

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON MAINE'S WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC FUTURE

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS TO MWEF THROUGH 2/25/13

Adult Education/ Incumbent Worker Training

- Support proposed increase of \$550,000 per year in each year of the biennial budget for Maine College Transitions program.
- Provide leadership to make sure that the Tri-Agency Initiative keeps moving forward (agencies – DOE HHS and DOL – working together to “develop an integrated, efficient and effective approach to help bridge the gap from dependency on public assistance to self-support through employment.)
- Help provide adequate resources for the training and re-training of incumbent workers
- Look at some of the state-run programs (not specified) that might be revised to create processes and channels for incumbent worker training
- Provide more associate degrees and certifications to our front-line workers
- Address stranded investment of the approximately 200,000 Maine residents who have some post-secondary education but have not earned a degree (UMS's ABCDE Steering Committee); study committee looking at; preliminary goal of 5,000 new students from this population engaged in completing degree by 2015—initial goal to get started while waiting for more info from study group (Next Step Maine, Maine Employer's Initiative, Maine Adult Education to help execute)
- Adequately support organizations that provide effective workforce training, including soft skills, that offer multiple pathways to post-secondary education and skills training, and that address barriers individuals across the span of life

Apprenticeship/Trade Skills/Internships

- Look at the model being used in apprenticeship program in the Greater Bangor area
- Restore funding in 2014-15 biennial budget to Maine Apprenticeship Program
- Provide additional revenues to Apprenticeship Program; would allow better outreach to employers and promotion of program as well as increase capacity to deliver programs
- Consider license holder and certification apprenticeships
- Recruit additional business partners to use apprenticeship program
- Get career centers and community colleges to promote apprenticeship as a career pathway
- Develop a more flexible delivery of skills from state colleges and business partners
- Consider tax credit to provide employers an incentive to participate in apprenticeship program (other states)
- Place greater emphasis on apprenticeship, trade schools, veterans, community colleges
- Expand model of in-house training by businesses and recognize skills acquired by employees that would be valuable to other businesses (Government-Private Sector-Education partnership – Maine Skills Academy?); stackable credentials; prior learning assessment

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- Establish a skill trade facility – one physical location where best practices in industry training can be leveraged and with capacity so it did not have to turn students away
- Create mobile outreach capacity: ability to move a training program where it needs to be
- Develop more job-sharing opportunities to accommodate aging workforce
- Establish a statewide internship program (e.g., use existing www.internhelpme.com platform and grow it through a dollar to dollar matched investment with State Chamber's members)
- Work with 27 existing career and technical high schools to expand their program offerings
- Allow adult workers to access higher education systems at any point so that they can get to where they need to be in terms of program completion that is aligned with future employment opportunities
- Support approval of the redirected funding source of Maine Apprenticeship Program

Collaboration/Communication

- Better collaboration is critical
- Communications gaps among departments/programs/initiatives must be eliminated
- Barriers to coordination and collaboration identified and removed; better coordination among existing service delivery systems
- Work on capacity, efficiency and management of workforce development system in Maine ("get below six inches deep"; create third party to take bird's eye level and identify the redundancies and inefficiencies; C. Larrabee to provide written rec)

Community Colleges

- Solve credit transfer issues
- Increase enrollment at Maine's community colleges. For every \$1 million invested, the colleges can serve an additional 250 students
- Expand the Bring College to ME program to deliver four new degree programs to rural Maine each year in high skill/high wage occupations at a cost of \$320,000 annual (\$80,000 per program), allowing 60-75 students to enroll each year
- Expand the Accelerate ME program to all seven of Maine's community colleges at an annual cost of \$1.1 million to cover tuition and staffing costs. This would result in an additional 350 to 400 students completing a degree each year.
- MCCS will recommend to its BOT that it commit 10% to 15% (approx. \$250K) of Maine Quality Center's biennial budget to a pilot program aimed at providing customized training for incumbent workers. Emphasis on providing businesses with <100 employees free training; business with >100 employees would pay half the cost of training. No new jobs, but improves the skills of Maine's existing workforce and helps promote job security and pay advancement for individual workers
- Remove training bottlenecks at SMCC and USM by dedicating resources to the educational needs of the current and emerging economy

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- Prioritize re-training/re-educating the 20-34-year-old age group that has the highest unemployment rate
- Provide individuals opportunities in the rural areas of this service area (Eastern Maine)
- Help find resources to expand community colleges' capacity in high-demand programs
- Obtain funding for new full-time faculty to expand programs and create new programs
- Find resources for new equipment for existing programs and or new programs
- Create innovative degree programs
- Leverage existing technology space to expand
- Promote advanced credit and non-credit continuing education opportunities for specially-designed businesses in the region
- Create more partnerships and think and act ahead of the new economy rather than being reactive
- Look at the capacity within the community colleges to do just-in-time training

K-12 Education

- Better allocate resources in K-12, including pre-K
- Include “entrepreneurial skills” or “self-employment skills training” as part of Maine Learning Results
- Have MDOE include or expand entrepreneurial skills training as part of the K-12 curriculum
- Increase flexibility of MDOE Fund for the Efficient Delivery of Educational Services grant program
- Expand MDOE “5th Year Bridge” grants
- Expand WorkReady program pilot in 3 Bangor area high schools to other area high schools
- Replicate Bridge-Year Program pilot project in Hermon
- Increase K-12 awareness of what careers are
- Common business skills: problem-solving, communication skills – those need to be taught in high school and post-secondary
- Standard diploma by 2018 (LD 1422) –opportunities to build in communications and problem-solving skills, entrepreneurship, innovation, etc.
- Create a funding mechanism for Career and Technical Education and those schools without the capacity to take more students; make these program affordable to students
- Work with JMG to expand their model and training to more schools across the state
- Work with industry to create a program for guidance counselors to keep them regularly informed of economic/employment opportunities
- Support increase in JMG biennial budget (\$2.3 million to \$2.9 million over biennium); allow JMG to increase number of students served from 4,500 to 5,250 annually

Question: Get more information about WorkReady? Differences between WR and JMG?

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Regional Economic Development and Workforce Training

- Support Many Flags' "Promise Neighborhood" work
- Support Mobilize Maine Initiative; developing on a regional level
- Encourage alliance between workforce and economic development groups
- Have comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS) for workforce
- Allow "phased-in" approaches for regional models
- Support regional efforts to maximize regional economic potential
- Expand and strengthen Governor's Account Executives program at DECD
- Look at Tri-County Workforce Investment Board's novel approach to workforce development and economic development
- Manage workforce training locally; keep current Tri-County Workforce Investment Board in place with current share of funding and local control
- Look at economic homesteading idea
- Invest in the Communities for Maine's Future Program, which makes investments to improve downtowns in communities across the State

Research/Data Reporting

- Assess employer needs and job performance requirements regularly (market research collaboration)
- Evaluate if education and training programs are responsive to the market (program evaluation)
- Monitor curriculum content to determine if learning objectives and skill requirements line up (curriculum reviews)
- Audit the performance of recent graduates on the job
- Require data gathering/reporting by gender from all workforce, education and training, business development and other economic development investments

Question: What specific data should be collected, who will collect and who will evaluate?

Scholarships/Grant Programs/Subsidy

- Focus resources on scholarships and support systems for students to retain them and reduce dropout rate, particularly in the scientific-computer fields
- Invest in all Maine students: Fully fund the Maine Student Grant Program
- Provide direct subsidy to students or institutions to help with post-secondary costs
- Look at education loan forgiveness by employer as a way to ensure workers are where they are needed
- Support the Competitive Skills Scholarship Fund and create a Re-employment Assurance Program; use unemployment benefit system to deliver job retraining and employment placement

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- Keep support system going for a year for welfare recipients so they can successfully transition back to workforce
- Aggressively promote the Opportunity Maine Program
- Expand re-fundability of Educational Opportunity Tax Credit beyond STEM degrees (based on original fiscal note that assumed all eligible for the EOTC would take full advantage of it, there would be little, if any, additional cost)
- Flexible work schedules, family and medical leave, support for child care: critical for all workers and families to make work pay

Soft Skills Training

- Fund WorkReady (for adults) in MDOE
- Expand WorkReady (for high school students) program in 3 area high schools (Bangor, Brewer, Hampden) to other area high schools once evaluation of the current pilot project is complete
- Develop the WorkReady program into one supported by all state agencies with a more secure funding base and a clear way to coordinate it with skill training that would make the program eligible for Workforce Investment Act funding. The 2014-15 state budget includes funding for the Coordinator position

Tribal Inclusion

- 8,000 tribal members in Maine; ensure that workforce efforts are meaningful, relevant and accessible to them as well

University of Maine System

- Public post-secondary institutions need to be fully supported
- Focus resources on scholarships and support systems for students to retain them and reduce dropout rate, particularly in the scientific-computer fields
- Make financial literacy and planning part of student orientation
- Look at how to generalize and expand Project Login; augment private investment with public support
- Remove training bottlenecks at SMCC and USM by dedicating resources to the educational needs of the current and emerging economy

General/Uncategorized

- Focus economic development policies around growing businesses, not just starting new ones
- Build upon what has been done, what has been working
- Seek real structural changes that maximize existing investments
- Don't give up on the liberal arts (common skills)
- Keep income tax reductions and federal tax conformity in place

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- Be aware of unintended consequences of eliminating BETR and BETE programs
- Ask private colleges to help address workforce training concerns
- Raise the minimum wage, expand the Earned Income Tax Credit or some combination of the two

Bonds

- Use state's bonding authority to invest in emerging and existing economic clusters (note R&D deficit compared to other states)
- Support the proposal by the Mayors' Coalition on Jobs and Economic Development for a bond package that will include investments in higher education with a focus on economically important skills such as machinists training, research and development, transportation and water/wastewater infrastructure
- Invest in R&D

Action: Track AFA schedule for bond proposals and weigh in as committee or individual members feel appropriate/necessary.

Early Childhood Education

- Shift some resources to early childhood education (0-5)
- Better allocate resources in K-12, including pre-K

Action: Letters to AFA, EDU, HHS re: testimony MWEF heard about importance of early childhood education initiatives.