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# Competitive Skills Scholarship Program

2018 Annual Report

Submitted by

Laura A. Fortman, Commissioner

Maine Department of Labor



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**2018 Report  
of the  
Competitive Skills Scholarship Program**

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Transmitted to:

Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing

by:

Laura A. Fortman, Commissioner

Maine Department of Labor

As Required by 26 MRSA §2033(10)



# Executive Summary

The success of Maine's economy is tied directly to the skill of our workforce and the creativity and innovation of our employers. The Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP) is successfully moving our workforce and economy forward. Highlights of the 2018 CSSP are:

**Improved wage earnings.** Of those completing the program between April 2017 and March 2018, participants' 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter wage earnings after completion increased by 40% over their earnings the quarter prior to their enrollment in CSSP. During the same period, average wages increased an additional 20% between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters after completion.

**Increased enrollment in 2018.** CSSP served 1,061 individuals during calendar year 2018, compared to serving 925 in 2017, a 13% increase.



**Improved entered employment rate.** Between January 2007 and March 2018, a total of 1,657 individuals completed CSSP. Of those, 70% earned wages during their first quarter after completion. Between April 2017 and March 2018 (the most recent period that captures wage earnings of those exited) a total of 303 individuals completed the program and 77% entered employment in the first quarter.



**Relevant training for employers.** CSSP is training individuals for in-demand jobs available in Maine. According to Maine's <sup>1</sup>Occupational Employment Outlook to 2026,<sup>1</sup> the largest job gains are expected in Health Practitioner and Technician and Healthcare Support occupations. 33% of CSSP trainees choose healthcare occupations.

<sup>1</sup> <https://cwri1.blogspot.com/2018/09/occupationalemployment-outlook-to-2026.html>

**Improved credential attainment rate.** In a 4-year period between 2014 and 2018, 68% of CSSP participants successfully obtained their degree or industry recognized credential. In the most recent year 94% of CSSP participants successfully obtained their degree or industry recognized credential.

**High school students pursuing degree programs.** CSSP Bridge Year students can graduate from high school with up to eight college courses completed. As of December 2018, 127 students were enrolled in the CSSP Bridge program. 85% of those who have entered college remain enrolled.



# CSSP's Three Paths

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## Competitive Skills Scholarship Program for Individuals

This is the original program that was established in 2007. The CSSP provides funding to individuals for education, training and necessary support services that lead to high-wage jobs that are in demand in Maine. The education and training must be universally recognized and accepted by the trade or industry in which the participant intends to seek employment and that will provide opportunity for employment in high wage, in demand jobs in Maine that will provide substantial improvement in earnings and benefits. In order to qualify for the program, individuals must: be at least 18 years old; be legally eligible to work in the U.S.; have a family income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level; not already have a marketable post-secondary degree; and, have the desire and ability to earn a post-secondary certification, degree or similar credential.

In addition to training, CSSP provides critical wrap-around support services, to help ensure that individuals remain in training and successfully earn their post-secondary degrees and/or credentials. Many individuals enrolled in CSSP receive federal Pell Grants that typically cover most if not all tuition costs associated with attending college. Though Pell may cover tuition costs, low-income individuals often struggle to stay in school due to the high-cost of childcare, transportation, books, supplies and unanticipated situations that require money to resolve. CSSP provides support services to assist individuals with the costs of attending college that go beyond tuition. These support services combined with the career counseling, guidance and support provided to CSSP trainees through their case managers at Maine's CareerCenters often make all the difference.

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## Competitive Skills Scholarship Program for Business

The CSSP Business Program (CSSP-B) was first piloted in 2014 to help businesses train their employees to take on hard-to-fill, high-wage occupations within their organization. CSSP Business Program trainees are either CSSP income-eligible incumbent employees in entry-level jobs or income-eligible individuals recruited directly through the CareerCenter. At the conclusion of training, successful trainees earn an industry-recognized certificate or degree, leading to a new job and increased wages while businesses have access to individuals trained for their industry. Through September 2018, CSSP-B has served 368 trainees.

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## Competitive Skills Scholarship Program - Bridge

The CSSP Bridge Program began in 2016 to support high school students enrolled in a Bridge Year Program at a Career and Technical Education (CTE) school and that meet the eligibility requirements of CSSP. Students are dually enrolled in high school and college courses and attend their regional CTE school where they participate in training for a field of their choice. CSSP Bridge students can obtain 24+ college credits by high school graduation through dual enrollment. These credits will be transferable to all University of Maine System schools, all Maine Community College System schools, and may be transferable to other public and private post-secondary institutions. Students enrolled in CSSP Bridge can graduate from high school and enter college with a year of college courses behind them. CSSP funding and CareerCenter consultants will support them as they pursue an associate's degree and/or complete a bachelor's degree. As of December 2018, 127 students have enrolled in the CSSP Bridge program.

# Individual Success Stories

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## Competitive Skills Scholarship Client

Hamdi Abdi came to Maine from the war-torn country of Somalia. When she came to the United States, she couldn't speak or write her name in English. When she applied for CSSP, she was receiving welfare benefits through the Department of Health and Human Services and was living with her children in publicly subsidized housing. She was accepted into the CSSP program to pursue her dream of becoming a registered nurse.



Hamdi's story follows: "When Saint Joseph's college accepted my application to join their nursing program, I was very excited. Shortly, I was informed by the college financial aid office that federal financial aid could no longer cover my tuition because I had exhausted the available funds learning to speak and write English. My excitement became short lived. My heart was broken and I did not know what to do. Through a family friend I heard about the Competitive Skills Scholarship program through the CareerCenter. When I was told that I was eligible for the scholarship, this news completely changed my whole life for the better by reviving my dreams once again of becoming a registered nurse. Nursing School is not easy, especially when English is not your native language and you're the mother of 3 young children. The scholarship program was so helpful and it took away most of my burden off my shoulders. Scholarship funds covered my tuition and childcare expenses. Despite the

odds being against me as a busy mother with limited English language proficiency, I passed all my classes with flying colors. I will now be able to provide for my family by myself. More than that I want to be a role model to those who follow me so that they can achieve their goals as well. Especially for those mothers who believe that they cannot do it. I tell them where there is will, there is a way just keep on working toward your goal. Everything can be achievable especially if you put your mind into it."

Hamdi graduated from St. Joseph's College with a Bachelor's of Science in nursing in December of 2017. She obtained employment, working at a starting rate of \$25 per hour at Spring Harbor Psychiatric Hospital as a full-time nurse with full benefits.

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## Competitive Skills Scholarship Program – Bridge

Darian Goggin is currently attending the University of Maine. He attended Ellsworth High School and Hancock County Technical Center during high school and was accepted into the Competitive Skills Scholarship – Bridge Program (CSSP-Bridge) as a Junior which allowed him to pursue college level classes and earn college credits while still in high school at no financial cost to him. CSSP-Bridge will continue to support him through college to achieve his academic goals at the University of Maine.



Following is Darian's story:

While in high School, I was very active and engaged in my school and community. I was a 4-year member of the Ellsworth High School Show Choir, competing and placing well at States and Nationals. I performed in musicals, advanced theater productions and was on the tennis team.

I was a proud member and treasurer of both the International Thespian Society and Maine Music Masters and was inducted into National Honors Society and National Technical Honors Society. During high school I was an active member of SkillsUSA where

I earned 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Restaurant Service competition and served in the position of High School State President my junior year. It was extremely challenging to balance college level classes with my numerous high school activities. Though challenged, I found balancing it all very fulfilling and finished my high school career with a 4.0 and earned college credits for all 8 bridge classes that I took. School was only half the battle for me. I am a first-generation college student, and come from a low-income family. Balancing school and activities is a big task for a teenager, but adding the struggles that come with riding the poverty line made for a challenge that at times, seemed insurmountable. During high school, I moved to 6 different houses, a total of 9 times which was quite disruptive. I worked one job during the school year and two during the summer so I could keep a car on the road and a telephone in my pocket. Between Thanksgiving and Christmas of my senior year I ended up homeless and lived with a friend for about 5 months. Not easy to cope with it all, but I did.

If it wasn't for CSSP – Bridge, I don't know where I would be today. During high school, the Scholarship Program assisted with expenses for books and the classes that I was in no shape to be able to afford. I didn't fully understand it then, but my success in Bridge Year would be immensely helpful as I transitioned into college. Because I earned credits for classes like BIO100 and ENG100 during high School, I am not required to take them or pay for them in College.

Once I enrolled in College, the CSSP-Bridge program purchased the laptop necessary for my program. CSSP-Bridge also provided funding for tuition and books that were not covered by other Financial aid and awards, leaving me with a nearly Zero balance during my first year at the University of Maine.

Clearly, this scholarship has saved my educational career on more than one occasion, and I am only one person. This scholarship is something that is helping to make tomorrows leaders, and giving them

a true chance at success, regardless of their past. I know, that because of this scholarship, there is no doubt in my mind that I will be able to achieve everything, if not more, in my life and in my career. It is my hope that by reading this, you will help continue this scholarship, giving this amazing opportunity to more students like myself. I can speak for everyone that has received it so far, and for the many that will in the future, this scholarship matters, and it changes lives.

Sincerely, Darian Goggin



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## Competitive Skills Scholarship Program – Business

AngleZ Behavioral Health Services provides quality mental health services and co-occurring services to children, adults and families with special needs or behavioral, psychological or intellectual impairments. AngleZ provides in-home support services, outpatient services and community-based services in several counties throughout Maine.



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AngleZ currently employs 75 mental health professionals, including medical doctors, licensed clinicians, Mental Health Rehabilitation (MHRT)/C case managers, Children’s Targeted Case Manager, MHRT/1 Daily Living Skills Staff, MHRT/C Skills Development Staff and BA Behavioral Health Professionals in our HCT (Home and Community Therapy) Program.

Robert Giroux, AngelZ’s Compliance Director first connected with the Competitive Skills Scholarship for Business Program by participating in one of the Department’s no-cost job fairs, which are offered frequently at CareerCenter locations across the state. CareerCenter staff at the job fair talked to Robert about his workforce needs and how CSSP-B might help upskill his entry level workforce to higher skilled, higher paying jobs. AngleZ has enrolled four entry-level workers in CSSP-B to cover the cost of earning their MHRT/C certification.

When asked about his experiences with the CareerCenter and the CSSP-B program, Robert enthusiastically responded: “The job fairs held at the CareerCenters are fantastic! We have hired many, many new employees at the job fairs and have been able to move many from entry level MHRT/1 positions to MHRT/C’s through the CSSP-B program. Our experience with CareerCenter staff has been extremely positive. They are always very helpful in walking us and our employees through the enrollment process. Through CSSP-B, one individual advanced from an entry level MHRT/1 position making \$10.30 per hour as a lead in our Daily Living Skills and Skills Mentoring program, to being a supervisor and is now a Director in our Daily Living Skills and Skills Mentoring program, overseeing 35 people and earning \$18.00 per hour.”

# Looking Ahead

The Bureau of Employment Services continues to work toward the overarching CSSP goal of providing eligible individuals with access to postsecondary education, training for industry-recognized credentials, and support leading to skilled, well-compensated jobs with anticipated high employment demand.

Through the Maine Department of Labor's expanded outreach to individual businesses and industry sectors, the CSSP program, including the CSSP Business and CSSP Bridge programs are helping the State's workforce development system (WDS) to reach several strategic objectives: increasing the relevance of the WDS to employers and using aligned workforce funding to produce an educated and skilled workforce.

According to Educate Maine,<sup>2</sup> 87 % of Maine students graduate from high school in four years, making Maine a standout in the nation. For every 100 students entering high school, 87 will graduate, 55 go to college, 46 return for a second year, and 30 will graduate with a 2 or 4-year degree on time.

68% of CSSP participants exiting the Program between January 2014 and December 2018 successfully earned 102 Associate's degrees, 138 Bachelor's degrees and 255 occupational license/certifications.

While continuing to assist individuals in obtaining Associates and Bachelor's degrees in high-wage in-demand occupations, CSSP assists individuals who choose alternative pathways into the workforce. Shorter-term employer based training resulting in industry recognized credentials or certificates continues to be a path to success for both trainees and businesses. Interest in the Business program continues to grow and fill an ongoing need, enrolling 134 participants in CSSP Business in 2018.

Maine Registered Apprenticeship has expanded to include 21 new Sponsors in 2018. It is expected that as Apprenticeship continues to expand, opportunities to involve CSSP Business will increase. This pathway directly connects participants with training for a portable certificate and immediate employment in high paying jobs and careers while providing necessary support services. It provides students an opportunity to obtain their career and education goals without the typical student debt.

Opportunities, including registered apprenticeships, partnerships with other agencies offering additional sources of funding, education providers, and Career and Technical Education schools will be considered to provide the best opportunities to meet the needs of CSSP participants.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.educatemaine.org/docs/EDME\\_Executive-Summary\\_2018-01.pdf](http://www.educatemaine.org/docs/EDME_Executive-Summary_2018-01.pdf)

# Competitive Skills Scholarship Program – By the Numbers

Total Trainees in 2018 1,061  
 Calendar Year 2018 included the largest number of participants to date.

Expense Summary 2018

Training	\$1,732,336
Support Services and Stipends	\$1,454,964
Case Management, Counseling and Administration	<u>\$1,276,051</u>
Total Expenditures in 2018	\$4,463,351

Revenue Balance as of December 31, 2018 \$3,056,999  
 These funds are obligated for the expected costs for current CSSP participants. Expected costs for Calendar Year 2019 are \$4.8 million. The additional funds will come from Calendar Year 2019 revenue.

Average Cost Per Person

Training	\$1,633
Support and Stipends	\$1,371
Case Management, Counseling and Administration	<u>\$1,203</u>
Total Per Person	\$4,207

Demographics

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Recipients	39%
Income at or below Federal poverty line	70%

While participants must be at 200% or less than the federal poverty level, most participants' income is below the federal poverty level.

Employment Status at Application

Employed	41%
Unemployed	59%

# Conclusion

Maine's unemployment rate dropped below 3 percent in 2018, yet interest and demand for the program continues with an increase in participant enrollment and growing involvement from businesses in need of employing and upskilling entry level workforce to fill their vacancies.

According to the 2018 Education Indicators for Maine,<sup>3</sup> to best serve Maine's expanding workforce, we need to increase the number of Mainer's with postsecondary credentials of value. To achieve an increase in credential attainment, more academic supports must be provided and the price of college needs to be made more affordable for Maine students, allowing and encouraging more students to complete their degrees and certificates.

CSSP was designed to help participants prepare for high-wage, skilled jobs that are in demand by employers. Analysis of participants' training choices compared to projected job openings indicates the program is successfully connecting people with training for jobs that are in demand in Maine. CSSP participants themselves have provided important insights into the critical role that CSSP is playing in helping them succeed.

CSSP is a successful, flexible workforce program, helping to strengthen the Maine economy by helping business meet the demand for skilled workers while offering workers higher wages and better employment outcomes. CSSP is one of the few remaining state-funded programs allowing flexibility to support our state's specific training and employment challenges. The program's benefits go beyond financial, making it possible for low-income individuals begin a supported journey on a career pathway leading to self-sufficiency and a brighter future for themselves and their families.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.educatemaine.org/docs/EducateMaine\\_2018\\_IndicatorReportWEB01.pdf](http://www.educatemaine.org/docs/EducateMaine_2018_IndicatorReportWEB01.pdf)

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