



## **At Camden Rotary: How Businesses and Colleges Collaborate on Training for Skilled Jobs**

According to a recent presentation at the Camden Rotary Club, Mainers have excellent opportunities to prepare for skills jobs at little or no cost.

Charlie Collins, deputy executive director of workforce training for the Maine Community College System (MCCS), told how the colleges collaborate with businesses and trades associations to prepare new and incumbent workers for high-quality jobs.

Based at the [Harold Alfond Center for the Advancement of Maine's Workforce](#), Collins manages the Maine Quality Centers (MQC) program, the workforce training arm of MCCS. He described programs ranging from apprenticeships and short-term certificate courses to one-year certificates, and two-year degrees, highlighting developments such as these:

MQC provides grants to employers who want to train new or current employees. To date, this program has enabled more than 28,000 Mainers at 289 Maine businesses to upgrade their skills or train for new positions.

This summer, 80 businesses and industry associations representing almost 100,000 workers joined the Maine Workforce Development Compact with MQC. This collaboration helps unemployed and underemployed find employment and provide training jobs going unfilled for lack of skilled workers.

MCCS will use federal American Recovery Plan (ARP) funds to train workers for jobs in healthcare, computer technology, trades such as high-pressure boiler operation and marine engine repair, manufacturing, hospitality, education, and the green economy.

Employers are offering "earn and learn" programs with help from MQC grants. For example, Southern Maine Community College, in partnership with Bath Iron Works, provides free training to those unskilled for entry-level jobs. Participants receive a \$500 weekly stipend as they prepare for jobs at BIW. Within four weeks of starting that training, they can earn between \$18-\$21 as BIW employees and sign up for further training and apprenticeships to further build their skills. Workers can acquire industry-recognized credentials, digital badges, and college credits at little or no cost.

MQC collaborates with employers to tailor training programs to their specific needs – such as upskilling Certified Nursing Assistants. Many of these training programs are offered at work. Through the Maine Apprenticeship Program (MAP), new or existing employees can receive on-the-job learning and related classroom instruction.

Collins's talk was one in a series about economic and workforce development. In addition to presentations on workforce education and training, the series has addressed challenges and potential solutions to other workforce-related issues such as housing and childcare. In hosting these presentations, the club is seeking ways to improve opportunities for people in the Midcoast. All the presentations are available for viewing in the club's [library of economic and workforce development presentations](#).

Camden Rotary Club holds hybrid meets at noon on Tuesdays. Members and guests can gather at the First Congregational Church on Elm Street or attend via Zoom. See [www.camdenrotary.org](http://www.camdenrotary.org) for more information.