

The North Star Alliance

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Focus: This revolutionary industry led collaborative, synthesizes business, R&D, education, workforce, and economic development resources to reskill a workforce and launch a new regional economy - coastal Maine.

The industries participating in this project include a vast range of enterprises that make-up or support the Marine Trades and those that utilize advanced composite materials, comprised of: boat building, marine/waterfront infrastructure, marine service and repair, building products, sporting goods, ballistic armor, and more.

Referred to as the “Four Pillars of Economic Development”, the proposed strategy focuses on building capacity and addressing gaps in Workforce Development, Research and Development, Outreach and Market Development, and Capitalization and Infrastructure Development. The North Star Alliance (NSAI) management team works with each of these pillars as they move through defined strategies. The overall profile of each pillar is:

(1) Workforce Development

Develops and delivers just in time applied knowledge and skills to both incumbent and new workforce, utilizing faculty jointly sponsored by industry and education and space within Maine’s businesses, secondary schools, adult education centers, community colleges, and university systems. The team also identifies any existing training resources than can be utilized in conjunction with WIRED funding.

(2) Research and Development

Identifies and prioritizes new industry based research initiatives, leveraging existing R&D resources with the ultimate goal of increasing Maine’s industry focused R&D workforce. These activities are being accomplished through a contractual arrangement with the University of Maine Orono’s Advanced Engineering Wood Products facility.

(3) Outreach and Development

Works to expand new market development initiatives within the boat building and composites industries, extending the reach of Maine brand products into both the domestic and international markets while showcasing career opportunities within these industry sectors.

(4) Capitalization and Infrastructure Development

Engages philanthropic and investment partners throughout the state to develop strategies that will provide capital and management assistance targeted for business and industry growth,

facility improvement and expansion in the targeted industries in order to provide the necessary backdrop for workforce development.

Geographic Area Served: Coastal Maine areas that includes twelve of Maine's 16 counties: Washington, Penobscot, Hancock, Waldo, Knox, Lincoln, Kennebec, Androscoggin, Sagadahoc, Cumberland, York, Piscataquis (eight that are coastal and 4 that are greatly impacted by the closing of the Brunswick naval base)

Participant Age Level: Clients must be of age to be employed.

Funding Sources: Over \$21 million in leveraged resources is brought to this project from the partners who are coming together to make this collaborative work for the industries involved. \$15 million from the first round funding of the US DOL WIRED grants allowed the Governor to begin the work of the collaborative. Also of interest is the collaboration of Maine's North Star alliance Initiative with Southern Maine Community College who submitted a \$2 million Community Based Job Training Grant. The grant will be used to establish a composites training facility in the Brunswick community, the site of the future naval base closing. The collaborative will work in conjunction with the college through the process of creating the composites training curriculum is a world renowned composites training institution.

Key Services Abstract: The lead of industry in the initiative manifests itself in the creation of an industry coordinator position that works in partnership with the professional organizations and agencies that support industry; recruits industry representation to serve as working team members on the Steering Committee as well as within each of the four pillars; but most importantly collaborates with industry to identify and then respond to training and workforce needs as well as the identification and utilization of economic development resources and support that will allow industry to realize the full potential of advancing and applicable technology.

In order to successfully accomplish the overarching goal of the WIRED Project to spur the integration of education, workforce, and economic development systems, Maine's North Star Alliance partners have identified the following six goals:

1. Create high quality, skilled jobs that support the competitiveness of the targeted industries, the income of Maine workers, and a return for the public investment.
2. Expand current markets and develop new ones so that the boat building, composites, and marine trades industries achieve global industry leadership.
3. Transform and build upon the capacity of the public system to nimbly and flexibly support competitive boat building, composites, and marine trade industries that are looking to expand capacity, create and/or improve their workforce, and/or take their technology to the next level.
4. Through advanced training opportunities build on the willingness, ability and skill sets of both the current and future workforce.
5. Ensure that the economic development delivery model is sustainable and can be replicated for other targeted industries and regions.
6. Catalyze innovation through research, development and workforce preparedness that will sustain and improve the global competitiveness of Maine's boatbuilding, composites and marine trades industry.

The North Star Alliance centers on three major industry associations: the Maine Composites Alliance, Maine Built Boats Inc, and the Maine Marine Trade Association, jointly representing over 285 companies across a wide range of manufacturing and service industries who desire to upskill their workforces and expand their markets.

Additional members include the University of Maine, the Maine Community College System, the Maine Technology Institute, Eastern Maine Development Corporation, the Maine Community Foundation, local and regional Workforce Investment Boards, the Governor's Office, and the State Departments of Labor, Economic and Community Development, and Education who bring education initiatives and support for the six goals.

Summary of Key Benefits and Results: A collaborative effort of this size has never been attempted within Maine before so it is a real opportunity to see if the work of various government entities, associations, and nearly 300 businesses can work jointly to achieve goals of revitalizing and expanding a regional economy through innovation.

Key Partner Organization Roster of Maine's North Star Alliance Initiative:

- Brunswick Municipal Government
- Governor's Office of Redevelopment, Reemployment and Business Support
- Harbor Technologies
- Maine Built Boats
- Maine Community Foundation
- Maine Composite Alliance
- Maine Department of Economic and Community Development
- Maine Department of Education
- Maine Department of Labor
- Maine Marine Trades Association
- Maine State Planning Office
- Maine Technology Institute
- Private Industry Representation (individually listed in Attachment , Pillar Membership)
- Solera Capital
- Southern Maine Community College
- University of Maine of Orono, Advanced Engineered Wood Composites Center
- US Department of Labor
- Washington County Community College
- Workforce Development Boards of Aroostook/Washington, Central/Western Maine, Coastal County, and Tri-County

Currently, the Initiative management team is working with both USDOL ETA WIRED staff and several state agencies that already track many components necessary to document the Initiative's progress. A set of standards by which activity can be measured is currently being created. To this end, in addition to acquiring a more concise profile of the targeted industry sector, the management team is working in conjunction with the Workforce Pillar as well as industry representatives to conduct a business visitation with each individual company. An obvious benchmark will be employment and past revenues of each company prior to accessing assistance from the NSAI. Additionally, machinery and equipment costs associated with upgrading labor skill sets and the always desired value of non NSAI leveraging will be included. A major portion of the evaluation process will involve the standard activities associated with workforce development.

By matching benchmarks and standards to periodic monitoring, the management team will be able to better identify when and where the Initiative may be straying or ineffective in its efforts. These findings will then be brought back to the Executive Committee for further evaluation and then if necessary to the Steering Committee for revision. Until this activity is formalized in the near future, management team will continue to capture individual company profiles via a basic database while the Workforce Pillar team tracks individual activity via the already established Career Center system.

Lessons Learned:

Maine's North Star Alliance management team is charged with identifying and then recommending to the Executive Committee a long-term strategy by which to continue the efforts of the Initiative after the grant has closed. This process will be ongoing through the end of the grant period. All NSAI partners will be solicited for their suggestions as well.