

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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THREE-YEAR PROGRESS REPORT

OCTOBER 18, 2024



MAINE

JOBS AND RECOVERY

PLAN

[MAINE.GOV/JOBSPLAN](https://www.maine.gov/jobsplan)

ABOUT THE MAINE JOBS AND RECOVERY PLAN

The Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan uses Maine’s nearly \$1 billion in State Fiscal Recovery Funds provided by the federal American Rescue Plan Act for strategic investments to relieve the significant toll of the COVID-19 pandemic on Maine’s people, communities, and economy while addressing known, systemic challenges that have constrained our state’s ability to grow and thrive for years.

Governor Mills identified three goals when she introduced the Jobs Plan in 2021:

1. Immediate economic recovery from the pandemic: Ensure Maine businesses stay open, their workers are safe and remain on the job, and our economy is secure in the short term.
2. Long-term economic growth for Maine: Strengthen Maine’s workforce, spur innovation, and draw new people and their families to Maine.
3. Infrastructure revitalization: Revitalize the support systems and community infrastructure that ensure people and families can live healthy and productive lives in Maine.

The plan accomplishes these goals by investing in programs organized across three domains:

- Business Supports that sustain and grow Maine’s small businesses and heritage industries by keeping employer doors open, reducing the costs of doing business, and supporting innovation.
- Job and Career Programs that help Maine workers and students improve their career opportunities by enhancing job training, credential attainment, and experiential learning.
- Investments in Maine People & Communities that strengthen traditional infrastructure and community infrastructure to help create jobs and support Maine workers, families, and employers.

WHAT IS IN THE MAINE JOBS AND RECOVERY PLAN?

BUSINESS SUPPORTS			Small Businesses	New Businesses	Economic Development
Regulatory Reform	Worker Attraction Development + Retention	Heritage Industry + Sector-Specific Supports <i>Agriculture • Commercial Fisheries • Forestry • Innovation Economy • Clean Energy</i>			
JOB + CAREER PROGRAMS			Apprenticeships	Education + Job Training	
Career Exploration	Career Counseling	Health Sector Careers	Clean Energy Careers		
INVESTMENTS IN MAINE PEOPLE + COMMUNITIES					
Broadband	Clean Water	Climate + Energy Efficiency	Early Childhood + Family Caregiving		
Government Services	Housing	Legal Assistance	Outdoor Rec	Public Health + Safety	

Since the Jobs Plan took effect in October 2021, the Mills Administration has delivered \$211 million in direct economic relief to thousands of Maine small businesses, invested in workforce programs to offer apprenticeship, career and education advancement, and job training opportunities to 26,000 Maine people, and catalyzed more than 700 infrastructure projects to support families and revitalize Maine communities.

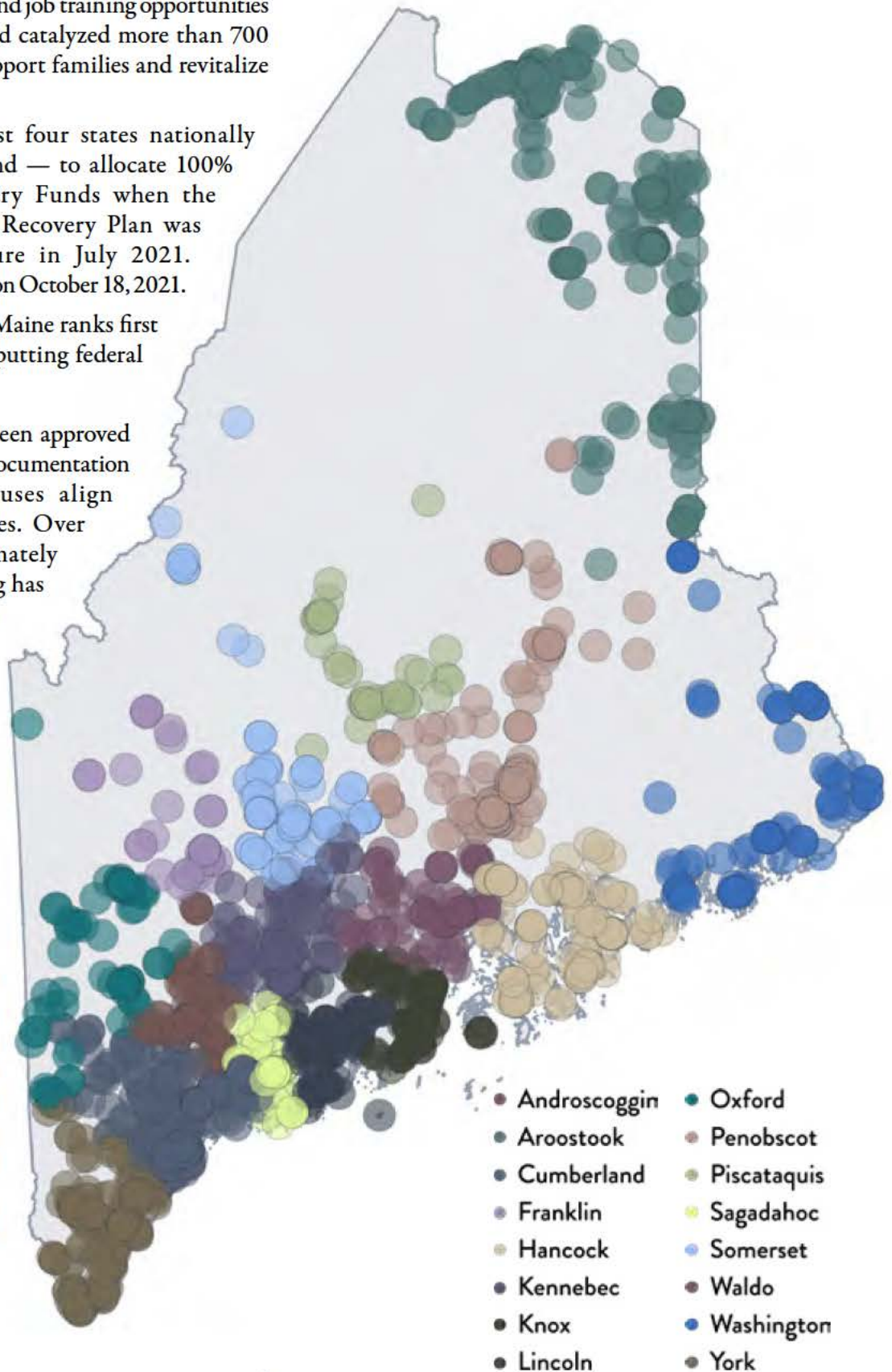
Maine was among the first four states nationally — and first in New England — to allocate 100% of its State Fiscal Recovery Funds when the Governor’s Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan was approved by the legislature in July 2021. The Jobs Plan went into effect on October 18, 2021.

As of the last available data, Maine ranks first in New England in swiftly putting federal recovery funds to work.

All Jobs Plan funding has been approved through the state’s internal documentation process to ensure these uses align with federal eligibility rules. Over \$847 million — approximately 85% — in Jobs Plan funding has been spent or committed to deliver results on behalf of Mainers, as of June 30, 2024. All funds must be spent by December 31, 2026.

Announced grants include support for Maine small businesses and heritage industries, grants to job training organizations, and investments in communities through expanding child care, affordable housing, broadband, and other critical infrastructure. Map data as of October 7, 2024.

Grants Funded Through the Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan



MAKING AN IMPACT FOR MAINE

\$211 MILLION
IN DIRECT ECONOMIC RELIEF TO THOUSANDS OF
MAINE SMALL BUSINESSES



Health
Insurance
Relief



Economic
Recovery
Grants



Energy
Cost
Relief

WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES
FOR 26,000 MAINE PEOPLE



Job
Training



Apprenticeships



Credential
Attainment



Experiential
Learning

700+ INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS
TO SUPPORT MAINE PEOPLE, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES



Drinking
Water



Wastewater



Climate + Energy
Efficiency



Early Education +
Childcare



Affordable
Housing

JOB AND CAREER PROGRAMS

The Jobs Plan makes historic investments in the development of Maine's workforce to help Maine people achieve their full potential. Paid work experiences for young people and upgrades to Career and Technical Education programs are strengthening students' early foundations for rewarding work. Apprenticeships, no- and low-cost job training, and tuition support for credential attainment are providing workers with job skills that unlock well-paying careers. Industry talent partnerships, community-based career counseling, and peer supports are connecting more Mainers to quality jobs and equipping them for success.

JOBS PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

SKILL DEVELOPMENT: Over 8,500 workers enrolled in a in a job credential or training program

CAREER EXPLORATION: Over 7,000 young people participated in an internship, apprenticeship, or career exploration experience

WORKFORCE OUTREACH: Over 10,500 Mainers received career advancement or navigation assistance

TECHNICAL EDUCATION: 23 schools built out new career and technical education facilities or job training equipment

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Margaret Rende used her experience with the Associated General Contractors (AGC)'s Maine Construction Academy Pre-Apprentice Program funded by the Jobs Plan to become an electrical apprentice with Maine construction firm Reed & Reed. Jobs Plan funding is expected to provide more than 3,000 Maine people with new apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship opportunities in partnership with the Maine Department of Labor's Registered Apprenticeship Program, more than doubling the program's previous reach.

"I first got into electrical work from a family friend and his electrical company. There I learned a lot about the different types of electrical work that can be done. After a year there, I found myself needing a new job in this trade that would allow me the ability to get a formal education and better on-the-job training concurrently. I connected with a local partner of Reed & Reed's (AGC), that had an opening for an apprenticeship.

What I have learned so far is that an apprenticeship, given the right opportunity, is invaluable. All you have to do is show up, work hard, and be eager to learn. If I had known about these opportunities in high school, I would have benefitted greatly. I believe that this opportunity opens many doors for my future and a great career in this field. Absolutely worth the effort. I highly recommend an apprenticeship to anyone."



Governor Mills at the signing of an Executive Order to improve the recruitment, training, and retention of women in Maine's construction industry on May 6, 2024.



Governor Mills tours a surgical tech class at Eastern Maine Community College in Bangor.

BENEFITING MAINE'S FUTURE

Maine's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy recognized the skills needed to sustain a successful workforce are rapidly evolving as the world changes, and that means Maine's workforce must be prepared to evolve with them as well. With \$35 million from the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan and a \$15.5 million gift from the Harold Alfond Foundation, the Maine Community College System substantially expanded free and low-cost job training for Maine workers. Since 2022, more than 26,000 students have taken short-term workforce training classes through the Alfond Center, gaining valuable skills and credentials that will allow them to enter new fields or advance in their careers. These students are strengthening Maine's workforce in health care, clean energy, manufacturing, hospitality, education, computer technology, the trades, and other important sectors. Jobs Plan funding supports student tuition costs, the purchase of new equipment needed to stand up new trainings, and added staffing for project management, instruction, and learner navigation.

Since the Jobs Plan was introduced, Maine has continued its historic investments in its talent and developed new ways to partner with employers in this work. Maine has made community college free for recent high school graduates. The Harold Alfond Foundation is investing another \$75.5 million over the next five years into short-term workforce training programs, representing the largest grant ever for the Maine Community College System. To encourage more employers to help workers gain new skills, Governor Mills also signed into law the Dirigo Business Incentive Program. The new program, which goes into effect in 2025, offers employers tax credits of up to \$2,000 per year for every worker trained. These credits are specifically targeted towards high-value sectors and industries, including agriculture, fishing, forestry, manufacturing, software publishing, and scientific research. Together, these investments by the Mills Administration, industry, and philanthropic partners will help Maine to grow and support its workforce into the future.

BUSINESS SUPPORTS

Jobs Plan business support initiatives are sustaining and growing Maine’s small businesses and heritage industries by keeping employer doors open, reducing the costs of doing business, and supporting innovation. These investments have provided direct economic relief to thousands of businesses in every sector of Maine’s economy through recovery grants and loans, energy cost support, and health insurance cost relief. Jobs Plan funding also catalyzed business assistance resources for Maine entrepreneurs, expanded the state’s domestic trade program to help Maine’s small businesses grow sales across the United States, and invested \$80 million into the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund to mitigate increases to business taxes.

JOBS PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

RECOVERY INVESTMENTS: More than 2,100 Maine small businesses received over \$161 million in recovery and growth financing

ENERGY COST RELIEF: Over 2,900 small businesses received electric utility credits to reduce the burden of elevated energy costs

HEALTH INSURANCE SUPPORT: Approximately 5,700 small businesses were able to more affordably offer health insurance to over 45,000 employees and dependents

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Advancing domestic trade—selling more of Maine’s goods and services within the United States—is a key recommendation of the 10-Year Economic Development Strategy. The Jobs Plan invested \$15 million in the Domestic Trade Pilot Program through Maine’s Department of Economic and Community Development to promote economic growth and strengthen Maine’s business climate for startups.

PowerWise Systems based in Bucksport received \$19,000 from the Jobs Plan to help tell the story of its work to



Governor Mills cuts a ribbon re-opening the Pier Road Causeway in Kennebunkport on July 1, 2024, after it was raised 4 feet higher to protect access and infrastructure. The project was made possible with funds from the Maine Infrastructure Adaptation Fund.

create, install, and commission weather stations for the commercial and industrial solar market. During the pandemic, the firm strategically shifted to target sales to utility-scale solar plants instead of smaller stations.

PowerWise needed help updating its marketing strategy to better target these new customers and demonstrate its strengths. “We may be tiny,” said founder and CEO Carsten Steenberg, “but I would challenge you to find a group with more experience than us.”

PowerWise is partnering with a marketing company in Bangor for website upgrades and trade show brochure design and development, as well as receiving assistance from business accelerator Maine APEX. “I’ve always been extremely impressed with what this state has offered to small companies,” said Steenberg. “We are so lucky to be in Maine.”

BENEFITING MAINE’S FUTURE

Maine’s investment in research and development, a key driver of economic growth, has historically ranked among the lowest in the nation. That’s why the Jobs Plan made strategic innovation investments in forward-looking industries, small businesses, and entrepreneurs to better harness the talents and ingenuity of Maine people.

With Jobs Plan funding, the Maine Technology Institute has provided over \$23 million to 174 technology-based companies in Maine through the Pandemic Recovery for an Innovative Maine Economy (PRIME) Fund. New venture creation initiatives have launched, including a ClimateTech Incubator and the Future of Healthcare Founder Residency at Northeastern University’s Roux Institute; Coastal Enterprises, Inc.’s Weatherization Business Lab, which helps energy-efficiency contractors start or expand their businesses; and the Gulf of Maine Research Institute’s Blue w(AI)ve Accelerator, supporting



Tagwongo Obomsawin and Dan Burgess of the Governor’s Energy Office (GEO) help cut the green ribbon to celebrate the launch of the Roux Institute’s ClimateTech Incubator program in Portland on September 18, 2024.

Hit hard by the pandemic, PowerWise Systems received a \$19,000 grant from the Domestic Trade Pilot Program. That allowed them to partner with a Bangor-based marketing company to upgrade their website and create collateral to strengthen their business outreach.





Governor Mills helps break ground on 55 Weston, a housing development supported by the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan, on October 20, 2023, in Madison, Maine.

early-stage companies leveraging artificial intelligence for ocean-based solutions. The Jobs Plan has also funded awards totaling over \$50 million to more than 400 companies across Maine’s heritage industries of forestry, fishing, and farming.

Already, Maine is seeing long-term benefits from these investments, with particular momentum in the clean energy sector and natural resource industries. Companies with awards from the first round of MTI’s PRIME Fund have added nearly 500 new jobs and report anticipated year-over-year revenue growth of 14 percent. The state’s leadership in advanced wood technologies led the U.S.

Economic Development Agency in October 2023 to designate Maine as a “Tech Hub” for forest bioproducts and advanced manufacturing, which will speed development and commercialization of new products in construction, plastic replacements, and alternatives to petrochemicals and opens the door for significant Federal investment in the future. Startups in the ClimateTech Incubator have raised \$24 million and in 2024, FORM Energy and the U.S. Department of Energy announced \$147 million to build the world’s largest multi-day energy storage system in Lincoln, Maine.

INVESTMENTS IN MAINE PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

Jobs Plan investments in Maine people and communities are revitalizing the support systems and community infrastructure that ensure people are able to live healthy and productive lives in Maine. Many of these grant funds are helping communities address critical water and climate infrastructure needs without assuming additional debt. Others focus on building out early childhood programs, housing, and broadband. Efficiency programs help reduce the energy cost burden for residents and businesses.

JOBS PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

HOUSING: 558 units under development across 20 projects

EARLY CHILDHOOD: Over 4,850 new or newly full-time child care and pre-kindergarten slots at more than 240 programs

ENERGY EFFICIENCY: Nearly 2,200 energy efficiency upgrades to businesses, communities, and low-income homeowners

WATER AND CLIMATE: More than 180 investments to upgrade drinking and wastewater systems, or increase infrastructure resilience to climate change

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

On July 1, 2024, the Town of Kennebunkport cut the ribbon on a project funded by a \$2.6 million grant from the Maine Infrastructure Adaptation Fund, created and funded through the Jobs Plan to improve stormwater, drinking water, and wastewater infrastructure from flooding, rising sea levels, and extreme weather. The town used the funds to raise the Pier Road Causeway by four feet, safeguarding stormwater and utility infrastructure and maintaining access for residents, fishermen, and emergency vehicles during storm events.

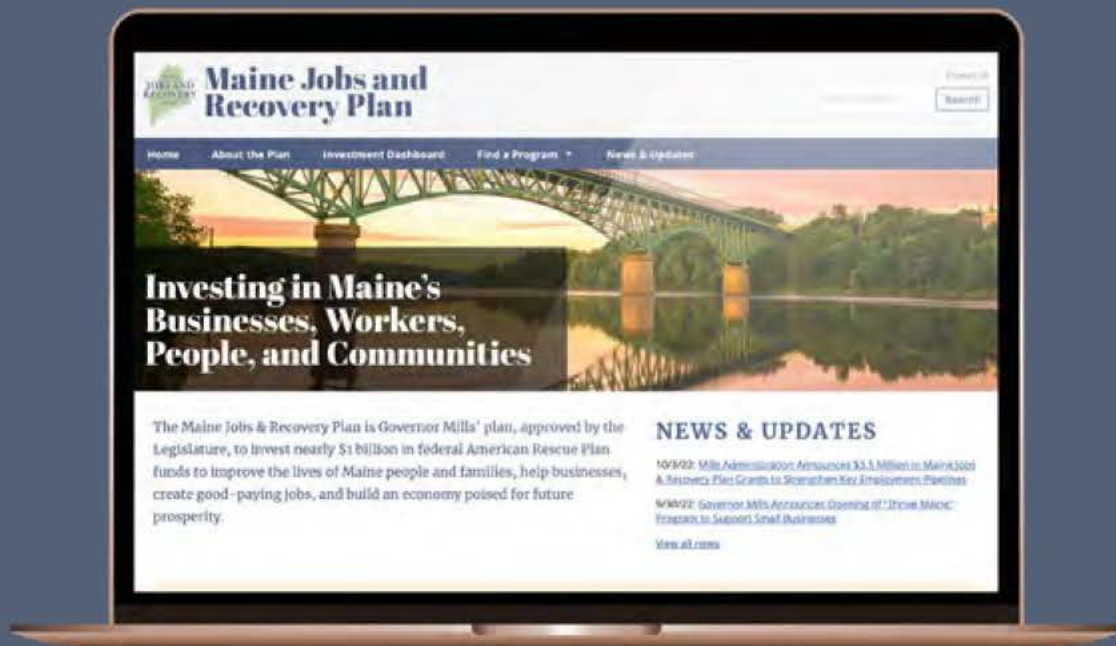
The Jobs Plan's initial \$20 million allocation to establish the Maine Infrastructure Adaptation Fund awarded grants to 13 municipalities. In August 2024, Governor Mills announced an additional \$25.2 million in storm recovery grants to 39 communities across Maine to help them recover and build more resilient infrastructure following last winter's devastating storms. This second grant round was funded by \$60 million in State funding that Governor Mills and the Legislature approved through the supplemental budget in May 2024 — the single largest investment in storm recovery by any Administration in Maine history.

BENEFITING MAINE'S FUTURE

Governor Mills allocated \$10 million from her Jobs Plan to MaineHousing to launch the Rural Affordable Rental Housing Program, to address both the affordable housing crisis, which disproportionately impacts low- and moderate-income Maine households, and the lack of federal resources directed at rental housing in rural areas. The Rural Rental program provides funding for the development of smaller (5 to 18 units) affordable rental housing projects in areas and at a size where traditional Low Income Housing Tax Credit projects are not generally feasible. Benefits beyond increasing the supply of affordable homes in rural areas include the emergence of local housing leaders and the cultivation of new developers who are bringing innovations. For example, at 55 Weston, an 18-unit development in Madison, Maine — a rebounding mill town with a population of 4,700 — new developer Sam Hight and his partners utilized modular components custom-built for the development at an indoor manufacturing facility about 60 miles away in Paris, Maine to accelerate the timeline for completing the project.

In April of 2024, the Maine Legislature again approved funding — another \$20 million — for the program, and interest from developers remains high. This program has become an integral part of MaineHousing's suite of funding opportunities because it incentivizes affordable housing development at a scale that fits into the local community, helps the area's older residents to right-size their housing, and provides affordable homes to younger households with workers at the start of their careers.

In September 2024, the Rural Rental program received an Award for Program Excellence during an annual gathering of the National Council of State Housing Agencies.



Visit the Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan website for more details about investments and programs.



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