



**FOCUSMAINE**

**A Year of Learning and Evolving**  
*2022 Annual Impact Report*



# A MESSAGE FROM FOCUSMAINE'S NEW PRESIDENT & BOARD CO-CHAIRS

2022 was a transformative year – a period of progress, transition, reflection, learning, and opportunity.

After five successful years, FocusMaine's inaugural president Kim Hamilton transitioned out of her role. In June, Dana O'Brien took the helm, bringing significant experience in building strategic partnerships and expert knowledge in FocusMaine's key sectors – agriculture and food production, aquaculture, and biotech.

Our fifth year of implementation marked a moment to celebrate our impact while also reflecting on our role and our responsibility to Maine in an ever-changing economy with serious climate and workforce threats.

Leadership and learning are essential to each other.

Since 2021, we have been listening and learning from partners, peers, economists, business owners, government, and industry leaders. These findings fueled a process to update our strategy and hone our effectiveness.

FocusMaine's next strategic phase will capture the best elements of its first five years to enhance future programming, capture emerging opportunities, and remain nimble in the face of unforeseen obstacles.

Thanks to your support and the tremendous work of our partners, together, we continue to build a sustainable, competitive, and prosperous economic future for Maine.

In the pages that follow, we're proud to share the positive difference we're making for Maine people, businesses, and communities.



Dana O'Brien  
*FocusMaine President*



Michael Dubyak  
*FocusMaine Co-Chair*



Andrea Cianchette Maker  
*FocusMaine Co-Chair*

## MEET THE TEAM

We are proud to be working together, using our unique strengths, and drawing from our individual experiences and passions to continuously improve the economic well-being and quality of life in the great and gorgeous state of Maine.



From left to right: Mikayla Sweet, *Grants & Finance Manager*; Courtney Crossgrove, *Food & Agriculture Program Manager*; Dana O'Brien, *President*; Laura England, *Communication & Outreach Manager*; Leo Waterston, *Program Director*

# GENERATING OPPORTUNITY AND PROSPERITY FOR MAINE

Snapshot of 2022 Impact Metrics

## 215+

Jobs Created in  
Maine's Food Economy



## \$11.5M+

in New Federal and State  
Funding Secured by  
Food Program Participants



## 50

Food Companies  
Benefited from Technical  
Assistance & Programs



## 17

Life Sciences Companies  
Introduced to  
Opportunities in Maine



## 62

Employers Registered in  
Maine Career Catalyst



## 367

Interns, Co-ops, and  
Apprentices Enrolled in  
Maine Career Catalyst



## 114

Sector Interns Enrolled in  
Maine Career Catalyst



# POWERED BY PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION

FocusMaine is a statewide economic development organization that works to create quality jobs and build a thriving workforce.

In collaboration with industry, government, academic, and nonprofit leaders, we develop programs and identify tools and workforce skills needed to accelerate the growth of Maine's food economy and bioeconomy. We then coordinate and engage some of Maine's leading organizations to deliver the programs, tools, and training.

Our efforts have resulted in measurable job growth, an impressive array of programs and tools to support business growth and attraction, and significant new resources that are shaping the economic trajectory of Maine.

To date, over 215 companies and 2,480 students have been positively impacted by our work. More than 1,015 new jobs have been created in businesses served by FocusMaine's programs; these jobs are part of the 5,000 new jobs realized in FocusMaine's key industries between 2016 and 2021.

## PAST AND CURRENT PARTNERS



## KEY COLLABORATORS

Maine Community College System

Maine Congressional Delegation

Maine Development Foundation

Maine Food Strategy

Maine State Chamber of Commerce

Maine State Government

Maine Technology Institute

University of Maine System

University of Southern Maine

The following stories illustrate some of the impacts of FocusMaine sponsored programs.



# STORIES OF IMPACT: PEOPLE

In its sixth year, the Maine Career Catalyst Program, implemented by Educate Maine and sponsored by FocusMaine, continues to inspire young adults to seize career opportunities in Maine and help employers fill the critical workforce gap by offering professional development, social opportunities and networking for experiential learners working in Maine.

*“Maine Career Catalyst helped me really feel part of the Maine community and like I was working in Maine. I loved meeting other young people doing pre-professional work in Maine. It was great to make connections with these people and also to learn about what other careers are out there in Maine. This really helped me realize what there is in Maine - a strong network of professional people and some of the careers out there.”*

- Maine Career Catalyst Intern



The Aquaculture Pioneers program launched in 2022 to support the growth of Maine’s aquaculture industry and cultivate talent. Administered by Educate Maine, a cohort of 10 interns worked on aquaculture farms and hatcheries in the Downeast and Mid-Coast regions.



*“Now that I’ve done this internship, I think I might actually pursue a career in oyster aquaculture. I don’t know if that means working on farms, with farms, or starting my own. It’s definitely in my future and I’m really excited about it.”*

- Pheobe Wagner, Aquaculture Pioneers Intern at Mook Sea Farms

In partnership with Educate Maine, FocusMaine awarded 15 Equity in Internships Program (EQUIP) stipends to support racial equity and increase experiential learning opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students facing financial barriers to starting careers in aquaculture, life sciences, and the food economy.

*“This stipend truly made it possible for me to complete my summer internship, which turned out to be an extremely valuable experience for me, both personally and career-wise. I was working in a lab at the MaineHealth Institute for Research, but the funds from this stipend meant that I had the extra time to also shadow doctors and volunteer at health clinics. Moreover, the stipend allowed me to take part in a research experience that was life-changing.”*

- EQUIP Intern





# STORIES OF IMPACT: **BUSINESSES**

FocusMaine remains a proud sponsor of Maine Center for Entrepreneurs' food accelerator programs: Cultivator and MarketShare. 91% of participants stated they have more confidence in their business and business plan by participating in the accelerator programs administered by MCE and CEI.



*"It's easy to say that the high growth and success in the past year is a direct result of our participation in the Cultivator program. Our financials got in order, our cost models got reviewed and polished, our safety protocols improved significantly, we got clarity on the business as a whole, and our branding/marketing got stronger. All aspects of the business improved significantly. The access to the different mentors and other resources from lawyers to graphic designers to operation specialists helped us gain insight, grow, and perform better."*

– Tomer Kilchevsky, Shovel and Spoon

To spark new business opportunities, the Maine Food Producer Showcase, hosted by the Maine Center for Entrepreneurs and Coastal Maine Enterprises and sponsored by FocusMaine, connected 42 of Maine's emerging food and beverage companies to buyers, investors, industry experts, and members of the press. Over half of the companies participating in the Showcase entered products into the first-ever Golden Fork Awards.

## **2022 GOLDEN FORK AWARD WINNERS**

*Retail Best in Show:*

**Original Coconola by Grandy Organics**

*Foodservice Best in Show:*

**Alder Smoked American Eel by American Unagi**

*Best New Product:*

**Middle East Coast Labneh by Shovel and Spoon**



FocusMaine initiated a new partnership with the New England Ocean Cluster (NEOC) to help bolster Maine's blue economy by supporting three programs that 1) provide early-stage startups and entrepreneurs with technical assistance 2) attract international companies to Maine, and 3) pair UMaine grad students with industry professionals in need of capacity.



*"Being a part of the Hatchery has been an enormous help for Shred Electric. We're now connected to folks we can use as sounding boards, particularly in the development of our go-to-market strategy, which has enabled us to make sound strategic decisions at an accelerated rate, a huge asset for any startup."*

– Nick Planson, Founder of Shred Electric

# STORIES OF IMPACT: COMMUNITIES

To enhance community and political support for aquaculture, FocusMaine partnered with the Maine Aquaculture Association (MAA) on a public relations campaign that generated 35 positive news stories. Additionally, FocusMaine supported media training for 15 MAA board members to assist their critical conversations about the value of aquaculture with neighbors, town Select Boards, and local journalists.

*“The media training was invaluable to me as a farmer. We are often contacted by our local media and it was so helpful to have some aquaculture specific training on how to effectively communicate key points to journalists.”*

– Annie Langston Noll, Pemetic Sea Farms



In September, Maine proudly hosted Seagriculture, the first international seaweed conference in the US. To increase awareness of Maine’s thriving seaweed sector, FocusMaine created the Seaweed Showcase - a summary of farmers, innovators, educators, researchers, and nonprofits - to share with 279 attendees from 157 companies and 12 countries worldwide.



The Showcase included the Maine Seaweed Financial Benchmarking Study, a body of work pioneered by our partners, the Maine Aquaculture Association, funded in part by FocusMaine, to serve as a key resource for the aquaculture community.

*“The data for the benchmarking study represents over 90% of the seaweed harvested in Maine - an unprecedented level of participation. To the best of our knowledge, this dataset is the most comprehensive study that exists on the finances of seaweed farming.”*

– Sebastian Belle, Executive Director of Maine Aquaculture Association

To accelerate the growth of Maine’s life sciences ecosystem, Dana O’Brien provided testimony for the State of Maine genome-editing advisory panel and at a Portland City Council meeting in support of the proposed plans for the new Roux Institute graduate school and research center at the former B&M factory site. FocusMaine continues to partner with the Roux Institute and others to advance life sciences and biotech cluster development in Maine.

*“Working in partnership with industry, academic, and community organizations distinguishes our efforts at the Roux Institute and fuels our impact. Our partnership with FocusMaine is strategic and important. Together, we discover organizations and new partners that might benefit from Maine’s unique opportunities and work collaboratively to understand their goals. This creates compelling value and accelerates the development of new models for learning, research, and entrepreneurship that drive economic development and growth throughout Maine.”*

– Chris Mallet, Chief Administrative Officer of the Roux Institute at Northeastern University





# OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

Michael E. Dubyak  
Co-Chair, FocusMaine  
Former President, CEO, & Chairman WEX, Inc.

Andrea Cianchette Maker  
Co-Chair, FocusMaine  
Former Partner, Pierce Atwood

Michael Bourque  
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MEMIC

Jay Dearborn  
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Former Maine Market President  
KeyBank

Ed McKersie  
Founder & President  
ProSearch, Inc.

Dana O'Brien\*  
President  
FocusMaine

## ADVISORY TEAM

### Academic

Joan Ferrini-Mundy  
Team Chair  
President  
University of Maine  
UMS Vice Chancellor for  
Research and Innovation

### Business

Dana Connors  
Team Chair  
President  
Maine State Chamber of Commerce

*\*Served partial term in 2022*

# SUPPORTERS

We are immensely grateful to the following donors who supported our efforts with financial contributions in 2022.

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# FOCUSMAINE

**Mailing address:**

128 State Street Suite 101

Augusta, ME 04330

[info@focusmaine.org](mailto:info@focusmaine.org)

(207) 200-3813

[Focusmaine.org](http://Focusmaine.org)

EIN: 30-0036992

*Available for meetings at our  
office in The Hús on Portland's  
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