

Workforce Development Research Project - Quarterly Update

April 2026

Learning Community

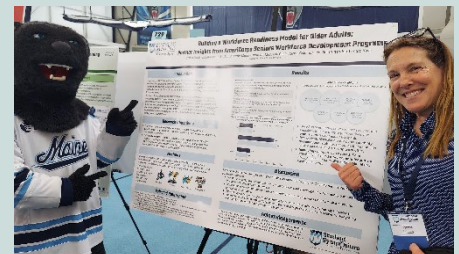
- The Learning Community held its quarterly meeting on March 30, 2026, featuring updates from AmeriCorps Program Officer, Christine Mulvin. She encouraged WFD grantees to reach out if they need grant close-out guidance and reminded program staff about the [AmeriCorps Seniors Training Hub](#).
- Dr. Cal Halvorsen of Washington University's Brown School of Social Work and a member of the project Advisory Committee (AC), shared insights from his research on the value of work and volunteerism for older adults confirming that volunteering and fair employment provide significant health and social benefits for many older adults.
- UMaine's WFD Project Manager, Dr. Rachel Coleman, provided a brief update on the 2025 partner survey results that illustrate the diversity across WFD program partners. Partners reported that participants brought new perspectives, greater commitment and reliability, and past work and life experiences to the training, volunteer, or employment activity.

Advisory Committee

- The project's Advisory Committee (AC) met on March 17, 2026, and discussed project updates, including preliminary findings across the 55 partner organization surveys received in 2024 and 2025.
- The AC and project team discussed implications for survey findings including the resources that may be needed to help project partners and program sites.
- The AC and the project staff also discussed the experience of technology use in the partner organizations, considering the tension between adapting to the limited use of tech by some older adults and encouraging continued digital education.

Research Activities

- The research team is currently cleaning and analyzing 2025 survey data and compiling survey charts and graphs and comparing them with the prior 2024 survey results. The team has nearly completed coding of a large body of qualitative data and has begun writing up summaries of key themes and subthemes.
- The five existing project tip sheets have been updated with a new graphic design template and there are three new tip sheets under development on topics related to emerging project findings: technology in WFD, older adult learners, and WFD partner attributes.
- The Porter-Leath and The HAP Foundation programs completed their annual interviews in February adding to a growing body of data and deepening our understanding of the on-the-ground experience.
- The team submitted a presentation abstract to the Gerontological Society of America and is awaiting response. Project team member, Cynthia Cushing, submitted a WFD poster for the UMaine Student Symposium.



Site Visits

- Project Director, Mary Lou Ciolfi, and graduate research assistant, Cynthia Cushing, will conduct the final two program site visits with a visit to Lifespan, in upstate New York, and University of Chicago's C4P program, the first week in May. Research staff will conduct focus groups with both programs and key informant interviews with program staff and partner organizations.

Contact Project Director, Mary Lou Ciolfi, with any questions, comments, or requests
marylou.ciolfi@maine.edu