

Talent Readiness—New England

Workforce Development Leads Meeting: Outcomes and Action Plans

October 1, 2026 | York County Community College, Wells, Maine

Executive Summary

Talent Readiness—New England (TRNE) brings seven public higher education systems across six states together with industry partners to address shared workforce challenges in healthcare and advanced manufacturing. Launched in 2025, the initiative strengthens regional economic competitiveness and expands career preparation and employment opportunities through joint action.

At TRNE's first Workforce Development Leads Meeting in Wells on October 1, system, industry, and partner representatives established two sector action plans:

- **Healthcare:** Gather regional workforce evidence, select three priority occupations, and identify barriers to training and employment. This work will inform further next steps and prepare for a TRNE Healthcare Metrics Academy in 2027, subject to funding.
- **Advanced manufacturing:** Establish priority workforce needs, initially focusing on defense manufacturing, validate findings with employers, and compare those needs with participating systems' education and training offerings. The analysis will prepare the group for a presentation to regional employers in early 2027.

NASH serves as TRNE's secretariat, coordinating implementation, mobilizing evidence and partner expertise, scoping and securing resources, and expanding the partnership base. System workforce development leads (WFDLs), industry representatives, and supporting partners will advance the plans through an initial 90-day cycle, with a progress review in mid-November.

NASH will convene sector follow-up discussions before the end of October to refine scope, confirm responsibilities, and identify the support participants need.

Participants are asked to review the action plans and provide corrections, proposed contributions, and support requests by October 23, 2026.

Please note that "Workforce development leads" refers to system representatives coordinating their systems' involvement in TRNE. Sector "working groups" include the system, industry, and partner representatives advancing each plan. Named task owners and working group membership will be confirmed with NASH during the initial 30-day period.

A Regional Framework for Action

TRNE is co-designed by NASH member systems and industry partners to address workforce challenges that benefit from regional collaboration. Working together, systems can draw on complementary training assets, industry relationships, and evidence to expand opportunities for learners and respond to regional workforce needs.

The June 25, 2026, Providence Leadership Forum established the mandate for this work. The Wells meeting translated that mandate into sector action plans, drawing on the Power of Systems to organize shared work across New England.

TRNE proposes the following longer-term goal:

By 2035, every learner served by a TRNE system will have access to career preparation informed by workforce evidence and meaningful employer participation, strengthened by regional collaboration that expands systems' capacity to meet their states' workforce needs.

We thank the Maine Community College System for hosting this first WFDL meeting at York County Community College. We also thank President David Daigler, President Michael Fischer, Chancellor Dannel P. Malloy, and Commissioner Shannon Gilkey for their participation and ongoing leadership in advancing regional collaboration.

From Evidence to Action

Following the Providence Leadership Forum in June, NASH, with Waymark Analytics, developed a stakeholder survey to identify shared workforce constraints and opportunities for regional action. Preliminary findings identified clinical placement capacity, shared workforce measures and data capacity, and peer exchange among system workforce leaders as leading opportunities. They also emphasized employer involvement, financial support for workplace learning, and collaboration responsive to state and local needs.

At the Wells meeting, WFDLs, industry representatives, and partners used these findings alongside regional labor-market evidence to develop the two sector plans. Waymark Analytics presented the preliminary survey findings; SHEEO contributed policy expertise and national examples; and Education Design Lab facilitated the asset-mapping and planning exercises. The appendix records the assets, barriers, and opportunities identified through those exercises.

NASH will coordinate contributions from Education Design Lab, SHEEO, Education Strategy Group, NEBHE, BHEF, Waymark Analytics, and other partners to support implementation of the sector action plans and avoid duplicative requests to participating systems and employers.

NASH is also establishing a dedicated TRNE hub on its online platform to consolidate project materials and support communication among participants. Access instructions will follow as the hub becomes available.

Next Steps in Healthcare

The healthcare working group has committed to gathering state workforce evidence and selecting three priority occupations to focus regional action on barriers to training and employment. The group will examine how licensure, accreditation, clinical placement, hospital credentialing, and other industry requirements affect entry into and progression through these occupations.

Occupation selection will consider recruitment needs, available workforce supply, projected shortages, and opportunities for regional action, including in both high-volume roles and smaller occupations that remain difficult to fill. Participants identified nursing assisting and medical assisting as possible occupations, alongside roles in dental care and behavioral and mental health. The evidence review will guide the final selection.

NASH will convene the healthcare group before the end of October to refine the work and confirm contributions. NASH and other partners will support the tasks below.

Immediate Tasks | Healthcare | First 30 Days

For system workforce development leads

- ☐ Confirm your system's participation and nominate additional colleagues, employers, or partners.

For healthcare working group members — before the mid-November check-in

With support from NASH and other partners:

- ☐ Identify existing workforce data and sources. These may include hospital associations, non-hospital healthcare employers, workforce boards, labor-market information, and Rural Health Transformation working groups.
- ☐ Contribute available evidence on vacancies, retirements, recruitment difficulties, and current and projected staffing needs.

For NASH

- ☐ Convene the healthcare group before the end of October to refine scope, confirm responsibilities, and identify support needs.
- ☐ Confirm how and when members should submit evidence, and coordinate additional data and partner support.
- ☐ Scope support for Northern Light's workforce data request and its contribution to TRNE's regional evidence base.
- ☐ Follow up with VSCU on Vermont's simulation technology and public-funding experience.
- ☐ Work with systems and SHEEO to identify regulators and accreditors for the next TRNE WFDL meeting.

30/60/90-Day Action Plan

Stage	Actions and intended outputs	Responsibility
First 30 days	Confirm participation, responsibilities, data sources, and assistance needed. Begin gathering existing workforce evidence for review in mid-November.	WFDLs and healthcare working group members, supported by NASH and contributing partners.
By 60 days	Compare contributions, identify evidence gaps, and agree criteria for selecting three occupations. At the mid-November review, discuss the intended audience and scope of subsequent analysis.	Healthcare working group, with NASH coordinating analytical and partner support.

Stage	Actions and intended outputs	Responsibility
By 90 days	Select three priority occupations and identify the barriers, decision-makers, and next steps for regional action. Prepare for a proposed 2027 Healthcare Metrics Academy, subject to funding.	Healthcare working group, supported by NASH, systems, industry, and relevant partners.

The Metrics Academy will provide a potential next phase for joint work on healthcare training capacity and learner progression. The initial evidence gathering and occupation selection will inform its scope.

TRNE will also bring relevant authorities and other interested parties into the work. Concord Hospital Health System and other participants emphasized the importance of involving regulatory bodies in developing practical recommendations.

Next Steps in Advanced Manufacturing

The Wells advanced manufacturing working group agreed to establish priority occupational and skill needs, initially focusing on defense manufacturing, including submarine and surface-ship work. The group will validate employer needs, compare them with existing education and training offerings, and identify gaps that regional collaboration could address.

The group aims to prepare an initial analysis of regional workforce needs and training capacity for presentation to regional employers in early 2027. This discussion will provide an opportunity to validate findings and identify priorities for further collaboration.

NASH will convene an October scoping meeting with the sector group and relevant partners to refine the goal, initial deliverable, evidence needs, and responsibilities.

Immediate Tasks | Advanced Manufacturing | First 30 Days

For system workforce development leads

- ☐ Confirm your system's participation and nominate additional system and industry contributors.

For advanced manufacturing working group members — scope agreed in October; contributions due by mid-November

With support from NASH and other partners:

- ☐ Join the October scoping meeting to refine the goal, initial deliverable, evidence needs, and responsibilities.
- ☐ Identify employer contacts, available workforce evidence, and sources describing existing education and training offerings.

For NASH

- ☐ Convene the October meeting with sector participants, industry representatives, and NASH's workforce development and data teams.
- ☐ Assess available labor-department and industry data, and agree a practical scope with participants.
- ☐ Confirm responsibilities and submission arrangements, and coordinate assistance from NASH and other partners.
- ☐ Assess with Waymark Analytics whether targeted survey work could address evidence gaps, coordinating with NEBHE on relevant regional data sources and existing initiatives.
- ☐ Follow up with UNH and NEBHE on activating the manufacturing-center network, and explore BHEF's contribution.

30/60/90-Day Action Plan

Stage	Actions and intended outputs	Responsibility
First 30 days	Hold the October scoping meeting; refine the goal, initial deliverable, and evidence needs; confirm contributions; and discuss survey work and network activation.	NASH's workforce development and data teams with sector participants; Waymark Analytics, UNH, and NEBHE contributing to relevant discussions.
By 60 days	Assemble initial employer-side workforce evidence and invite employers to validate findings and clarify regional occupational and skill needs.	Working group members and designated data leads, supported by NASH and partners.
By 90 days	Compare validated needs with education and training offerings, identify gaps, and prepare findings and questions for a regional employer presentation in early 2027.	Advanced manufacturing working group, with NASH coordinating analysis, partner contributions, and employer engagement.

This analysis will guide decisions about subsequent work on labs and equipment, credit for prior learning, apprenticeships, and stackable credentials.

Milestones and Participant Input

Timing	Purpose and next step
Before the end of October	NASH convenes sector discussions to refine scope, contributions, responsibilities, and support needs.
October 23, 2026	Participants submit corrections and feedback on the 30/60/90-day plans.
Mid-November virtual review	Review initial evidence, progress, outstanding questions, and assistance needed.
December 2–4 NASH Superconvening in Washington, DC	Share progress and engage system heads in the NASH Solutions panel discussion featuring TRNE, “ <i>From Local Action to Regional Alignment: How Public Higher Education Systems Are Building Workforce Solutions for Learners While Removing the Barriers that Limit Access.</i> ” The panel will take place on Friday, Dec. 4 (10-10:45 AM ET) and will include Tiffany Walker (Senior Director of Workforce Education at Community College of Vermont) and Catharine MacLaran (Vice President of Talent Acquisition & Workforce Development at Northern Light Health) as speakers. Learn more about the conference here .
Early 2027	Convene the next in-person TRNE meeting and advance sector activities, including the proposed manufacturing employer discussion and Healthcare Metrics Academy preparation.

Participants may contact Yasmine Mendes Raouf at ymendesraouf@nash.edu at any point with questions, clarifications, proposed contributions, or requests for assistance.

Appendix: Education Design Lab Stakeholder and Asset Synthesis

The appendix documents the October 1 mapping and planning exercises, including sector assets, barriers, opportunities, and working session notes.