



Year One Work Plan - Midyear Update

The first half of the 406 JOBS Year One implementation has yielded significant progress across the 12 priority initiatives. Montana's efforts reflect especially strong activity in apprenticeship expansion, reentry coordination, credential-registry development, workforce storytelling, JMG expansion, and statewide coordination efforts. Additional initiatives have established initial design and continue to build baseline structures for strong progress through the second half of the year.

This update details accomplishments across several of the initiatives, highlighting notable progress through the Year One Workplan's tasks and metrics.

Key Accomplishments by Initiative

Increase Registered Apprenticeship Pathways

Year one tasks focus on expanding registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship pathways across Montana. Work in this area is intended to strengthen direct-to-career opportunities, reduce barriers to employment, and increase employer engagement in workforce training.

- Teacher Apprenticeship Programs were implemented in 28 school districts across the state.
- Created a formal definition for pre-apprenticeship programs.
- Ensured clear links from pre-apprenticeship programs to Registered Apprenticeship pathways for all 21 new high school sponsored pre-apprenticeships created with links to Registered Apprenticeship pathways.
- Expanded apprenticeship outreach and promotion, which contributed to rising participation by employers as apprenticeship sponsors, with 818 sponsors as of July.
- Progress toward metrics:
 - Over 600 new apprentices in the first half of the year
 - 15 new Registered Apprenticeship pathways created through June, surpassing the year one target of 12.
 - Pre-apprenticeship pathways were developed for 5 of the 6 High Priority Sectors.
 - Total pre-apprenticeship participation through the first half of the year is 65% higher than 2025, exceeding the year one target in the first half of the year.

Prepare Workforce for Artificial Intelligence and Automation Opportunities

Year one tasks focus on building a statewide hub for emerging technologies, expanding educator training and stackable credentials, advancing AI guidance and strategic partnerships, supporting business adoption and workforce upskilling, and launching cross-sector communities of practice. Work in this area aims to build statewide AI readiness by expanding educator support and guidance, promoting responsible AI adoption in schools and businesses, and coordinating cross sector training and communities of practice that help Montanans use AI to improve learning, work, and long-term economic opportunity.

- Frontier Learning Lab is operational, delivering educator training and AI literacy tools.
- Chief AI Officer engages with SWIB leadership, leads AI Communities of Practice, and supports broadband expansion (BEAD, SB 330 Task Force).
- State agencies are developing AI purchasing consortia and appropriate use standards.
- SBDC and partners (High Tech Business Alliance, Craton, AGI) are delivering statewide AI training for businesses and professionals.
- Montana University System leads a systemwide AI Task Force and expands access via programs, symposiums, and emerging tech initiatives (e.g., QCore).
- DLI is integrating AI and automation into programs, apprenticeships, grants, and career tools.
- Progress towards metrics:
 - Data collection underway for educator professional development offerings and small business AI trainings; participation rates and district-level AI integration are increasing, with baseline measures in development.

Establish Local Sector Partnerships in High Demand Sectors

Year one tasks focus on organizing regional, employer led sector partnerships in each MACo region, training and deploying workforce intermediaries, issuing sector reports with actionable data, and developing public private models to fund and implement local sector strategies. Work in this area aims to create sustainable, community-based talent pipelines by increasing regular employer engagement with the workforce system, aligning education and training with demonstrated industry needs, and expanding sector-based strategies that improve access to wraparound services and quality careers in Montana's high demand industries.

- Designed Montana-specific Local Sector Partnership Model aligned to USDOL framework.
- Identified regional approach to begin training intermediaries across the state.
- Published reports for 4 of 6 High Demand Sectors
- Progress towards metrics:
 - Baseline data development underway

Address Child Care Shortages to Enable Labor Force Growth

Year one tasks focus on addressing childcare access, affordability, and workforce challenges that limit labor force participation in Montana. Work in this area links childcare workforce strategies, credentialing, and sector partnership approaches to broader employment and economic growth goals.

- Provided workforce representation on the Early Childhood Special Revenue Account and Oversight Board, with board allocating \$8.5 million in funding to deliver critical financial resources to childcare providers across the state through three grant programs.
- Child Development Associate Credential adopted on the Montana Credential Registry.
- Progress towards metrics:
 - Baseline data development underway

Reduce Barriers to Employment Through Disability Empowerment

Year one tasks focus on advancing Employment First strategies and expanding opportunities for Montanans with disabilities. Work in this area is intended to reduce barriers, strengthen referrals, and improve access to apprenticeship and other workforce pathways for Vocational Rehabilitation program participants.

- Significantly increased use of Registered Apprenticeship among Vocational Rehabilitation participants.
- Progress towards metrics:
 - 610 total vocational rehabilitation participants employed one year after exit, 47 participants away from the goal of a 10% increase over the past program year.
 - Seven Vocational Rehabilitation participants in Registered Apprenticeships, up from 0 in the prior program year.

Highlight Military Service & Support Veteran Transitions

Year one tasks focus on strengthening and better coordinating services that support veterans and transitioning service members in finding civilian employment and training opportunities. Work in this area aims to reduce barriers to civilian employment for veterans by strengthening coordinated transition services, improving military-to-civilian skill mapping and employer engagement, and ensuring veterans can connect to quality careers and needed training across Montana's workforce system.

- Completed statewide geographic analysis of veteran employment services to identify gaps and access disparities.
- Initiated mapping of veteran-serving programs, including employment services and business supports.

- Evaluated JVSG service delivery model to identify improvements in service quality and outcomes.
- Began planning stages for a statewide Veteran’s Summit to convene key partners and stakeholders.

Establish Office of Reentry Programs

Year one tasks focus on establishing the Office of Reentry and improving coordination of reentry services to supporting stronger employment outcomes for people leaving incarceration. Work in this area aims to reduce recidivism and employment barriers through greater connections to workforce programs.

- Stood up the Office of Reentry, with the OOR Director hired September 2025 and a Reentry Program Support Specialist onboarded in March 2026.
- Rolled out an updated referral process for individuals exiting MT COR facilities into Job Service workforce programs in January 2026 with Montana State Prison, Montana Women's Prison, and Pine Hills Correctional facility participating.
- Published the first Office of Reentry report and provided to the legislature July 1. Available digitally at lmi.my.gov/publications.
- Progress towards metrics:
 - Number of total WIOA participants with a record of criminal arrest or conviction in the first half of 2026 is nearly double the number of participants from the entire previous year.
 - Improved coordination illustrated through new onsite Job Service staffing pilot in Kalispell pre-release facility, coordinated training for residents, exploration of co-location opportunities, and the new referral process between Corrections and Job Service.
 - Coordination on data sharing across state agencies to improve metrics reporting.

Launch Statewide Credential Registry

Year one tasks focus on creating a statewide credential registry of industry-recognized credentials, work-based learning, and dual enrollment opportunities. Work in this area is intended to align education with validated credentials and improve long-term tracking of workforce outcomes tied to credentials.

- The initial industry recognized credential list was published 12/1/2025 and is available to search at <https://montanaworks.gov/credential-registry-list/>.
- Draft rules for work-based learning experiences, initial list, and updated industry recognized credential lists prepared for rulemaking in Summer 2026.
- Progress toward metrics:

- Release of second registry rulemaking public comment period scheduled for release in early August.
- Data enhancement in Infinite Campus SIS for tracking and reporting, and coordination between DLI and OPI on reporting/tracking for credential attainment.

Modernize Career Exploration Tools

Year one tasks included assessing existing and prospective tools, interoperability capabilities, and funding opportunities. Additional tasks included alignment across agencies and initial stakeholder engagement. Work in this area is intended to support development of a fully functional, AI-enabled Talent Marketplace

- Applied for funding across 3 grant programs, with some funding already successfully secured.
- Partnered with C-BEN for technical support in Talent Marketplace development strategy
- Conducted vendor discovery for 15 vendors in the career exploration, LER, job board/job aggregator, resume and interview assistance, ETPL and Workforce Pell, and LMI spaces- nearly all using ai-enabled technology.
- Began CTO challenge working groups as part of funding competition including staff from DLI, OCHE, and the Governor's office.
- Progress toward metrics:
 - User engagement baseline established
 - Conducted vendor discovery for 15 vendors in the career exploration, LER, job board/job aggregator, resume and interview assistance, ETPL and Workforce Pell, and LMI spaces- nearly all using ai-enabled technology.

Expand Jobs for Montana's Graduates & Empowered Sites

Year one tasks focus on expanding Jobs for Montana's Graduates and Empowered as complementary programs that strengthen employability, leadership, and entrepreneurship skills for young people. Work in this area is intended to expand access to these programs and increase recognition of their value among educators and employers.

- First half of the year activity has focused on expanding JMG into more schools across Montana, seeing 28 new sites added through June 2026.
- Raised awareness of JMG and value of the program through the JAG Workforce Credential, which was endorsed by the Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM).
- Progress towards metrics:
 - 28 new JMG sites added through June 2026, with 10 of the new sites teaching Empowered curriculum alongside JMG
 - JMG Summer Educator Training registration is up 94% from 2025.
 - Piloted the JAG Workforce Readiness Credential, demonstrating employer recognition through endorsement by the Society for Human Resource Managers (SHRM).

Tell the Story of Workforce in Montana

Year one tasks focus on strengthening statewide communication about workforce opportunities, promising practices, and successful career pathways in Montana. Work in this area uses storytelling, web content, and shared materials to reinforce work as a pathway to prosperity and expand awareness of workforce programs.

- Completed development of Workforce Warriors poster series, including videos, with content available on dli.mt.gov and 406JOBS.mt.gov with full launch to schools planned for the second half of the year.
- Developed and launched 406JOBS.mt.gov, to serve as a repository for workforce programs content.
- Health Careers talent attraction work is underway, serving as a pilot and test to apply across other sectors.
- Progress toward metrics:
 - Posters, website, socials added/expanded.

Improve System Leadership, Coordination, & Communication

Year one tasks focus on modernizing Montana's workforce system by improving interagency coordination, reducing duplication, and creating a more efficient entry point for employers and workers. Work in this area emphasizes alignment across state plans and programs, skills-based strategies, and stronger communication among agencies and partners.

- In April 2026, submitted Montana's first combined WIOA-Perkins combined state plan during the 2026-2028 mid-cycle update process. The plan has received conditional approval pending final edits.
- Workforce Pell implementation framework approved during the Spring SWIB meeting.
- SWIB representation now includes members and liaisons from Labor and Industry, Public Health and Human Services, the Commissioner of Higher Education, Tribal Colleges, the Office of Public Instruction, Corrections, and Commerce.
- Interagency collaboration convenings outlined with SWIB feedback and set to begin in September.
- Progress toward metrics:
 - Combined WIOA/Perkins State Plan submitted and conditionally approved for PYs 2026 and 2027.
 - State job postings transitioning to skills-based hiring including all job postings at DLI.
 - Medicaid Community Engagement Requirement process in place at DLI to support individuals on Medicaid expansion in connecting to employment opportunities.