



## *Access to Education Goal:*

*All Maine people, including adult learners and other nontraditional students, are able to complete a degree or certificate program to maximize their potential.*

Why this issue is important: Jobs in Maine increasingly require advanced skills and training. Today, only 42% of Mainers hold post-secondary education and/or workforce credentials. Experts agree that to meet 2025 workforce needs, 60% of Maine adults will need a post-secondary education qualification—whether it's a college degree or workplace certificate. Around 200,000 Mainers have some college or training credits, but did not complete their program of study because of financial barriers and/or family responsibilities. Most of these adults are working below their ability. This limits them, their families, and our state's economy.

What we learned: In recent years, public understanding has increased regarding the importance of supporting post-secondary degree and credential attainment to close gaps between worker skills and industry needs. The *MaineSpark* initiative, led by a coalition that includes MaineCF and education and business leaders, has adopted the 60% by 2025 goal. Success will require increasing financial supports. The time is right to turn understanding into action.

Our vision: Maine people understand the importance of continuing their education beyond high school. Supports and financial incentives exist to allow them to reach their post-secondary goals. By 2025, more than 60% of Maine adults possess a post-secondary degree or certificate. The post-secondary education field is focused on achieving the 60% goal and has the resources and knowledge to support adult students.

### Our strategies:

**MaineCF will help lead *MaineSpark's* steering committee work** as the partnership builds public support and connects students with services to reach the goal of 60% degree or certificate attainment by 2025. We will provide the committee a grassroots understanding of needs and keep the focus on outcomes.

**We will provide leadership and funding for *MaineSpark's* Adult Promise Program**, which offers information, support, and resources for those looking to start or finish a degree or certificate, change careers, or learn a new trade or skill. We will provide scholarship support for participants in the Adult Promise Program through our Adult College Completion Fund.

**We will fund professional development for administrators who support adults returning to school.** We will support training opportunities for student service professionals, such as those who work in Adult Education.

**We will advocate for adult learners** with other funders and with those working within the post-secondary education field.

How you can help:

Give to the **Access to Education Fund** at MaineCF to advance activities, including:

- **Grantmaking**—supporting statewide post-secondary initiatives such as *MaineSpark* and the Adult Promise Program.
- **Emergency Funding**—providing funds for campuses to help adults stay in school when non-academic emergencies such as transportation or child care interruptions place adult learners at risk of dropping out from post-secondary programs.
- **Peer-to-Peer Learning**—convening staff from post-secondary institutions to share promising student support practices.
- **Professional Development Support**—helping student service organizations so they can better help adult learners return to college.

You can also give to MaineCF's **Adult College Completion Fund**, which offers direct financial supports that help adults offset costs of returning to college, including tuition and living expenses. And you can establish your own **adult learner scholarship** fund.

*If you would like more background information about MaineCF's goal to increase access to education, please contact Director of Educational Initiatives Cherie Galyean at [cgalyean@mainecf.org](mailto:cgalyean@mainecf.org) or 207-412-2017.*