

# Coastal Operators Group (COG) Meeting

## Minutes

January 28, 2026

2:00 – 3:00 PM

Agenda Item	Notes	Next Steps
<p>Welcome and Review 12/17/25 Meeting Minutes</p>	<p>In attendance:                      Joy Rodrigue (Workforce Solutions)                      Jeff Martinelli (Workforce Solutions)                      Allen Lambert (Adult Ed Hub 7)                      Barb Stoddard (Adult Ed Hub 8/New Mainers Resource Center)                      Linda Greer (Adult Ed Hub 9)                      Kim Desso (MDOL Vocational Rehabilitation)                      David Grima (MDOL Bureau of Employment Services)                      Robert Ducharme (MDOL Bureau of Employment Services)                      Rene Smith (MDOL Bureau of Employment Services)                      Amy Geren (OSO / Catherine Cutler Institute, USM)</p>	<p>Post approved minutes to CCWI's website:  <a href="https://www.coastalcourties.org/board-operations/">https://www.coastalcourties.org/board-operations/</a> → One-Stop Operator → Coastal Operator Group</p>
<p>1. Updates from the group</p>	<p><b>Barb:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance at PAE has been very low - moved to hybrid teaching</li> <li>• NMRC Licensing guides will be published within a week</li> <li>• MDOL speaker coming to PAE on March 6 to speak about labor laws and worker rights</li> <li>• MCCS construction programming will be offered this spring                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Free Advanced Construction Institute (carpentry-focused) at SMCC from Jan through April (3 programs: roofing, stair framing and millwork)</li> <li>○ Construction Immersion Program through AGC of Maine - March through June                                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Auburn, PI, Fairfield, Bangor, Calais</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Alford Scholarship Program - in addition to what's available for compact members, 50% off tuition for up to 2 classes per semester (6 per year), \$212 per course</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Portland Professional Connections program is restarting next month                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mentoring and social network building</li> <li>○ Workshops for job seekers</li> <li>○ PPC is a collaborative initiative that helps Portland's highly skilled individuals from a range of cultural and professional experiences build meaningful</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Portland Professional Connections info is here:  <a href="https://www.portlandofportunity.com/portlandprofessionalconnections">https://www.portlandofportunity.com/portlandprofessionalconnections</a></p>

	<p>relationships with local leaders and grow their careers in the Greater Portland area. Connectees are paired with Connectors through the Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce and their network of experienced business and civic leaders from the Greater Portland area. Over a series of informal conversations, participants share insights, stories, and strategies for navigating the local job market. Each Connector commits to introducing their Connectee to at least three new contacts within their professional network. Participants must hold a valid work permit and have a high intermediate/low advanced level of English. You can learn more about the program here. Applications are being accepted until January 26 for the first cohort. The program will also offer a Rising Talent program that will offer job seeker professional development workshops - this part of the program begins in February.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NMRC/PAE Workforce Department are offering multiple sessions for student mock interviews</li> <li>• Lola from DOL is on site on Wednesday afternoons for office hours and job seeker workshops</li> </ul> <p><b>Allen:</b> For about 3 weeks have discontinued in-person language learning classes. Doing remote learning – COVID experience has been helpful for current environment. Trying to keep up where classes are being held. Classes are in 2-week increments.</p> <p><b>Linda:</b> Moved to flexible offerings, including tutoring one-on-one, but they are not completely remote. Classes haven't been good on numbers. Workforce is strengthening. More people are looking to up their skills and they are doing what people need. Workforce in conjunction with Walmart was a well-timed curriculum. Helpful to retail.</p> <p><b>Kim:</b> Tightening labor market shows – they are getting quality candidates. They have hired RC2 &amp; RC1. Every 1<sup>st</sup> Wed- job fair from 12:00 – 12:30. In-person Vocational Rehab consultations offered. All based individually &amp; based on goals. Virtual orientation 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday for both job seeker and employer customers as well.</p> <p><b>Rene:</b> Hiring event Job Fair. Next week Wednesday (Feb 4<sup>th</sup>) from 9-12. Have about a dozen employers. Skeptical about how many will show up. Had visitors last week. Every Thursday 9-3 Unemployment services is available for assistance on site. Billyrae has decided not to stay on and they are hiring for an assistant manager again.</p> <p><b>Robert:</b> Events in Springvale and Biddeford coming up. Good feedback from employers recently.</p> <p><b>Jeff:</b> Finished training with adult-eds. Preliminary Summer Cohort – Farm Field program in Late March and grounds for Spring &amp; Summer. Amy asked if Workforce Solutions is involved with</p>	
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	<p>Regional Care Teams – she connected EMDC from CWMWDB service area for a request from this team. Jeff is connected to these meetings.</p> <p><b>Joy:</b> Closing out Healthcare Grant. Life Navigators –have a list for new Mainers if gone from home. Resources (who to take care of cat, what will happen to car, etc.)</p> <p><b>David:</b> Have found employer who is impacted by loss of workers who are terrified and not going to work. Wanting to know what to do. Hiring Temps so workers remain safe. Rockland Career Center is mostly helping people with unemployment, primary job search.</p> <p><b>Rene:</b> (In response to question about if workers can get unemployment benefits.) Probably not.</p> <p><b>David:</b> Employers are putting them on temporary lay-off.</p>	
2. One-Stop Operator Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MOU Amendment has been approved by all signatories and the updated version is posted to CCWI’s website: <a href="https://www.coastalcounties.org/resources/">https://www.coastalcounties.org/resources/</a> → Publications → <a href="#">CCWI Local Area MOU 2025-2028 (Amended December 2025)</a></li> <li>• The One-Stop Center certification process will be due next year. In preparation, Amy will work with the core partners (Titles I, II, III, and IV) to update the process.</li> </ul>	
3. Business Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USM’s Career &amp; Employment Hub is hosting one of two annual job and internship fairs on 3/5/26, 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM. The event will be held at the Sullivan gym on the Portland campus and is open to the community. This is a good opportunity to engage with employers; there could be an opportunity to table at the event to meet the needs of eligible USM and SMCC students.</li> <li>• The ClimateWork Maine Summit on Maine's Economy will be held on 3/19/26 at Thompson’s Point in Portland. Local workforce boards will not have a table. Rene was not sure if BES will be tabling at the event.</li> </ul>	
Adjourn		2:33

Next Meeting:  
**February 25, 2026 @ 2:00PM**