

FIVE-YEAR PORTS AND MARITIME PLAN

MARITIME ADVISORY TASK FORCE

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Baton Rouge, LA

“Existing Louisiana maritime businesses and those new or outside businesses seeking to locate here find it difficult to identify and attract local workers with even the basic maritime skills necessary to work in the industry. The US Coast Guard licensing requirements demand a higher educational threshold and increased certified training in unique skills well beyond the traditional easy entry to the profession of years past. Additionally, the requirement for at least some college education in order to be eligible for the higher paying jobs in maritime professions is becoming common place.

There is a paucity of state supported high school vocational programs and post high school training programs for maritime jobs of any kind at any level in Louisiana.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to attract local maritime workers. Businesses are being forced to look for qualified workers from outside Louisiana. These workers do not re-locate. Instead, they take advantage of the traditional practice of working several consecutive weeks aboard a vessel with commensurate weeks off to commute to their out-of-state residence. Louisiana does not benefit from these jobs to the degree it should were the workers trained, skilled, local residents. Programs are needed to educate, train, recruit and retain high school graduates.

Out-of-state colleges, and neighboring state-sponsored training and vo-tec programs are the major suppliers of the maritime workforce working but not living in Louisiana. Training a maritime workforce to boost our economy and bolster our tax base is critical. It is equally critical to develop a significant, compelling marketing program to new and outside businesses that includes the provision of a trained workforce as part of an overall attraction program. The State has already elevated workforce development as a top priority. The Maritime Advisory Task Force observes that there are opportunities in which to collaborate with the State. For example:

- Integrate workforce development and social support programs across agencies to provide one-door service for businesses and seekers.
- Strengthen the role of community and technical colleges in maritime workforce development.
- Quickly improve the ability to address workforce shortages in high-demand maritime occupations.
- Improve the capacity to respond to new business or expansion opportunities with customized workforce solutions.
- Create a demand-driven system that ties workforce development to business and industry needs.
- Ensure that the voices of ports and the maritime industry are heard and the needs are understood.”