

WORKFORCE ALLIANCE WIOA LOCAL PLAN 2020-2025

Workforce Innovation & Opportunities Act services for South Central CT
Prepared by Workforce Alliance, 560 Ella T. Grasso Blvd., New Haven, CT

Bethany
Branford
Chester
Clinton
Cromwell
Deep River
Durham
East Haddam
East Hampton
East Haven
Essex
Guilford
Haddam
Hamden
Killingworth
Madison
Meriden
Middlefield
Middletown
Milford
New Haven
North Branford
North Haven
Old Saybrook
Orange
Portland
Wallingford
West Haven
Westbrook
Woodbridge



Workforce Alliance Affirms Commitment to Racial Equity

Workforce Alliance denounces the unjust and racially motivated murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and countless other Americans of color.

We condemn the long history of systemic racism that has made violence and discrimination against people of color so prevalent in the United States.

We recognize the persistent inequalities that continue to impact Black communities, leaving them with higher unemployment rates, lower graduation rates, less income, higher poverty rates, and less wealth. The recent pandemic has magnified this issue as we've seen Blacks and Latinos getting sick and dying at disproportionately high rates and be much more likely to be laid off during the economic shutdown. The stark fact that 40% of those laid off earned \$20,000 a year or less lays bare the economic struggle so many already faced. Many individuals, even those working multiple jobs to make ends meet, found themselves ineligible for unemployment insurance.

Our mission to develop comprehensive and community-wide options that deliver employment solutions to South Central CT has never been more important. Like all government and non-profit entities that serve communities of color, we must do more.

As we begin our new program year July 1, we pledge now to do these 5 things:

- Assess our operations as an organization both internally and externally to make changes and be accountable for them.
- Dedicate new outreach resources through our network of American Job Centers and increase our collaboration with our community partners to not only reach and serve more people of color with employment & training services, but also provide us with input so that what we do is meaningful and has impact.
- Urge the Governor's Workforce Council to put into action recommendations we made last year to remove barriers caused by poor transportation, lack of adequate child care and benefit cliffs which disproportionately affect minority populations
- Expand efforts to serve minority-owned businesses and entrepreneurs through our Business Services unit. In addition, continue to provide guidance and strategies to employers on how to diversify recruiting and hiring.
- Expand and build upon the impact of our Next Steps for Ex-Offenders program that has helped over 2,000 people since 2003 to find gainful employment after incarceration – a systemic plague that has for too long impacted black and brown lives and livelihoods in South Central CT.

To move our region toward racial and economic equity, we will continue to place people into jobs that provide a fair wage and benefits. We need more jobs, more education opportunities, more affordable housing and more mental health resources. These resources combined with a workforce development system that works through an equity lens can build better communities for everyone.

June 19, 2020

Table of Contents

I.	ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE.....	6
II.	ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN	13
III.	LWDB VISION, GOALS AND STRATEGIES	23
IV.	COORDINATION OF SERVICES.....	28
V.	DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM SERVICES.....	32
VI.	RESPONSE TO COVID-19	39

Workforce Alliance WIOA Local Plan (DRAFT)

Fall 2020

I. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. Chief Elected Official(s) (CEOs)

- 1. Identify the chief elected official(s) by name, title, mailing address, phone number and email address.**

See Attachment A.

- 2. If the local area includes more than one unit of general local government in accordance with WIOA sec. 107(c)(1)(B), attach the agreement that has been executed to define how the parties will carry out the roles and responsibilities of the CEO.**

See attachment B.

- 3. If applicable, attach a copy of the agreement executed between the CEO (s) and the LWDB.**

See Attachment B.

Describe the following:

- i. The nomination process used by the CEO to elect the local board chair and members;**

Board officers, following a recommendation from the WDB Nominating Committee, shall be elected by the Board of Directors, and shall hold office until their term has expired or until others have been chosen in their stead. Business nominations are put forth by the Chambers of Commerce within the region. Non-business nominations are garnered by governing agencies. Board appointments are voted on as necessary at the Council meetings.

- ii. The term limitations and how the term appointments will be staggered to ensure only a portion of membership expire in a given year;**

Board terms are staggered such that one third expire each year. Board members may be reappointed for up to two additional terms.

- iii. The process to notify the CEO of a board member vacancy to ensure a prompt nominee;**

The Council of Chief Elected Officials meet at least twice a year. Board vacancies are communicated to the Council prior to meetings. Business nominations are put forth by the Chambers of Commerce within the region. Board appointments are voted on as necessary at the Council meetings.

iv. The proxy and alternative designee process that will be used when a board member is unable to attend a meeting and assigns a designee as per the requirements at §679.110(d)(4) of the proposed WIOA regulations;

Board members are able to vote by proxy, by either fax or email when a board member is unable to attend a meeting.

v. The use of technology, such as phone and Web-based meetings that will be used to promote board member participation;

Because our WDB area is accessible to major highways within the state, most meetings have been in person, at a central facility. Since spring of 2020, this has not been possible, so we have made use of virtual meeting platforms such as Zoom and GoToMeeting, and in some instances, conference calls.

vi. The process to ensure board members actively participate in convening the workforce development system's stakeholders, brokering relationships with a diverse range of employers, and leveraging support for workforce development activities; and,

We have, and will continue to assemble ad-hoc workgroups of board members and stakeholders to address items of priority to the board, and business groups to address sector strategies. Some board members participated in these groups as well. We expect that *all* of our board members and workforce partners will be advocates for the system, and will provide ongoing education and guidance to their respective constituencies.

vii. Any other conditions governing appointments or membership on the local board.

N/A

4. Provide a description of how the CEO was involved in the development, review and approval of the plan.

The Council of Chief Elected Officials Chair was present at the January 2020 Board Meeting where Patrick Flaherty provided an overview of and discussion of the economic factors of the region, and the emerging workforce development priorities. Members of the CEO Executive Committee have participated in professional development provided by the National Association of Workforce Boards and other entities. Additionally, many CEO's are users of the system, either directly or through their economic development or youth services offices. They make it a practice of referring jobseekers and businesses that need service. They have a perspective of the system and have suggested strategies to improve these services, which have been incorporated into the plan. The CEO will have the opportunity to review and comment of the draft plan. A virtual meeting was held on August 20, which was a joint meeting of the CEO and the Workforce Alliance Board Executive Committee. At that meeting, the draft plan was approved, and will be put out for Public Comment shortly thereafter.

B. Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB)

1. Provide a matrix identifying LWDB members including the category each member represents.

See Attachment C.

2. Provide a description of how the LWDB was involved in the development, review, and approval of the plan

Responsibility for overall development of the plan is under the program of work for the Workforce Alliance Planning Committee, which is comprised of board members and other individuals whose work aligns with that of Workforce Alliance. An initial outline of planning activities was presented to the Board in Fall 2019. Initial research was presented, including the last strategic plan which was developed and adopted five years ago, and the last Local Plan Update. The Committee examined and approved the general direction of planning activities, which included focus groups, real time and traditional Labor Market Information, employer, individual and group discussions and participation in state-led workgroups.

The Planning Committee and the Workforce Alliance Executive Committee were kept informed of staff work on an ongoing basis. The full board of Directors has been briefed at its regular meetings. A virtual meeting was held on August 20, which was a joint meeting of the Chief Elected Officials and the Workforce Alliance Board Executive Committees. At that meeting, the draft plan was approved, and will be put out for Public Comment shortly thereafter.

3. Provide an organizational chart for the LWDB and administrative support.

See Attachment D.

C. Local Administrative Entity and Grant Sub Recipient

1. Identify the administrative entity.

The administrative entity is Workforce Alliance.

2. Identify the entity selected to receive and disburse grant funds (local fiscal agent).

The local fiscal agent is Workforce Alliance.

D. One-Stop System

1. Provide a description of the local one-stop system, including the number, type and location of full-service and other service delivery points. Identify the process to select the one-stop operator.

The local one-stop system in the Workforce Alliance region utilizes a “One-Stop Provider” competitive model of service delivery. Currently, we have American Job Center (AJC) offices in New Haven, Hamden, Meriden, and Middletown. Additionally, limited AJC Services are provided within the New Haven Correctional Facility in New Haven. Currently, WIOA funded services are provided in New Haven, Middletown and Meriden. The American Job Center located at 560 Ella T. Grasso Boulevard is the location of the full-service center. WIOA Youth activities operate at various sites in the region, through vendor contracts.

The One-Stop Operator and One-Stop Provider are selected through competitive procurement.

2. Identify the entity or entities selected to operate the local one-stop center(s).

The current One-stop Provider is Equus (formerly ResCare) Workforce Services.

3. Identify the entity or entities selected to provide career services within the local one-stop system.

The entity selected to provide career services is Equus (formerly ResCare) Workforce Services.

4. Identify and describe what career services will be provided by the selected one-stop operator and what career services, if any, will be contracted out to service providers

At this writing, our intent is to have all Adult and Dislocated Worker career services provided by the selected One-Stop provider. There is no longer a “sequencing of services” for career service activities under WIOA. Career services consist of activities such as, determining eligibility to receive assistance under WIOA, outreach, intake and orientation, initial assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, and supportive service needs, job search and placement assistance and where appropriate career counseling, provision of Labor Market Information, provision of performance information and cost information on eligible providers of training services. Sector focused pathways to careers will be encouraged and will place job seekers on a clear career pathway towards their employment goals.

Youth career services are currently conducted initially by the One-Stop Provider and then referrals for additional career services and training services are made accordingly, to contracted WIOA-Y service providers and/or partners. Project CEO is a WIOA-Y activity currently operated in house in the AJCs by Equus.

5. Describe the roles and resource contributions of One Stop Partners.

The roles and contributions are articulated on the MOU’s. See Attachment E

6. Provide copies of the executed Memoranda of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreements.

See Attachment E

7. Identify any non-required partners included in the local one-stop delivery system and respective contributions

The South Central Partners’ Group is listed in Attachment F. Contributions are based on collaboration in programs and services, uniform referrals and joint planning.

8. Customer Access

Describe actions taken by the LWDB to promote maximum integration of service delivery through the one-stop delivery system for both business customers and individual customers.

A. Describe how entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and one-stop partners, will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act regarding physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities, including

providing staff training and support for addressing needs of individuals with disabilities.

All of our current American Job Centers are ADA-compliant. We continue to survey all of our required One-stop partners to determine their levels of compliance as part of the transition period. We will also work with partners to conduct an inventory of programs, services, technology, equipment and materials for each required partner, and make that information available to all required partners in the system.

We expect that there would continue to be a significant amount of training of one-stop staff, as well as ongoing cross-training of partner staff. We would look to our partnership with the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS – formerly known as DOHRS) to provide ongoing guidance and assistance in training resources.

Describe how the LWDB facilitates access to services provided through the local delivery system, including remote areas, through the use of technology and through other means.

Our website allows for virtual orientations, workshops, online learning platforms, information on programs, services and Labor Market Information. The website also allows for tools for direct inquiry to program managers. There will continue to be a dedicated section for annual reports and both the full and executive summary of the Local Plan.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, several activities for both jobseekers and employer customers are by necessity offered online. Whereas previously virtual service delivery was the exception, it has become the default with in-person service delivery being only as needed. As digital literacy rises, it is anticipated that this will continue to be the expectation even after the pandemic crisis. In a customer-centered system the challenge is to be effective in all modes of service. Increasing awareness of how to blend in-person and virtual practices for training, job search, interviewing, on-boarding and on-the-job tasks will be integral to our success going forward.

To that end, CT HIRES allows for a WIOA online pre-application. Workforce Alliance and its One Stop provider, Equus, now deliver a video-based orientation to American Job Center services and allow for necessary intake documents to be directly uploaded or with contactless drop-off. As stated above, those online steps are integrated with an in-person meeting with a case manager (Job Seeker Consultant) within a set window (2020-2021 goal: 5 days). The blending of in-person and virtual services continue from there. This accommodates not only COVID-19 concerns, but also abates the barriers of transportation and child care particularly for those in areas with limited public transportation.

As with general American Job Center (WIOA) services, select programs including Recovery Works, Health Careers Advancement Project, CARES Act offerings and Skill Up for Manufacturing, Project CEO and ITXpress have dedicated program pages that provide online orientation/overview slideshows to give necessary information usually covered during an in-person information session, as well as an online form to begin application and staff engagement. In specific cases, assessments for basic skills and career suitability can also be done online, with an in-person option. Our site is also a conduit to CTHires, Metrix Online Learning and the CT

Back to Work Initiative. A technology infrastructure of email, text messaging and video conferencing for appointments, sharing of information, confirmation of appointments, activities and check-in's exists to facilitate service delivery.

Workshops normally only available in person have been created and posted on YouTube and on the workforcealliance.biz website. In doing so, these are accessible to the people not only enrolled in services but to any member of the public, both in the region and beyond.

In addition to workshops, Job Clubs are now recurring online events that bring together jobseekers and employers. Attendance at these online events has surpassed attendance at previous in-person Job Clubs, attributed to being able to participate without the barrier of transportation or child care. Employers regularly participating in these virtual Job Clubs is also a draw. Virtual Job Fairs/Meet & Greets have occurred by program, and more are planned.

Access to job leads and recruitments directly facilitated by the Workforce Alliance Business Services team have largely moved online, with in-person expected to resume in 2021, although modified for COVID-19 safety. For enrolled customers, Talent Market is an online jobs database populated by Business Services. CT has a new agreement with Indeed for a CT jobs portal, which complements the CTHires job board. As a public service, the dedicated page for recruiting and hiring by essential employers that launched during the pandemic will continue for the foreseeable future. The page: (<https://www.workforcealliance.biz/recruiting-and-hiring/>) allows our Business Services specialists to post on behalf of employers they are working with and to track and follow up for those who apply via our site.

We continue to make extensive use of social media to inform our community. Traditionally, we use Linked In as a means of general networking and outreach. We have a Facebook page, which is used for general announcements, program recruiting and to promote employers with significant job events. Jobseeker customers and staff are also trained to establishing LinkedIn accounts for networking and job search.

Twitter has an audience of more tech savvy and provide short bursts of information, usually linking to more information. Instagram is a recruitment vehicle for the Project CEO Youth and Young adult programs, plus workshop content and event announcements.

We will continue to build upon some of the more successful aspects of the local delivery system in an effort to bring services and programming to remote areas. The most evident example of this would be the expansion of our Summer Youth Program. With the cooperation of the Chief Elected Officials and the local business community, we have been able to expand summer jobs for youth , and 19 municipalities in the region are participating in 2020, in spite of the COVID-19 limitations.

3. Integration of Services

Describe how one-stop career centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under this Act and programs carried out by one-stop career center partners.

We currently use the CT HIRES system as our case management system, which enables us to integrate services with Wagner-Peyser, Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA), Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), and Veterans services currently provided by the Connecticut Department of Labor. The CT HIRES System also allows access to WIOA and JFES participation, thus further facilitating integration.

4. Competitive Selection of One Stop Operator

Describe the steps taken or to be taken to ensure a competitive process for selection of the one-stop operator(s). Provide the name and contact information of the One Stop Operator.

The process for design and selection of the One-stop Operator began in January 2016 where we received technical assistance from a national consultant. Since that time, Senior Staff have worked diligently at examining best practices in One-stop Operation and the opportunities to better serve customers through WIOA. We established a timeline for a traditional competitive procurement, review, selection process, contract negotiation and transition period for a One-Stop Operator. The One Stop Operator selected for the South Central Region is Farnam Associates LLC, 129 Church Street Suite 604, New Haven, CT, 06510.
Tel: 203-776-0001

5. System Improvement

Describe the steps the LWDB will take to ensure continuous improvement of the area's one-stop system.

Workforce Alliance has embraced many of the models that have emerged that continuously improve services to our customers. These are over and above the WIOA performance indicators and are grounded in our vision and values.

The “2Gen” pilots in the region, the Secure Jobs pilot in New Haven, and the Customer – Centered Design Models such as the model developed through the local Social Service Delivery Improvement Initiative (SSDI) all take a more holistic, whole family approach to case management and to service delivery. We will migrate to customer-centered design in the first year of operation. We have already started this process with some of our discretionary grants, and our plan is to implement the design system-wide.

The region is composed of thirty cities and towns. In light of there currently only being a WIOA presence in New Haven, Middletown and Meriden, it is often difficult to come to one of the centers for service. Therefore, one of our service improvement goals is to bring more services to our outlying areas, and to offer more services virtually. The CT HIRES case management function is more portable and will allow us to provide more remote services. We have done this in the past with our Summer Youth Program, and we are confident that we can replicate many career service functions.

On the employer services side, we will work towards more seamless service delivery of products in the region, with extensive cross training of a Business Services Team, comprised of partners who carry on that function.

II. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

1. Provide an analysis of the local area’s economic conditions, including information on existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

INTRODUCTION

The South Central Workforce Investment Area, encompassing 30 towns in South Central Connecticut, and the New Haven Labor Market Area (NH LMA), had experienced a strong recovery from the effects of the great recession, with the region’s unemployment rate at 3.4% in March of 2020, continuing a downward trend over the past several years. Now faced with a 9.1% unemployment rate largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our region is now experiencing unemployment at the levels we experienced during the Great Recession.

EXISTING AND EMERGING IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS

Every two years economists at the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) Office of Research create ten-year industry and occupational employment forecasts. The most recent forecasts at the time of this document’s publishing utilize 2016 data as the base year, and project employment trends out to the year 2026. The purpose of these forecasts are to assist students, schools, training programs, businesses, and governments to make informed planning decisions.

As of June 2020, the unemployment rate in South Central Connecticut was 9.1% due to the pandemic, up from a recent low of 3.4% in March. The total number of unemployed in our region was 29,990 as of June 2020. While job growth began to recover in May, the state lost 17% of its jobs (291,300) to the pandemic between February and April. The hoped for V-shaped recovery does not appear to be happening as the recovery looks like it will be more gradual. The Workforce Alliance has an

opportunity to work with the State and its partners to help shape the response to this dislocation in a way that focuses on continued upskilling of the labor force and on job quality. Table 1 shows the top growth sectors in the latest CT DOL employment projections which continue to show gains in sectors that require post-secondary training.

Table 1: Top 5 Growing Industry Sectors 2016-2026

Industry Title	Base	Projected	Numeric Change	Percent Change
	Employment 2016	Employment 2026		
Education and Health Services	124,366	132,058	7,692	6.2
Health Care and Social Assistance	68,860	75,938	7,078	10.3
Ambulatory Health Care Services	20,212	24,192	3,980	19.7
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	4,936	8,872	3,936	79.7
Professional and Business Services	39,266	43,173	3,907	9.9

Table 2 presents the 12 South Central Connecticut occupations groupings which are projected to have more than 2,000 annual total openings between 2016 and 2026, accounting for 93% of all openings.

Table 2: Top 12 Growing Industry Occupational Categories, 2016-2026

SOC Code	Occupation Title	Base Employment 2016	Projected Employment 2026	Annual Change	Annual Total Openings
43	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	58,411	58,508	10	6,495
35	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	28,698	29,951	125	5,080
41	Sales and Related Occupations	34,980	35,574	59	4,887
39	Personal Care and Service Occupations	21,182	24,907	372	3,624
41-2	Retail Sales Workers	20,535	20,518	(2)	3,295
35-3	Food and Beverage Serving Workers	16,517	17,486	97	3,177
25	Education, Training, and Library Occupations	30,883	32,143	126	2,714
53	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	19,974	21,930	196	2,699
39-9	Other Personal Care and Service Workers	15,270	17,361	209	2,588
51	Production Occupations	20,713	20,644	(7)	2,278
11	Management Occupations	23,259	25,458	220	2,082
37	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	15,638	16,033	40	2,018
	Total	306,060	320,513	1,445	40,937
	Total, All Occupations	375,036	398,441	2,340	43,824

Industry Forecasts. The latest CTDOL forecasts project the highest growing industry sector in the region to be Education and Health Services (a ten-year growth of 7,692 new jobs), followed by Health Care and Social Assistance (7,078 jobs), Ambulatory Health Care Services (3,980 jobs), Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (3,936) and Professional and Business Services (3,907). Table 3, below, shows the top five industries predicted to grow by the largest number of jobs over the next ten years. Of course, the pandemic will likely impact industry projections dramatically in areas such as arts, entertainment, and recreation; retail trade; and hospitality.

Table 3 Top 5 Growing Industries, 2016-2026

Industry Title	Base Employment 2016	Projected Employment 2026	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Education and Health Services	124,366	132,058	7,692	6.2
Health Care and Social Assistance	68,860	75,938	7,078	10.3
Ambulatory Health Care Services	20,212	24,192	3,980	19.7
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	4,936	8,872	3,936	79.7
Professional and Business Services	39,266	43,173	3,907	9.9

Our region’s top five employers are in health, healthcare supplies and logistics which align with areas of demand due to COVID-19.

Occupational Forecasts. The latest CTDOL forecasts project Personal Care and Service Occupations to be the highest growing occupational category over the next ten years, growing by 3,725 jobs or 17.6%. The next highest occupational growth categories are Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations (3,131 jobs, 11.2%) and Management occupations

(2,199 jobs, 9.45%).¹ These projections align with historical occupational growth in Health Services occupations having seen the highest growth over the past decade.

Provide an analysis of the employment needs of employers in those industry sectors and occupations.

Health and Personal Care Sector. COVID-19 has resulted in a growth in the health and personal care sectors. This sector was already experienced an increased need of employees due to an aging population, as well as other demographic and workforce shift prior to the pandemic. As more Americans become insured, access to medical care will increase, leading to a more fiscally healthy health care system.² Hospitals are the single largest employer within the health and personal care sector. The South Central region is home to the largest hospital network in the state of Connecticut, Yale New Haven Health. Additionally, rapid growth of rehabilitation services in traditional nursing homes is driving a need for ongoing specialized training within the healthcare sector. The recent opening of Retreat Behavioral Health, an addiction recovery facility, has added to the need in this sector. For instance, an increasing number of CNAs currently trained in caring for the elderly need additional training in rehabilitation therapy services.

Relative to the state, the region's concentration of Health Care and Social Assistance employment is 1.14 times higher, and 1.35 times the national concentration..³ Health sector employers have detailed immediate hiring needs across multiple occupations in focus groups and sector discussions. Examples include CNAs, Pharmacy Technicians, and Sterile Processing Technicians. With such a high concentration of employment as well as high growth projections, Workforce Alliance identifies Health Care and Social Assistance as a priority sector in the region.

Educational Services. The South Central region's concentration of employment in the educational services sector 2.3 times higher than that of the rest of the state, and 4.1 times higher than national averages.⁴ This is due in large part to Yale University, the single largest employer in the region, which has in recent years posted thousands of jobs annually.⁵ The CT DOL forecasts the educational services sector to see the second highest job growth in the region. Education, Training and Library Occupations are projected to offer 2.714 openings per year in the region.⁶

While many occupations in the educational services sector have significant educational requirements, a large portion do not such as: information technology, financial services and

¹ CT DOL 2012-2022 Occupational Growth Projections for South Central Connecticut. Accessed April, 2016.

² U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services:

<http://www.hhs.gov/healthcare/facts-and-features/fact-sheets/aca-is-working/index.html>

³ CT DOL Workforce Investment Area Planning Information, June 2020 Update. Accessed August 2020

⁴ CT DOL Workforce Investment Area Planning Information, June 2020 Update. Accessed August 2020.

⁵ Key Labor Market Trends: Real-Time Labor Intelligence Research for South Central CT. Monster Government Solutions, March 2016 and subsequent sector communications.

⁶ CT DOL Workforce Investment Area Planning Information, June 2020 Update. Accessed August 2020

billing, and building grounds and maintenance workers. These support occupations will grow alongside others in the educational sector. Workforce Alliance plans to partner with community colleges to match employment needs with training for these support occupations. This partnership has the potential to create a two-generational solution, as the children of community college employees may attend the college tuition free – paving the way for the next generation’s success.

Information Technology (IT) Sector and Other STEM-related Occupations remain among the hardest occupations to fill including: computer and mathematical, architecture, and engineering occupations. Connecticut employers’ difficulty filling STEM-related occupations mirrors a nationwide issue.

Information Technology represents one of the region’s super-sectors. The Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sector is projected to grow by 10% to 17, 367 jobs by 2026. According to CTDOL, computer and mathematical occupations are projected to have annual openings of 622 in the region from 2016-2026. Architecture and engineering occupations account for another 458 annual openings. Life, physical and social science occupations account for another 277 annual openings, for a combined total of 1,357 annual openings,

Table 4: STEM Occupation Projections, 2016-2026

STEM Occupations	Base Employment 2016	Projected Employment 2026	Annual Change	Annual Total Openings
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	5,268	5,942	67	458
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	7,549	8,488	94	622
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	3,000	3,128	13	277
Grand Total	15,817	17,558	174	1,357

Nationally, employment in STEM occupations grew by 10.5 percent, or 817,260 jobs, between May 2009 and May 2015, compared with 5.2 percent net growth in non-STEM occupations. Computer occupations and engineers were among the types of STEM occupations with the highest job gains. Employment in computer occupations was nearly 3.2 million in May 2009 and nearly 3.9 million in May 2015. Employment of engineers was nearly 1.5 million in May 2009, compared with over 1.6 million in May 2015.⁷

Despite relatively higher salaries, the supply of workers with specific high-value skills needed by employers common to STEM occupations remains insufficient.

Manufacturing Sector. The manufacturing sector faces two important challenges that also represent potential opportunities for the region: 1) up until the pandemic hit, manufacturers had

⁷ Fayer, Steven, et al, STEM Occupations: Past, Present, and Future, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 2017. <https://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2017/science-technology-engineering-and-mathematics-stem-occupations-past-present-and-future/pdf/science-technology-engineering-and-mathematics-stem-occupations-past-present-and-future.pdf>

unfilled positions due to current job-skills mismatches; and 2) manufacturers forecast future openings due to an aging and retiring workforce. At a recent Workforce Alliance Manufacturing Focus Group to inform planning for the regional Skill Up for Manufacturing initiative, local manufacturers reported significant growth and signaled a need for skilled labor. Virtually all focus group attendees indicated that the lack of skilled workers is inhibiting their ability to grow. The need for a skilled workforce will only increase as the manufacturing industry rebounds post-pandemic and the aging manufacturing workforce continues to retire. WA is working to capitalize on these needs by developing programs and services to train the region's workforce for these in-demand occupations.

The manufacturing industry in Connecticut was in the midst of a renaissance until the pandemic hit, as the aerospace and shipbuilding sectors expand due primarily to Pratt and Whitney's development of the F-135 aircraft engine and Electric Boat's Virginia Class submarine program, both of which have a ripple effect throughout the statewide supply chain. The long-term impact of the pandemic on demand for aerospace components is yet to be fully understood, but could dampen demand for manufacturing workers.

Provide an analysis of the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs in in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

Health-related Knowledge and Skills. The Health Care sector offers career pathway opportunities to residents, as entry-level jobs within the sector may lead to higher-paying careers. For instance, within the Personal Care and Service occupations category (projected to grow by 17.6% and 3,725 jobs by 2026).⁸ PCAs, and a host of other health-related entry level positions (e.g. Personal Care Technicians, Home Health Aids, Nursing Assistants) offer workers opportunities to pursue careers rather than just a job. For example, a worker with experience as a Personal Care Aid could, through on-the-job training and further experience, progress to a role as a nursing assistant or even a licensed practical or vocational nurse.

Many of these in-demand positions within the health and personal care sectors (e.g. Personal Care Aids, Nursing Assistants, Patient Care Technicians, and Community Health Workers) appeared on the Health and Human Services list of "Promising Occupations Achievable through Short-term Education or Training for Low-Income Families." Often times these occupations do not require a post-secondary degree. Instead, many of these occupations require only a post-secondary certificate (and only a high school diploma or equivalent as pre-requisites), making them ideal positions for which to train unemployed or underemployed workers. Providing assistance to doctors and nurses, these occupations play an increasingly important role in successful healthcare delivery.

Educational Knowledge and Skills. Within the Educational sector, the occupation with the largest projected growth is post-secondary teachers adding 1,163 jobs or 10.9% (with 957 annual openings). Preschool, primary, secondary, and special education school teachers are not projected to grow in numbers, but the annual openings are projected at 781 due to retirements

⁸ CT DOL Occupational Employment Projections, 2016-2026.

and transfers out of the profession.⁹ Nearly all education-related jobs, especially public ones, require at least a bachelor's degree, while the majority of post-secondary teaching occupations require a doctor's degree. The educational requirements of this sector present a significant barrier for a large portion of those seeking employment, and for the majority of WA clients.

IT Skills. Similar to the educational sector, occupations requiring STEM-related knowledge and skills including information technology, computer and mathematical, and professional and technical occupations, require a bachelor's degree. The total number of computer occupations in South Central Connecticut is projected to increase by 12.2% between 2016 and 2026, creating 594 annual openings.¹⁰ I/T occupations that are increasing at an even faster rate include Computer Software Developers and Web developers. In 2019, 21 CT software companies were approved for 236 H1B visas to fill positions with foreign workers, a program that has been suspended.

Manufacturing Knowledge and Skills. Manufacturing occupations, including machinists and welders (two occupational categories projected to grow), require a range of skills including: analytical, mechanical, and technical skills. Workforce Alliance aims to provide much of the necessary core education and skills training through its AJCs, partnerships with local community colleges, technical high schools and 4-year colleges and universities, as well coordinated on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs at many local and regional manufacturing companies.

Logistics. There is currently worker demand in all roles within the sector due to COVID-related activity as a result of e-commerce, and the field was also experiencing need before the pandemic. According to the CT DOL (CT Career Paths, 2019), there are 23,796 Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers employed in CT, with 3,5768 annual total openings (based on CT DOL 2016-2026 Occupational Projections). Another 7,247 Packers and Packagers are employed in the state with annual total openings of 1,182. Employers are seeking candidates with technical skills such as process management and the basic tools of Six Sigma and soft, transferable skills such as working in teams, accuracy, timeliness, and tenacity.

Provide an analysis of the workforce in the region, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region, including individuals with barriers to employment.

Employment & Unemployment Data. The South Central region had seen a strong recovery from the negative effects of the Great Recession, but that recovery has been drastically set back due to the Pandemic Depression. Our region's unemployment rate hit 9.4% in June, which is comparable to the levels we experienced at the height of the recession. We do not know the length of this recovery, but we can expect the needs of our regions health, IT and logistics employers will be emerging career opportunities in the immediate future.

Local Wage Information.

⁹ CT DOL Occupational Employment Projections, South Central CT WDB, 2016-2026.

¹⁰ Ibid.

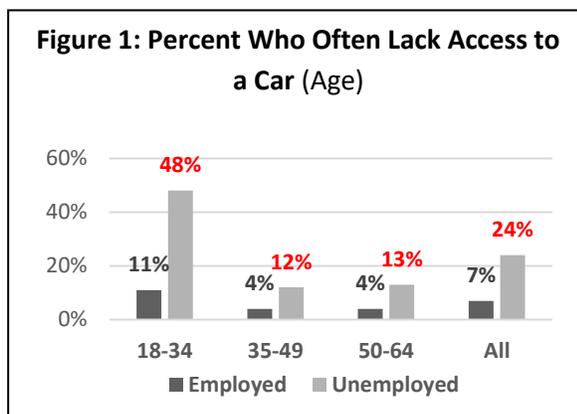
Average weekly wages for all industries are \$1,191 in our region compared to an average of \$1,185 in the US. Annual average wages within the South Central region are \$59,869 and have remained below state averages

Educational and Skill Levels of Workforce. The South Central region has an educated workforce. Thirty-seven (37) percent of the region’s residents hold a bachelor’s degree or higher,¹¹ in line with state percentages and 8% higher than the national average.¹² The region’s four-year high school graduation rate for the 2018-19 4 year cohort of 89.0% is higher than that of the state as a whole (88.5%).¹³ The percentage of the region’s residents lacking a high school diploma or GED at 9.8% is 0.7% lower than the state (10.5%), and 3.9% lower than the national average of 13.7%.¹⁴

Employed vs. Unemployed Demographic Information.¹⁵ Stark differences in the region’s employed and unemployed were revealed in 2015 and 2018 DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey of South Central residents.

50% percent of unemployed residents in the region felt they needed more *training and/or education* in order to “get ahead in their career,” compared to 23% of employed residents (more than 1.5 times as many). Among this group, 36% of young adults say they need more training and education, underscoring a need for youth supports in our region.

Figure 1 shows that *Transportation*, specifically access to a car when needed, can pose another significant barrier to employment. Almost 3.5 times (24%) as many unemployed residents reported they often do not have access to a car when needed, compared to employed residents (7%). Black and African American respondents reported the greatest disparity, with 48% of unemployed Black residents reporting they often do not have access to a car when needed, compared to only 13% among employed Black respondents.



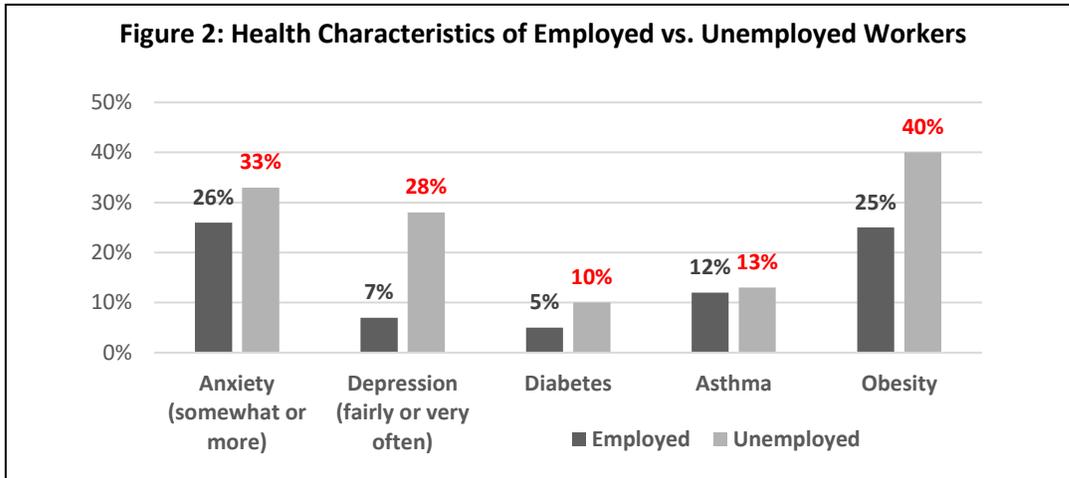
In regard to potential *health barriers* to employment, unemployed residents reported higher percentages of anxiety (7% higher), depression (21% higher), diabetes (5% higher), obesity (15% higher), and asthma (1% higher) as compared to employed residents. Figure 4 compares health characteristics among employed and unemployed survey respondents in the region.

¹¹ American Community Survey, Decennial Census

¹² United States Census Bureau, 2010-2014. <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/09,00>

¹³ CT DOL WIA Planning Information, June 2020, Accessed August 2020.

¹⁴ United States Census Bureau, 2010-2014. <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/09,00>



Under employment. Underemployment in Greater New Haven, and New Haven specifically, is more pronounced than statewide percentages. At the state level, 16% of adults are underemployed, compared to 20% in Greater New Haven. DataHaven’s analysis revealed a 30% underemployment rate among New Haven adults in 2019 revealing that our urban centers need additional support.

Provide an analysis of the workforce development activities (including education and training) in the region, including an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of such services and the capacity to provide such services, to address the identified education and skill needs of the workforce and employment needs of employers in the region.

Workforce Alliance provides a wide range of workforce development activities including:

Individual Training Accounts for WIOA-eligible adults, dislocated workers, and TANF recipients. Customers select occupational training options from the state-approved provider list of vendor institutions. Services are arranged through the One-stop.

On the Job Training (OJT) for WIOA /TANF eligible, underemployed or long-term unemployed individuals. Individuals who are job ready but who lack specific occupational skills are likely candidates for OJT. One-stop Job Developers match jobseekers with employers who are willing to provide the skills training, and are reimbursed for a specific period to offset training costs.

Customized or Industry Pipeline Training in which an employer or consortium of employers design curriculum and agree to interview and/or hire successful program graduates.

Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) is available to help companies grow and maintain competitiveness by investing in training of their existing workforce. Training programs may include training designed to increase the basic skills of employees including, but not limited to, training in written and oral communication, mathematics or science, or training in technical and technological skills. Incumbent Worker Training grants are structured to be flexible to meet the business’s training objectives.

Please see SECTION IV Coordination of Services for more information.

Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area.

Please see information regarding workforce development activities described in number 5 above.

Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area, including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities. The description and assessment must include an identification of successful models of such youth workforce investment activities.

The Workforce Alliance Youth Committee includes Board Members, stakeholders and young people from the community who all share a mission. Together, the Committee devises strategic themes for action, and oversees youth opportunities. The following are examples of these programs, all which serve youth with disabilities:

The Children's Community Program of CT – In-School Youth Program serves in-school youth in grades 11 through 12, many of whom have been or are involved in the juvenile justice system. Referrals are made through arrangements with the Street Outreach Worker Program, New Haven Police Department, and the New Haven Board of Education. Students receive academic guidance/counseling and paid work experiences during the year.

Project CEO - Career-related workshops are provided in the following areas: career identification, making informed career decisions, career plan development, understanding the importance of education and its relation to employment, and developing an educational plan. Goal setting, action planning and real-life application supplement skills development in the classroom.

Summer Youth Employment Program: every summer, Workforce Alliance puts more than 1,000 young people to work across the region. Over the last five years, Workforce Alliance Summer Youth Employment programs have included a collaboration with the State Department of Children and Families to put youth into jobs via programs operated by municipalities, boards of education, and chambers of commerce. The program currently serves 22 of the regions 30 towns.

ACES Summer Youth Employment Program – a continuation of a formerly-funded WIOA program where a Work-based learning model is in place. 100% of enrollees are youth with disabilities.

The Common Ground year-round program provides assistance to eligible youth with real work, opportunities for learning and leadership, and individualized supports. The program provides participants with work-based learning experiences with an emphasis on Green Jobs. Work experience activities – ranging in length from six (6) to 12 weeks, for between five (5) and 25 hours per week – represent the defining feature of the program. Some students work as facilitators for after-school environmental programs, while others help with outside gardening, tree planting and maintaining school grounds, gardens and parks throughout the City of New Haven. The program also helps youth with resume writing and interviewing skills. Youth attend workshops throughout their participation in Green Job Corps to make them feel more comfortable and experienced while getting out into the world of work.

Identify gaps in service based on the above analyses.

Skills Gap. One of the greatest challenges facing the region is a lack of workers trained and educated for in-demand occupations. Employers in the region report shortages for qualified workers in the area's in-demand sectors, including the health, manufacturing, and information technology. Our shift to a person-centered case management model ensures AJC customers receive the best in customer service to help them advance along their desired career pathways. The large scope of the skills gap challenge requires a coordinated response among workforce stakeholders. By continually responding to employer's knowledge of their workforce needs and creating and delivering training programs to build a talent pipeline, we can begin to address the Skills Gap. Through the implementation of these strategies, Workforce Alliance will work to address both the demand and supply side of the skills gap issue (see Section III, OUR STRATEGIES for more information).

COVID19. The global pandemic has required a rapid change in our service delivery models at the same time our region experiences severe increase in the number of unemployed in our region. The Workforce Alliance will need to work closely with our region's employers to respond to increased need in healthcare, IT and warehousing and logistics positions and offer job training supports to career seekers through a variety of virtual methods. The uncertainty of this time will require that we remain agile and innovative.

Transportation and Child Care. Access to transportation and adequate child care remain major barriers to high quality employment for many in our region. 13% of individuals in our region experience transportation insecurities which are more common among Black and Latino residents (2019 DataHaven Community Well Being Survey). Regarding child care needs, New Haven alone is in need of 2,500 additional child care slots and the cost of available slots is a major issue (NHCHLD). Workforce Alliance will work with ride-sharing services to continue to offer a customized menu of transportation services for AJC customers who lack transportation to interviews and employment. To address the longstanding issue of our customers' need for child care services, we will work with the CT Office of Early Childhood and regional early childhood councils and providers to expand resources for and improve access to services, including exploring how to support Child Care Navigation to build stronger connections to community providers.

Digital Divide. The shift to virtual services in the wake of the pandemic has highlighted the need to bridge the digital divide in our region. From our perspective, this divide not only includes physically components such as computers, but also access to the internet and a foundation of digital literacy for customers. The Workforce Alliance will seek funding to supply these items and all of our training programs will now include a digital literacy component to cover virtual interview skills, and virtual workplace skills.

Customizing Services for Specific Populations. Our service population represents a diverse array of lived experiences and effective training and supports require approaches that are customized per population. Providing effective services for youth, underemployed, those with disabilities and ex-offenders will require the Workforce Alliance to adopt a range of best practices and to be effective service providers for a variety of customers.

III. LWDB VISION, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

- 1. Identify the vision, goals and strategies adopted by the LWDB in response to the passage of WIOA and how these will affect the preparation of an educated and skilled workforce.**

OUR VISION

Our vision is to work with our partners to cultivate the highly-skilled, high-quality workers needed for regional employers to prosper and grow. Our vision includes a renewed focus on creating a more just system that produces equitable outcomes for Black and Brown residents.

Our vision embraces the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) emphasis on partnership, alignment and systems integration, as well as WIOA's dual focus on developing a supply of highly-qualified workers while meeting the hiring demands of employers.

Our vision aligns with Governor Lamont and the Governor's Workforce Council's vision for our state, which also serves as the vision in Connecticut's WIOA Unified State Plan: *Connecticut will create and sustain the global economy's best-educated, most-skilled, highest-productive workforce, capable of pursuing rewarding careers, such that every Connecticut business has access to a qualified, skilled, job-ready workforce.*

GOALS

The Workforce Alliance has six overarching goals for 2020-2025 to address our region's unique priorities and that align with WIOA priorities and Connecticut's Unified State Plan.

1. Develop and implement an action plan to advance racial equity through workforce services.

Our board and staff will work together to build and apply knowledge of racial equity and to implement actions that move our region toward racial and economic equity. Racial equity focused measures will be incorporated across all our 5 year plan strategies to ensure sustained action to address systemic racial bias.

2. Continue to build an integrated workforce system with increased access, greater agility, and deeper partnerships to advance career pathways. Responding to the COVID pandemic by moving to virtual service delivery required great agility. We will learn from this experience to continually adjust service strategies to ensure increased access through closer partnerships with all service providers, employers, chambers and industry associations and deepened connections to the community and community based organizations, and customer feedback.

3. Continue and expand efforts to engage youth, with a focus on out-of-school youth and young adults and minority youth. Through strong, person-centered practices and the implementation of relevant and engaging youth programs, we will support youth as they enter career pathways. We will work with our partners in K-12 and Adult Education to meet the academic needs of youth and will work with employers to provide work experience and career exploration opportunities.

4. Strengthen employer-driven, next generation sector partnerships to enhance industry talent pipelines. We will expand on our successful manufacturing industry partnership by engaging with other regional industry sectors such as health care, IT, and logistics to address employers' talent needs.

5. *Continue progress toward person-centered service delivery within a two generation approach with particular focus on availability of support services to address barriers to participation and employment.* Access to adequate transportation and child care services remain barriers to employment for many in our region. By addressing the needs of an individual and their family, more appropriate plans and strategies can be put in place so that career seekers can obtain and sustain employment while still working toward a long term career goals.

6. *Continue to strengthen AJC system services for career seekers with disabilities.* We will continue to refine our nationally recognized strategies to support individuals with disabilities as they navigate career pathways through use of Integrated Resource Teams involving partners, provision of assistive technology, and strong connections with employers.

STRATEGIES

The following paragraphs describe several strategies we will utilize to accomplish our vision and goals.

- Racial Equity -

Begin implementation of our racial equity action plan to do our part in ushering in a more just and equitable workforce system in our region. We recognize the persistent inequalities that continue to impact Black and Brown communities, leaving them with higher unemployment rates, lower graduation rates, less income, higher poverty rates, and less wealth. The recent pandemic has magnified this issue as we've seen Blacks and Latinos getting sick and dying at disproportionately high rates and being much more likely to be laid off during the economic shutdown. To address systemic racism, the Workforce Alliance has committed to:

- Assess our internal and external operations and commit to making changes and being accountable for them.
- To deepen our connections with Black and Latino communities, we will dedicate new outreach resources through our network of American Job Centers and increase our collaboration with our community partners to not only reach and serve more people of color with employment & training services, but also seek input from customers and partners so that what we do is meaningful and has impact.
- Review existing Business Services policies to ensure that minority-owned businesses and start-ups are not excluded from services to increase the participation of minority-owned businesses in our programs
- Disaggregate our program outcomes to reveal disparities by race and use those results to inform programmatic changes, including changes to internal policies.
- Advocate for state policies that address barriers in areas of transportation, child care, and access to services faced disproportionately in Black and Brown communities

-Integrated System-

Institute new avenues of engaging with mandated and other partners that are more inclusive and responsive to 2Gen approaches and incorporate successful virtual elements created for COVID

in our American Job Centers. We will continue to deepen our engagement with all partners to move toward a more integrated, transparent, and equitable workforce system. Our virtual service delivery models in response to COVID provide insight into new opportunities to increase engagement with both partners and customers. Customers who previously were limited by lack of transportation or child care needs can now participate in activities like online training through the METRIX platform and virtual job clubs. We will expand on this new opportunity to offer more virtual services such as industry based work-shops, Q&A sessions with employers, and appointments with Job Seeker consultants.

In order to be successful with these endeavors, we must also address the digital divide facing Black and Brown communities in particular by providing technology supports such as computers, access to internet hot spots, and digital literacy services. We will need to work with our partners to advocate for the state level policies and the resources to bridge this divide.

We will enhance our regional partner network to focus on engagement and retention of participants from Black and Latino communities and address the specific barriers that have impacted their success in programs previously.

-Employer Engagement and Industry Pipelines-

Advance sectoral partnerships across growth areas. Our history of engagement with employers from diverse sectors, all with differing talent needs and target populations, has allowed the Workforce Alliance to greatly improve our training services and job opportunities for career seekers while addressing specific employer needs. We will continue to refine talent pipeline offerings in manufacturing, health, IT, and logistics, seeking new state and federal resources to support them and will expand our engagement with employers through sector advisory bodies, virtual and in-person hiring events, and opportunities to advise on program offerings. For sectors undergoing transition, such as hospitality, which was a growing industry before the pandemic, we will listen to industry adaptations and be responsive to new roles and occupational requirements in coming years.

We will also encourage employers currently utilizing Business Services to become mentors to minority-owned businesses and start-ups and will work with our employer partners to provide guidance and strategies with the goal of increasing diversity in recruitment and hiring practices.

-Support Services-

Continue refinement of AJC system practices to ensure a person-centered, strengths-based approach that meets participants where they are and continue move from focus on immediate placement to career pathways. We will adopt broad interpretation of supportive services to include any barrier to participation in training or work, which can be supported by fully utilizing funds allocated for support services. Understanding that barriers to employment impact minorities at greater rates than their white counterparts, often resulting in their taking part-time or lower wage work, we will incorporate best practices for equity and inclusion in our support services model as important to closing racial gaps in career success.

Transportation and child care continue to be major barriers to successful opportunities for our customers. Our study conducted with the NAACP and COG showed much lower rates of car

ownership in our urban areas. We will develop transportation strategies for employment outside areas or times served by public transportation such as expanding on a pilot partnership with UBER for our customers. To address the longstanding issue of our customers' need for child care services, we will work with the CT Office of Early Childhood and regional early childhood councils and providers to expand resources for and improve access to services, including exploring how to support Child Care Navigation to build stronger connections to community providers.

-Youth-

Administer better supports and engagement with youth and young adults. To help our region's youth and young adults gain access to strong career pathways, we will implement better support services to address this population's unique needs. Our youth serving program, Project CEO, has been successful in engaging youth and introducing them to career pathways, and we now shift our focus to expanding on those successes. To do so, we commit to developing earlier interventions, creating engaging and relevant career exploration opportunities and expand utilization of subsidized employment and On the Job training to provide work experience opportunities.

-Persons with Disabilities-

Continue to advance work to serve persons with disabilities across the AJC system. To increase opportunities for career seekers with disabilities, we must continue to implement our best practices of engaging partners and providing adaptive services and strive for more opportunities and supports for this population. We will maintain and upgrade assistive technology and professional development in our three American Job Centers and accessible online presence, using a lending library approach where appropriate, and seek funding for interpretive services. Due to our increased utilization of virtual service delivery, adaptive services and interpretive services for this delivery model will be needed as well. Our relationship with DADS is a key element of the successes of our efforts to date and we will continue to strengthen that partnership through engagement with DADS staff at multiple levels. Finally, we will create Integrated Resource Teams that involve our community partners to help advance participant career goals.

-Data-driven System-

Use data more effectively to drive continuous improvement and racial equity across all strategies. Building on the work of the Governor's Workforce Council, we will use data across all operations to guide our program planning and performance measurement for greater productivity and accountability, including disaggregating our program outcomes to reveal disparities by race and use those results to inform programmatic changes, including changes to internal policies.

2. Describe the process used to develop the LWDB's vision and goals, including a description of the participants in the process.

Workforce Alliance has incorporated extensive involvement from workforce development stakeholders and the public in the development of its vision and goals. The following bullets capture highlights of this process, including the participants involved in each portion of the process.

- We convened *focus groups with AJC Partners, customers and employers* from our priority "pipeline" industries (manufacturing, healthcare and hospitality) . Over 30

regional employers participated in these focus groups, which gave employers the opportunity to talk about their current and future workforce challenges. AJC partners participating in focus groups included agencies offering various training and support programs, homeless advocates, Adult Education providers, and the current One-stop Operator.

- Workforce Alliance leaders held strategic planning meetings, one on one conversations and presentations with REDFO, Chambers, CEDS, Economic Development Commissions, the Secure Jobs Pilot, Middletown Works, the 2 Gen (Gateway and Middlesex) to discuss opportunities to increase collaboration and coordination between the public workforce and higher education systems. The Workforce Alliance Planning Committee and Executive Committee have been leading the strategic planning effort that developed the vision and goals and produced this Local Plan.
- Workforce Alliance leadership has continued to take advantage of professional development opportunities and other opportunities related to emerging areas such as building industry pipelines, customer-centered practice and working remotely. These webinars, Zoom Meetings, trainings, and learning and networking opportunities (e.g., National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP) and National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) meetings) have all informed the development of our vision, goals and strategies.

3. Describe the local area’s strategy to work with entities that carry out the core programs to align resources available to the local area to achieve the strategic vision and goals established by the local board.

The *Our Strategies* section above describes in detail current and planned strategies to align resources and increase coordination with our partners that carry out core WIOA programs. Increasing coordination and integration represents an imperative under WIOA, and is a hallmark of the customer-centered approach to which we have implemented within our system

4. Describe service strategies the LWDB has in place or will develop that will improve meeting the needs of customers with disabilities as well as other population groups.

The *Our Strategies* section above describes in detail current and planned strategies to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities (strategy #8), as well as other priority populations including ex-offenders (strategy #5), out-of-school youth (strategy #6), and underemployed workers (strategy #7).

5. Describe how the LWDB’s goals relate to the achievement of federal performance accountability measures to support economic growth and self-sufficiency.

The Workforce Alliance goals support the achievement of WIOA performance accountability measures. Through implementation of an action plan centered on knowledge of racial equity (Goal #1) will move towards improving economic conditions for our regions Black and Brown communities. By continuing to build an integrated workforce system (Goal #2) that is agile

allows for multiple engagement strategies we will ensure customers will receive services and training that supports their self-sufficiency. (Goal #4) will improve employment rates and build talent pipelines for our region's top industries. Increasing the level and accessibility of AJC services for young adults and persons with disabilities (Goals #3 and #6) will improve credential rates, skills gains, employment rates, and earning for those priority populations.

6. Indicate anticipated local levels of performance for the federal measures.

The Workforce Alliance consistently met WIOA performance measures, and anticipates meeting future WIOA measures.

7. Describe indicators used by the LWDB to measure performance and effectiveness of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), contracted service providers, and the one-stop delivery system in the local area.

Current indicators include periodic monitoring of expenditure rates, outreach, enrollments, persistence in training, completion, credential, placement into employment, earnings upon employment and employment retention.

IV. COORDINATION OF SERVICES

1. Coordination with Partner Programs and Services

Describe how WIOA Title I services will be coordinated across programs/partners in the one-stop centers, including Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Education and Literacy activities and TANF. Specify how the LWDB will coordinate with these programs to prevent duplication and improve services to customers.

Workforce Alliance is cognizant that the "past system" of working with the entities described above would in reality, only warrant a referral to the appropriate entity. For example, if a person presented him/herself into the One-stop with a disability, then that person would almost always be directly referred to Vocational Rehabilitation for services, as their employment plan. Individuals who are basic skills deficient would automatically be referred to the Adult Education provider. The South Central Partners Group, consisting of over 40 organizations and agencies in the region has established a more integrated mechanism for working together as the customer moves through the system. It involves concurrent service planning, rather than sequential planning or simply a referral. The Partners' Group has two geographic subcommittees – one that serves Greater New Haven, and the other which serves Meriden/Middletown areas that meet on their own as well.

We have shifted the focus of our regular partner meetings in an effort to become more intimately familiar with the individualized career and work support services provided by each entity. This has enabled all parties to examine and address areas of duplication. We will continue to work to build upon the established planning, referral and continuous improvement protocols and procedures between agencies.

As indicated above, we will embrace not only customer-centered case management, but a more customer-centered workforce development system. The closest that this system is currently operating is the Secure Jobs pilot, currently operating in New Haven.

The two 2Generational (“2 Gen”) pilot programs in New Haven and Middletown also feature a customer-centered feature this modality, and both serve a customer base that are likely to benefit at least one of the network of WIOA core partners. Staff and Board members have reviewed the recommendations of the 2 Gen Committee that was included in Connecticut’s State WIOA Plan, and will work with partners to implement as many of the recommendations as funding will allow.

2. Coordination with Economic Development Activities

Provide a description of how the LWDB will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with economic development activities.

Economic Development professionals are members of our local board, as well as on our Planning Committee. Staff from the WDB have been significantly involved in several local and regional economic development planning efforts. The Manager of Strategic Development is Chairperson of the CEDS Workforce and Housing Committee in the region (and additionally serves on the Business Development and Retention CEDS Committee), the Regional Economic Development Forum of the South Central Council of Governments, and the Economic Development Committee of the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce as examples of direct coordinated efforts. Staff regularly attend the SCRCOG and Valley RPA meetings as well. These relationships are long standing, and the WDB will continue to use these venues as a primary economic development coordination checkpoint. Our work with our Chief Elected Officials, Economic Development Commissions, Chambers of Commerce, Organized Labor and Trade Associations (with a particular emphasis on Trade Associations representing demand industries and occupations), as well as with the region’s public utilities often enables us to participate early in on their efforts, and we will continue to share information about programs and services with those entities/organizations. These groups enthusiastically support the Region’s applying for grants and are eager to participate in planning and execution of new projects.

3. Coordination of Education and Workforce Development Activities

Describe how the LWDB will coordinate education and workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.

Education representatives serve on our local board and board committees. As indicated above, we have implemented a more customer-centered case management function, and this will of course apply to our relationship with the education community.

For adults, our postsecondary strategy includes program development with adult education and community colleges based on real time employer need. Customized training programs have been developed collaboratively. We support articulation agreements of our regional community colleges for smooth transition into a four degree program along established career ladders. On the secondary level, as well as for those matriculating at community colleges, we will continue to

work with “soon to be graduates” on enhanced job readiness and placement, in an effort to smoothly move them on to the next step.

WIOA Out of School youth has been redefined to include an older youth population (more suitably called “young adults”). Our WIOA Out of School Youth Strategy focuses around three principles: 1) every activity must include work-based learning, 2) contextualized instruction is the preferred mode, particularly with out of school youth, and 3) employer engagement beyond hiring, is critical to success. Our WIOA RFP incorporates these principles and we require that they be integrated into all WIOA Youth programming. Our Youth Committee and Planning Committees will benchmark and evaluate programs and identify any best practices in the region. Additionally, Project CEO is an Out of School Youth initiative operated in-house by our AJC Provider, Equus Workforce Services.

4. Coordination of Transportation and Other Supportive Services

Describe how the LWDB will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out under this title in the local area with the provision of transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate supportive services in the local area.

Transportation access has been a top supportive service barrier in this region for many years. In the absence of state funding to support customized transportation assistance, the WDB will expand its existing support service menu of transportation options (bus passes, gas cards, mileage reimbursement), but the staff and board understand that that strategy needs to be improved if our customers are to have better access to jobs around the region where little or no transportation exists. We have been an active supporter of expanding the state’s U-Pass program, which gives free transportation to matriculating credit students at the state’s colleges and universities. It is our hope that this program be expanded to include those matriculating in noncredit certificate programs as well.

We continue to utilize Uber in developing customized transportation services to customers who need to get to interviews and employment in areas where public transportation isn’t an option, or hours of public transportation do not coincide with work hours. We have also worked with CTRides to market their services to our regional employers, and will invite CTRides to any large scale hiring events.

Other support services include child care, assistance in tools, books, uniforms, exam fees, certifications/licensing, drivers’ license as necessary. The support service determination is carried out at the beginning of the workforce investment activity and individually tailored to customer needs.

5. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services

Provide a description of plans and strategies for, and assurances concerning, maximizing coordination of services provided by the state employment service under the Wagner-Peyser Act and services provided in the local area through the one-stop delivery system to improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services.

A Wagner-Peyser funded representative from the Connecticut Department of Labor sits on our local board. Additionally, CTDOL staff serve on our Planning Committee and our Youth

Committee. Our Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Labor articulates how services provided under Wagner-Peyser will interface with WIOA. All parties are committed to participate in a system that will eventually improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services.

6. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy

Describe how the LWDB will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out under this title in the local area with the provision of adult education and literacy activities under Title II in the local area, including a description of how the local board will carry out, consistent with subparagraphs (A) and (B)(i) of section 107(d)(11) and section 232, the review of local applications submitted under Title II.

A representative from New Haven Adult Education serves on our local board. Our local Adult Education programs are a presumptive deliverer of adult education and literacy services in the region. To participants who lack a high school diploma or GED, or who are in need of ESL, we will continue to make referrals in order for them to receive services either concurrently or sequentially, with workforce development services as we transition to a more customer-centered case management system. Our preference is that these services be delivered concurrently.

There continues to be a large volume of individuals with educational certification, who require refresher or short time educational intervention to be successful in occupational training. We have successfully retained several Adult Education providers to conduct intensive academic “boot camps” which have enabled customers to pass entrance exams for occupational training, be successful in the actual training, and then onto better jobs.

We will continue to be involved in the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) establishment of priorities, RFP review and selection process conducted by SDE in our region. We will provide the State Department of Education (SDE) and local Adult Education programs with relevant labor market information and economic/demographic information in the region, in an effort to assist in their new program development for their respective communities.

7. Cooperative Agreements

Provide a description of the replicated cooperative agreements (as defined in WIOA section 107(d)(11)) between the local board or other local entities described in section 101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29U.S.C 721(a)(11)(B)) and the local office of a designated state agency or designated state unit administering programs carried out under Title I of such Act (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11) with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross-training staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers and other efforts of cooperation, collaboration and coordination.

MOU's are included as Attachment E.

V. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM SERVICES

1. System Description

Identify the programs that are included in the system and how the local board will work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs to support alignment in provision of services

The system operates in the south central region and includes programs authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth), the Jobs First Employment Services, two National Emergency Grants serving Dislocated Workers, the Skill Up for Manufacturing Initiative, the Health Care Advancement Program (HCAP), and the Supportive Services for Veterans and their Families Program.

Adult Education Programs in the region currently operate programs to provide basic skills remediation, academic and functional Boot Camps, ESL, occupational training, besides their legislated program menu of ABE and GED instruction. Through our partners network, we continue to strengthen referral and policies for concurrent or sequential enrollment, in an effort to better align services.

Job Corps and Vocational Rehabilitation staff have a presence in at least one American Job Center to see customers (or prospective customers) and work jointly with AJC staff to assure seamless integration of services.

2. Sub Grants and Contracts

Provide a description of the competitive process to be used to award sub-grants and contracts in the local area for WIOA-funded activities and the services to be made available.

The competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process will continue to be used to procure a One-stop Career Service Provider and One -Stop Operator for the region. These RFPs will be issued in early 2021 and will contain the specifications, using the goals and principles outlined in this plan as general guidance. Public notice of the RFP will be made available through our website and through social media. A special effort will be made to attract minority bidders. A letter of intent will be required by prospective bidders. Once proposals are received, a detailed review process will be used to select a vendor, which may involve proposal review and evaluation, interviews and on-site visits of finalists and contract negotiations prior to the execution of a contract. Funding recommendations are voted upon by the Board of Directors.

The competitive RFP proves is also used to procure WIOA-funded in school and out of school youth programs. A special effort will be made to attract minority bidders. A set of evaluation criteria and processes are developed and included in the RFP package, which is always made available on the Workforce Alliance website. Evaluation teams usually consist of a mix of individuals which may include staff, board members, committee members, stakeholders and customers. The result of this process then produces a menu of WIOA Youth programs and services which are made available to eligibly youth in the region. We do consider factors such as geographic distribution within the region, as well as service mix, to insure a broad and rich array

of programming. Funding recommendations are issued by the Youth Committee and are voted upon by the Board of Directors.

All contracts will be executed with a unilateral option to extend, based on satisfactory performance.

3. Expanding Access to Employment

Describe how the local board, working with entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment, including how the local board will facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs, and improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credential.

It is important that in discussions with core partners, we come to agreement on how each partner's strength can contribute to overall improvement of the system. In all cases, the discussion would evolve around how each entity conducts employer and customer outreach and information, and facilitates solid referrals and/or co-enrollment within the core partnership, if co-enrollment in programs results in added services and/or customer benefits. The partners need to have a level of confidence in the system, not only at the administrative level, but more importantly at the "front line" staff level. Staff must be comfortable enough to share customers and information in a customer-centered case management model.

4. Key Industry Sectors

Identify how the LWDB plans to better align its resources to support and meet the training and employment needs of key industry sectors in the local area. Describe policies adopted or planned for aligning training initiatives and Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to sector strategies and demand occupations.

The target priority industries that we have identified in our region are *Information Healthcare* , *Manufacturing* , *Technology (IT)*, and *Logistics* . See Section II. Environmental Scan for a discussion of occupation/industry demand. Within all of these sectors, there exists demand occupations all along their respective career pathways. In addition to WIOA funds, we currently have additional resources to provide training in these sectors, through federal discretionary funding and Industry Pipeline funds authorized by the Connecticut Bond Commission. It is important that we examine the career pathway access points in all of these sectors and ensure that both funding and appropriate training modalities are available to support each step within the respective career path.

In some cases, Individual Training Accounts is the most appropriate training modality, based on the need for credentialing. We have established policies governing ITA's. We will keep our education partners informed of any gaps in this modality and encourage them to develop training classes which will meet these needs.

Should the need arise for large scale hiring in a certain role and/or target industry, we will employ Contracts for Training modality, where an entire cohort of students can be purchased.

We currently provide the largest On the Job Training (OJT) program in the state of Connecticut, currently supported by six different funding streams. We have been very successful with this program on both the jobseeker and employer side; jobseekers begin earning a wage quickly, and employers can train individuals who have solid foundation skills, to their individual specifications. Under OJT, a portion of the training wage is provided to the employer to offset those training costs. This training modality has been very popular in the IT and manufacturing sectors. At this point, we foresee only minimal policy changes, if any under WIOA for OJT.

WIOA is explicit in its discussion of Supported Employment (SEP) and Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) modalities. We have provided both of these types of training and it is our intention to continue to use WIOA and other resources to SEP (for workers who need to establish – or reestablish – a credible work history) and IWT (as a business expansion, role modification of duties due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, or layoff aversion strategy) moving forward.

5. Industry Partnerships

Describe how the LWDB will identify and work with key industry partnerships where they exist within the local area, and coordinate and invest in partnership infrastructure where they are not yet developed.

We have identified industry partnerships within our workforce development area and additionally outside of our area where we can build with employers to strengthen our support for our sector strategies.

For the *Healthcare* sector, we have convened a group of employers who have informed our work and have provided much rich information in guiding program design and real time labor market needs. Additionally, our work with the Healthcare Committees of our regional Chambers of Commerce, as well as with the Town of Hamden Healthcare Cluster, puts in direct contact with the broad spectrum of healthcare employers. We are confident that this direct involvement will augment our involvement with the Connecticut League for Nursing, the Allied Health Policy group and the CT Hospital Association in better understanding career lattices, as well as career ladders and evolving changes in the industry. We expect to develop a formal Health Care Advisory Committee within the next year to further inform our work.

For the *Manufacturing* sector, we currently are in Year Two of a Four Year Manufacturing Pipeline Grant, funded by the Connecticut Bond Commission. *The Skill Up for Manufacturing Advisory Committee*, led by our Board of Directors Chairperson and composed of employers, educators, and Workforce Alliance staff have provided guidance, policy and direct input all aspects of this project. Additionally, we have been a member of Manufacture CT (formerly the New Haven Manufacturer's Association) for several years. We have been consistently supportive of their work, and they continue to assist us in referring employer. Our Business Services Team is in constant contact with employers as well for placement or other training needs.

The Information Technology sector is vast and broad in its roles and functions. It can be argued that there are jobs in that industry to suit any type of worker, provided they are trained and are committed to lifelong learning. We are members of the Connecticut Technology Council and have used their resources and labor market guidance for a number of years. Our employer partners have been cultivated over the past several years through our administration and

successful execution of two H1-B Discretionary Grants funded by the US Department of Labor, and the more recent *ITXpress* program, a part of the national Tech Hire Initiative of USDOL. We are equally familiar with the training providers, their menu of programs and modalities of training. Employers are constantly queried as to how the requirements of their jobs are changing. Our employers are highly specific in what they are looking for, and the Business Services Team's ability to offer highly personalized referrals in this industry has garnered high levels of respect.

It is interesting to note that in our original WIOA Local Plan of 2016, there was no mention of the *Logistics* sector. This sector has experienced rapid advancement and growth in infrastructure and jobs in the interim years; so much so that it is now a priority sector. Virtually thousands of job orders have come through the system. Employers such as Amazon, FedEx, Bozzuto's, Macys and others (including trucking companies) have all established large-scale operations within the South Central WIOA region. Because the companies are often competing for the same workers, our industry partnerships are much more personalized, with a knowledge of individual company desired skills sets, aptitudes, and interests of their hires. We will explore the concept of a more formalized multi company industry partnership with these employers, as we expect the industry to continue to grow in the region, and in the state. We will also support our local community colleges in continuing to provide or develop short term training in this sector.

6. In Demand Training

The process of a training program being placed on the ETPL requires that the training be in a demand occupation. Should the demand for training be at a large scale locally, we will work with education and training institutions, along with significant employer input, to develop Contracts for Training.

7. Employer Engagement

Describe strategies and services that will be used by the local area to facilitate engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in-demand industry sectors, support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area; better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development; and strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs.

Workforce Alliance considers the concept of "Employer Engagement" to be one of its WIOA areas of strength, as evidenced by an employer roster of well over one thousand employers who placed individuals from all of the programs overseen by Workforce Alliance, from the date that the WIOA legislation was enacted. Our history running these programs, all with differing target populations and sectors has allowed the Business services Team to greatly improved on our network of engaging small employers, as well as employers in demand industries/occupations such as Information Technology, Advanced Manufacturing, Financial Services, Healthcare and Engineering. Most of the employers in these industries have hired more than one individual, and have been made aware of WIOA requirements for more intensive employer engagement. Moving forward, we will build on these relationships, with the vision of greater participation in the

system, not only through hiring, but through the provision of career related information in the system.

Part IV., Section 2 of this plan fully articulates our ability to coordinate with local and regional economic development entities.

As regards linkages with unemployment insurance, we have in the past, had a CTDOL UI Staff member out-stationed part-time in our full- service office. This has enhanced coordination, however with COVID affecting the system at this writing, this is not possible. Additionally, Equus staff have presented in RESEA Workshops in the Hamden CTDOL Office. This too has stopped being offered due to COVID. Should those workshops resume, wither in-person or virtually, we expect to be able to provide this service in an effort to enroll RESEA customers who desire training and more individualized job development/placement assistance, as well as access to other programs and services of the system.

8. Priority for Services

Describe the local policy and procedures that have been established to give priority to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient in the provision of individualized career services and training services in the Adult program.

The priority of services is targeted to give priority to veterans, low income, individuals who are basic skills deficient and /or have low educational attainment, and those who have occupational skills deficiencies. Please see Attachment G for the policy and procedure.

9. Training Services

Describe how training services will be provided, including, if contracts for training services are to be used, how such contracts will be coordinated with the use of ITAs.

A variety of training products will be made available to individuals which will allow workers to obtain better paying jobs, access to the middle class and further contribute towards building our economy. Job seekers will have access to quality education and training and workforce activities through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), Online Training, On-the-Job training, Subsidized Employment, Incumbent Worker Training and Customized Training opportunities. We will develop Contracts for Training if there is a pressing need to deliver training as part of a regional economic development project, or there is a large scale need for a particular role or sector in the region. . Every effort will be made to encourage the vendor to apply to be accepted to the state Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) if it is feasible to institutionalize the training.

10. Customer Choice

Describe processes utilized by the LWDB to ensure customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are to be provided.

At One-stop orientation (both in-person and virtually), the concept of Customer Choice is introduced. As a customer moves on to receive more individual WIOA career services, the topic will be discussed in more detail. It is important to note that “informed customer choice,” in

order to be aligned with the principles of WIOA, the local labor market and customer-centered design, should include a 1) detailed discussion of career pathways, 2) current and future expected wages, and 3) impact on their life in general, and their family members. Ongoing training occurs for front line staff and the South Central Partners Group, which includes traditional and real-time Labor Market Information provided by a variety of sources.

11. Individual Training Accounts

Describe the process and criteria for issuing Individual Training Accounts (ITAs).

A. Describe any ITA limitations established by the board.

The policy and procedure criteria and packet for Individual Training Accounts is listed in Attachment H. Currently, our maximum financial threshold for issuance of an ITA is \$3,500.00. All ITA's must be issued in accordance with the providers' being in good standing on the state Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). All vendors must have a signed "blanket contract" with Workforce Alliance. ITA payment benchmarks for training is authorized at 75% the point of 3-day enrollment, 25% at completion.

B. Describe any exceptions to the use of ITA.

We will use Contracts for Training or Customized Training modalities if there is a high level of demand for a particular occupation on the part of employers. Such programs will relate to the Workforce Development Board needs identified in this plan.

12. Enhancing Apprenticeships

Describe how the LWDB will enhance the use of apprenticeships to support the local economy and individuals' career advancement. Describe how job seekers are made aware of apprenticeship opportunities in the area's career centers.

AJC staff have been trained by Connecticut Department of Labor staff in the various apprenticeship programs offered. The programs are mentioned in Orientations and in RESEA presentations. Apprenticeships are an important product in the WDB's "Work Based Learning Toolkit," which also includes activities such as OJT, SEP, Internships and Direct Placement.

13. Other Program Initiatives

Describe the services to be provided that may include the implementation of initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies career pathway initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other initiatives in the support of the board's vision and strategic goals described in Section III. WIOA §134(c)

See item #4 above for a discussion of OJT and incumbent worker training.

We plan to participate in any customized training opportunities which may present, as a result of a new company locating within the region, a company expansion or a large-scale economic development project.

14. Service Provider Continuous Improvement

Describe the LWDB's efforts to ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services, including contracted services providers and providers on the eligible training provider list, through the system and ensure that such providers meet the needs of local employers, workers and jobseekers.

All providers (both those on the ETPL and those contracted services providers) are monitored both financially and programmatically every year. Discussions regarding program improvement and enhancements are usually held at the conclusion of programmatic monitoring. For those programs on the ETPL, we examine both program completion and placement into training-related services in an effort to address the needs of local employers and jobseekers.

15. Youth Program Design

Describe the design framework for youth programs in the local area, and how the 14 program elements required in §681.460 of the proposed WIOA regulations are to be made available within that framework.

We have retained a standing Youth Committee, which is a subcommittee of our local board. The committee consists of board members, stakeholders and youth. This group works to design and implement the framework for youth programs and activities in the region.

All youth programs are competitively procured on an annual basis as needed. Contracts are executed with a unilateral option to extend based upon satisfactory performance and employer demand. The 14 program elements are addressed in the RFP for Youth services and are evaluated accordingly when proposals are received. The Youth Committee is charged with ensuring that our program menu incorporates the entire 14 program elements as described in WIOA, whether directly through the vendor or through referral.

Our Out of School Youth program design is based upon three guiding principles: 1) Career Pathways, 2) Contextualized Learning and 3) Employer Engagement. All vendors MUST incorporate a work-based learning component.

Because under WIOA, the age for out-of-school youth eligibility has been expanded, we recognize that families may be impacted. In keeping with a customer-centered case management design and integrating 2Generational policies, we may look at other funding besides WIOA youth (such as TANF) to support this effort.

For In-School Youth, our design is to support youth while they are matriculating and inform them of the world of work/maturation skills, labor market information, work-based learning and academic remediation as necessary, with the goal of having them graduate from high school with pathways to either employment or post-secondary education. All WIOA In-School youth programs and services require emphasis on work-based learning, employer engagement, and attainment of a credential (high school diploma and/or occupational skills certificate).

Additionally, we have found that WIOA only speaks minimally of the process of integrating the youth population into the One-stop delivery system. Our Youth Committee feels strongly that our local area needs to provide better access, services and activities to bring the WIOA Youth

population – both in school and out of school – into the One-stop system. We have introduced Project CEO \ in the American Job Center as a job readiness/ experiential learning program that is connected to the services and activities in the American Job Centers.

Definition of the term “a youth who is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual’s family, or in society.” Describe how the local board defines whether youth is unable to demonstrate these skills well enough to function on the job, in their family, or in society and what assessment instruments are used to make this determination. 20 C.F.R. §681.290.

We conduct an initial assessment, which consists of a CASAS appraisal and pre-test. Dedicated One-stop staff will conduct individual assessment of all applicants for suitability for WIOA-Y programs. Additionally, contracted vendors do their own suitability assessments.

B. Definition of “requires additional assistance.” Describe how the local board defines the term “requires additional assistance” used in determining eligibility for WIOA-funded youth programs.

The Youth Committee is charged with developing the policy on “requires additional assistance.” It is included as Attachment H.

16. Rapid Response

Provide a description of how the LWDB will coordinate workforce development activities in the local area with rapid response activities.

The LWDB will continue to participate in local Rapid Response Activities, including employer meetings to determine extent and scope of the layoff, possible aversion strategies and planning on Early Intervention Meetings. The LWDB and/or its One-stop Operator representative will participate in Early Intervention activities and meetings, to explain the programs and services of the American Job Center, as well as to encourage affected workers to obtain WIOA Dislocated Worker Certification.

VI. RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Please address the following in response to the COVID -19 public health emergency.

1. Describe the economic and workforce impact this event has had on your local area.

According to the Connecticut Department of Labor LMI website, the unemployment rate in January 2020 for the South Central region was 4.2%. The rate increased to 7.3% in April, and in June to 9.4% . The increase in June compares unfavorably with Connecticut’s jobs numbers, considering that the state as a whole gained 73,0000 net jobs during that time period. As of this writing, there are an estimated 34,000 individuals out of work in the region. The leisure and hospitality industries, as well as retail have been especially hard hit. Health care and logistics have seen steady increases due to the need for testing and treatment of COVID, and online purchasing largely replacing in-person visits to retail establishments.

2. Describe any new service delivery strategies and partnerships you have implemented or have plans to implement following this crisis.

We have instituted Virtual AJC Orientations, Job Readiness Workshops, in-person testing and related services BY APPOINTMENT ONLY beginning on July 15. We have expanded our use of METRIX online training licenses and as of this writing, have issued over 3,000 METRIX licenses We will be using CARES ACT funding to provide virtual training in Information Technology, Health Care, and Logistics sectors. The Health Care and Logistics programs will include minimal in-person labs/training in a socially- distanced, safe environment.

3. Describe any new related training and supportive services needs you have identified in your region and highlight any plans to address these needs.

Supportive services will be much more broad-based and tailored to individual needs and programming. They will include the provision of Digital Literacy training, as well as laptop computers, hotspots, and stipends for those participating in training. Based on available funding and additional factors throughout the crisis, we may expand the provision of participant support even greater.

4. Describe the steps and partner coordination that will be taken to reopen the American Job Centers in your region to staff and customers.

The Workforce Alliance COVID Reopen Plan is included as Attachment J.