



FocusMaine Completes Its 10-year Economic Development Initiative and Transitions Programs to Partners

April 8, 2026 — Portland, ME — FocusMaine, a 10-year catalytic initiative to coordinate Maine's economic development ecosystem, catalyze the creation of jobs, and increase sales outside the state to attract new private sector dollars into the Maine economy, will be complete at the end of 2026. The organization focused on growing Maine's food and life sciences sectors, both of which are tied to Maine assets and serve growing global markets, as well as the need to build Maine's workforce.

Since 2017, FocusMaine has invested its resources into economic development organizations to mutually design and deliver programs aimed at the entrepreneurs, companies and public policies in those focus areas. Notably, the economic development partners in the FocusMaine network will continue to deliver these programs after FocusMaine's tenure. Today, those partners are significantly more coordinated and interconnected, which will help companies and entrepreneurs in the targeted sectors continue to grow in the years to come.

The suite of programs offered through the partners of the FocusMaine initiative catalyzed the creation of over 1,500 new direct, indirect, and induced jobs; the creation of the Maine Life Sciences Center at the Maine Technology Institute (MTI), premier aquaculture apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, and enrolled nearly 3,700 interns working in 140 employer organizations in Maine Career Catalyst.

FocusMaine's distinctive economic development model harnessed the strengths of existing organizations, aligning efforts across business development and workforce systems to improve efficiency and close critical gaps for emerging companies and entrepreneurs in Maine's food and life sciences sectors. These sectors were intentionally selected based on their strong potential for export-driven revenue growth and Maine's competitive advantages related to those sectors. From the outset, FocusMaine was designed as a catalytic initiative, with the intention that through sustained investment, would foster enduring collaborations and deliver impact well beyond the organization itself.

"We are deeply grateful to our partners, funders, and friends who have believed in the unique approach of FocusMaine and helped make all this possible," says Andrea Cianchette Maker, President, Co-Chair, and Co-Founder of FocusMaine. "This year, as we approach the completion of our initiative, we are focusing on helping our valued partners maintain programmatic momentum in the years ahead. We are confident that our partners have the skills and relationships to carry the mission forward."

FocusMaine's partner network includes CEI, the Maine Aquaculture Association, Maine Center for Entrepreneurs, New England Ocean Cluster, BioME, The Maine Life Sciences Center,

Northeastern University's Roux Institute, and Educate Maine. Other collaborators include the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Maine & Co, Live and Work in Maine, the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development, the Maine Development Foundation, the Maine Food Convergence, and SEA Maine.

"As FocusMaine concludes a decade of catalytic work, its legacy is visible in the businesses that are growing, the jobs being created, and the stronger innovation ecosystem flourishing across Maine," says Tom Rainey, President of Maine Center for Entrepreneurs. "We are deeply grateful for FocusMaine's partnership, leadership, and belief in Maine entrepreneurs. The impact of this work will continue to ripple through Maine's economy for years to come, and we are proud to have been part of building that foundation together."

In 2026, FocusMaine is focused on creating sustainability of its impacts by transitioning proven, metrics-driven programs to partner organizations, where they are positioned to continue scaling and delivering long-term value for Maine's economy.

"It is clear by the achievements of our partners and program participants that the FocusMaine model is making a difference," says FocusMaine Co-Chair and Co-Founder Michael Dubyak. "It takes coordinated leadership and patience to generate tangible economic impacts. With our partners now positioned to sustain long-term collaborative impacts, we are seeing Maine enter a new, stronger era of economic growth and opportunity, especially in the FocusMaine sectors."

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Celebrating 10 Years of Past and Present Partners

Accelerating the Food Sector

- Tastemakers Grant Program
- Cultivator Business Accelerator
- MarketShare Business Accelerator
- SmartLaunch CPG
- Aquaculture Business Planning
- Aquaculture Communications
- Aquaculture Ambassador Program
- Seafood Promotional Council
- Maine Farmed Seafood Coalition
- *Inclusion in the Blue Economy
- *The Hatchery

“Together, we strengthened the state’s food sector by fueling innovation, supporting business expansion and helping create good jobs that expanded economic opportunity for Maine people.”

— Betsy Biemann, CEO,
Coastal Enterprises Inc.



Growing the Life Sciences Sector

- Life Sciences Advocacy Efforts
- Maine Life Sciences Media Asset Library
- Maine Life Sciences Impact Forum
- Maine Life Sciences Center

“FocusMaine’s willingness to invest early, align diverse stakeholders, and consistently advocate for infrastructure and policy support created the momentum and credibility that ultimately led to the establishment of MLSC.”

— Sarah Delmar, Director,
Maine Life Sciences Center



Strengthening Our Workforce

- Maine Career Catalyst
- Equity in Internships Program (EQUIP)
- Aquaculture Pioneers and Apprenticeship Programs
- *Blue Economy Gateway

“Educate Maine’s goal, with FocusMaine’s support, has been to recruit and retain employees to solid careers in our state. In a recent survey of MCC alumni, a significant number say they would consider moving to/staying in Maine for work”

— Kate Howell, Director of Workforce
Partnerships, Educate Maine



**New England Ocean Cluster Programs supported by FocusMaine.*



FocusMaine programs and partners are **delivering measurable impact** across key groups:

Interns

3,680 interns have participated in Maine Career Catalyst, including 60 through Aquaculture Pioneers

Each year, roughly **4 out of 5** participants report that there are viable career opportunities in Maine

70–80% of participants finish the summer with an interest in starting or continuing their careers in Maine

These interns were hosted at approximately **140 different employers**

Entrepreneurs and Businesses

More than **330** entrepreneurs and businesses have participated in FocusMaine business development

80 participants have engaged 3–12 times, either across multiple programs or through multi-year involvement

The Tastemakers Grant has awarded over **\$750,000 in grants** of up to \$25,000 to nearly 70 companies

Business growth supported by FocusMaine has generated **\$332.0 million** in total sales

In 2025, **65% of reporting participants** applied for and received growth funding

Among 2025 respondents:

- **58%** launched a new product
- **55%** entered a new market or sales channel
- **47%** adopted a new process or technology

Workers

From 2018–2025, participating businesses reported adding 725 direct jobs, or a total of **1,541 jobs** (including direct, indirect and induced jobs) statewide

These jobs generated **\$92.8 million in total earnings**, averaging **\$60,192 per job**

Every \$4,512 of FocusMaine program investment resulted in one job created

Industry Impact

FocusMaine was instrumental in establishing the Maine Life Sciences Center at Maine Technology Institute. FocusMaine sectors outpaced Maine's overall economy in employment growth from 2019 to 2025, reinforcing the strength of sector selection and program strategy.

**FOCUS
MAINE**

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FOCUSMAINE Program Transitions

FOCUSMAINE Programs

Future Stewards

Life Sciences Initiative



Maine Life Sciences Center

Cultivator & MarketShare Accelerators



MAINE CENTER
FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Tastemakers Financing



Coastal Enterprises, Inc.

Aquaculture Programs



MAINE
AQUACULTURE
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Maine Seafood Promotional Council



CONNECTING PEOPLE
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Aquaculture Pioneers and Apprenticeships

