



MAINE DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

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Media Contacts:

Melanie Baillargeon
Director of Communications
Maine State Chamber of Commerce
(207) 215-8430; melanieb@mainechamber.org

Jen Webber
Communications Consultant
Maine State Chamber of Commerce
(207) 939-0213; jwebber3@maine.rr.com

Maine State Chamber and Maine Development Foundation release “Making Maine Work: Preparing Maine’s Workforce”

Fifth report in the Making Maine Work series explores five themes to ensure Mainers are able to fulfill future job needs

Augusta, ME — The Maine State Chamber of Commerce (MSCC) and the Maine Development Foundation (MDF) released “*Making Maine Work: Preparing Maine’s Workforce*” at a press conference on Tuesday, December 16, 2014. The “*Making Maine Work*” series provides strategies for raising incomes and improving productivity on a variety of focused topics. Central to any strategy is an available and skilled workforce.

“Economists agree that Maine’s economic success in the next 20 years will rely largely on its workforce,” said Dana Connors, president of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce. “We need *both* quantity and quality to be successful. The two are undeniably interrelated, which is why this is a priority focus for both the Maine State Chamber and the Maine Development Foundation.”

This most recent report in the *Making Maine Work* series examines the economic implications that the quality of Maine’s workforce in the face of modern economic engines will have on our state. This document serves as a companion to the previous report, “*Making Maine Work: Growing Maine’s Workforce*,” which focused on the quantity of Maine’s workforce in light of a declining and aging population. Together, they work to reinforce the importance of addressing both the quantity of people here and the quality of the skills they offer to the workforce.

“This report contains both interesting data and best practices,” said Dr. Christopher Quinn, President–Maine Campuses of Kaplan University and Chair of the Maine State Chamber’s Workforce Development Committee. “My favorite comes from a study by the McKinsey Center for Government that states, 72% of college and university leaders nationwide believed that graduates were ready for the job market, compared to only 42% of employers. Our greatest opportunity lies in bridging that disconnect.”

The inherent challenges of continually enhancing the quality of Maine’s workforce require a focused effort by all stakeholders. Broadly, the recommendations in “*Preparing Maine’s Workforce*” do not call for the creation of new infrastructure and organization, but for tighter alignment and coordination of efforts under five key themes: stakeholder collaboration and integration; targeted marketing; incentives to catalyze individual and institutional behaviors; competencies and workplace readiness; and, metrics and data-driven decision making. Tangible efforts in the next decade towards goals under each of these themes will assuredly enhance the quality of our workforce, restore our economic competitiveness, and catalyze growth while protecting our values.

“MDF’s strategic focus is a productive workforce that is educated, healthy, innovative, and engaged in the economy and their community,” said Harold Clossey, president and CEO of the Maine Development Foundation. “Ensuring that we have enough skilled workers for the jobs of today and tomorrow is critical to Maine’s economic growth.”

There are many entities and efforts engaged in various aspects of preparing Maine’s workforce, each with a valuable role to play. The goal will now be to ensure that these efforts are coordinated and working cohesively, sharing knowledge and best practices, and increasing awareness, opportunities, and incentives. In addition, the evaluation of basic competencies to determine how well graduates are prepared for the job market is an emerging trend in education and workforce training. Ensuring that we have accurate and meaningful data is a key part of guiding our decision making.

“There is already some excellent work being done in this area by some great organizations,” said Ryan Neale, program director at the Maine Development Foundation. “We’ve had the opportunity to work with many of them in developing this report and look forward to moving these efforts forward in the future.”

This report builds on a number of prior reports released by the Maine State Chamber of Commerce and the Maine Development Foundation as part of its ongoing “*Making Maine Work*” series. A 2010 survey of 1,000 Maine business leaders conducted by the MDF to learn more about the critical issues businesses face revealed that Maine’s loyal and skilled workforce was a top benefit to operating a business in Maine. We need to ensure that it remains so.

Funding for the workforce reports was provided by Kaplan University, the Maine Community Foundation, Unum, Saint Joseph’s College of Maine, the University of New England, Anthem BlueCross BlueShield in Maine, Bangor Savings Bank, and Hannaford.

The full document can be accessed online at <http://www.mainechamber.org/makingmainework.php>.

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About the Making Maine Work Series...

Making Maine Work: Critical Investments for the Maine Economy is a comprehensive action plan for improving productivity, growing the economy, and providing a higher quality of life for all Maine people. Released in July 2010, the original report and recommendations were the result of a joint effort between the Maine State Chamber of Commerce and the Maine Development Foundation. It explored the investments needed to grow the economy and the factors that influence those decisions. Subsequent editions have provided in-depth looks at various issues that affect Maine’s economy – “*The Role of Maine’s Public University System*,” released in December 2010, and “*Investment in Young Children – Real Economic Development*,” release in January 2012.

Along with *Making Maine Work*, MDF published two background reports: *Maine’s Investment Imperative II: Unleashing the Potential*, an in-depth review of more than 100 reports and recommendations on key issues influencing investments in Maine, and the results of the *Investment Imperative Survey* with 1,000 Maine Businesses.

About the Maine State Chamber of Commerce...

As the state’s most influential business advocate, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce works to ensure a business climate in which Maine State Chamber members, large and small, can compete successfully in the local, regional, national, and world marketplaces. As *The Voice of Maine Business*, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce proudly represents a network of 5,000 businesses of all sectors, sizes, and regions. It advocates on their behalf daily before the Legislature, state departments, and various levels of state government.

About the Maine Development Foundation...

The Maine Development Foundation (MDF) is a private, non-partisan membership organization that drives sustainable, long-term economic growth for the State of Maine. MDF’s strategic focus is a productive workforce. We believe that a productive worker is one that is educated, healthy, innovative, and engaged in their community and the economy. MDF stimulates new ideas, develops leaders, and provides common ground for solving problems and advancing issues by empowering leaders; strengthening communities; and, guiding public policy with trusted economic research. Created in statute in 1978, MDF is a unique and trusted non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. MDF works statewide across all sectors.