

# **Department of Economic and Community Development**



**JANUARY 2021  
HEATHER JOHNSON, COMMISSIONER**

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# Mission of Department

The Department of Economic and Community Development is tasked with fostering economic growth and diversification in Maine.

Encourage *economic and community planning and development* throughout the state by coordinating programs and policies.

Encourage the *creation and retention of quality jobs* through increased private sector investment.

Through the *Business Ombudsman Program* resolve problems encountered by businesses dealing with other state agencies; facilitate responsiveness of State Government to small business needs; report on the breakdowns in the economic delivery system; provide comprehensive permit information and assistance; and serve as a central clearinghouse of information with respect to business assistance programs and services available in the State.

*Enhance the quality of life* for all by assisting local governments to plan and implement comprehensive community planning and development strategies through the Community Development Block Grant Program.

Administer programs that *support and expand the tourism industry* and promote Maine as a four-season tourist destination.

Promote Maine's economy and job creation through the *expansion into international markets* and increase exports and trade overseas.

Encourage, promote, stimulate and support *research and development activities* through innovation leading to the commercialization of new products and services.

# Department Contact Information

## Department of Economic and Community Development

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# Senior Staff



## **HEATHER JOHNSON, Commissioner**

Heather Johnson grew up in Skowhegan and graduated from the University of Maine. She began her career by building a diverse background in the private technology sector including sales, operations and general management roles at Nokia, Gateway and Toshiba. With continually expanding roles she created startup operations inside large companies, developed new products for new markets, and ran a \$1.2 billion retail business.

After leaving the private sector, Heather had the opportunity to concentrate on rural economic development at Somerset Economic Development Corporation. During her time as the Executive Director she focused on key economic drivers such as connectivity, workforce participation, and potential growth markets.

While serving as the Director of ConnectME Heather was responsible for managing a small grant program, mapping key assets, working with communities and businesses to help them identify needs and opportunities to utilize connectivity to enable their goals. Heather was able to make changes that positioned the ConnectME to move forward into the connectivity space.

As Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development Heather continues to dedicate her career to fostering economic development, both in private companies and in rural communities across Maine.



**DENISE GARLAND,**  
**Deputy Commissioner**

Denise Garland is the Deputy Commissioner of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), the state agency responsible for creating jobs and investment opportunities in Maine through business recruitment, retention and expansion, workforce attraction, and international trade and tourism.

Garland has been instrumental in advancing Maine's economic welfare as deputy commissioner for more than nine years and has worked in Maine State Government for 30 years, holding several senior-level positions.

Prior to joining DECD, Garland served as the Associate Commissioner in the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, providing overall administration and management for more than 12,000 state employees and 7.4 billion dollars in funds. In daily communication with senior agency officials, she worked to resolve conflicts, disseminate information and address individual requests pertaining to department budgets and finances.

Garland spent the first 16 years of her career in the Secretary of State's Office. As the Director of the Elections Division, Denise was responsible for ballot creation, budgeting and administering the Election Laws for more than 500 municipalities.

Her knowledge of the State of Maine through the many community and statewide initiatives and programs has assisted Garland in guiding and promoting business development and job creation. Throughout her career, she has excelled in improving systems and increasing efficiency as well as providing a high-level of customer service.

Garland and her husband live in Farmingdale and have two grown children.



**KATE FOYE,**  
**Legislative Affairs and Communications**

Kate Foye handles Legislative Affairs and Communications for the Department of Economic and Community Development. Prior to joining the Administration in January of 2019, she worked on a number of political campaigns which includes serving as Senator Angus King's Field Director for his reelection campaign in 2018. Kate also worked at Maine Development Foundation where she worked with legislators on civility training, leadership development, and coordinated statewide bus tours for legislators to provide them with opportunities to see areas of Maine outside of their districts. Her background also includes extensive work in fundraising, event planning and meeting facilitation. Kate is originally from Maine and after boomeranging back after college, lives in Brunswick with her three boys.



**MARTHA BENTLEY,**  
**Director of Economic Development Coordination**

Martha joined the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development in July 2019 as Small Business and Entrepreneurial Development Manager, working directly with small and early stage business owners. In July 2020, she was appointed to the role of Director of Economic Development Coordination and leads the implementation of the 10-year Economic Development Strategy focused on talent and innovation.

Prior to coming to DECD, she served as Director of Innovation Infrastructure with Maine Technology Institute and has worked to build Maine's entrepreneurial ecosystem in all areas of the State. In this role, she managed multiple R&D bond programs between 2002-2019 totaling over \$175 million, as well as overseeing the development of the Maine Innovation Economy Action Plan, and managing the Maine Accelerates Growth network.

Martha has a MA from the University of South Carolina and is a previous small business owner as co-owner of the Big White Barn, an integrated health care center, in Readfield Maine. She is a member of the Startup Champions Network and on the Board of Maine Network Partners. She lives in West Gardiner with her husband and two cats. During the pandemic she has learned to moonwalk and pickle peppers.

# Department Overview

The Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD) has a total of 33 positions. Thirty are located on the 3rd floor of the State Office Building, two are located with the Maine International Trade Center in Portland and one is located with the Maine Technology Institute in Brunswick. DECD is responsible for administering Maine's programs related to business growth, community development, tourism, and film promotion. Detailed in Maine Revised Statute Title 5, Chapter 383, these programs fall within six divisions:

- Office of the Commissioner
- ConnectMaine Authority
- Office of Business Development and Innovation
- Office of Tourism and Film
- Office of Outdoor Recreation
- Office of Community Development

In most cases, these divisions' programs require a significant amount of interaction with other organizations in the public and private sectors. The presidents of the following organizations are employees of the department and as such report to the Commissioner:

- Maine International Trade Center (Title 10, Chapter 107-B)
- Maine Technology Institute (Title 5, Chapter 407)

The department also administers grants and contracts for several pass-through funding accounts:

- Technology Centers (Title 5, §15321)
- Maine Small Business and Entrepreneurial Commission (Title 5, Chapter 381)
- Economic Growth Council (Title 10, §929-A et seq.)
- Renewable Energy Resources Fund (Title 35-A, §15321)
- Maine International Trade Center (Title 10, Chapter 107-B)
- Maine Technology Institute (Title 5, Chapter 407)



# COVID-19 Response

As the COVID-19 Pandemic began to impact Maine, The Department of Economic and Community Developments' priorities remained the same, but the actions changed dramatically. DECD remained focused on supporting business, however, that support took different actions. Businesses and organizations needed assistance navigating pandemic management, protocols and they needed help finding appropriate funding support.

As part of the state response the Department collaborated with each sector to understand their processes, where there were concerns and high contact periods, as well as potential solutions. The Department then worked with the team of public health experts to identify protocols that would allow for as much business capacity as possible while also creating public health protections for employees and customers. There were many adjustments in that work as the science and practical experience evolved.

Additionally, the Department was able to develop and internally execute a number of grant programs to award \$235 million to Maine's small businesses and nonprofits. By managing the programs internally and in partnership with the Economic Development Districts, DECD saved the high cost of outsourcing grant programming and instead were able to award those funds directly to the businesses that need it.

The DECD team is also working with partners with an eye to recovery. Going into the pandemic Oxford University predicted Maine would have

the most devastating economic impact due to our high dependence on the service industries and our older population. The pandemic has not impacted all sectors equally, and as predicted, our service sector businesses are down significantly, as they are across the country. The economic impact has been significant, however in the fall of 2020, CNN Business and Moody's Analytics ranked Maine first in the nation for economic recovery. In Maine we are seeing some areas of growth. As an example, the building supply sector has grown about 18% year over year. Additionally, we are seeing real estate sales increase as well as an in-migration to some of Maine's rural communities that needed an influx of residents.

While we continue to address our short-term economic challenges caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic, we must not lose focus on the long-term economic development plan. Economic recovery is a long term look at how we execute on the strategic plan. Recovering to our prior position of 48th in the country is not the goal and leaders of all sectors; nonprofits, business, education, state and local government must work together to address these challenges. As part of this recovery work, as outlined by the Governor's Economic Recovery Committee we can focus our recovery efforts on options that support existing businesses and can foster future growth.

We look forward to working with the 130th legislature in reaching these goals for all people of Maine.

# 10 Year Strategic Plan

In February of 2019 Governor Mills directed Commissioner Heather Johnson to oversee the development of a 10 year Statewide Strategic Plan. In December 2019, under the leadership of Commissioner Heather Johnson and FAME President Bruce Wagner, the plan was delivered to the Governor, LEgislature and to the people of the State of Maine. The plan is a culmination of months of work by industry and sector experts, feedback from thousands of Mainers, and input from our University and Community Systems. This report is a dynamic and nonpartisan roadmap designed to foster collaboration among the public, private, nonprofit, and education sectors for the purpose of creating a diverse and sustainable economy.

While much of the work around the Strategic Plan implementation has been delayed due to many within State government being fully focused on the COVID pandemic, DECD has been working on creating the scaffolding and frameworks for plan implementation including:

- Serving on core staff team with Governor’s Office of Policy, Innovation and the Future to connect work with Economic Recovery Committee recommendations
- Regular meetings with key State agencies around workforce and talent specific recommendations, including lead on grant applications around continuum of training and education opportunities within aquaculture industry
- Working with Children’s Cabinet paid internships for students structures

- Serving on Executive Committee of DOE Cross Departmental Data Governance project
- Securing VISTA volunteer and intern support for fundraising, grant writing, and connecting to ERC recommendations

While the economic challenges that the State of Maine faces are different when the COVID-19 pandemic took hold of our economy, the Strategic Plan goals remain the same. Maine remains at an economic crossroads; however, Maine is poised to recover from the economic downturn of the pandemic. While the path to recovery may still be unclear, the commitment and energy remain the same and we will carry that forward.

In 2021, DECD will lead the work to harmonize the ERC recommendations, which bridge well to the 10-Year Plan. DECD is grateful for the work of the ERC, as the recommendations serve a variety of purposes when used as a tool for implementation of the 10-year plan—as a mechanism for prioritizing the Strategies and actions identified in the Plan; as specific implementation recommendations around existing Plan Strategies, and as important recommendations on the “who” of the plan. We will use all of these to recalibrate the work of the Plan implementation and to set priorities within State Government and to help assess where we need to lean more heavily on the private sector.

[Maine Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029](#)

# Small and Early-Stage Business-Related Activities

Maine DECD supports businesses of all sizes and maturity levels statewide, recognizing both the outsized importance of small businesses to the Maine economy and the need for constant churn and regrowth within the economy.<sup>1</sup>

Using the SBA definition of small business as firms with fewer than 500 employees, Maine's 149,355 small businesses represent 99.2% of all Maine businesses and the 293,872 small business employees represent 57.2% of Maine employees.

Also notable for their importance to Maine's economic well-being, firms with fewer than 20 employees have the largest share of small business employment and the number of proprietors is steadily increasing. In 2019, small businesses created 5,924 net jobs with firms employing fewer than 20 employees experiencing the largest gains, adding 4,843 net jobs. The small gains were in firms employing 100-499 employees, which added 239 net jobs.

DECD's strategy of supports also recognizes that a small business and an early stage business are not synonymous. Supporting entrepreneurs, or early stage business owners, is a critical role for the agency, as startups and exits are a natural part of the life cycle of businesses and helping early stage businesses navigate Maine's entrepreneurial ecosystem is important to a healthy life cycle.

In the most recently available data (Q4'18), 1,241 establishments started in Maine, generating 3,659 new jobs (Startups are counted when business establishments hire at least one employee for the first time). In this same period, 913 establishments exited (go from having at least one employee to none and remain closed for at least one year) with 2,182 jobs lost.

The importance of this business support system and the ability for Maine's entrepreneurs to navigate it successfully plays out in the impact on median income. The median income for self-employed individuals at their own incorporated business was \$48,645, above the overall median income for Maine. The median income for self-employed individuals at their own unincorporated firms was \$25,523, well below the overall median income.

DECD's supports cross over offices within the agency, with supports for early stage and small businesses found throughout. For example, MTI supports early stage businesses in technology sectors, and MITC supports small businesses with export-related services. Maine Made supports small businesses that make consumer products reach new markets.

In addition to these cross-agency supports, DECD also plays a critical role in direct supports specific to our small and early stage businesses:

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<sup>1</sup> US SBA Office of Advocacy, 2020 Small Business Profile, note that data is most up-to-date government data but that some data lags and is pre or early stages of pandemic. All data provided is from this source

Management and oversight of the Maine Small Business and Entrepreneurship Commission, and through this, annual support for the Maine SBDC. DECD provides the required matching funds to enable the Maine SBDC to receive its Federal allocation as Small Business Administration host partner. The Commission reviews the SBDC's annual work plan to ensure that it meets the Maine statutory requirements.

Business Answers and Resource Navigation support—Business Answers is a statutorily-defined program that provides information and resources for new businesses about State-required licensing and permitting. The service provides a searchable data base of permitting information as well as email and phone support. In 2020, we have upgraded the service to include a live, searchable and regularly updated data base of over 400 resources available via the Maine Resource Compass. Maine Resource Compass is powered by the Startup Space platform, available in desktop or app versions. We have also made the Business Answers page translatable into multiple languages. Since February 2020, 4,535 distinct users have accessed the online Business Answers option to search for licensing and permitting information.

The partnership with Startup Space is also a critical resource for the overall entrepreneurial ecosystem as the platform is multi-functional, serving as a shared event calendar (that can be sorted by event location), mentoring platform, and educational cohort management system. Startup Space provides the option of “sub-hubs”—communities embedded within the overall Statewide platform. Sub-hubs are currently being used in Washington County and by the Maine Accelerates Growth network to support work with individual entrepreneurs. We are also using the platform to manage the mentoring program of the newly-launched Indus Fund – a microenterprise loan program for new immigrant entrepreneurs in partnership with the Fund's investors and Cport Credit Union.

Finally, the information within the Startup Space platform can be embedding into partner website, thus broadening the outreach and navigation opportunities. It is currently embedded in DECD's Business Answers webpage, the Office of Business Development's Domestic Trade page, and outreach pages for Live and Work in Maine, Startup Maine, and the Portland Public Library.

Small business ombudsman—DECD also provides the small business ombudsman role to help small businesses navigate the State's various systems. The small business ombudsman helps businesses navigate State agencies and resources, like connecting food businesses with the Farms for Maine's future programs, or aquaculturists with DMR's licensing team. The ombudsman also maintains, and reports concerns and difficulties from small businesses regarding interactions with State government and works on systemic improvements.

Finally, DECD staff serve as thought leaders within the entrepreneurial ecosystem and connect, communicate and support multiple communities and small business/startup networks around the State including: Greenlight Maine (Advisory Committee and judge), Buoy Maine (Advisory Committee and judge), Downeast Innovation Network (including grant reviewer), Tastemakers program, CEI (grant reviewer), Main Street Fellows (Program Committee), Maine Accelerates Growth, SBA Service Provider Network, Bangor Region Roundtable, Women investor network support (W4W Investor Training committee). This is a critical communication and coordination role, and participants in these networks report that regular DECD communication and feedback opportunities are a real value-add for their meetings. In this area, the intersection of Economic Development Coordination via the Commissioners Office and small business/entrepreneurial supports and ombudsman work, has been particularly effective.

# Office of the Commissioner

The Commissioner's Office is tasked with economic growth and diversification in Maine. By focusing on talent development and investment attraction Maine can build on opportunities that changes in the global economy present. Innovation in key sectors like forest products, fisheries and tourism as well as foundational elements including low cost renewable energy and connectivity are critical to long term, sustainable growth.

With innovations that are already underway, we can diversify our heritage industries. We can grow protein in new ways to diversify fishing and farming. We can use wood and wood residuals for new fuels, plastics, and building materials. We can advance health with our biosciences and technologies. The possibilities are limitless. Our growth potential lies at the intersection of global trends and Maine's assets.

The Commissioner's Office, funded by the Administration Account, also provides oversight of the day to day operations for the entire department, including personnel, financial and contractual obligations; coordinates the legislative and media activities; develops and maintains the department-wide budget; and represents the administration on various boards, commissions and task forces. Through appointments to various boards, commissions and task forces, the Commissioner's Office can keep abreast of emerging issues relating to economic and community development in Maine as well as direct the coordinated efforts of all economic policies and programs.

The Commissioner's Office seeks to coordinate the programs and services of the department with those programs and services of other state agencies and regional planning and economic development organizations to create efficiencies and promote a collaborative approach to development for existing and potential businesses. Through appointments to various boards, commissions and task forces, the Commissioner's Office can keep abreast of emerging issues relating to economic and community development in Maine as well as direct the coordinated efforts of all economic policies and programs.

The Commissioner's Office works closely with several agencies, organizations and entities to assist in accomplishing its goals and responsibilities:

- Maine State Department of Labor
- Maine State Department of Environmental Protection
- Maine State Department of Marine Resources
- Maine State Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
- Maine State Department of Administrative and Financial Services
- Maine State Department of Financial and Professional Regulations
- Maine State Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife



- Maine Small Business Development Centers
- Finance Authority of Maine
- Maine Manufacturing Extension Partners
- Maine Forest Products Council
- Maine Development Foundation
- Maine & Company
- Live and Work in Maine

The Office of the Commissioner provides a central location for the business community to seek assistance with the creation and retention of quality jobs and to provide a resource for the coordination and facilitation of resources statewide.

In the department, the Commissioner's Office provides direction and coordination of new assignments and legislative changes and has been responsible for several key efforts:

- Business Attraction RFP: DECD has worked with Maine & Company to provide business attraction and expansion services to businesses seeking to move to Maine.
- Workforce Attraction RFP: Working with the Department of Labor and Office of Tourism, DECD awarded a five-year contract to "Live and Work in Maine", in December 2016, to provide workforce attraction marketing on behalf of Maine and Maine's businesses in desperate need for an expanded workforce.
- OEA Diversification Grant: In 2016, \$1.9m was awarded to DECD in a three-year contract to identify Maine's federal defense contract dependent businesses. Through federally approved contracts DECD will ultimately present a strategic plan to help Maine businesses minimize the impact should defense cuts occur and maximize Maine's defense sector supply chain.

## **BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

The Office of the Commissioner is responsible for policy development, including legislative activities and participation on numerous boards and commissions which include:

- Finance Authority of Maine, Board of Directors
- Maine Technology Institute, Board of Directors
- Maine International Trade Center, Board of Directors
- Maine Jobs Council's Standing Committee on Apprenticeship
- Statewide Workforce Investment Board
- Maine Port Authority
- Maine Rural Development Authority, Board of Trustees
- Maine & Company
- ConnectME Advisory Board
- Maine Small Business and Entrepreneurship Commission
- Maine Economic Growth Council
- Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority
- Maine Venture Fund Board
- Maine Innovation Advisory Board
- Advisory Committee on Fair Competition with Private Enterprise
- Maine Development Foundation
- Loring Development Authority
- Mid-Coast Regional Redevelopment Authority
- Maine Lobster Marketing Collaborative
- Child Care Advisory Council

Through annual contracts, the Commissioner's Office provides pass-through funding to the following entities:

### **Maine Economic Growth Council (MEGC)**

The MEGC, established pursuant to MRSA 10 §929-A and §929-B, exists to provide the annual "Measures of Growth" report. The council develops economic indicators, analyzes the performance of indicators against established benchmarks, and reports findings and recommendations. Funding is provided to the Maine Development Foundation for support and administrative services for the MEGC who report to the IDEA Committee at the beginning of each new Legislature with a recommended plan. The budget appropriation is \$55,395 annually.

### **Maine Small Business & Entrepreneurial Commission**

The Maine Small Business & Entrepreneurial Commission approves and administers the annual contract for the Maine Small Business Developments Centers (SBDC) program established pursuant to the Small Business Development Act of 1980. The Office of Business Development works closely with SBDC, often referring business owners looking for assistance with business planning and financing to a network of professional, certified business counselors at centers and outreach offices around the state. Pursuant to MRSA 5 §13034, SBDC shall provide an annual

report to the IDEA Committee. The appropriation is \$683,444 annually.

### **Renewable Energy Resources Fund**

Established in 2008, the Maine Legislature authorized the establishment of the Renewable Energy Resources Fund in the Public Utilities Commission with the Maine Technology Institute named as a recipient of an annual distribution of 35% of the funds to support the development and commercialization of renewable energy technologies. An amount is transferred from Public Utilities Commission to DECD annually and provided to Maine Technology Institute in the form of a grant. The actual transfer as of July 1, 2020, was \$21,388.89.

### **Applied Technology Development Centers**

There are three remaining technology centers in the State (Maine Center for Entrepreneurial Development, MCED; Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center, MAIC; Target Technology Incubator) whose purposes are to support early-stage development of technology-based businesses. They are self-managed, state-coordinated centers who are an integral component of the State's efforts to foster new technology-based businesses. The funding in this account is allocated on a competitive basis pursuant to statute MRSA 5 §15321. Since FY13/14, the three technology centers have joined forces to form one entity. The appropriation is \$178,838 annually.

# ConnectMaine Authority



**PEGGY SCHAFFER,**  
**Director of ConnectMaine Authority**

Peggy is the Executive Director of the ConnectMaine Authority, Maine’s program to expand broadband to unserved areas of the state. Prior to joining ConnectMaine, Peggy was the Small Business Advocate in the Secretary of State’s office, and served as the Co-chair for the Maine Broadband Coalition, a statewide advocacy organization that is focused on expanding high speed broadband. Peggy served as the Chief of Staff in the Senate Majority Office and the Senate President’s office under Senate President Libby Mitchell. Peggy also worked as the lobbyist for the Department of Economic and Community Development where she helped develop and implemented many of the State’s key economic initiatives under both the King and Baldacci administrations and was part of the team of people that created Maine’s Research and Development infrastructure. Peggy lives in Vassalboro.



## OVERVIEW

In 2006, the Legislature created the ConnectMaine Authority to develop and carry out its broadband strategy.

The ConnectMaine Authority is a public instrumentality of Maine state government whose mission is to facilitate the universal availability of broadband to all Maine households and businesses and help them understand the valuable role it can play in enriching their lives and helping their communities thrive.

Duties of the Authority include:

- Establish criteria defining unserved and underserved areas
- Promote use of broadband service
- Support broadband investment
- Facilitate state support of deployment of broadband infrastructure
- Collect and disseminate information
- Administer funds

The Authority consists of the following seven voting members:

- The Chair of the Public Utilities Commission or the Chair's designee
- The Chief Information Officer of the State or the officer's designee
- One representative of consumers—appointed by the Governor
- Two members with significant knowledge of communications technology, appointed by the Governor
- The Commissioner of Economic and Community Development or the commissioner's designee
- One member with significant knowledge of telehealth, appointed by the Governor

The Authority has a Director and an Assistant Director who are employees of the Office of Broadband within DECD.

The Maine Legislature has adopted the following goals related to broadband:

- Broadband service be universally available in this State, including to all residential and business locations and community anchor institutions
- There be secure, reliable, competitive and sustainable forward-looking infrastructure that can meet future broadband needs
- All residents, businesses and institutions in the State be able to take full advantage of the economic opportunities available through broadband service

ConnectMaine is funded by two separate assessments on essentially land lines. The first is .25% on the revenues of those people. The second, which was added in January of 2020, is 10 cents per landline number. The two revenue streams combined is roughly \$1,700,000 a year. Over the past 13 years, ConnectMaine has provided \$12.33M in grants to fund projects costing \$24.37M.

This past spring the legislature passed a bond proposal to expand broadband for \$15M, that was approved by over 75% of the voters in July.

### Why Broadband?

Broadband is a necessary asset to attract and retain businesses and residents in Maine. Most rural communities do not have access to viable high-speed connectivity. This limits Maine's ability to develop a strong workforce, incubate innovation, create an environment to attract new residents and businesses, and support seniors and others to stay in their homes. Broadband access can also improve delivery and reduce costs of services including health care and education. As Maine works to address significant economic challenges, universal access to high-speed broadband will play a foundational role in building digital skills, attracting workforce and reducing inequality in our educational system.

## **ConnectMaine’s Action Plan to Guide Investment**

The private sector broadband investment model doesn’t work in rural Maine. The low population density and limited scale make it unprofitable for the private sector to expand their networks with private investment only. This persistent market failure is the driving force behind state, local and federal investments in high-speed internet connectivity for rural areas.

### **Uploads Matter**

The Action Plan recognizes the importance of a focus on higher upload speed as the critical factor for economic development. Think of it this way: download is how the world talks to Maine; upload is how Maine talks to the world.

For high-speed broadband to have the potential to transform workforce development, education, health care, and communities. It is critical for upload speed to be adequate to meet the demands of Maine’s economy. “Adequate” means an up speed of at least 25mbps. We recognize that adequate upload speeds will drive technology that is scalable for the future. That ability to scale to meet future increased capacity demands is at the core of our state investment strategy.

### **Community Plans Drive Economic Solutions**

While Maine communities have similar economic and community challenges, every community in Maine will have a different solution to those challenges. When you have seen one rural Maine community, you have seen one rural Maine community. For that reason, ConnectMaine’s plan to build out high speed affordable, reliable internet is based on a community planning model.

Communities, whether a single town, a group of towns, a county or some other compilation, must be firmly in the driver’s seat in determining their own broadband destiny. These community plans will rely on public/private partnerships to optimize the private and public-sector investment while driving the high-speed internet expansion needed to grow the Maine economy.

## **State Funding Is a Critical Part of the Strategy**

This Statewide Broadband Action Plan proposes that the state will contribute 25% of the total cost of the expansion needed for rural Maine. The remaining costs will come from the private sector, federal government and the local communities. To complete this program by 2025, we are recommending an investment of \$30 million dollars in FY20/21 and \$42.5 million in each of the next four years to be committed by the State of Maine.

That would make the total State’s investment \$200 million over the next five years to reach the goal set forth in the State of Maine Strategic Plan.

This total amount is less than half of what MDOT spends on the State highway and bridge system annually. Bringing high speed connectivity to rural Maine is relatively cheap, given the economic payback, estimated to be at least a 4:1 return. It is also the critical infrastructure needed for Maine communities to attract new residents, increase workforce and education, and address climate change issues.

ConnectMaine understands that an average investment of \$40 million over the next 5 years is a significant lift, even though the need and projects are there right now to successfully use this level of funding to bring connectivity to rural Maine. The planning process in Oxford and Franklin Counties alone have identified a need for \$140 million to bring a Fiber-to-the-Premise (FTTP) solution to residents.

### **Two Tracks for Funding**

#### **COMMUNITY DRIVEN PLANS— NEAR UNIVERSAL SERVICE**

ConnectMaine is recommending a two-track grant/loan process. The first track depends on public/private partnerships that will fund already identified projects in communities. These communities have been engaged in community planning and actively engaged providers, residents, businesses, education and health care to create a specific strategy for near universal service. These will be substantial projects that seek to bring affordable, reliable, scalable high-speed connectivity to 90-95% of the community’s

geographic footprint. Currently, well over 50 communities in Maine have gone through this process and are awaiting enough funding to implement their plan.

#### **DARK GAPS IN CURRENT SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE**

The second track is for providers who are seeking to fill in “dark” gaps in communities that are currently unserved. These projects are by their nature smaller and require less community engagement. Both tracks will require match from providers and community support to demonstrate need.

#### **Public Outreach for Process**

When ConnectMaine moved their meetings from Friday afternoon to Wednesday Morning, and then moved it to virtual, the attendance at meetings has gone from the same eight people, mostly from the industry, to over 50. We now gather thoughts from people from all across Maine, and from a wide variety of perspectives. This is a challenge to manage, but a good challenge to have.

The demand and need for better internet service has skyrocketed in the past nine months. ConnectMaine has responded to that challenge by relooking at its grant processes, applications and scoring. The core tension remains that there is over \$600M of need for better broadband service, and currently only \$15M to meet that need. That is also a challenge to manage, but not a good challenge.

ConnectMaine has undertaken a community outreach and engagement process this fall to redefine the objectives, application process and scoring for infrastructure grants. This process has included well over 100 people in a series of meetings and online surveys to help clarify and refine the infrastructure grant process based on the significant changes that have taken place in Maine as a result of the pandemic.

The bond funding for infrastructure grants will be awarded in two phases, one in early winter and one in late spring. This serves two purposes: fund “pole ready” projects now and provide time for projects

that need match and further development to apply in a later round. It also allows the board to undertake any adjustments in the rule needed to address the challenges and opportunities brought forward in the public outreach process.

#### **Challenges to Capacity**

Up until 2018, ConnectMaine had three staff. One position was eliminated because of the declining revenue from the assessment that fund ConnectMaine. This was warranted for a program that had managed \$750,000 a year in grants.

But times have changed. Between October 2020 and June 2021, ConnectMaine will have undertaken over \$22,000,000 in grants. That is \$10,000,000 more that ConnectMaine has undertaken in the past 13 years combined.

In order to undertake that level of activity, ConnectMaine needs to beef up its infrastructure and staffing. This includes better mapping, more community outreach, and building in accountability all the way through the grant process, from application to final build and additional staff to support all the aspects of the program.

#### **ConnecttheKidsNow!**

In October, Governor Mills allocated \$12M from the CARES fund to ConnectMaine to connect students to broadband. There was a very tight time line, as all projects had to be finished by 12/30/2020. ConnectMaine solicited proposals and awarded just over \$6M in grants. These funds will connect over 750 students state wide.

ConnectMaine has already begun to undertake some of this effort with its ConnecttheKidsNow project that used volunteer efforts from both VetroFiber and Tilson Technologies to identify areas of service and to verify grant requests from ISPs. ConnectMaine is also working with the Maine Broadband Coalition, Island Institute, and the Maine West project to bring a crowdsourced speed test to Maine to augment our understanding of the quality of broadband service across Maine.



These efforts need to be expanded and built in to ConnectMaine's systems moving forward to assure broadband expansion projects are targeted appropriately, and that there is accountability for taxpayer dollars moving forward. This type of mapping and support infrastructure is likely to be no more than 3% of the total grant funds (\$400,000 - \$700,000.) These funds must come from ConnectMaine's annual budget as it is not a capital expense. That is about ½ of the total ConnectMaine budget, and does not leave much room for other efforts, including community planning support.

### **Meeting the Challenges of Digital Inclusion**

Running a wire by someone's house is just the first step of making sure Maine can take advantage of the vast opportunities a high-quality broadband connection can bring. Maine is fortunate to have the National Digital Equity Center doing some of this work through an EDA grant.

NDEC works with Adult Education, DOL and several private nonprofits to provide tablets often with a MiFi connection, and then education to help people get connected and then understand how to use the device. Their classes run the gamut from basics of getting online, how to be safe on the internet, to how to use word, excel, and other commonly used applications.

Digital inclusion work needs to continue to be included in all efforts that have an expectation that people will be able to use the internet, that they have a device, and that they can connect. That includes workforce and unemployment activities, health care, education at all levels and business support. ConnectMaine is committed to continue to work with NDEC and other state agencies to expand this integration of efforts.

The biggest challenge in digital inclusion statewide is the ability to afford a connection. Several large internet service providers have programs that assist low-income individuals that meet certain qualifications to apply. There is also a federal program (lifeline) that people who meet certain eligibility criteria can receive \$10 a month towards a cell phone of a very limited amount of data. These programs, while a good start, do not begin to address the need.

This winter, DECD worked with DHHS to provide free internet service to families that are eligible for SNAP from January to June 2021. This program is part of the ConnecttheKids program the administration put in place to provide internet connections to students through CARES money and to provide connections to students who have service but cannot afford it. As DECD was preparing to implement the program the Federal COVID relief package passed and included funding for an expanded broadband affordability program through the FCC. As a result, DECD and DHHS did not move forward with the state program at this time.

The efforts to address affordability AND connectivity are critical, but just a first step in addressing the economic, educational and health care inequities that occur when Maine citizens do not have the ability to access opportunities with an affordable, high quality broadband connection..



# Office of Business Development



**CHARLOTTE MACE,  
Director of Office of Business Development**

Charlotte Mace is Director of the Office of Business Development. She has an undergraduate degree in Biochemistry from Bowdoin College, a Master's in Business Administration from the University of Southern Maine, and over 20 years of experience in the private and non-profit sectors in consulting, business, and sustainable economic development. Prior to joining DECD, Charlotte was Executive Director of Biobased Maine, a manufacturing trade association working to advance Maine's bioeconomy. Prior to that, Charlotte worked as an environmental and sustainability consultant for the private sector, which included Woodard & Curran where she worked for 10 years as a Project Manager. Charlotte lives in Windham where she locally serves her community on the Windham Economic Development Corporation.

## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Office of Business Development is responsible for investment attraction, business assistance for both new and existing businesses, business retention and expansion, entrepreneurship and innovation, tax incentive programs, and Maine's emerging domestic trade program. The Office also manages Business Answers, which assists businesses with business licensing and other questions.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of Business Development's Business Answers service responded to thousands of telephone calls and email questions from businesses and the general public on the Governor's Executive Orders, the COVID-19 prevention checklists, and other questions related to the pandemic.

The Office of Business Development also helps to coordinate, yet not actively participate in, enforcement of COVID-19 prevention requirements across State agencies. OBD's role is to ensure that businesses have access to the right information to assist them with compliance and to ensure that business owners receive consistent and transparent communications from enforcing agencies.

In July 2020, the Office of Business Development implemented the Maine Economic Recovery Grant program, including providing customer service to applicants.

Each of OBD's focus areas is described in further detail below:

### Investment Attraction

Match businesses and potential investors outside of Maine with Maine's natural resources, industrial assets, and sites available for development

- Respond to investment attraction leads that come in to DECD
- Work to attract investment in all of Maine's industry sectors

- Participate in industry-specific efforts for investment attraction (e.g., FOR/Maine, SEAMaine)
- Maintain knowledge of industry trends and evaluate their fit with Maine
- Participate in national conferences and advertising, if possible, within budgetary constraints

### Business Retention & Expansion

Help Maine businesses stay in Maine and grow in Maine through improving Maine's business climate and helping businesses access State resources

- Serve as "ombudsmen" to help remove barriers to business growth created by State government
- Serve businesses through e-mail, telephone conversations, site visits, and providing comprehensive and well-researched summaries of available resources, including financial, workforce, R&D, market access/domestic trade, and other resources
- Maintain an up-to-date understanding of Maine's diverse industries, including an awareness of industry "pressure points" that may hinder sector growth
- Manage the Governor's Awards for Business Excellence (cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19)

### Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Continue to improve Maine's business climate for start-up businesses and innovators.

- Continue to nurture ecosystem for Startups and Entrepreneurs, including staffing the Small Business Commission
- Support an improving business climate for new under-represented business owners
- Lead the implementation efforts for Strategy C of the Maine Economic Development Strategy (Promote Innovation)

- Work with other partners, such as the Maine Technology Institute, Maine Venture Fund, and the Maine Innovation Economy Advisory Board, to support start-up companies and pursue additional resources for start-ups
- Implement Maine’s Coworking Development Fund and Program

### **Tax Incentive Programs**

Implement and market Maine’s tax incentive programs

- Tax credit programs include Pine Tree Development Zone program, Employment Tax Increment Financing Program, Major Business Headquarters Expansion Program, Major Food Processing Manufacturing Expansion Program, Shipbuilding Facility Investment Tax Credit Program, and other tax incentive programs.
- Explore new incentive programs that may fit with Maine’s 10-Year Economic Development Strategy, as well as COVID-19-related economic recovery needs.

### **Domestic Trade**

Help Maine businesses identify and pursue markets within the United States

- OBD is in the process of developing a suite of domestic trade resources for Maine businesses to better enable them to identify and pursue customers and markets within Maine and within the United States. So far, OBD has engaged a consultant to perform a Domestic Trade Baseline Study (almost complete), launched a business survey to get a better understanding of Maine business’s domestic trade needs, and launched a new domestic trade program website to offer businesses resources for domestic trade <https://www.maine.gov/dec/d/domestic-trade>. This effort is being done in consultation with key partners, such as the Maine International Trade Center and Focus Maine.

### **Maine Coworking Development Fund**

The Maine Coworking Development Fund was established in 2015 in “An Act to Attract Entrepreneurs to the State.” The act established broad authorities for DECD’s establishment and management of the Fund but proscribed specifics around grants and loans that could be made from the Fund including the guidelines, criteria, award amounts, and co-investment (matching) required. The statute also outlines specific duties for any collaborative workspace receiving a contract. The legislation provided an initial \$200,000 in General Fund monies to capitalize the Fund, with the limitation of awards to any one collaborative space to be \$25,000. DECD issued two rounds of RFPs for investment from the Coworking Development Fund in 2016 and 2017, awarding contracts totaling \$100,000 in each round.

The Fund lay dormant in the years following its establishment and first General Fund appropriation, but Governor Mills recognized the critical role of coworking to entrepreneurship and the future of work in Maine by including the recapitalization and small improvements to the Fund in her first-year legislative agenda.

The updates in statutory language in the 2019 legislation changed the award process from an RFP (procurement process) to a competitive grant process, while maintaining the same guidance on guidelines (criteria) and duties of the recipients as in the 2015 legislation that governed the first two rounds of awards, the same amount of General Fund dollars appropriated, and the same reporting requirements.

Goals in statute are: Strengthen opportunities for entrepreneurship; Stimulate innovation; and Address regional market demand for affordable work environments (supporting communication, information sharing and networking opportunities).

DECD’s staff recognized that coworking spaces build community and connection for early-stage entrepreneurs, free-lancers, and remote workers. They foster dreaming, sharing, iteration, and risk-taking through

their energy, density of people, and community-building activities. In addition, collaborative work spaces are at the nexus of multiple areas of economic strategy—they are among the amenities that can be offered to tourists, they serve as a hub of information and community for remote workers, and they serve as a signal to entrepreneurs and new businesses that a community understands the value of connection.

DECD developed grant guidelines and convened a meeting of interested parties in September 2019, attended by 42 different collaborative workspace representatives. Through the competitive grant process, DECD made sixteen grants ranging from \$20,000 to \$5,000 in December 2019 to spaces from Biddeford to Ellsworth and in between.

These sixteen spaces have been managed as a “Coworking CoDesign Cohort” The cohort met first in January 2020 and developed agreement about how the cohort will communicate and collaborate to strengthen collaborative work spaces as individual businesses and as a concept for economic development for Maine. Throughout the pandemic, the cohort continued to meet remotely, sharing survival strategies and generally keeping each other’s spirits up.

With funding support from MTI, the Coworking Cohort has a paid Coordinator who manages the cohort. Together these collaborative spaces have developed three priorities for partnering together -work with GWI to develop a shovel-ready proposal to connect coworking spaces with Fiber, offering vouchers to work in coworking spaces as an add-on for existing portfolio companies for MTI, MVF and FAME, and participating in a marketing plan for Maine as a place to live and work.

### **One-on-one Small Business Assistance**

The Office of Business Development assists small businesses with everything from business licensing, permitting, to COVID-19 prevention requirements. OBD helps small businesses to navigate State government and access resources for financing (loans and grants), attracting new investors, regulatory requirements, trade, domestic markets, and workforce. Business development experts visit directly with small

businesses (remotely or in-person) to talk through business challenges and help to match State and other resources directly to these challenges to address them. If the businesses are located outside of Maine, the Office of Business Development helps match them with the best available incentives and connects them directly with possible sites, community leaders, and regional economic development resources. The Office of Business Development provides personalized, one-on-one, and highly responsive assistance to businesses via email, a 1-800 telephone service, and in-person throughout the entire State. In 2020, the Office of Business Development provided personalized service to thousands of Maine businesses.

## **SUCCESS STORIES**

### **Investment Attraction Success in Ellsworth**

Desert Harvest (Ellsworth, Maine) – a North Carolina nutritional supplements company reached out to DECD to explore the possibility of re-locating to New England. With help from the Office of Business Development, Maine & Co., and local economic development and Chamber of Commerce resources, Desert Harvest decided to move its company to Ellsworth. It plans to hire 15 workers at this location.

Read more: <https://www.mainebiz.biz/article/north-carolina-company-plans-new-hires-with-move-to-ellsworth>.

### **Manufacturing Success in Lewiston**

Jones & Vining, a heritage manufacturing business in the shoe industry in Lewiston, was poised to close. With the help of new owners (Anania & Associates) and the benefits of the Pine Tree Development Zone tax incentives program, this facility has not closed and all of its existing employees (about 40) have kept their jobs. DECD was instrumental in assisting the new owners with its new PTDZ certification. The new company is called Poly Labs.

Read more: <https://www.mainebiz.biz/article/maine-investor-group-eyes-growth-with-55m-acquisition-of-lewiston-manufacturer>.



# Office of Community Development



## **DEBORAH JOHNSON,**

### **Director of the Office of Community Development**

Deborah Johnson is the Director of the Office of Community Development (OCD) at the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). Deborah joined DECD in 1997 as a Development Program Manager and has been the Director since 2010. She also serves as Chair of the Board of Trustees, Maine Rural Development Authority and sits on the Board of Directors of the Maine Development Foundation. The OCD oversees the Community Development Block Grant, the Maine Made program and the Municipal Tax Increment Financing Program. Prior to joining DECD, Deborah worked for the City of Portland, Maine as a Program Manager for the CDBG and Home programs. She graduated from the University of New Hampshire with a BS in Business Administration.

## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

In addition to the Office of Community Development's (OCD) regular CDBG allocation of \$11,951,816.00 the OCD received \$15,698,000.00 of CDBG funding under the CARES Act.

Some of the initiatives the OCD has completed, has underway or has planned are:

- Emergency Rental Assistance in partnership with MaineHousing and the Community Action Agencies (over 1,000 households assisted).
- Micro-Enterprise Assistance in partnership with Aroostook County, the Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) and Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments, Northern Maine Development Commission, Southern Maine Planning Development Commission and Coastal Enterprises Inc. Over 450 micro-enterprise businesses have already been assisted with grants up to \$5,000.
- Food Security Program which is a partnership with the Town of Brunswick and the Good Shepherd Food bank to provide additional resources to local food banks statewide.
- YMCA Alliance of Maine will use CDBG CV 19 funding to provide childcare scholarships to families statewide.
- The National Digital Equity Center will provide 265 scholarships for low-to-moderate individuals to participate in the Maine Digital Inclusion Initiative.
- MaineHousing will use CDBG-CV 19 funds in conjunction with other existing funds to develop additional permanent supportive housing for the homeless.

## MAINE MADE PROGRAM

The Maine Made Program, through its website, social media, monthly newsletter and trade show support builds recognition and awareness for hundreds of exceptional Maine made products and their producers, via the branding and logo: "Maine Made—America's Best". The Maine Made Program also provides market-

ing assistance, counseling referrals, and facilitates B2B experiences to over 1,600 of its members. This assistance allows members to increase revenues through new and expanded market opportunities and increase employment levels as a result of growth. Members of the program range from micro-enterprises to internationally recognized companies.

As a result of the COVID Pandemic creating new buying habits for consumers and the huge loss of B2C shows, fairs, and events the following program adjustments/enhancements were made:

- Waived the one-time \$100 set up fee for new members to allow them to reinvest in their small businesses
- Created a "members only" portal to disseminate information on grants, workshops, B2B communications, and technical assistance
- Increased social media to carry our message to wider consumer base, being more thoughtful of who the buyers are and what they're seeking
- Developed a more aggressive print advertising campaign targeting specific markets outside the state
- Effectively communicated with partner organizations to create clear and concise messaging about workshops, marketing tools, and self-help without duplication of services
- Prepared members for the holiday season with tools and resources to enhance ecommerce opportunities for increased revenue
- Partnered with O'Maine Studios to host 4–1 hour long live shows—"Live From Maine" broadcast online via Facebook Live (Nov/Dec)—an online ecommerce platform where consumers could learn about areas in Maine where products are made, meet makers, learn about products inspiration and development, and shop at one location safely online from their homes with no shipping costs associated with the order. Currently seeking sponsorship to continue the programming on a monthly basis.

# Maine Office of Tourism and Film



## **STEVE LYONS, Director of Maine Office of Tourism and Film**

Steve Lyons has been with the Maine Office of Tourism for more than 20 years, being named Director in July 2017. He is responsible for overall operations of the Maine Office of Tourism, having moved into this position following nine years as Director of Marketing. In that capacity, he played a critical role in developing a tourism marketing strategy for the state of Maine and managed contracts for the state's ad agency, marketing research firm, fulfillment and call center operations, and web site. In 2018, he led the development of the Maine Office of Tourism's Five-Year Strategic Plan.

Throughout his tenure at the Office of Tourism, Steve managed many other marketing programs for the office including web site development, group tour marketing, and contracts for visitor information centers, publications and PR.

Steve was recently elected to the Board of Directors for the U.S. Travel Association, the national non-profit organization that represents the travel industry. He also serves on the Board of Directors for Discover New England, a regional international marketing collaborative; and represents the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development on the Board of the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority. Past service has included the American Bus Association Education Committee and Board of Directors for the Emerge Film Festival in Maine.

Steve was born and raised in Montpelier, Vermont and began his tourism marketing career at Stowe Mountain Resort in Vermont. In 1993, he left Stowe and journeyed west working in tourism and hospitality positions in Glacier National Park, Montana and Portland, Oregon before returning to New England where he held positions as Director of Marketing at

Mt. Cranmore Ski Resort in New Hampshire, Public Information Specialist at the Vermont Department of Tourism, and Sales and Marketing Manager for HearthStone. In 1998, he moved to Maine where he has resided ever since.

During his off-time, Steve enjoys hiking, paddling, biking, skiing, snowshoeing and exploring Maine and New England's many interesting attractions with his wife and 18-year-old son.

## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Office of Tourism is charged with administering a program to support and expand the tourism industry and promote the State as a tourist destination. It does this by executing a year-round statewide marketing program to deepen consumer engagement, enrich and promote the tourism brand that ultimately increases tourism spending and generates increased meals and lodging tax collection. The office includes the Maine Film Office which is responsible for the promotion of Maine as a location for film and video production.

The mission of the Office of Tourism is to become the premier four-season destination in New England. To accomplish its mission, within the bounds created by statute, the office is authorized to: conduct research to determine market demand; implement public relations and promotional programs designed to market Maine's travel-product; print materials as needed to fulfill requests for information about Maine by consumers and the travel trade; encourage the development of travel-product facilities and attractions; operate tourist information centers; serve as a liaison between private industry groups and local, state, and federal agencies involved in tourism promotion and development; and provide basic support and discretionary grants to regional tourism agencies as well as organizations and associations engaged in tourism promotion. The office continuously conducts local outreach programs, seminars, and conferences with elements of the Maine tourism industry including the Annual Governor's Conference on Tourism and oversees the operation of eight year-round visitor information centers.

The powers and duties of the Office of Tourism are detailed in 5 M.R.S.A. §13090-C. The Tourism Marketing Promotion Fund also supports one staff person in the Maine Film Office and a part of the salary of a staff person in Maine Made Program. The Office of Tourism has a legislative headcount of 8.

The Office of Tourism works closely with a number of state agencies, non-governmental organizations and entities to assist in accomplishing its goals and responsibilities. Recent collaborations with state agencies include:

- Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry- Foliage Reports
- Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife— Promote Guides and Outfitters
- Department of Transportation— Acadia Gateway Center Planning
- Department of Marine Resources— Seafood Marketing
- Maine Arts Commission—Arts Grants Review
- Maine Made Marketing Program— Live streamed product sales

The Office of Tourism in Collaboration with the tourism industry and other partners released its 5-Year Strategic Plan in 2019. The five key strategies include: Present Maine as Real and Authentic; Build Collaboration and Partnerships; Make Sites/Programs Come Alive; Balance Community and Tourism; and Understand Tourism Readiness. These key strategies lead to the following business goals:

- Increase direct tourism expenditures
- Increase gross restaurant and lodging taxable sales
- Increase leisure visitation volume

The Office of Tourism budget is allocated as a percentage of restaurant and lodging taxable sales as specified in §13090-K - Tourism Marketing Promotion Fund. With these funds, the office develops and executes an integrated marketing plan that includes a

mix of earned, owned and paid media across various channels and platforms - digital/social, print, out of home, broadcast, editorial promotion, media outreach, and consumer travel and trade shows.

Ten Percent of the office's budget is annually provided to regional tourism marketing promotion along with Enterprise Marketing Grants, Special Event Grants and Small Communities Grants. In 2020, the Office of Tourism awarded more than \$1.1 million in tourism marketing grants throughout the state.

Additionally, the Office works with 6 of the 8 Tourism regions to integrate their regional websites to the Visit Maine platform, allowing for enhanced web design capability and database sharing.

## **COVID RESPONSE**

The Maine Office of Tourism is a marketing entity charged with promoting the state as a tourism destination. There is no question that 2020 provided unprecedented challenges for destination marketing.

Heading into calendar year 2020, Maine tourism was strong with restaurant and lodging taxable sales experiencing 10% growth over 2019. By March, COVID-19 started to surface forcing many businesses to close including the state's two largest ski resorts that ended the season early, thereby negatively impacting Maine's winter tourism experience.

At the beginning of May the Governor implemented the Restarting Maine Economy plan and the Office of Tourism established [info@visitmaine.com](mailto:info@visitmaine.com) to provide tourism and hospitality businesses and consumers with a mechanism to answer questions about the restarting plan. Between this portal and the Business Answers phone and email, DECD provide personal responses to thousands of inquiries throughout the pandemic.

Weekly calls were established with leaders from the tourism industry to answer questions and address issues related to COVID-19 and the state's response. These calls continue today, providing an open dialog between DECD and the tourism and hospitality industry.

As the restarting plan took shape, the Office of Tourism adjusted its marketing campaign to target states that were exempt from travel restrictions. This began with an in-state marketing effort encouraging Maine residents to travel within Maine as a means of supporting local businesses and rediscovering Maine as a tourist destination.

As other states were exempted from travel restrictions, the Office of Tourism launched a "Travel with Care" page on the website educating potential travelers about requirement for traveling to Maine. This was followed by targeted digital campaigns in these states marketing Maine as a safe destination with lots of wide-open spaces. These campaigns continued until early December when the out-of-state campaign was put on hold.

Additionally, we participated in a virtual travel adventure show and interacted with more than 250 people who are interested in visiting Maine when they are ready to travel again.

Finally, with the deadline for utilizing the CARES Act funding at the end of December, DECD developed the Tourism, Hospitality, Retail Recovery Grant program. Within a matter of hours, the Office of Tourism set up and staffed a live chat option on our industry web site, assisting hundreds of small businesses by answering eligibility questions.

Moving forward, the Office of Tourism is looking to expand its in-state marketing campaign to provide on-going support for Maine businesses and planning for a broader campaign to market Maine outside of the state in 2021 when it is safe to do so.

## **CULTURAL TOURISM**

Maine is a place where travelers have a truly unique opportunity to experience rich cultural traditions, world-class visual and performing arts offerings, award winning locally sourced cuisine, in-tact historic downtowns, local festivals and exceptional heritage-based outdoor recreation. Together, these attributes make tourism in Maine a vital economic driver and uniquely position the state. Maine Office



of Tourism research has consistently shown that visitors to Maine typically engage in a blend of nature-based and cultural activities.

Understanding that cultural heritage tourism is a significant piece of the travel market, the Maine Office of Tourism contracts with a cultural development consultant whose role is to identify, develop product and broaden awareness of Maine's tourism ready cultural assets.

Cultural heritage tourism can generate both tangible and intangible benefits to a destination. Cultural and heritage community improvements enhance quality of life, which in turn contributes to increased local pride thus creating places that people want to visit, or even relocate to. It is imperative that Maine communities continue to identify and nurture cultural heritage tourism opportunities and experiences to remain competitive in the global travel market.

## **DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT**

The Destination Development Specialist position was created in response to rural tourism industry's request for assistance in traditional destination areas to help determine immediate steps necessary to remain competitive in tourism markets. The statewide position was created within the Office of Tourism by request of the Maine Woods Consortium (MWC), a network of marketing and economic development entities in Maine's seven most rural counties, with support of the Northern Forest Center (NFC). The position, though statewide, has partnered with the MWC and NFC in a true "public-private partnership", to offer initial support to rural destinations that requested this assistance. Community development work crosses traditional economic development boundaries and may include infrastructure work, finding funding, making important connections with various state departments for community leadership and specific businesses as required. Additionally, community work and successful destinations require a unique level of cooperation among business, non-profit, and municipal stakeholders and a common set of skills, knowledge, and language to enable effective team-based project implementation.

Focused assistance has been directed to destinations that have exhibited leadership, commitment and readiness to help themselves through asset inventory and evaluation, commissioning regional studies, hiring professional consulting assistance to raise their own local awareness on how to make their destination more appealing to attract visitors and visitor spending. MOT staff helped design a flexible program, called Community Destination Academy (CDA), to motivate destinations to focus on evolving visitor interests, and to provide a seamless, service-oriented experience from lodging and dining to outdoor recreation, cultural events, unique experiences, and shopping for locally crafted items. While the program is grounded in the tourism and recreation economy, the approach supports amenities that contribute to local values, quality of life and at the same time serves to attract new residents and businesses.

The MOT goal through the CDA is to meet communities where they are in their development process, bring in specialized expertise to help them determine their best future, then through a facilitated process, they determine steps required to reach their collective goals, which ultimately places them in a better competitive position to market more effectively to their specific target markets. The CDA program is geared toward serving local multi-sector leadership teams that continue to work with MOT staff for at least a year beyond the initial CDA program to insure positive, visible community results.

More detailed information on the CDA program and the Destination Development process can be found at <https://motpartners.com/programs-services/destination-development>.

## **MAINE FILM OFFICE**

The Maine Film Office is a division of the Maine Office of Tourism within the Department of Economic and Community Development.

The Film Office plans and executes a marketing strategy to increase production in Maine; provides productions with essential support services and resources; partners with public and private stake-

holders to identify opportunities to build the film, television and digital media industry sectors; and encourages the hiring of Maine residents and sourcing of goods and services from Maine businesses to deepen the industry's economic impact in Maine.

As the official liaison between productions companies and federal, state and local agencies, the Film Office promotes filming in communities in all four corners of the state.

The Film Office directs the administration of the film tax incentive program with Maine Revenue Services.

Comprised of one staff position and funded through an annual transfer of Other Special Revenues from the Office of Tourism, the Film Office provides consultative professional advice, expertise and testimony about policy and legislation to promote the industry.

# Office of Outdoor Recreation



## **CAROLANN OUELLETTE, Director of Office of Outdoor Recreation**

The focus of the Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation is on leveraging Maine's assets and outdoor recreation heritage to grow the outdoor recreation economy and build Maine's outdoor recreation brand as part of a coordinated effort with partners from the public and private sectors. The Office was created in September 2018, and Carolann rejoined Maine Department of Economic & Community Development in 2018 as the first Director of the new Office of Outdoor Recreation.

From 2006 to 2016, she was at DECD with the Maine Office of Tourism and served as Director for 6 of those years. A graduate of Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration, Ouellette has a strong background in travel, tourism and outdoor recreation as a former White-water Guide and operations manager for New England Outdoor Center, lodging manager at Sugarloaf Resort, and restaurant owner in Jackman. She is a ski, snowmobile, snowshoe, hike and paddle enthusiast, working on her mountain biking, fishing and hunting skills, and loves the exploration and discovery of travel.



## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Office was created in 2018 and became permanently established on July 1, 2019 making it the 10th Office to be established and the 9th to be staffed in the US. Maine is one of the 13 Confluence of States having signed the Confluence Accords in October 2019.

The Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation focuses on leveraging Maine's assets and outdoor recreation heritage to grow the outdoor recreation economy and build Maine's outdoor recreation brand as part of a coordinated effort with partners from the public and private sectors. Its objectives are to:

- Strengthen and grow the outdoor recreation economy by developing strategies to create outdoor recreation employment, to enhance business growth and to coordinate with state economic development leaders to integrate the outdoor recreation industry into their efforts.
- Monitor, analyze, develop and coordinate outdoor recreation policies at the federal, state and local levels. Establish relationships between diverse industries that depend upon the state's natural resources to ensure recreation interests and perspectives are included in policy decisions related to land management and land use planning activities, including access, stewardship and conservation.
- Facilitate coordination with Maine Office of Tourism, Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, and Department of Transportation in promoting outdoor recreation opportunities. Coordinate market research on the impact of outdoor recreation to the state, including participation and consumer spending figures.

- Serve as a central point of contact for the outdoor recreation industry in Maine, monitoring emerging trends and issues that may potentially impact the outdoor recreation assets and experiences in the state.
- Promote the health benefits of outdoor recreation by encouraging active lifestyles for Mainers through collaboration with health-care industry leaders and local communities minimizing barriers to outdoor recreation opportunities.

Maine's outdoor recreation industry is made up of those that are making the gear, making the goods, making the experience and goes beyond the buyers and sellers – including land managers, access facilitators and educators.

In 2020, the outdoor industry experienced many of the business disruptions attributed to COVID-19, including supply chain disruptions to limited visitor markets, but the industry also experienced an incredible surge in outdoor recreation participation. Additionally, outdoor industry businesses were quick to pivot to meet growing demand for PPE and safe outdoor experiences.

Over the course of the year, the Office of Outdoor Recreation has worked with private sector as well as public sector partners to identify growth opportunities and address existing challenges, from the launch of the Maine Trails Coalition and Look Out for Me campaign helping to message responsible recreation, to bringing together industry leaders for weekly Outdoor Recreation meetings and supporting Maine Outdoor Brands with their launch Adventure Local Maine to their continued work helping outdoor industry businesses thrive.

We have started to work with partners to better define and build career pathways in the outdoor industry to

attract Maine's young people, and increase marketing of Maine's outdoor recreation and outdoor business degree programs, and connect education to jobs.

Per the latest report from the Bureau of Economic Analysis Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account - Maine is among the top states in the country for the value outdoor recreation adds to the state's economy.

According to the report, which focuses on 2019 data, Maine's outdoor recreation industry makes up a larger percentage of the state's economy than in almost any other state – ranking in the top five among Hawaii, Montana, Florida, Vermont, and Wyoming.

Key 2019 Maine highlights show that:

- Outdoor recreation made up 4.2% of Maine's economy—double the national average.
- From 2018 to 2019, contribution to state GDP has grown 5.9% in Maine, compared with an increase of 3.7% for the US.

- Outdoor recreation continues to support more than 40 thousand jobs in Maine, accounting for 4.7% of employment.
- From 2018 to 2019, the outdoor recreation employment and compensation in Maine grew faster than the U.S. average.
- The biggest activity contributors are boating/fishing generating \$284 million; followed by RV'ing, at \$151 million. Snow activities generate \$64 million; with hunting/shooting/trapping at \$53 million.

As a rural state, building a strong outdoor recreation brand that will support our existing businesses, attract new businesses to our communities, encourage healthy lifestyles and grow our economy.

# Maine Technology Institute



## **BRIAN WHITNEY, President**

Brian Whitney is President of the Maine Technology Institute, an organization established to diversify and grow Maine's economy by encouraging, promoting, stimulating and supporting innovation and its transformation into new products, services and companies and, ultimately, the creation of quality jobs for Maine people.

He has extensive experience in economic development and legislative matters at both the state and federal level and has worked with innumerable companies, private and public sector research organizations, and entrepreneurial leaders throughout the State of Maine during his professional career. He served previously as a private sector manager and in the public sector as Maine's Director of Business Development & Innovation, the Director of Outreach and Economic Development for U.S. Senator Olympia J. Snowe (R-Maine), a Business Development Specialist for the State of Maine, and as Chief of Staff to Maine's Senate President.

He has served on, or staffed, a number of statewide boards including the Maine State Workforce Investment Board, the Maine Economic Growth Council, Maine Innovation Economy Advisory Board, Maine Venture Fund and the Maine Rural Development Authority. He is currently a board member of the Maine Center for Entrepreneurial Development, Maine & Company, and the Economic Development Council of Maine.

Brian is a graduate of the University of Southern Maine (USM) and lives in Augusta with his wife and two daughters.

## **DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW**

Founded and funded in 1999 by the Governor and Maine State Legislature, the Maine Technology Institute is the State's industry-led, publicly funded, nonprofit corporation whose core mission is to diversify and grow Maine's economy by encouraging, promoting, stimulating, and supporting innovation and its transformation into new products, services and companies, leading to the creation and retention of quality jobs in Maine.

MTI leads the development of a strong culture of innovation in the State of Maine and is well-positioned for continued growth and effectiveness. It is organized as a nonprofit corporation, consistent with the provisions of the Federal Internal Revenue Code. By-laws were drafted and corporation documents filed in September of 1999.

A Board of Directors consisting of thirteen voting members and two non-voting members governs MTI. The Governor appoints ten directors, eight representing the targeted technologies and two of whom have demonstrated finance, lending or venture capital experience. The Commissioner of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development, the Chancellor of the University of Maine System, the President of the Maine Community College System and the Director of the Office of Policy and Management, or their designees, are ex-officio members. The MTI President is a non-voting director. Seven subsidiary boards, each representing a targeted technology sector, were formed to support the MTI Board. Approximately 120 subject matter experts comprise the membership of these Tech Boards.

Below are several of the ways MTI promotes new ideas, products, or methods with the potential to grow and diversify Maine's economy and increase the number of quality jobs throughout the state.

## **Economic Development**

MTI plays a key part in the State's economic development strategy and is a significant driver in expanding research and development to creating new innovative ventures. Since its founding, MTI has distributed nearly \$280 million in nearly 2,950 distinct projects across the State of Maine, and that funding has leveraged well-over \$1 billion in matching investment. The Maine Technology Asset Fund (MTAF) program, funded by a \$45 million bond and distributed in 2018, will generate 5,350 jobs over the next 3 years and nearly \$1.4 billion in economic impact.

## **Sponsorship**

MTI also supports Maine's innovation economy through event sponsorships that promote innovation and entrepreneurship in Maine. MTI is interested in supporting events that align with one or more of these three areas:

### **MARKETING**

We want to make certain that our programs and services are well-known and well-understood. In order to maintain a strong application pipeline and to build innovation in Maine, we support events that reach our targeted audiences and provide the opportunity to share information about MTI.

### **CELEBRATION**

MTI celebrates the successes of our partners, programs, clients, and organizations to encourage a culture of innovation, aspiration, and success in Maine.

### **EDUCATION AND CONNECTION**

We support educational and networking opportunities for current and potential MTI companies, organizations, and innovators to grow and succeed.

### **Federal Funding Assistance**

The federal Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and the Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) program provides over \$3.7 billion in annual funding for small businesses to conduct research and development of innovative technology leading to the commercialization of new products, processes and services.

As Maine's official SBIR/STTR support organization, MTI hosts and participates in workshops to help Maine businesses learn about the program, helps companies develop strong, competitive proposals and offers funding assistance for activities related to creating and submitting a SBIR/STTR proposal.

### **Innovation Ecosystem Support**

Consistent with MTI's statute, they work with partners across the State of Maine to "encourage, promote, stimulate and support research and development activity leading to the commercialization of new products and services in the State's technology-intensive industrial sectors to enhance the competitive position of those sectors and increase the likelihood that one or more of the sectors will support clusters of industrial activity and to create new jobs for Maine people."

# Maine International Trade Center



## **WADE MERRITT, President and State Director of International Trade**

In 2017, Wade Merritt was appointed President of Maine International Trade Center and State Director of International Trade within the Maine Department of Economic & Community Development. In this role, he is responsible for directing the trade and investment policy for the state, including the delivery of international trade services to Maine's business and academic community.

His appointment is the culmination of 22 years at MITC, progressing up the organization from frontline staff to regional office director, followed by 11 years as Vice President. During his time, Wade has served Maine's business community through the creation and development of several major subprograms including the Canada Desk and Invest in Maine, MITC's investment attraction initiative. He also was the creator of MITC's StudyMaine consortium, which promotes Maine's secondary and post-secondary educational institutions to a global audience. During his time with MITC, he has organized multiple trade missions to 15 different markets on 4 continents.

As past president, Wade serves on the board of directors of SIDO, the national association of state trade offices, and has advocated for greater cooperation between state trade offices, the federal government, and small- and medium-sized businesses nationwide. For this work, Mr. Merritt was given the Distinguished Service to the States Award from the Council of State Governments in 2014.

A native of Bangor and graduate of the University of Maine, Wade recently completed a program on Nonprofit Leadership at Stanford University. He currently resides in South Portland, Maine with his wife and daughter.



## **ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW**

Maine International Trade Center (MITC) was created by unanimous act of the state legislature in 1996 to expand Maine's economy through increased international trade in goods and services. MITC is a public-private partnership funded through the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development, membership dues of approximately 300 business members, as well as corporate sponsor contributions. Of MITC's membership, 81% have fewer than 100 employees; 68% have fewer than 25 employees. Each year, MITC works with about 300 clients in Maine, and completes over 1,000 trade assistance consulting and research projects for those clients. The budget includes funding for the State Director of International and Maine North Atlantic Development Office (MENADO) Director, as well as pass-through All Other funding in support of its operations.

MITC provides critical services to Maine's small- and medium-sized businesses, including customized trade assistance to help businesses identify and take advantage of opportunities in the global marketplace. MITC's core functions are to provide accurate, relevant international trade education and counseling and to expose Maine businesses to overseas opportunities through facilitated activities. MITC also manages three specialty subprograms with closely reinforcing goals: MENADO, StudyMaine, and Invest in Maine.

### **Educational Workshops and Seminars**

MITC conducts or co-hosts trade educational programs ranging from one-hour webinars to half-day conferences that feature keynote speakers and panel sessions, as well as business networking receptions. MITC's trade education series, GlobalU, offers a multi-tiered approach from basic information to advanced specialized topics offered through multiple channels: live webinars, video on-demand, and, when possible, live webinars. MITC also hosts one large-scale event, Maine International Trade Day, which typically attracts over 325 attendees. (This event was cancelled in 2020.)

### **Invest in Maine**

The Invest in Maine initiative was designed to increase the flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) dollars into Maine through international business attraction and international joint venture opportunities. Invest in Maine works with a lead generation and management firm in the UK to identify prospects, as well as engaging with partner organizations like Maine & Co. and FOR/Maine. In past years, Invest in Maine has leveraged MITC's participation in several trade shows in the advanced materials, food processing, and life science sectors to meet new investors, and in December 2020 co-hosted a program for Italian companies highlighting opportunities in Maine for the US market.

### **Trade Missions and Trade Shows**

MITC organizes gubernatorial and industry specific trade missions to targeted markets and coordinates group participation in international trade shows, offering cost-effective opportunities for small- and medium-sized companies to meet international buyers and distributors. During 2018, MITC coordinated booths and one-on-one business matchmaking meetings with buyers for Maine companies at trade shows featuring Maine's food, seafood, composites, and life sciences industries in the US, Europe, and Asia. During the pandemic, these efforts shifted to virtual, and events were held that promoted Maine's education, food, and forest bioeconomy efforts, and an early 2021 mission will highlight Maine's defense manufacturers to potential buyers and partners in Korea. In addition, MITC facilitates business delegations to the North Atlantic region through its MENADO initiative. Though 2020 numbers are lower due to reduced travel, these efforts have produced an average of about \$25 million in projected sales annually in 2017-2019.

### **StudyMaine**

Nearly 2,500 international students were enrolled in Maine in 2019, contributing approximately \$90 million to Maine's economy. StudyMaine, a consortium of Maine high schools, colleges, and universities, promotes the state as a place to study and encourages

lasting ties through alumni and parent relationships. StudyMaine is an extension of MITC's export development work, with crossover to investment attraction. This year StudyMaine, in close cooperation with the US Commercial Service office in Portland, led Maine education institutions to Turkey and Azerbaijan on a student recruitment mission just before the pandemic and met with interested students, parents, and agents to promote Maine as an education destination. StudyMaine has also hosted or participated in several virtual fairs for parents and students in Turkey and Ukraine.

### **Maine North Atlantic Development Office (MENADO)**

MENADO was created in 2014 to increase trade and investment between Maine and markets of the North Atlantic Region and guide Maine's policy in Arctic affairs. The work of MENADO includes delivering Nordic models of success to Maine industries, including expert contacts and resources for forest and ocean bioeconomy development and maritime cluster innovation. In past years, MITC's MENADO program organized Maine participation in several North Atlantic/Arctic trade and policy events and conferences, and presented at numerous domestic and international events; work that has extended into the virtual world in 2020. MENADO's work has demonstrated success fostering a North Atlantic and High North focus for Maine business development, as well as academic, arts, and cultural exchanges. The initiative has inspired collaboration between 13 colleges, universities, and research institutions in Maine for sharing resources and curriculum around North Atlantic and Arctic studies and provided the context and networking support for University of Southern Maine, UMaine's Climate Change Institute, University of Maine School of Law's Center for Oceans and Coastal Law, and UNE to develop their respective North Atlantic and Arctic institutes. MENADO's growing network connects Maine with new opportunities throughout the North Atlantic, Arctic, and near Arctic, establishing Maine as a valued and respected member of the Region.

MENADO is MITC's center point for efforts focusing on the forest and blue bioeconomy industries, based on the strong development efforts of Nordic nations in this area. In 2020, MENADO organized a virtual forest bioeconomy trade mission to Finland that attracted 200 participants from Maine, Finland, and beyond, as well as conducted business-to-business matchmaking for Maine businesses with their Finnish counterparts. In addition, MENADO has taken a lead role in developing business and economic relationships between the US and Greenland, and is involved in several ocean bioeconomy efforts across the region.

### **SUCCESS STORY**



#### **MITC Success Story 2020**

MITC Member Luke's Lobster (Saco, ME) continued to expand international sales in 2020, participating in two MITC-organized activities and leveraging federal funding from the State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) grant initiative of the U.S. Small Business Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Market Access Program. In January 2020, Luke's Lobster exhibited at the Winter Fancy Food Show in San Francisco. While this was the company's first time at one of the world's largest specialty food and beverage shows, MITC has organized a State of Maine pavilion and one-on-one meetings with international buyers for Maine companies at the show for the past 8 years. After the global pandemic cancelled in-person activities for the year, Luke's Lobster worked with MITC



to participate in the Seafood Buyers Virtual Mission in September 2020. As a result of these two activities, the company held meetings with international buyers from Costa Rica, U.A.E., Korea, Saudi Arabia, Singapore,

France, Taiwan, Spain, and Hong Kong. In addition to Luke's Lobster, a total of 14 Maine companies from across the state participated in these two activities and reported \$3.3 million in anticipated sales.



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