

406 JOBS

Modernizing Montana's Workforce



406 JOBS is a statewide framework to unify and modernize Montana's workforce system. The plan is simple: 4 pathways to a career, 0 barriers to employment, and 6 High Demand Industries. Specifically, we are challenging the entire workforce system, public and private, to commit itself to promoting career, college, entrepreneurship, and military pathways to employment equally across the system. We are dedicating ourselves at a state level, to tearing down the barriers that are holding back the labor force and worker mobility. And, we are leaning on local sector partnerships to build the talent pipelines necessary to filling labor gaps in six priority sectors that have chronic worker shortages.

4 PATHWAYS TO WORK

- Career/Apprenticeships
- College
- Entrepreneurship
- Military

0 BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

- Prepared Employees
- Engaged Employers
- Responsive System

6 HIGH DEMAND INDUSTRIES

- Healthcare/Health Careers
- Construction Trades
- Hospitality & Recreation
- Advanced Manufacturing & Computing
- Education & Child Care
- Financial & Professional Service

BUILDING MONTANA'S WORKFORCE FOR THE FUTURE

The **406 JOBS** initiative will create a unified workforce system that is driven by industry demand and responsive to worker needs. Montana's rural nature and expansive geography demand new ways to share and scale success stories, innovative approaches to regional sector partnerships, and heightened focus on key challenges such as housing, behavioral health, and recidivism.

Progress will be tracked through metrics such as **rising labor force participation, fewer workforce exits, and declining numbers of Montanans depending on benefits to make ends meet**. Additional indicators include **growth in apprenticeship pathways, CTE graduates, private investment, and skill-based hiring**. Outcomes also focus on income levels, long-term employment for justice-involved individuals, and greater employer engagement in workforce programs.

MAKE AMERICA SKILLED AGAIN

President Trump's MASA plan prioritizes flexibility, apprenticeships, and right-sizing government. Montana's current strategies, especially in apprenticeship expansion, data-targeted training, business-led workforce development, and rural outreach are well-aligned with these priorities and position the state to adapt quickly to the proposed block grant structure.

MONTANA'S WORKFORCE STRATEGY FITS MASA



APPRENTICESHIP FOCUS

In the past five years, Montana added apprenticeship programs for 20 new occupations, over 350 new employer sponsors, and recruited over 4,500 new apprentices. This year, the Legislature approved 32 new pathways allowing apprentices to earn occupational licenses on the job—expanding career options and helping employers build skilled, licensed workers across many industries.



BLOCK GRANTS & FLEXIBILITY

Montana uses flexible ARPA/other federal dollars to launch public/private programs like Build Montana in construction, healthcare, and manufacturing—mirroring MASA's philosophy.



PERFORMANCE-DRIVEN REVIEW

Data-centric models to target high demand fields, such as construction trades and manufacturing, and anticipate changes in the future of work due to artificial intelligence and automation — which align with MASA's focus on outcomes and programmatic review.



CAREER PATHWAY INTEGRATION

High school dual-enrollment, credential registry, and transition support for displaced workers all align with MASA's modernization goals.

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406 JOBS is designed to enable every Montanan to have a clear pathway to a career and a plan to achieve it. To support this goal, **406 JOBS** aims to achieve consistent quarterly growth in the labor market participation rate, reduce barriers to employment for those who have left the workforce, and increase the number of adults reaching financial self-sufficiency.



MONTANA MODERNIZATION IN ACTION

TEARING DOWN BARRIERS

The 2025 Legislature delivered major wins for Montana's workforce by advancing the Zero Barriers to Employment agenda. Key achievements include:

- Consolidating WIOA Titles I, II, and III at MTDLI for seamless service delivery
- Requiring meaningful industry representation in the Perkins State Plan, aligning it with the MT WIOA Plan
- Investing new funds into middle and high school career exploration, pre-apprenticeship, and hands-on learning resulting in credential attainment
- Launching the new Office of Reentry at MTDLI to better coordinate efforts to reduce recidivism and support second-chance employment

These changes move Montana closer to a workforce system that works for everyone—no matter their background or starting point.

BUILD MONTANA

A partnership between the Montana Contractors' Association and local public school districts is prioritizing construction trade careers across Montana. Build Montana provides high school students with work-based learning, employability skills, networking opportunities, and stackable, industry recognized credentials – all while still in school. Students complete the program with an equipment operation competition and a special ceremony with all their industry partners.



FEDERAL ALIGNMENT: MASA & LICENSING REFORM

Montana is leading the way in aligning state workforce efforts with national goals through legislative and structural reforms.

HB 336: Licensing Reform to Expand Apprenticeship Access

In 2025, Montana passed **House Bill 336**, allowing individuals who complete **nationally recognized apprenticeships** to qualify for licensure in over 30 occupations—from EMTs to radiologic technologists—without duplicative educational requirements.

This reform supports the goals of the federal **Make America Skilled Again (MASA)** initiative by:

- Removing unnecessary barriers to licensure
- Expanding apprenticeship pipelines into high-need fields
- Prioritizing skills over seat time
- Focusing on workforce access, mobility, and equity

