improve access to services for individuals across the region.

The Board recognizes that the region is geographically large and that distance can create barriers to participation in workforce services. Partners are encouraged to collaborate, when possible, to identify transportation solutions and coordinate resources to support participation in training and employment activities.

Finally, the Board is committed to transparency and public engagement. Virtual access to Board meetings is provided to allow partners and members of the public to participate remotely.

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

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

The Board recognizes that individuals with disabilities may face barriers to employment not encountered by other workers. However, when connected to appropriate opportunities and provided with the necessary supports, individuals with disabilities contribute significant value to the workforce and to employers. To support this, the Board is committed to ensuring that all individuals have access to the full array of workforce services and that staff are equipped to effectively serve individuals with disabilities.

One Stop Coordination and Program Services:

The Comprehensive One Stop Center and affiliated sites in the region are equipped to serve individuals with disabilities and are physically and programmatically accessible in accordance with WIOA Section 188 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The presence of Vocational Rehabilitation staff within the One Stop system provides an important resource for individuals requiring more specialized services. One Stop staff coordinate closely with Vocational Rehabilitation to provide referrals, develop service strategies, and ensure that individuals receive appropriate support based on their needs.

Through past and ongoing efforts, including staff training and system improvements, One Stop staff have increased their capacity to serve individuals with disabilities. Training provided through the Maine Department of Labor and partner programs supports frontline staff in understanding accessibility requirements, utilizing assistive technologies, and applying best

practices when working with individuals with disabilities. Staff are able to provide basic services while ensuring that individuals are connected to additional resources when needed.

The Board continues to support efforts to increase participation of individuals with disabilities in WIOA programs by promoting accessibility, improving coordination among partners, and ensuring that services are inclusive and responsive.

Board Engagement:

The CWMWDB is committed to understanding and addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities through its governance and planning processes. Organizations that serve individuals with disabilities are engaged through Board membership and stakeholder participation, providing input on workforce challenges and strategies for improving access and outcomes.

The Board also supports training and information-sharing efforts to help employers better understand the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities and the resources available to support them. These efforts will continue to be expanded across partner organizations.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among One Stop Partners formalizes commitments to accessibility, coordination, and shared responsibility for service delivery. Through this agreement, partners affirm their roles in maintaining accessible services, supporting individuals with disabilities, and collaborating to improve outcomes across the workforce system.

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

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

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

The Board's efforts to utilize ITAs will be aligned with its priority industries and employer engagement efforts. By engaging with employers and workforce partners, the Board will continue to identify in-demand skills and occupations within the region. This engagement helps ensure that ITAs are used to support training that leads to employment in high-demand and difficult-to-fill positions.

In addition, coordination with partners and the use of labor market information will support a clearer understanding of the types of training that are most beneficial for job seekers and employers. Through its Service Provider, Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC), and other partners, the Board receives regular updates on labor market trends, including in-demand occupations, wage data, and identified training gaps in the region.

The Board will support the use of ITAs through the following strategies:

- CWMWDB, in conjunction with the Maine Department of Labor, will maintain a list of eligible training providers. This list will be updated regularly to ensure that training programs meet performance and quality standards.
- One Stop staff will work with customers to review labor market information, discuss in-demand occupations, and evaluate potential career pathways. Through this process, customers will be supported in making informed decisions about training. Once a training decision is made, staff will assist in developing a training plan and identify any supportive service needs.
- One Stop staff will work with employers and partners to identify workforce needs and communicate those needs to job seekers. When gaps in training are identified, coordination with education and training providers will be pursued to support development or alignment of programs that meet local demand.

Through these strategies, ITAs will be used to support training investments that align with regional workforce needs and lead to employment outcomes.

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

The CWMWDB has established policies and implemented practices to ensure priority of service is provided in accordance with the State Unified Plan and Policy PY15-03 for the Adult program.

As specified under WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(E), priority of service for individualized career services and training services funded with WIOA Title I Adult funds must be given to:

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

The CWMWDB will ensure that priority for training services is given to adult program participants (excluding those served under dislocated worker funding) who meet the above criteria. Particular focus will be placed on serving individuals who are economically disadvantaged, including those below the Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL) guidelines or receiving public assistance.

In addition to these populations, the CWMWDB will identify and serve other individuals with barriers to employment. These may include:

- Veterans and eligible spouses
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with limited English proficiency
- Justice-involved individuals
- Out-of-school youth
- Older workers

The Board recognizes that these populations may require additional services beyond education and occupational training. These services may include English language instruction, basic skills development, work readiness training, and supportive services such as transportation and childcare.

To support effective service delivery, the CWMWDB will ensure that local policies allow for flexibility in addressing individual needs and that services are adapted to reflect local conditions and barriers.

Service providers will be required to establish performance goals for serving priority populations based on local labor market and demographic data and to report progress on a regular basis. This approach ensures accountability and supports continuous improvement in serving individuals with barriers to employment.

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

The CWMWDB will develop a policy with guidelines on appropriate use of incumbent worker training as part of layoff aversions strategies that help businesses retain employees and prevent job loss. Through its outreach to employers, the Board will promote awareness of available workforce services, including incumbent worker training, layoff aversion strategies, and Rapid Response services. These efforts are intended to ensure that businesses are informed of resources that can support workforce stability and growth.

The Board will continue to work with employers and partners to identify workforce needs and opportunities where training can assist in retaining employees, improving skills, and supporting business sustainability. Information gathered through employer engagement and partner coordination will inform the development and implementation of training strategies that align with business needs.

The CWMWDB recognizes that business transitions, particularly those related to owner retirement, present a significant risk to workforce stability in the region. Research indicates that a substantial number of small business owners are approaching retirement age, and many lack formal succession or exit plans. This creates a risk of business closure and associated job loss, particularly in rural areas where alternative employment opportunities may be limited.

This challenge, often referred to as the “Silver Tsunami,” highlights the need for proactive strategies to support business continuity and workforce retention. In many cases, employee ownership or worker buyouts may provide a viable option for maintaining business operations and preserving jobs.

To address this risk, the CWMWDB will coordinate with partners to support outreach, education, and referral efforts related to business succession planning and employee ownership opportunities. In alignment with allowable uses of WIOA Rapid Response funds, the Board will support activities such as:

1. Research and Information Gathering:

- Partnering with organizations to assess risks to businesses and identify opportunities for workforce and economic transition
- Identifying potential training needs in growing or transitioning industry sectors

2. Outreach and Engagement:

- Working with Service Providers to conduct outreach to businesses to increase awareness of workforce services and layoff aversion strategies
- Supporting relationship-building activities that enable early identification of potential layoffs or business closures

3. Feasibility Assessment Support:

- Coordinating with partners to explore options for business continuation, including employee ownership or other transition strategies

4. Incumbent Worker Training:

- Supporting training initiatives that build business, financial, and operational skills for employees

- Utilizing incumbent worker training as a strategy to retain workers and support business sustainability

Through these efforts, the CWMWDB aims to proactively identify businesses at risk of closure, support workforce retention, and reduce the likelihood of dislocation. By coordinating with partners and utilizing available resources, the Board will work to strengthen the resilience of local businesses and the regional workforce.

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

The Board will ensure that its service provider, through new employee orientation, will inform and train new staff in the delivery of high-quality, WIOA-compliant, customer-centered service. This orientation will include an overview of workforce programs, partner services, eligibility requirements, and expectations for service delivery within the One Stop system. The Board will share this information with all required partners, to ensure that all staff delivering WIOA programs offer the same level of quality service.

In addition to initial onboarding, staff will receive ongoing training to support continuous improvement in service delivery. This may include training on program updates, compliance requirements, use of workforce systems such as Maine JobLink, and best practices for working with individuals with barriers to employment.

The Board will also utilize monitoring and performance review processes to identify areas where additional training or support may be needed. Findings from programmatic monitoring, customer feedback, and partner input will be used to inform staff development efforts and ensure consistency in service delivery across the system.

Through coordination with the One Stop Operator and partner organizations, staff are encouraged to participate in cross-training opportunities to increase understanding of partner programs and improve coordination of services. This supports a more integrated, customer-centered approach and reinforces the “no wrong door” model.

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

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

The delivery of Adult and Dislocated Worker services within the Central Western Maine region provides job seekers with access to a comprehensive range of career, training, and supportive services designed to support employment, career advancement, and long-term economic stability. Services are delivered in coordination with One-Stop Partners, education providers, employers, and community organizations.

Individuals enter the system through CareerCenters, partner referrals, or virtual access points. Intake includes eligibility determination and an initial assessment of employment history, skills, and barriers. Based on this assessment, participants are guided through a tiered service model.

Basic career services are universally available and include labor exchange, job search assistance, labor market information, and referrals. Basic career services may include:

- Eligibility determination and initial assessment
- Outreach, intake, and orientation
- Labor exchange and job search assistance
- Workforce and labor market information
- Referrals to supportive services and partner programs
- Assistance with unemployment insurance claims
- Information regarding financial aid and training opportunities
- Information on local One-Stop services and performance outcomes

When additional support is needed, staff transition participants into individualized career services, which include:

- Comprehensive and specialized assessments
- Development of Individual Employment Plans (IEPs)
- Career counseling and career planning
- Short-term pre-vocational services
- Internships and work experience opportunities
- Employment preparation and job readiness activities
- Financial literacy services
- Out-of-area job search and relocation assistance
- English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs

Training services are provided when assessments indicate that employment cannot be obtained or retained without additional skills. CWMWDB prioritizes training aligned with regional sector strategies and employer demand. Training options include:

- Occupational skills training
- On-the-Job Training (OJT)
- Incumbent Worker Training
- Registered Apprenticeships and work-based learning
- Customized training with employer commitment to hire
- Entrepreneurial training and transitional jobs
- Skill upgrading and retraining programs
- Adult education and workplace literacy activities provided concurrently with occupational training

Training activities are coordinated with public and private training providers, community colleges, universities, Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, apprenticeship programs, employers, and entrepreneurial support organizations.

Follow-up services are available to support employment retention, career advancement, and continued engagement with workforce resources following program completion or employment placement.

Assessment of service availability indicates strong regional capacity; however, access barriers persist in rural areas. CWMWDB addresses these through hybrid service delivery, co-location at partner sites, and expanded outreach through community-based organizations.

CWMWDB coordinates services with core WIOA partners including Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Bureau of Employment Services (BES), Community Action Programs, EMDC, community colleges, universities, Career and Technical Education providers, and community-based organizations to ensure participants have access to comprehensive workforce and supportive services throughout the region.

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

CWMWDB coordinates closely with the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL), Bureau of Employment Services (BES), CareerCenters and, Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC), employers, education providers, and community organizations to mobilize workforce development activities in response to layoffs, business closures, and workforce disruptions. Workforce partners coordinate outreach and service delivery to ensure impacted workers have timely access to reemployment services, training opportunities, supportive services, and labor market information.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **Confidential Lists:** Monitoring employers where the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation has documented three or more initial unemployment claims.
- **WARN Act and Maine Severance Law Notifications:** Formal notices submitted to the Dislocated Worker Unit and Bureau of Labor Standards.
- **Ongoing Monitoring:** Regular review of websites tracking mergers, downsizing, offshoring, and local/state press releases.
- **Community Intelligence:** Early rumor tracking and information sharing with economic development entities at state, regional, and local levels.

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

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

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

Customized Transition Support

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

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

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

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

Transition Team activities may include:

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

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

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

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

Youth services in Central Western Maine are delivered through contracted providers and coordinated with education, workforce, and community-based partners. Services are designed to meet WIOA requirements and address the diverse needs of both in-school and out-of-school youth.

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

- Steps:
 - Recruitment: some clients come to the CareerCenter and others are referred to youth employment counselors from community partners
 - Assessment: collect basic demographic information, info about barriers, and educational status
 - Enroll in WIOA
 - Assess more specific needs, including employment and education goals
 - Assess family and living situation, health and mental health status and concerns, substance abuse issues, language status and legal concerns
 - Educational status
 - Conduct additional assessments as needed (the World of Work Inventory (WOWI), the Transferable Skills Scale (TSS), Work Activity Matcher (WAM), or the O*NET Career Interests Inventory.)
- Individual Service Strategy: based on information collected in previous steps, youth counselors develop ISS in partnership with participant
 - Sets long-term career goals as well as short-term goals
 - Outlines action steps and support services that will be required
 - Setup review dates
- Case Management and Follow-Up:
 - Follow up is available to address on-going or new barriers
 - Check in with employers
 - WIOA enrolled youth are made aware of services offered by WIOA and through partner agencies
 - Youth Counselors address the 14 Youth elements through the ISS:

- Activities leading to the completion of a secondary school diploma (or equivalent) or a recognized postsecondary credential
- Alternative secondary school services, or drop-out recovery services
- Paid and unpaid work experiences that have academic and occupational education as a component
- Occupational skills training
- Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster
- Leadership development
- Supportive services
- Adult mentoring
- Follow-up services
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling
- Financial literacy education
- Entrepreneurial literacy education
- Career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services
- Preparation for and transition to postsecondary education and training

CWMWDB has identified work-based learning and employer engagement as critical success factors and continues to expand these opportunities to improve outcomes.

Registered Apprenticeship Strategy and System Alignment

CWMWDB will implement a coordinated strategy to expand utilization of Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) as a key work-based learning and career pathway model aligned with regional workforce priorities. In coordination with the Maine Apprenticeship Program (MAP) and the regional Apprenticeship and Training Representative (ATR), CWMWDB will support employer engagement, program development, and expansion of apprenticeship opportunities within priority sectors including healthcare, manufacturing, construction, education, transportation, and public sector occupations.

CWMWDB will assess the feasibility of serving as an intermediary sponsor to support small and medium-sized employers that may lack the administrative capacity to independently sponsor RAPs. The Board will continue collaborating with employers, CareerCenters, education providers, and workforce partners to increase awareness of apprenticeship opportunities and strengthen pathways into registered programs.

Consistent with WIOA and state policy guidance, CWMWDB will direct its WIOA service provider to integrate apprenticeship opportunities into career planning and workforce services, including:

- Assessing participants for apprenticeable occupations and career pathways

- Providing information on Registered Apprenticeship and State-Certified Pre-Apprenticeship opportunities
- Supporting referrals, co-enrollment, and supportive services, where appropriate
- Utilizing WIOA-funded training strategies, including ITAs, OJT, customized training, incumbent worker training, and work experiences connected to registered apprenticeship pathways

CWMWDB will continue supporting expansion of State-Certified Pre-Apprenticeship Programs that create documented pathways into RAPs and align with employer workforce needs. Progress will be monitored through employer engagement, apprenticeship participation, co-enrollment activity, and alignment with state and federal workforce policy requirements.

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

The Board regularly collaborates with education, training, workforce, and community partners to coordinate services, share information, and reduce duplication across the workforce system. Adult education providers, community colleges, CareerCenters, and other core partners actively participate in Board meetings, strategic planning, and sector discussions to ensure workforce investments align with regional employer demand.

Quarterly partner meetings are used to review labor market information, assess service gaps, and identify strategies to maximize training participation while efficiently utilizing workforce resources.

Employers in priority sectors including healthcare, education, manufacturing, and construction provide ongoing input regarding workforce needs and skill gaps. Education and training providers collaborate with employers to develop responsive training programs aligned with regional economic priorities and industry-recognized credentials.

CWMWDB and its partners will continue implementing strategies designed to strengthen workforce alignment and increase access to training and employment opportunities, including:

- Organizing employer engagement activities, business tours, career exploration events, and industry panels for students, educators, guidance counselors, and job seekers to increase awareness of career opportunities within priority industries.
- Expanding the use of virtual engagement tools, digital career exploration resources, and online job fairs to improve regional access to workforce information and services.

- Enhancing communication between employers, educators, and workforce partners to better align training programs with employer expectations and workforce demand.
- Maintaining accessible workforce resource information through Board communication platforms and partner outreach efforts.
- Supporting co-location and coordination of workforce staff and partner services at community college, adult education, and community-based locations when feasible to improve participant access to services.
- Increasing integration between adult education and occupational training programs to support participants in obtaining high school equivalency credentials, essential skills, and occupational training simultaneously.
- Promoting work-based learning opportunities including apprenticeships, internships, on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, and customized employer training strategies.

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

CWMWDB coordinates supportive services through partnerships with regional providers to address barriers that impact participation and completion of training. The Board maintains an inventory of available supportive services and ensures that staff are trained to identify needs and make appropriate referrals.

CWMWDB recognizes that supportive services are critical to successful workforce participation, training completion, and long-term employment retention. Barriers such as transportation, childcare, housing instability, technology access, and emergency financial needs can significantly impact an individual's ability to engage in workforce and training opportunities. Supportive services may be provided, based on reasonable necessity and program eligibility, to assist participants in overcoming these barriers.

A key priority of CWMWDB is improving communication, awareness, and coordination among workforce, education, and community partners to ensure individuals are connected to available resources and services throughout the region. While many supportive service resources already exist, partners identified the need for stronger referral systems and increased awareness of available assistance during the strategic planning process. CWMWDB will continue working collaboratively with partner organizations to strengthen referrals, improve information sharing, and increase access to supportive services for job seekers and employers.

Examples of supportive services may include:

- Transportation assistance

- Childcare assistance
- Technology and internet access
- Clothing and uniforms, when necessary
- Equipment and tools required for training or employment
- Limited medical or work-related expenditures, when appropriate
- Emergency assistance, when necessary to support participation or employment retention

Additional information regarding supportive services policies and eligibility is included in Appendix 3.

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

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

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

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

Dislocated worker funding is used to support rapid reemployment and career transition for individuals affected by layoffs.

Services begin with Rapid Response and transition into individualized career services and training when needed. Funding is prioritized for training aligned with regional demand and includes:

- Occupational Classroom Training (tuition assistance): Classroom Training defined as occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment, skill

upgrading and retraining. The primary intent of this type of training is to improve earnings potential and employability of workers.

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

CWMWDB maximizes funding impact through co-enrollment with other programs and coordination with financial aid resources.

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

CWMWDB generally defines “self-sufficiency” as the ability of an individual or family to achieve economic stability through employment that provides wages sufficient to meet basic living needs while reducing reliance on public assistance programs. The Board recognizes that self-sufficiency may vary based on family size, geographic location, and individual circumstances throughout the region.

For employed Adult and Dislocated Worker participants, self-sufficiency is evaluated through a combination of wages, employment stability, career advancement opportunities, and the participant’s ability to maintain long-term employment. The Board also recognizes that supportive services, skill development, education, and access to career pathways are important components in helping individuals achieve and sustain self-sufficiency.

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

CWMWDB determines that an individual is “unlikely to return to a previous industry or occupation” based on a combination of labor market information, employer demand, and the individual’s employment circumstances. This determination is made when evidence indicates

that suitable employment opportunities comparable to the participant's previous occupation are limited or unavailable within the region.

Key factors considered may include:

- Regional or statewide decline within the industry or occupation
- Limited availability of comparable employment opportunities within a reasonable commuting distance
- Technological, operational, or industry changes requiring new or substantially different skills
- Significant wage disparities that would prevent the participant from returning to prior earnings or achieving self-sufficiency
- Employer closures, layoffs, or long-term reductions in workforce demand within the occupation or sector

Determinations are documented through case notes and supported, when appropriate, by labor market information, employer input, and participant assessment activities.

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

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

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

CWMWDB requires documentation of training need through:

- Initial and comprehensive assessments
- Individual Employment Plans or ISS
- Labor market alignment
- Documentation that employment cannot be obtained without training

This information is recorded in the case management system and reviewed prior to training approval.

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

Youth counselors assess needs through interviews, assessments, and ongoing case management. Each of the 14 program elements is addressed through the ISS, ensuring that services are tailored to the individual.

Provision of services is coordinated across partners to ensure all elements are available and accessible.

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

The local area's youth program incorporates multiple WIOA youth service elements, including paid work experience opportunities for all participants. Youth service providers continue to expand work-based learning strategies for older out-of-school youth through the development of On-the-Job Training (OJT), apprenticeships, internships, and other employment-based training opportunities. These efforts strengthen participant career readiness while supporting compliance with the WIOA requirement that at least 20% of youth formula funds be expended on work experience activities.

Service delivery models have also been adjusted to increase access to work-based learning and training opportunities, including expanded use of remote services, virtual training, and flexible engagement strategies to better serve participants throughout the region.

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

CWMWDB prioritizes services to out-of-school youth through targeted outreach and partnerships with Adult Education providers, schools, community organizations, and justice system partners. Recruitment efforts include collaboration with guidance counselors, probation and parole officers, and other community partners to identify and engage youth who may not traditionally access workforce services through the One-Stop CareerCenter system.

Youth providers work with employers to develop paid work experience, On-the-Job Training (OJT), internships, and apprenticeship opportunities aligned with participant career goals and regional workforce demand.

CWMWDB regularly monitors enrollments and expenditures to ensure compliance with the WIOA requirement that at least 75 percent of youth formula funds are dedicated to serving out-of-school youth.

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

Youth services are delivered through contracted providers, including:

- Bureau of Employment Services (BES)
- Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC)

Each provider delivers case management, training coordination, and supportive services aligned with WIOA requirements.

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

Career services are delivered through the One-Stop system using shared intake, coordinated referrals, and co-enrollment strategies.

Staff across programs communicate regularly to ensure that services are aligned and that participants receive appropriate support without duplication.

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

Follow-up services are intended to support employment retention, career advancement, continued education and training success, and long-term connection to workforce system resources.

WIOA authorized follow-up services as described in WIOA sec. 134(c)(2)(A)(xiii) and § 678.430(c) are available as appropriate for adult participants who are placed in unsubsidized employment for up to 12 months after the first day of employment. Follow-up contacts are conducted by service provider staff during the first, second, third, and fourth quarters after program exit through:

- In-person meetings
- Telephone contact
- Email communication
- Virtual communication or other appropriate methods

Follow-up services may include:

- Workplace counseling and career planning
- Assistance addressing work-related challenges
- Referrals to supportive services and community resources

- Labor market and training information
- Peer support connections
- Assistance pursuing advancement or additional employment opportunities

Youth Follow-Up Services

Youth participants are offered follow-up services for a minimum of 12 months after program completion unless the participant declines services or cannot be located. Services are intended to support successful transition into employment, postsecondary education, or advanced training.

Youth follow-up services may include:

- Supportive services
- Adult mentoring
- Financial literacy education
- Career counseling and career exploration
- Labor market and employment information
- Transition support for postsecondary education and training
- Employer follow-up and assistance addressing workplace challenges

Services may be provided in person or remotely, including through telephone and virtual communication methods.

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

Documentation and Service Requirements

The type, frequency, and intensity of follow-up services are determined based on individual participant needs and Individual Service Strategies (ISS) or employment plans. Follow-up services must involve meaningful engagement and may not consist solely of attempts to collect performance outcome information.

All follow-up contacts, services provided, and participant outcomes are documented within the participant's Maine JobLink record in accordance with state policy and local procedures.

Section 5: Wagner-Peyser Services

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

The Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board (CWMWDB) works in close partnership with the Maine Department of Labor’s Bureau of Employment Services (BES) to ensure full integration of Wagner-Peyser services within the local One-Stop delivery system serving Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, and Somerset Counties.

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

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

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

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

Services for Employers

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

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

Maine JobLink (MJL)

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

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

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

Additional Benefits of MJL Usage

- Job listings posted on MJL help employers meet affirmative action requirements by facilitating recruitment from minority populations.

- Data from unfilled job postings supports the state’s workforce development efforts, providing critical insights that help secure industry sector training grants and guide strategic investments in workforce programs.

Other Services

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

- My WorkSource Maine virtual One-Stop platform that offers a personalized service matching tool that recommends resources based on individual needs and access to a wide array of partner services and a career exploration tool.
- LiveChat provides real-time assistance for basic CareerCenter and employment-related questions, Maine JobLink (MJL) password resets, and referrals to additional services and organizations.
- The CareerCenter Hotline serves as a conduit to workforce opportunities across BES and its partners, offering:
 - Scheduling of in-person appointments
 - Virtual triage of customer needs to better direct individuals to CareerCenter and/or partner services
- Both in-person and virtual CareerCenter workshops that are ADA-compliant and are regularly evaluated for topic relevance, current labor market trends, and attendance patterns to ensure they meet evolving customer needs.

Staff Development and Training

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

- Overview of Labor Exchange and Career Services delivery
- Introduction to Maine JobLink (MJL) as the state's labor exchange and case management system
- Familiarization with the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation (BUC) claims system and how to assist individuals with Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims
- Career information resources, including labor market and occupational tools and career decision-making supports
- Overview of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and Training Readjustment **Act** programs
- Understanding Rapid Response

- Introduction to RESEA (Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment) as a joint program between BUC and BES
- Standards and procedures for service delivery at One-Stop CareerCenters
- Overview of Veterans' services and required referral processes
- Outreach and services for Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers, including partnerships with the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP)
- Overview of training programs such as:
 - Maine Apprenticeship Program
 - Competitive Skills Scholarship Program
 - Title I-B Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs
 - Job Corps
 - YouthBuild
- Overview of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and Federal Bonding Program

Commitment to Collaboration and Innovation

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

- Align technology and data systems across One-Stop Partner programs
- Enhance service delivery to individuals and businesses
- Improve efficiency and accuracy in reporting on workforce performance metrics

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

CWMWDB utilizes the Wagner-Peyser program to ensure unemployment insurance claimants in Central Western Maine have direct access to reemployment services and workforce programming.

The Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services (BES) employs staff trained in Unemployment Insurance (UI) eligibility and UI issue identification during initial onboarding. Designated staff are equipped to assist individuals with:

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

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

UI Claimant Assistance

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

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

Reemployment Services through RESEA

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

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

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

RESEA Notification and Compliance

- BUC notifies selected claimants through letter, email, and Re-EmployME portal notifications.
- Claimants must attend and complete the initial RESEA session.
- Failure to comply triggers a fact-finding process to determine if UI benefits should be suspended or continued for good cause.

Delivery of RESEA Services

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

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

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

- Assistance accessing reemployment and training services
- Career counseling and exploration of higher education options
- Common intake and eligibility assessments for WIOA programs

- Access to computer-based job search programs and applications
- Job search and placement assistance with labor market information
- Orientation to supportive services and WIOA partner programs
- Access to Maine JobLink and general internet for job search activities
- Core assessments connecting skills and abilities to job opportunities

Delivery options are flexible:

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

Comprehensive RESEA Components

At a minimum, each RESEA participant receives:

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

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

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

Optional Career Services (Based on Individual Need)

Participants may also receive:

- Referrals to workforce training (WIOA or other programs)
- Labor exchange services in high-demand industries

- Information on financial aid resources beyond WIOA
- Access to community-based supportive services
- Financial literacy education
- Career readiness activities such as resume writing and interview preparation

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

The Monitor Advocate System, through the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL), ensures that Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs) have equitable access to career services, training, skill development, and workforce protections through Maine CareerCenters. The goal is to help MSFWs improve their living and working conditions.

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

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

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

Service Delivery Structure:

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

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

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

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

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

Services Provided:

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

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

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

At CareerCenters or virtually, workers can access:

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

Community and Partner Engagement:

CareerCenter staff also engage in broader community outreach through:

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

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

Staff Training:

All staff are trained to:

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

Section 6: Title II – Adult Education and Literacy Programs

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

The Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board (CWMWDB) ensures full integration of Adult Education and Literacy (Title II) services within the local workforce system through formal governance structures, shared planning processes, and operational alignment with WIOA core programs.

CWMWDB maintains executed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with Adult Education providers serving Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, and Somerset Counties. These agreements establish roles related to service delivery, referral coordination, data sharing, participation in the One-Stop system, and alignment with workforce priorities. Adult Education providers are active partners in Board meetings, One-Stop Partner meetings, strategic planning activities, and sector partnership discussions. An Adult Education Director serves as the Title II representative on the Board, while additional Adult Education leaders regularly participate in workforce planning and regional coordination efforts.

Coordination is supported through:

- Regular One-Stop Partner meetings to align service delivery and improve referral processes
- Shared intake, assessment, and referral protocols among Title I, Title II, Wagner-Peyser, and partner programs
- Participation in sector partnerships to align Adult Education programming with regional industry demand
- Joint planning efforts aligned with regional workforce priorities, labor market data, and economic development strategies
- Cross-partner communication and resource sharing to support co-enrollment and integrated service delivery

Adult Education providers deliver academic instruction, workforce preparation, English language acquisition, digital literacy, integrated education and training (IET), and career pathways programming designed to support participant transition into postsecondary education, training, and employment. Providers maintain Career Pathways Plans identifying priority sectors, training strategies, and measurable outcomes aligned with regional labor market demand and employer needs.

Adult Education plays a key role in regional workforce initiatives supporting digital literacy, foundational skills, and career pathway development in high-demand sectors including healthcare, skilled trades, transportation, technology, clean energy, and public service occupations. Through partnerships with employers, workforce providers, community colleges, and training institutions, Adult Education supports cohort-based training models that integrate academic instruction, industry-recognized credentials, workforce preparation, and supportive services.

CWMWDB and Adult Education partners continue to expand remote and hybrid learning opportunities to improve access for rural participants, individuals with disabilities, and others facing transportation or scheduling barriers. Remote instruction, digital literacy training, and expanded access to online learning platforms have increased participation in workforce training and credential attainment opportunities throughout the region.

In compliance with WIOA requirements, the CWMWDB conducts a formal review of all local Adult Education applications submitted to the Office of Adult Education and Literacy Services. This review process includes:

- Evaluation of alignment with local workforce priorities and sector strategies;
- Assessment of integration with the One-Stop system and career pathways framework; and
- Identification of opportunities to strengthen service coordination, access, and outcomes.

Following review, CWMWDB provides timely written recommendations to applicants regarding opportunities for increased alignment with regional workforce priorities and submits required review documentation to the Office of Adult Education and Literacy Services in accordance with State policy and established timelines. This process supports continuous coordination between Title II programming and regional workforce development goals.

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

CWMWDB ensures alignment of basic skills and English language assessments through coordinated processes between Adult Education providers, Title I service providers, CareerCenters, and other One Stop Partners. Adult Education programs serve as the primary

entities for administering approved assessments in reading, mathematics, English language acquisition, digital literacy, and other career and work-related competencies for both Adult Education participants and WIOA partner referrals, including trade participants when appropriate.

Assessment practices are aligned with state policy, AEFLA guidance, and local workforce procedures to ensure consistent administration, interpretation, and use of assessment results across the workforce system. Coordination is supported through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), established referral processes, release of information procedures, and ongoing partner communication consistent with FERPA and confidentiality requirements.

Alignment and coordination activities include:

- Shared assessment interpretation and service planning between Adult Education Career Pathways Advisors, Title I staff, and workforce partners to support development of individualized education and employment plans.
- Data-sharing protocols that allow assessment results to inform referrals, co-enrollment strategies, service sequencing, and career pathway placement.
- Coordination of testing schedules and referral processes among Adult Education providers, CareerCenters, and workforce partners to reduce duplication of assessments.
- Cross-training and ongoing professional development to ensure staff and assessment administrators are trained in accordance with state assessment administration requirements.
- Integration of assessment results into career pathways, occupational training, English language acquisition services, and postsecondary transition planning aligned with regional workforce demand.

This coordinated approach reduces duplication, improves participant progression, and ensures that individuals are placed into appropriate education, training, and employment opportunities based on skill level and career goals.

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

CWMWDB ensures consistent and structured communication between Title II providers, the State AEFLA grant recipient, and the local workforce system through formal representation and defined communication processes. An Adult Education Director serves as the Title II representative on the Board and helps ensure alignment between Adult Education programs, workforce system priorities, and state guidance.

Responsibilities include:

- Communicating Board priorities, policy updates, funding opportunities, and workforce initiatives to Adult Education providers throughout the region.
- Coordinating participation in One-Stop Partner meetings, sector partnerships, and regional planning activities.
- Sharing provider feedback, service gaps, and system improvement opportunities to inform Board planning and decision-making.

Communication and coordination are supported through:

- Regular partner meetings and strategic planning sessions.
- Shared communication channels, resource updates, and cross-partner information sharing.
- Participation in statewide Adult Education and workforce system networks to maintain alignment with AEFLA requirements and state workforce priorities.

This structure supports ongoing collaboration, consistent service delivery, and active integration of Title II providers within the regional workforce system.

This structure ensures that all Title II providers operate within a consistent framework, remain informed of system expectations, and are actively engaged in the integrated workforce system.

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

Adult Education services in Central Western Maine are delivered through a coordinated network of providers that function as an integrated component of the One-Stop system. Services are designed to be accessible, flexible, and aligned with regional workforce needs. Programming is aligned with regional sector priorities, including healthcare, skilled trades, manufacturing, transportation, and education. Contextualized instruction connects academic learning with occupational skills, improving transition to employment and postsecondary education.

Adult Education partners closely with CWMWDB, CareerCenters, and workforce service providers to expand access to workforce, education, and training services throughout the region. Adult Education sites and satellite locations increase accessibility in rural communities and support the workforce system's "no wrong door" approach by connecting individuals to appropriate workforce and supportive services regardless of entry point.

Adult Basic Education and Literacy programs provide adults with opportunities to improve literacy, math, digital literacy, and workforce readiness skills necessary to obtain employment,

pursue further education, and achieve self-sufficiency. Services are available to adults lacking basic skills, a high school credential, or English language proficiency.

High School Completion and Equivalency Programs offer pathways for adults to earn a secondary credential through:

- Adult High School Diploma programs administered through local school districts
- High School Equivalency preparation and testing programs leading to a Maine High School Equivalency Diploma

Career Pathways and Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs combine adult education, workforce preparation, and occupational training to support participant advancement into in-demand industries and occupations. Programs are developed in partnership with workforce providers, employers, community colleges, and universities to align training opportunities with regional workforce needs.

WorkReady and Workforce Training Programs help participants develop employability skills, workplace readiness, communication skills, and professional behaviors necessary for successful participation in employment and training opportunities.

Maine College and Career Access (MCCA) is offered free of charge through Maine Adult Education programs. The program supports students transitioning into postsecondary education and employment by helping participants strengthen academic readiness, career planning, and college navigation skills.

Family Literacy Programs provide integrated educational services that support adult learning, children's education, and parent engagement activities designed to improve long-term educational and economic outcomes for families.

Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG) support youth career exploration, workforce readiness, academic persistence, and transition into postsecondary education, training, and employment opportunities.

Higher Opportunity for Pathways to Employment (HOPE) helps individuals pursue education and training opportunities by addressing barriers to participation, including:

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

TANF Parents as Scholars (PaS) supports eligible parents pursuing postsecondary education and training opportunities. Coordination between workforce, education, and DHHS partners helps participants access supportive services, career planning, training resources, and employment opportunities that support long-term economic stability and career advancement.

New Mainers Resource Center (MRC) assists internationally trained professionals who have a bachelor's degree or above from outside the U.S., and immigrant workers with credential evaluation, licensing support, workforce readiness, career navigation, and employer connections to support successful entry into the regional workforce.

Through this structured, integrated, and accessible model, Adult Education serves as a foundational entry point to the workforce system, supporting skill development, credential attainment, and long-term employment outcomes.

Section 7: Cooperative Agreements

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

The CWMWDB has entered into an agreement with Vocational Rehabilitation.

Vocational Rehabilitation – WIOA Title IV

1. MDOL's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
2. Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired
3. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

The following summary includes service described in the Memorandum of Understanding – See Appendix 5.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Services are provided at three One-Stop locations across the CWMWDB region: Augusta, Wilton, and Lewiston. The service centers employ a “no wrong door” policy to ensure needs are met.

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

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

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

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

Short-term Supportive Services	Apprenticeship
Division for the Blind & Visually Impaired	
Vocational Rehabilitation Guidance & Counseling	Job Development and Placement Services
Comprehensive Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs	Pre-Employment Transition Services to Students
Medical and Psychological Evaluations	Vocational Exploration
Orientation and Mobility Instruction	Vocational Assessment
Rehabilitation Teaching Services	Job Readiness Assessment
Adaptive Technology Assessments and Services	Job Coaching
Computer Access Training	Referral to Supportive Service Resources
Teacher of Visually Impaired Instruction	Short-term Transportation Assistance
Low Vision Evaluation	Short-term Supportive Services
Personal Adjustment Counseling	Occupational Tools & Equipment
Reader Services	Self-Employment Exploration and Planning
Individual Employment Plan Development	Ticket-to-Work Services
Occupational Skill Training	Benefits Counseling
Postsecondary Education and Training	Post-employment Services
Work Opportunity Tax Credit	Apprenticeship

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

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

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

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

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

Financial Incentives: Financial incentives allow low risk participation for employers through DVR/DBVI paid work experiences, such as vocational assessment and On-the Job training, as well as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, which all assist in the placement and hire of an individual with a disability in competitive employment.

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

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

DVR/DBVI have expanded the use of video and teleconferencing, as well as developed many new virtual service options, including an online VR application through <https://workservices.maine.gov/>. Career Exploration Workshops, job shadows, Orientation & Mobility instruction, and college preparation programs.

Ongoing efforts to enhance services will include:

- Direct input from clients to assure that adaptable conditions and accommodations have been made.
- Programs available to support students facing anxiety and mental health issues.
- Connecting individuals with alternative high school programs as appropriate.

Section 8: Jobs for Veterans State Grants

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

CWMWDB provides referral, training, and placement services to veterans through the One-Stop American Job Center system serving Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, and Somerset Counties. Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces and their eligible spouses are a priority population and receive priority of service for all CareerCenter services and federally funded employment and training programs. All visitors to the One-Stop American Job Center system are screened to determine if they are a veteran or qualifying spouse of a veteran. If so, the visitor meets with a Bureau of Employment Services (BES) Employment Consultant who provides the individual with information on all available workforce services and programs and counsels them on how to apply these resources to best achieve his or her employment goals.

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

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

BES provides priority of service to all veterans and specialized employment and training services to veterans and eligible spouses. Disabled veterans and veterans with significant barriers to employment receive individualized services and may be referred to specialized veteran staff to ensure full access to available programs and resources.

Under the Jobs for Veterans Act and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), veterans must receive priority of service. This means that if a veteran meets eligibility requirements for any federally funded employment or training program, they are given priority over non-veteran eligible individuals.

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

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

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

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

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

Eligibility Definitions:

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. A special-disabled or disabled veteran, as defined in 38 U.S.C. §4211(1) & (3), is a veteran who:
 - a. Is entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retirement pay would be entitled to compensation) under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; or

- b. Was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability.
2. Vietnam-era Veterans. Pursuant to 38 U.S.C. 4211, the term “Veteran of the Vietnam Era” is an eligible veteran any part of whose active military, naval or air service was during the Vietnam era. “Vietnam-era” means the period beginning on February 28, 1961 and ending on May 7, 1975.
3. A veteran who during the three-year period beginning on the date of such veteran's discharge or release from active duty has been unemployed for 27 or more weeks in the previous 12 months (does not have to be 27 consecutive weeks);
4. A veteran who has been referred for employment services by a representative of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
5. A veteran who is experiencing homelessness, as defined in Sections 103(a) and (b) of the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. § 11302(a) and (b));
6. A veteran who is an justice-involved, as defined by WIOA Section 3(38), 29 U.S.C. § 3102(38), refers to any eligible veteran or eligible spouse who is currently incarcerated or has been released from incarceration;
7. Any veteran between the ages of 18-24;
8. A veteran lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate;
9. A veteran who is economically disadvantaged, meaning one of the following:
 - a. Low-income as defined by WIOA Section 3(36), 29 U.S.C. § 3102(36);
 - b. Unemployed
 - c. Heads of single-parent households containing at least one dependent child.
10. A transitioning service member (TSM) of the Armed Forces who has been identified as in need of intensive/individualized career services;
11. A member of the Armed Forces who is wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in military treatment facilities or warrior transition unit; and
12. The spouse or other family caregivers of such wounded, ill or injured member;

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

Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) serving Central Western Maine conduct employer outreach and build relationships with businesses throughout Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec, Oxford, and Somerset Counties to promote the hiring of veterans.

LVER responsibilities include:

- Conducting outreach to employers in targeted industries;
- Promoting employment and training opportunities for veterans;
- Building partnerships with workforce and economic development entities;

- Coordinating with One-Stop partners to expand veteran employment options; and
- Documenting outreach activities in Maine JobLink.

LVERs advocate for veterans by promoting their transferable skills, leadership experience, and industry-relevant training to employers across sectors. They participate as members of CareerCenter business outreach teams alongside Wagner-Peyser, WIOA Title I, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Adult Education staff to ensure coordinated employer engagement.

LVERs utilize Maine JobLink tools to identify veteran job seekers and match them with employer needs. They also monitor federal contractor job listings and proactively engage businesses to increase veteran placements.

Employer outreach efforts include educating businesses on workforce programs and incentives such as:

- On-the-Job Training (OJT);
- GI Bill OJT opportunities;
- Maine Apprenticeship Program;
- Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP);
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) services;
- State of Maine Vocational Rehabilitation;
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC); and
- Federal Bonding Program.

LVERs also assist in coordinating and participating in job fairs and hiring events, both in-person and virtual, including sector-specific recruitment efforts aligned with regional labor market demand.

Central Western Maine actively participates in the statewide Maine Hire-A-Vet Campaign, an initiative that connects employers with highly skilled veterans seeking employment. LVERs contribute to outreach, employer engagement, and coordination efforts within the region. Since its inception, the campaign has connected nearly 1,900 employers with 2,200+ veteran-hires and was recognized as a best practice by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) and the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA).

CWMWDB remains committed to ensuring that veterans and eligible spouses in Central Western Maine receive priority access to employment, training, and supportive services. Through coordinated referral systems, intensive DVOP services, proactive LVER employer engagement, and strong partnerships across the one-stop system, the Board will continue to strengthen employment pathways for veterans while supporting regional business workforce needs.

Section 9: Fiscal, Performance, and Other Functions

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

Central Western Maine Workforce Initiatives d/b/a Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board

87 Winthrop Street, Suite 400

Augusta, ME 04330

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

The Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board (CWMWDB), in collaboration and partnership with the Chief Elected Officials (CEO's) of Androscoggin, Franklin, Somerset, Kennebec, and Oxford Counties develop RFPs for Adult/Dislocated Worker service delivery and Youth service delivery based on WIOA guidelines and the Board's procurement policy. RFPs are posted online at <https://cwmwdb.org/>. Interested parties should check CWMWDB's website to access the RFPs and revisit regularly for updates.

The process follows a timeline that includes a Bidder's Conference where questions may be submitted in person or electronically between specified dates. All questions are responded to in written format and published on the website. Attendance at the bidder's conference is not mandatory. There is a due date for proposals, a date by which proposals are opened and discussed by a committee, and a date by which a subgrantee is selected. There is a certain amount of time allowed for feedback before a contract is written.

Throughout the entire RFP process, prospective applicants may not seek advice or assistance from any CWMWDB board member or staff, Fiscal Agent, or CEO for the region. Such communication will constitute grounds for eliminating a proposal submission from consideration. The CWMWDB and/or CEOs for the region reserve the right to amend the RFP process and/or schedule without advance notification.

All RFP announcements will be published in a widely circulated publication.

The following is a sample schedule/timeline:

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

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

The Chief Elected Official and CWMWDB executive director sign a copy of the negotiated performance measures below. (See Appendix 6 PY24-PY25 Performance Measures)

**Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board
WIOA Title IB Local Performance Measures for PY24 and PY25**

Local Performance Measures	PY 2024	PY 2025
Adult Program		
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	71%	71.5%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	69%	69.5%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$7300	\$7400
Credential Attainment Rate	64%	66%
Measurable Skill Gains	52%	53%
Dislocated Worker Program		
Employment 2 nd Qtr. after exit	75%	75.5%
Employment 4 th Qtr. after exit	76%	76.5%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$8420	\$8500
Credential Attainment Rate	67%	68%
Measurable Skill Gains	57%	57.5%
Youth Program		
Employment or Education 2 nd Qtr. after exit	68%	68.5%
Employment or Education 4 th Qtr. after exit	71%	72%
Median Earnings 2 nd Qtr. after exit	\$4600	\$4800
Credential Attainment Rate	57%	57.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	45%	46.5%

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

CWMWDB Financial & Program Oversight and Monitoring:

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

FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT:

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

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

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

The CWMWDB is responsible for annual on-site monitoring of service provider(s) and sub-recipients for financial and programmatic compliance. In the event the term of agreement is less than one year, monitoring will occur about halfway through the training.

The CWMWDB is required to develop and use local monitoring procedures, instruments, and schedules. The CWMWDB is responsible for conducting annual monitoring of the WIOA

service provider's workforce programs and financial management contracted with WIOA funds and in accordance with 20 CFR Sec. 667.410(a).

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

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

Entities Subject to Monitoring:

MDOL conducts annual monitoring in each of Maine's local workforce areas. MDOL monitoring reports that concern governance and strategic planning are sent to CWMWDB's executive director. MDOL program monitoring reports, together with requests for corrective action, and will be sent to CWMWDB's executive director, Board Chair, Chief Elected Official, and the MDOL supervisor of the monitoring staff.

. The CWMWDB is responsible for providing a timely response to MDOL's concerns or findings. The response is completed by the CWMWDB executive director in collaboration with the direct service delivery providers as appropriate.

Monitoring takes place at all levels and includes the CWMWDB, the service providers, and the Comprehensive One Stop Center and affiliated sites. The objective of monitoring varies from full system to very program-specific career assessment, workforce education and job training, individual funding opportunities, job search and placement assistance.

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

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

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

The Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board's (CWMWDB) Operations Committee reviews all assessments related to the Central Western Maine One-Stop Centers and when approved will recommend formal approval by the CWMWDB to certify the Lewiston Comprehensive One-Stop CareerCenter and the affiliate sites of Wilton, Northern Kennebec Valley, and Augusta.

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

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

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Title 1, Sec. 134(c)(3)(F)(iii), training services for Adults and Dislocated Workers may be provided through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). Under Sec. 129(C)(2)(D) Youth training activities are not subject to

the policy governing the issuance and management of ITAs. However, under 20 CFR Sec. 681.550, ITAs may be allowed for out-of-school Youth aged 16-24.

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

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

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

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

Policy

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

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

- g. Funds are available,
- h. The customer chooses an eligible training provider consistent with the ETPL,
- i. The customer is eligible for Training services,

- j. The customer is unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than wages from previous employment and in need of training to obtain economic self-sufficiency and comparable or higher wages,
- k. The customer has the skills and qualifications to successfully participate in the selected program of training,
- l. The customer demonstrates appropriate career choices based on work experience and occupational preferences. There is a reasonable expectation of completing training and a reasonable expectation of obtaining employment,
- m. ITAs are granted in high-growth employment sectors within the designated industry clusters as determined and documented in the Local Area Plan.

General:

1. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) are established on behalf of an eligible individual to finance training services (§680.230)4.).
2. WIOA Title I Adults and Dislocated Workers (DW) will select from the list of eligible training providers who best meet their needs in consultation with their case manager (§680.340)
3. Training shall be directly linked to occupations within industry clusters that are in demand in the local area or in another area if the customer is willing to relocate. The NWDB’s subcontracted service providers approve training services for occupations within industry clusters which have been determined to have a high potential for sustained demand or growth in the local area Sec. 134(c)(3)(F)(v).

(See Appendix 3 – CWMWDB Policies).

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

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

Contracts for services may be used instead of ITAs when:

- a. the services provided are on-the-job training (OJT) or customized training;
- b. the LWDB determines that there are an insufficient number of eligible training providers in the local area to accomplish the purpose of the ITA in designated/identified industry clusters;
- c. the LWDB determines that there is a training program of demonstrated effectiveness offered by a community-based or faith-based (CBO, FBO) or another private organization to service

special participant populations that face multiple barriers to employment. The LWDB will develop criteria to be used in determining demonstrated effectiveness, particularly as it applies to the special participant population to be served.

The criteria will normally include:

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

Coordination of ITAs with Other Grant Assistance

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

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

Partners coordinate through team meetings to align funding strategies and support each customer's individualized service plan. Core partner meetings are used to discuss shared challenges and identify opportunities to improve coordination and enhance the customer experience.

When working with new customers, partners assess eligibility across multiple programs and identify appropriate services based on individual needs. Coordination among partners includes early communication regarding potential referrals to ensure that programs are a good fit prior to enrollment. When a program is not immediately appropriate, partners identify indicators and timing considerations that would support future enrollment aligned with the customer's goals, readiness, and timeline.

A One Stop Partner goal for 2026 includes continuing to simplify and define our referral process to limit redundancy and create a seamless transition from service partners.

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

CWMWDB's procurement system is described in Appendix 4 – *Procurement Policy*. As stated at the beginning of this section, these policies and procedures are in accordance with Subpart D of 2 CFR 200.317 - 200.326.

Section 10: Performance Accountability

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

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

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

The Departments of Labor and Education collaborated to develop a Statistical Adjustment Model per Sec.116 (b)(3)(A)(viii) of WIOA. This model is used and applied to targets to account for changes in economic conditions and participant demographics throughout the workforce and education systems. The Statistical Adjustment Model specifies six performance indicators to be used for performance accountability purposes. As part of the process for setting targets for those performance indicators, the law specifies that it is a statistical adjustment model developed and used as part of the negotiation process. The service provider submits quarterly reports that compare the performance measure goals to the actual measures attained. This reporting provides guidance on additional action steps, staff training, and management focus to inform quality improvements.

Negotiated Performance Goals can be found in Section 9C.

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

See Section 9D.

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

Once the CWMWDB has reviewed and approved performance information and reports they will be posted on the CWMWDB website found at <https://cwmwdb.org/>.

Section 11: Local Board Assurances

A. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)

The Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board assures compliance with all applicable laws regarding discrimination:

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

B. Equal Employment Opportunity

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

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

C. Internal Program Management

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

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

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

D. Records Retention

The following records and documents must be maintained for WIOA participants and employees. The CWMWDB will make these records available for monitoring and review by the MDOL and agrees to retain these records, subject to audit, for three (3) years from completion of services. Release of responsibility to retain records after the

three (3) year period will not be authorized until final audit, resolution of audit questioned costs and all questioned costs are paid or accepted as allowable. In the event the CWMWDB goes out of business or ceases to be an organization prior to the expiration of records retention responsibility, the board will deliver all records required to be retained hereunder to the MDOL. The following records shall be transmitted to the MDOL for acceptance in an orderly fashion, with documents properly labeled and filed and in acceptable condition for storage:

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

E. Internal Financial Management

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

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

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

otherwise adequate records are maintained which support all expenditures of WIOA funds and confirm adherence to policies regarding the allowable costs and allocation of cost to proper cost categories. The CWMWDB shall document all internal financial compliance reviews.

F. Monitoring and Audit Procedures

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

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

G. Invoicing, Reporting, and Contractor Close-out

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

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

H. Submission of Most Recent Audit to the Administrative Entity

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

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

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

I. Requirements for Depository Accounts Holding WIOA Funds

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

J. Program Income Requirements

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

K. Property Management Requirements

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

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

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

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

K. Medical/Accident Insurance

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

L. General Assurances

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

5. The CWMWDB assures that all staff and participants/enrollees paid from the grant funds and employed in any service will be covered by workers compensation benefits in accordance with State Law; that enrollees in WIOA work-related training will be provided accident or medical insurance to cover any injury resulting from participation in the program; and that enrollees employed in subsidized jobs will be provided benefits and working conditions at the same level and to the same extent as other employees working a similar length of time and doing the same type of work.
6. The CWMWDB assures that no funds available under the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act will be used for contribution on behalf of any enrollee to retirement systems or plans; to impair existing conditions for services or collective bargaining agreements; to assist, promote, or deter union organization; and to displace any currently employed worker.
7. The CWMWDB assures that no enrollee will be employed or fill a job opening when any other individual is on layoff from the same or substantially equivalent job, or when the employer terminates the employment of any regular employee or otherwise reduces its work force with the intention of filling vacancies so created by hiring participants subsidized under the Act; and no funds may be used to create promotional lines that infringe upon any current promotional opportunities.
8. The CWMWDB assures compliance with all federal rules and DOL regulations of 29 CFR Part 93 which prohibits the use of WIOA funds to lobby the Executive or Legislative Branches of the Federal Government in connection with a specific contract, grant, or loan. If lobbying has occurred utilizing other than Federal appropriated funds, the service provider agrees to file a disclosure report if applicable.
9. The CWMWDB assures and certifies that it is in compliance with federal rules and regulations, Debarment and Suspension, 29 CFR Part 98 and is not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or involuntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by any Federal department or agency.
10. The CWMWDB assures and certifies that the CWMWDB has in place an established grievance procedure to be utilized for grievances or complaints about its program and activities from participants/enrollees, grantees, contractors, and other interested parties.
11. The CWMWDB will comply with the provisions of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970 (Public Law 91-646) which requires fair and equitable treatment of persons displaced as a result of Federal and federally assisted programs.

12. The CWMWDB will comply with the provisions of the Hatch Act, which limits the political activity of certain State and local government employees.
13. The CWMWDB will comply with NC-GS-234 which contains a provision that prohibits public officials and employees from having a personal interest in any contract to which he is also a party in an official capacity.
14. The CWMWDB assures and certifies that it will comply with restrictions regarding conducting business with businesses on the Environmental Protection Agency's List of Violating Facilities. Contracts and subcontracts in excess of \$100,000, or circumstances where the State of Maine has determined that orders under an 'indefinite quantity financial agreement' in any year will not exceed \$100,000, or if a facility to be used has been the subject of a conviction under the Clean Air Act [42 U.S.C. 1319 (c)] and is listed by the Environmental Protection Agency or is not otherwise exempt, the CWMWDB assures that: (1) no facility to be utilized in the performance of the proposed grant has been listed on the EPA List of Violating Facilities; and (2) the CWMWDB will notify MDOL and USDOL prior to award of the receipt of any communication from the Director of Federal Activities, U.S.E.P.A., indicating that a facility to be utilized for a contract is under consideration to be listed on the EPA List of Violating Facilities.
15. The CWMWDB assures and certifies that it will comply with applicable provisions of the following laws as they relate to employment and training procedures:
 - a. The Drug Free Workplace Act
 - b. The Immigration Reform and Control Act
 - c. The American's with Disabilities Act
 - d. The Davis-Bacon Act
 - e. Child Labor Laws
 - f. The Fair Labor Standards Act
 - g. The Equal Opportunity Act