



The mission of the Department of Labor & Industry is to empower Montanans through work and opportunity.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & INDUSTRY

ANNUAL PLAN

FY2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Montana Department of Labor & Industry provides vital support to Montana's workers, employers, and citizens, by ensuring safety and fairness in the workplace. DLI impacts nearly every business and employee within the state of Montana through its multiple divisions.

COMMISSIONERS OFFICE

The Commissioner's Office and the Centralized Services Division provide agency and program direction, legal, administration, and support services to the department's programs and administratively attached entities. Additionally, the Office of Administrative Hearings provides impartial administrative hearings and dispute resolution services.

WORKFORCE SERVICES DIVISION

The Workforce Services Division (WSD) serves Montana workers and employers by fostering a highly-skilled, trained, employment-ready workforce and connecting workers with employment and job training opportunities. The Division engages with employers and industries to understand and address future workforce needs. WSD operates 18 Job Service Offices (JSOs) across Montana tasked with working with individual job seekers to identify and pursue good-paying, sustainable careers, and connect them with resources to change careers, upskill, or otherwise prepare them for the workforce. The Division administers Montana's Registered Apprenticeship program, which provides paid, on-the-job training in a wide range of fields, and provides high-quality economic and labor market information to Montana policymakers, employers, and other stakeholders. WSD is structured in three bureaus: Job Service, Data & Operations, and Business & Education Engagement.

Employment Services Division

The Department's Employment Standards Division (ESD) is responsible for a wide range of services that seek to protect Montana workers and consumers. The Professional Licensing Bureau provides operational and administrative support for Montana's professional licensing boards and programs and operates the state's Prescription Drug Registry. The Building and Commercial Measurements Bureau sets and enforces minimum standards for building, electrical, plumbing, elevator and similar codes, and it licenses, tests and certifies all weighting and measurement devices used in commercial transactions. The Division's Investigation and Mediation Bureau enforces the Montana Human Rights Act, Wage Payment Act and investigates claims of violations related to all division programs. The Compliance Bureau administers federal and state industrial safety laws for the public sector while providing no-cost consultation services for all employers. The Bureau also oversees the Workers' Compensation section who assists claimants, employers and insurers in navigating the state's Workers' Compensation system. It also provides compliance oversight and inspection services for all division programs. The Operations Bureau provides administrative support to the Division while operating data management and customer services programs.

Unemployment Insurance Division

Montana's Unemployment Insurance Division (UID) administers the state's unemployment insurance program, which provides temporary, partial wage replacement benefits for unemployed workers which in turn provides economic stabilization to our communities. The Division's Claims Processing Bureau conducts the intake, adjudication, and payment of UI benefit claims. The Bureau assists unemployed Montanans with claims filings and appeals and operates claims processing centers in Helena and Billings. The Division's Contributions Bureau facilitates the payment of employer UI payroll taxes, collects taxes and wage reports, and conducts employer audits to ensure compliance. The Division's Program Support Bureau is responsible for reporting, compliance, program integrity and operational support, including support for the Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board. The Division also houses a fraud prevention team that seeks to identify and prevent fraudulent UI claims, and reclaim funds paid on fraudulent claims.

 Strategic Outcome #1	ADDRESS MONTANA'S WORKER SHORTAGE	
	Montana's worker shortage can be addressed by recruiting new workers into the labor force. Research indicates that youth, retirees, and students have lower labor force participation rates, and that lack of childcare and criminal backgrounds are common barriers to full employment. These populations are targeted with recruitment efforts.	
	Key Measures	Conduct outreach to 100% of Montana high schools to offer MTDLI programs for increased career exploration, work-based learning, and career and technical education programs.
		- Hold 10 Golden Opportunities job fairs in Job Service offices to recruit and employ retirees interested in re-entering the workforce. - Train at least 20 childcare workers in Registered Apprenticeship or childcare certification training. - Enroll justice-involved clients in Registered Apprenticeship program through PROWD grant.

 Strategic Outcome #2	UPSKILL MONTANA'S WORKFORCE	
	Keep Montana's workforce well-trained in a rapidly changing economy, providing additional opportunities for upskilling and retooling of worker skills.	
	Key Measures	Increase number of Registered Apprentices in training.
		- Increase number of clients served in MTDLI workforce programs. - Increase number of businesses served. - Increase number of Jobs for Montana Graduate (JMG) programs

 Strategic Outcome #3	INCREASE ACCESS TO WORKFORCE PROGRAMS	
	Improve access to workforce training programs for underserved populations, especially those in rural and reservation areas, and enhance digital and virtual services. Better tell our story through media and community outreach so more Montanans know to use Job Service and other MTDLI programs to access workforce services.	
	Key Measures	• Open and launch a new Job Service office in Lame Deer. • Initiate development of online customer portal. • Explore options to provide services in public assistance offices through in-person or kiosk presence. • Issue at least one press release per month with a client or business success story to highlight services provided.

Employment Services Division

 Strategic Outcome #1	IMPROVE LICENSING EFFICIENCY/INCREASE CAPACITY	
	Streamline the licensing process to reduce processing times by 10%, improve customer satisfaction by 30%, and enhance regulatory compliance. This will be achieved by adopting digital tools, optimizing workflows, and training staff, ultimately leading to increased operational efficiency, reduced costs, and a more responsive service to our clients.	
	Key Measures	• Time to issue license/renewal – reduce by 10% • First time approval – increase time approvals to 95% • Increase automation rate – increase automation of licensing process steps to 90% • Compliance rate – increase percentage of licensees that comply with regulations upon audit by 10%

 Strategic Outcome #2	DIGITIZE AND OPTIMIZE ONLINE SERVICE PLATFORM	
	Digitize service delivery products to enhance operational efficiency, improve data accuracy, and increase accessibility to critical information.	
	Key Measures	• Usage rate – increase usage rate of digitized platform to 90% • Transition all applications to Accela platform • Adopt virtual interaction platforms • Rework – reduce rework on digitized items to less than 50%.

 Strategic Outcome #3	ENHANCE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT	
	For education and outreach projects, the goal is often to measure both the effectiveness of the educational content and the reach or impact of outreach efforts. Our goal is to expand access to our services through promotional activities and program-specific educational content. This effort can proactively address questions but also serve as targeted equitable relief in cases of non-compliance.	
	Key Measures	• Feedback and Satisfaction Scores – collect and achieve 80% or higher on satisfaction scores • Audience Reach and Penetration – increase number of individuals or communities reached by outreach efforts • Conversion Rates (behavior change) – follow-up audits/surveys indicate 80% retention of educational objectives • Completion Rates – attain 50% or higher participation rates for intended audiences

 Strategic Outcome #1	ENHANCE CLAIMS PROCESSING	
	Provide exceptional customer service through full utilization of new Montana Unemployment Services Environment (MUSE) system functionality.	
	Key Measures	• Increase first payment processing timeliness • Decrease customer wait times (Phone/On-Line) • Decrease adjudication backlog and increase adjudication processing timeliness • Target 100% in system claims processing

 Strategic Outcome #2	UNIFIED PROGRAM ACCESS	
	Coordinated program efforts within Unemployment Insurance and Workforce Services Division for more robust customer service experience.	
	Key Measures	• Develop strategic plan for Unemployment Insurance & Work Force Services consolidation • Leverage current cross-training opportunities • Enhance coordination of one-stop job service and unemployment services at local job service offices. • Coordinated rapid response within impacted communities • Explore and respond to rural access challenges

 Strategic Outcome #3	LEVERAGE PARTNERSHIPS	
	Continue leveraging strategic partnerships with industry experts to enhance programs operational responsiveness to current and anticipated unemployment needs.	
	Key Measures	• Implement responsive staffing plan which reduces customer wait times while reducing total staffing levels (PCG Assessment) • Incorporate staffing cross-training model and schedule to enhance response times, address recruitment & retention challenges, and provide career path (PCG Assessment, Utah Model Research) • Robust upfront integrity review reducing fraudulent claims processing (Utah Model Research) • Meet or exceed federal metrics to reestablish federal funding levels (PCG Assessment, USDOL Monitoring)