



WORKFORCE ALLIANCE WIOA LOCAL PLAN 2024-2027

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act services for South Central
Connecticut. Prepared by Workforce Alliance, 370 James Street, Suite 401,
New Haven, CT



BETHANY, BRANFORD, CHESTER, CLINTON, CROMWELL, DEEP RIVER, DURHAM, EAST HADDAM, EAST
HAMPTON, EAST HAVEN, ESSES, GUILFORD, HADDAM, HAMDEN, KILLINGWORTH, MADISON, MERIDEN,
MIDDLEFIELD, MIDDLETOWN, MILFORD, NEW HAVEN, NORTH BRANFORD, NORTH HAVEN, OLD
SAYBROOK, ORANGE, PORTLAND, WALLINGFORD, WEST HAVEN, WESTBROOK, WOODBRIDGE

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Workforce Alliance WIOA Local Plan for Program Years 2024-2027

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2028

I. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. Chief Elected Official(s) and 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. Attach a copy of the agreement executed between the CEO(s) and the LWDB.

See Attachment B

4. 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 expires or others are chosen. 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;**

Since the spring of 2020, we have made use of virtual meeting platforms such as Zoom and Teams. The use of these virtual platforms has increased board member participation. Based on feedback from Board members, we will resume in-person meetings on a rotating basis in order to promote board member relationship-building.

- 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. Expectations of board members are covered in a new board member orientation, updated Fall 2020 and Spring 2024.

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

N/A

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

The Ex. Committee of Chief Elected Officials Chairman was present at the May 2024 Board of Directors Meeting where the head of CTDOL’s Office of Research provided an overview of and discussion of the economic factors of the region, and the emerging workforce development priorities.

B. Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB)

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

See Attachment C

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

Responsibility for the overall development of the plan is under the Workforce Alliance Planning Committee, which is comprised of Board members and other individuals whose work aligns with that of Workforce Alliance. Prior to adoption of the final plan, initial research, prior local plans and modifications

were reviewed with Planning Committee members. The Committee examined and approved the general direction, goals and strategies. Planning Committee membership overlaps with our board's Racial Equity and Accountability Initiative committee, whose direction and roadmap informs all aspects of this plan. The Workforce Alliance Business Services unit shared its plans and priorities which are incorporated into this plan under Employer Engagement and Industries Served. Individual and group discussions and feedback on the plan were collected prior to submission. Staff continues to serve on state-led workgroups.

Updated Labor Market information was presented to Planning Committee members on April 11 and May 9, 2024. An executive summary was approved by the Executive Committee on May 16 and by the full board on May 23, 2024, at which the chairman of the Chief Elected Officials Ex. Committee was also present. The Executive Committee of the Chief Elected Officials met on June 20, 2024 and voted to approve.

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.

Workforce Alliance is the administrative entity.

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

Workforce Alliance is the local fiscal agent.

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.

The local one-stop system in the Workforce Alliance region utilizes a "One-Stop Provider" competitive model of service delivery. We currently have American Job Center (AJC) offices in New Haven, Hamden, Meriden and Middletown. Of these, WIOA funded services are provided in New Haven, Middletown and Meriden. WIOA staff also have regular, scheduled, in-office hours at the Hamden AJC to accommodate job seekers who prefer that location. Hamden DOL staff refer candidates to onboard via our portal, since this is our general access point for all interested job seekers. WIOA services are also provided electronically and virtually. Workforce Alliance is pursuing recertification of the American Job Center located at 370 James Street, 4th Floor, as a comprehensive center. WIOA Youth activities operate at the AJC's as well as at various sites in the region through vendor contracts.

2. Identify the process for selection

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

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

The current One-Stop Provider is Equus Workforce Solutions. Our One-stop Operator is currently the United Way of Greater New Haven.

4. 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 Workforce Solutions.

5. 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.

All Adult and Dislocated Worker career services are provided by the selected one-stop provider. Career services consist of activities such as provision of Labor Market Information, outreach, orientation, intake, initial assessment of skills, aptitudes, abilities and supportive service needs, eligibility determination, job search skills enhancement, job matching, and where appropriate, career counseling and provision of performance and cost information on eligible providers of training services. Sector-focused career pathways are encouraged in order to place job seekers on a clear pathways to their employment goals.

Youth career services are currently conducted initially by the One-Stop provider. Referrals for additional career services and training services are made accordingly to contracted WIOA Youth service providers and/or partners. Project CEO is a WIOA Youth activity currently operated in-house in the AJC's by Equus Workforce Solutions.

II. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

INTRODUCTION

The South Central Workforce Investment Area, encompasses 30 towns in South Central Connecticut, and the New Haven Labor Market Area (NH LMA). As we look toward the next four years through the lens of this local plan, we are informed by CT DOL Labor Market Information (LMI), reports by independent foundations, targeted industry reports from the CT Office of Workforce Strategy and industry/trade groups, intelligence from Business Services staff, customer feedback, and input from community, education and economic development partners. Each Strategy included here has a list of planned action items, which articulate how this plan will be used. This plan aligns with [Unified State Plan](#), published by the CT Office of Workforce Strategies, and is largely focused on activities made possible with funding from the US Dept. of Labor through the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA).

These sources together give us a full picture of the economy in South Central CT that has largely recovered from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in numbers of jobs lost, but which still struggles with a skills mismatch (ranging from basic to advanced), wage disparity, entry into livable wage career pathways, and labor force participation. Since the last plan modification in 2022, we have seen more people than ever who are self-employed, a trend that is expected to continue and that will influence the development of entrepreneurial services and small business supports.

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

The May 2024 employment rate was 3.9% in the New Haven Labor Market Area, practically flat compared to 3.3% in May 2023, and below a rate 4% in May 2022. The total number of unemployed in our region was 13,361, up from May 2023 (10,857), but down from May 2022 (13,598).¹ These numbers do not necessarily indicate that more people have lost their jobs, but rather, that there are more people who are considered part of the labor force who are actively looking for work.

Every two years economists at CTDOL Office of Research create ten-year industry and occupational employment forecasts. Table 1 shows the industry data from the CT Department of Labor’s 10-year employment projections for 2020-2030. At the time, base employment in the region was 363,004 and was expected to grow by 12.1 % by 2030 to 407,003. As these projections were performed pre-pandemic, it will take the next round of projections for 2022-2032 and 2024-2034 to reflect current economic conditions, post-COVID.

Based on the 2020-2030 projections, the industries projected to have the largest employment in 2030 are Education & Health Services; Trade, Transportation & Utilities; Professional and Business Services; Leisure and Hospitality; and Manufacturing.

Table 1: South Central CT Industry Sectors 2020-2030

Industry Title	Base Employment 2020	Projected Employment 2030	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Total All Industries	363,004	407,003	43,999	12.1
Education and Health Services	122,900	131,706	8,806	7.2
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	63,942	73,487	9,545	14.9
Professional and Business Services	38,574	44,370	5,796	15.0
Leisure and Hospitality	24,406	33,535	9,129	37.4
Manufacturing	29,585	31,133	1,548	5.2
Total Self Employed and Unpaid Family Workers, All Jobs	23,083	26,545	3,462	15.0
Financial Activities	14,748	15,447	699	4.7
Other Services (except Government)	13,199	15,066	1,867	14.1
Government	14,167	14,869	702	5.0
Construction	13,176	14,827	1,651	12.5
Information	4,338	4,879	541	12.5
Natural Resources and Mining	886	1,139	253	28.6

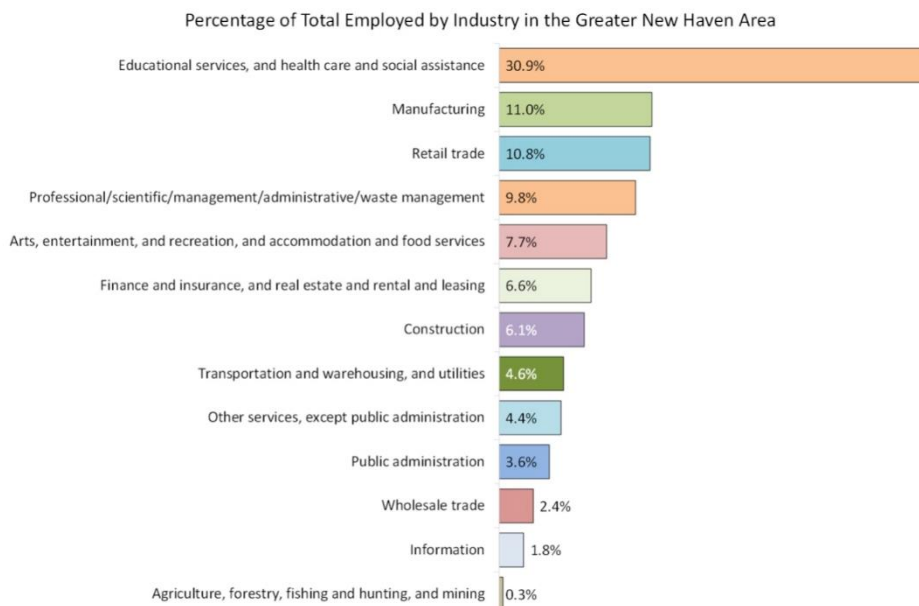
Source: CT Department of Labor, Office of Research

Industry Forecasts: Through 2030, CT DOL projects the highest growing industry sector in the region to be Education and Health Services (a ten-year growth of 8,806 new jobs), followed by Trade, Transportation and Utilities (9,545); and Professional and Business Services (5,796); and Manufacturing (1,548 new jobs). Leisure and Hospitality are shown as among the highest projections, however this industry is still recovering.

¹ Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) – CT Dept. of Labor

In its Labor Market Analysis report, the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven analyzed the percentage of total employed by industry in the Greater New Haven area in June 2023. While this does not include all 30 towns in the South Central CT region, it does allow us to see how the population of workers is aligned with industry demand. Some industries listed in Figure 1 below are subsets of the macro-industries shown in Table 1.

Figure 1: Percent of Total Employed by Industry in the Greater New Haven Area



Source: Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, Regional Labor Market Analysis, June 2023

Occupational Category Forecasts: Occupations are not always exclusive to one industry. For this reason, it is helpful to consider occupational groupings in order to help determine what kinds of occupations exist in South Central CT among the industries located here.

Table 2 shows all Occupational Categories and what the projected employment is for each for South Central CT by 2030.

Looking only at projections does not give a real-time look at demand and opportunity. To better plan, growth projections have been supplemented with the most recent data available from Q1 2023 to show how many jobs existed in this category in South Central CT and the average wage for each category. Identifying occupations with robust openings, livable wages, and the capacity for post-secondary or on-the-job, short-term training supported by WIOA will be a focus/goal of Workforce Alliance’s Local Plan for the next four years.

The occupational categories listed in Table 2 are alphabetical, not sorted by “top” based on openings or total employment. This table shows actual employment in each sector for the first quarter of 2023, and

what is projected by 2030. Those with the largest number in these columns do not consistently correspond to a higher or livable average hourly wage. Within these categories are close to 500 specific job titles.

Table 2: South Central CT Occupational Categories

Occupation Category Group	Regional Employment, Q1 2023	Regional Projected Employment 2030	Regional Annual Total Openings	Regional Average Hourly Wage	Regional Entry Wage
Architecture and Engineering	5,850	5,662	431	\$47.76	\$30.27
Art, Design, Entertainment, Sport/Media Occupations	3,510	6,013	664	\$35.76	\$18.75
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	12,410	15,756	2,082	\$20.38	\$14.52
Business and Financial Operations	15,000	17,749	1,657	\$41.02	\$25.49
Community and Social Service Occupations	7,530	9,312	949	\$29.53	\$18.09
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	6,310	8,163	645	\$49.23	\$29.40
Construction/Extraction Occupations	10,310	13,901	1,444	\$33.44	\$21.47
Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	30,070	34,674	3,258	\$43.28	\$20.24
Farming, fishing, and Forestry Occupations	180	1,120	177	\$18.38	\$14.41
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	26,190	29,480	5,246	\$18.86	\$14.28
Healthcare Practitioner & Technical Occupations	26,710	28,863	1,722	\$51.44	\$27.99
Healthcare Support Occupations	19,220	24,885	3,122	\$19.51	\$15.53
Installation, Maintenance, Repair Occupations	11,740	13,427	1,354	\$31.58	\$19.33
Legal Occupations	2,470	3,011	117	\$60.54	\$26.93
Life, Physical, Social Science Occupations	3,430	3,849	375	\$46.19	\$25.90
Management Occupations	26,340	28,526	2,442	\$34.31	\$65.85
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	44,000	51,480	5,619	\$25.54	\$16.97
Personal Care & Other Services	7,470	12,859	1,802	\$19.49	\$14.15
Production Occupations	18,320	20,500	2,260	\$25.18	\$16.58
Protective Service Occupations	7,040	7,145	840	\$29.80	\$16.91
Sales and Related Occupations	26,520	34,809	4,714	\$24.64	\$14.21
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	31,140	35,819	4,792	\$21.24	\$15.96

Source: CT Department of Labor, Office of Research

Within the occupational groups listed above are specific jobs. For example, Information Technology, web development, software development, information security jobs are included within the Computer and Mathematical. PreK-12, Post-Secondary, Adult and Basic Education, and tutoring jobs are part of the projections for Educational Instruction and Libraries. Biology, chemistry, environmental, medical or bioscience, occupational health/safety are within Life, Physical and Social Sciences. Child care workers, hairdressers, and skin/nail care technicians fall within Personal Care. Manufacturing, welding, and food production are all within Production occupations. Police officers, firefighters, security guards, investigators, transportation security screening are part of Protective Services. Sales and Related includes retail jobs. Truck or bus drivers, warehousing/distribution, watercraft, and crane operators fall under Transportation and Material Moving. Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs), pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, physicians, technicians, and therapists are within Healthcare Practitioners & Technical occupations; while Nursing Assistants (CNAs), phlebotomists, and other healthcare assistant and aide jobs are part of Healthcare Support.

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

The challenge for Workforce Alliance is to balance the needs of employers in categories with high annual openings and growth with the needs of job seekers for individual choice and the potential for economic mobility. While we strive to raise awareness of the opportunities in these industries and occupations, part of our Local Plan is to examine how best to prioritize training assistance and employment in areas that offer strong career pathways and livable wages, and to offer the support services necessary to be successful. In order to do this, Workforce Alliance has begun and will continue an analysis of not only the growth and number of openings, but also occupations that meet a livable wage threshold *and* are attainable through vocational training or an Associate degree. By focusing on these cross-over job titles, we can analyze employer need and the availability of training, both via classroom or on-the-job, or a combination of both via apprenticeship.

Tables 3 and 4 shows CT occupations which offered a livable average (median) hourly wage as of Q1 2023 and do not require more than vocational training or an associate degree. The wages (average and entry level) are specific to the New Haven Labor Market area. These occupations often cross multiple industries and represent a range of occupational categories. In this table, livable wage is at least \$24.13 per hour, defined by the MIT Livable Wage Calculator. It must be noted that entry level wages do not always meet the livable wage threshold. Workforce Alliance plans to identify support services that may be provided for job seekers to provide a bridge between entry level and the average.

Table 3: Livable Wage Occupations Requiring Less Than a Bachelor’s Degree, South Central CT Average Wages and Projections

CT Livable Wage^ Occupations	South Central CT Q1 2023 Entry Level Wage	South Central CT Average Hourly Wage Q1 2023	South Central CT Annual Openings	South Central CT Employment (Currently Working in this Job Title) Q1 2023	South Central CT Projected Employment by 2030	Education/Work-Experience Requirement
Architectural and Civil Drafters	24.05	30.59	15	170	150	Associate
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	16.42	26.17	193	1660	1924	Post-Secondary, Short-Term
Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	28.19	41.17	7	110	97	Associate
Chemical Technicians	18.01	25.14	33	140	294	Associate
Civil Engineering Technologists and Technicians	31.17	36.68	6	30	68	Associate
CNC Tool Programmers	31.7	42.45	21	90	174	Post-Secondary, Moderate
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	37.14	46.29	16	260	204	Associate
Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technologists and Technicians	22.94	35.55	22	390	237	Associate
Electrical and Electronics repairers, Commercial and Industrial Equipment	22.55	35.58	6	40	75	Post-Secondary, Long-Term
Firefighters	33.12	38.36	59	NA	718	Post-Secondary, Long-Term
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	20.87	27.47	405	3520	3546	Post-Secondary, Short-Term
Human Resources Assistants, Except Payroll and Timekeeping	19.73	25.41	17	200	166	Associate
HVAC mechanics and installers	24.4	35.41	132	970	1334	Post-secondary, Long-Term
Industrial Engineering Technologists and Technicians	18.16	28.95	18	220	184	Associate
Library Technicians	19.49	29.17	47	40	321	Post-Secondary
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurse	27.38	30.98	122	1960	1643	Post-Secondary
Mechanical Drafters	28.3	36.24	10	150	106	Associate
Medical Equipment Repairers	22.86	34.98	22	150	208	Associate, Moderate
Morticians, Undertakers, and Funeral Arrangers	29.12	36.01	8	70	68	Associate, Long-Term
Nuclear Medicine Technologists	44.88	52.04	16	50	213	Associate
Occupational Therapy Assistants	28.68	34.31	20	120	148	Associate
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	24.84	33.07	125	850	1117	Associate
Physical Therapist Assistants	26.86	34.86	16	150	128	Associate
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	29.36	38.66	NA	1480	NA	High School Diploma
Prepress Technicians and Workers	19.08	26.08	7	50	55	Post-Secondary
Psychiatric Technicians	21.93	27.88	18	190	254	Post-Secondary, Short-Term
Radiation Therapists	39.26	51.6	3	60	70	Associate
Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	30.76	38.97	33	560	449	Associate
Respiratory Therapists	32.41	38.34	30	350	526	Associate
Surgical Technologists	26.22	35.12	68	340	870	Post-Secondary
Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers, Except Line Installers	26.46	36.38	75	510	627	Post-secondary, moderate
Tool and Die makers	27.24	37.37	27	370	265	Post-Secondary, Long-Term

Table 4: Additional Occupations Requiring Less Than a Bachelor’s Degree, South Central CT Wages and Projections, \$20-24 per hour

Additional Occupations Paying \$20-24 per hour	South Central CT Q1 2023 Entry Level Wage	South Central CT Average Hourly Wage Q1 2023	South Central CT Annual Openings	South Central CT Employment (Currently Working in this Job Title) Q1 2023	South Central CT Projected Employment by 2030	Education/Work-Experience Requirement
Medical Assistants	18.37	22.27	345	2100	2849	Post-Secondary
Motorcycle Mechanics	16.82	21.26	12*	NA	106*	Post-Secondary, Short-Term
Ophthalmic Medical Technicians	18.7	22.44	32*	110	411*	Post-Secondary
Phlebotomists	18.87	22.3	53	580	433	Post-Secondary
Psychiatric Aide	18.23	20.93	NA	90	NA	Post-Secondary
Dental Assistants	18.9	24	127	660	1001	Post-Secondary
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	17.32	22.48	27	420	333	Associate

^Livable Wage Defined as \$24.13 per hour. Source: MIT Livable Wage Calculator, CT (April 2024)

* Indicates statewide CT number

Source: CT DOL, Office of Research

Key:
Short-Term (up to 1 month)
Moderate (1-12 months)
Long-Term (> 12 months)

Healthcare Support, Practitioner and Technical Occupations

The healthcare field is multi-faceted, consisting of occupations that vary widely in terms of the level of education and credentials required. Within healthcare we see a larger number of openings for some of the lowest paying jobs (i.e. CNAs and home health aides), which is the result of churn and burnout in the workforce. Within healthcare, the means to add new skills through training and work-based experience and therefore advance up career ladders is a strategy embodied by Workforce Alliance’s Health Careers Advancement Project and other national models that blend working and education, with contextualized learning.

Healthcare Practitioner and Technical occupations include registered nurses, licensed practical nurses (LPNs), pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, physicians, technicians, and therapists. These accounted for 26,710 jobs in South Central CT in the first quarter of 2023.² Nursing Assistants (CNAs), phlebotomists, dental assistants and medical assistants and aide jobs are part of Healthcare Support, which numbered 19,220 during the same quarter. Across CT, the number of entry-level healthcare jobs posted has nearly doubled in 5 years.³

Hospitals and large health care systems are the largest employers within this sector, offering openings in each type of occupation. The South Central CT region also continues to see rapid growth of rehabilitation services, traditional nursing homes, and assisted living facilities. In-demand skills for these positions include technical knowledge such as the EPIC EMR software, as well as communication skills. As shown in

² Regional Labor Market Information – CT Department of Labor

³ Business-Higher Education Forum, CT Healthcare Labor Market Landscape, May 2024

Figure 1, over 30% of Greater New Haven residents currently work in healthcare, or the related fields of educational services or social assistance.

Educational Services

As show in Table 1, Educational Services is combined with Health Care and constitutes the largest employment sector in South Central CT, employing 122,990 people and projected to grow to 131,706 by 2030. The region is a true “Meds & Eds” economy, particularly in Greater New Haven and is powered by the presence of Yale University, Southern CT State University, Albertus Magnus, the University of New Haven, Wesleyan, CT State Middlesex and CT State Gateway, the largest community college campus in Connecticut. Municipal K-12 systems, adult education, cultural institutions, libraries and other educational entities all create jobs in this sector. Within the sector, occupations that are classified as directly providing education or library services numbered 24,918 jobs in this sector in the 2nd Quarter of 2023.⁴ The South Central region’s concentration of employment in the educational services sector is 2.3 times higher than the rest of the state, and 4.3 times higher than national averages.⁵

While the majority of occupations in the educational services sector have significant educational requirements of a bachelor’s degree or higher, many do not. These roles can be found in operations, maintenance, and administration, or in supportive roles such as teaching assistants and library technicians.

Information Technology (IT) Sector and Other STEM-Sectors Including Bioscience

These remain among the hardest occupations to fill, but are the focus of concerted efforts by municipal and economic development, and higher education entities to grow for their potential to not only offer high wages, but drive the development of new technologies in health care, natural sciences, communications, and pharmaceuticals. The education, certifications, background, and work experience required vary not only by occupation but also by employer. Unlike health care, educational services or manufacturing, IT in particular is not a clearly defined sector. It is considered part of Professional and Business Services sector (Table 1), and grouped with Computer and Mathematical occupations (Table 2). Those working in these fields are often part of larger entities like healthcare systems or universities which cross multiple functions.

That being said, the Professional and Business Services sector is expected to grow by 15% over the next six years, while there are more than 600 openings in computer and mathematical occupations each year in our region. Workforce Alliance is working with its educational and training partners to develop and offer on-going relevant courses and programs to keep up with demand, and to introduce and prepare more jobseekers to this field since employers have indicated a willingness to hire without a degree. Major initiatives grounded in South Central CT including Yale Ventures and QuantumCT have missions to foster innovation and entrepreneurship in STEM and related fields, with potential to not only impact the regional economy, but state, national and global. Close collaboration with the related workforce needs, short-term training, and entry-points for candidates will be part of our work in the next four years.

Table 4 lists a sampling of IT Computer job titles and the multiple industry sectors where they are found in South Central CT.

⁴ Regional Labor Market Information – CT Department of Labor

⁵ Information For Workforce Investment Planning (IWIP) South Central Report – CT Department of Labor

Table 4: Distribution of Sample Computer Jobs Across Sectors

IT Job Title	Sector(s)	Occupational Group
Computer and Information Systems Managers	Insurance Carriers and related; Telecommunications; Management of companies and enterprises; professional, Scientific and Technical Services	Administration/Management
Computer Systems Analysts	Management of Companies and Enterprises; insurance and related; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; Educational Services	Computer and Mathematical
Information Security Analysts	Insurance Carriers and Related; Educational Services	Computer and Mathematical
Computer Network Support Specialists	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; Educational and Health Services	Computer and Mathematical
Computer User Support Specialists	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; Education and Health Services; Trade, Transportation, Utilities; Information; Financial Activities; Public Administration	Computer and Mathematical
Network and Computer Systems Administrators	Educational Services; Insurance Carriers and Related; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	Computer and Mathematical
Database Administrators and Architects	Educational Services; Telecommunications	Computer and Mathematical
Computer Programmers	management of Companies; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; Education and Health Services	Computer and Mathematical
Software Developers	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; Insurance Carriers and related; Management of Companies and Enterprises; Publishing Industries	Computer and Mathematical
Web Developers and Digital Interface Designers	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	Computer and Mathematical

Source: CT Department of Labor, Office of Research

Medical and bioscience, biology, chemistry, environmental, medical or bioscience, and occupational health and safety are considered Life, Physical and Social Sciences occupations. This group of occupations is relatively small but projects a 20% growth by 2030 and 375 annual openings. Occupations in this group almost exclusively require a minimal bachelor’s degree and in many cases a Master’s or Doctoral degree. However, technician-level jobs such as agriculture and food science, chemical and environmental science and projection can be obtained with an Associate degree. Occupational health and safety technicians require only a high school diploma and moderate post-secondary training. Workforce Alliance is working with the Elm City Climate Collaborative on efforts to expand access to high-quality jobs and economic opportunities through workforce development in environmental and climate justice.

Table 5: STEM Occupation Regional Employment & Projections

STEM Occupation Groups	Regional Employment, Q1 2023	Regional Projected Employment 2030	Regional Annual Total Openings	Regional Average Hourly Wage	Regional Entry Wage
Architecture and Engineering	5,850	5,662	431	\$47.76	\$30.27
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	6,310	8,163	645	\$49.23	\$29.40
Life, Physical, Social Science Occupations	3,430	3,849	375	\$46.19	\$25.90

Source: CT Department of Labor, Office of Research

Manufacturing Sector

Local manufacturers reported significant growth and a need for skilled labor, made more urgent by the threat of retirements of the most experienced workers as the population ages.

There are still fewer people employed in the industry now than in 2019, before the pandemic. In May 2024, it had among the top five number of job postings in South Central CT as a sector, behind health care and retail.⁶ Jobs such as tool & dye makers and CNC Tool Programmers are included in Table 3 for their average livable wage without requiring a bachelor’s degree. In South Central CT, entry-level machine operators top the list of workers needed, according to a survey of employers conducted by the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce on behalf of Workforce Alliance.

As further discussed in Section II. C., occupations within the manufacturing sector are broken into “office” jobs and “on-the-floor” jobs. Both types have had steady jobs postings over the past five years across CT, including quality inspector, machinist, production worker/fabricator, and CNC operator.⁷ Funding for Skill Up for Manufacturing at both CT State Gateway and CT State Middlesex and the addition of a Uniquely-abled cohort by 2026 will help to fill entry-level needs in our region.

Leisure & Hospitality

The Leisure and Hospitality sector, and the retail sector, continue to struggle to recoup its workforce following the pandemic. The number of accommodation and food service jobs has risen steadily since the 15-year low-point of 2020 during the pandemic. While the demand has returned, employers do not have the ready supply of workers needed. In May 2024, there were 788 accommodation and food service help wanted ads in South Central CT alone. Retail trade jobs had 1,617 openings during that period, with retail salespersons topping 600. As a sector, employment in Leisure and Hospitality was projected in 2030 to grow by more than 37% by 2030.

⁶ Conference Help Wanted OnLine Data Series - May 2024

⁷ Business-Higher Education Forum, CT Manufacturing Labor Market Landscape, May 2024

Self-Employment as a Sector

In the simplest terms, the labor force is a combination of Goods Producing + Service Producing + Self-Employment.

As noted in Table 1, Self-Employed stands as an industry sector unto itself. Unlike other sectors that were predicted to grow between 2020-2030 and remain to be seen or have already shown a vastly different landscape post-pandemic (i.e. Leisure and Hospitality), Self-Employment is a significant part of the South Central CT economy and is expected to continue to grow. Workforce Alliance and the American Job Centers will over the next 4 years add more entrepreneurial and other services that benefit the self-employed, and endeavor to recognize that many career pathways incorporate and can lead to self-employment. Table 6 below shows the number, size and employment of worksites in South Central CT as of Q3 2023. Seventeen percent of the region’s companies ranging from 10 to 50 workers employed roughly 30% of the region’s workforce, while about 3.5% of the region’s companies with 50 to 250 workers employed about 28% of the region’s workforce.

Table 6: South Central CT Worksite by Size, Q3 2023

Company Size	Worksites		Employment	
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
0 to <1	6,101	23.40%	503	0.20%
1 to <5	11,156	42.90%	22,680	7.30%
5 to <10	3,449	13.30%	23,663	7.70%
10 to <20	2,548	9.80%	35,444	11.50%
20 to <50	1,818	7.00%	55,566	18.00%
50 to <100	568	2.20%	39,263	12.70%
100 to <250	314	1.20%	46,502	15.10%
250 to <500	50	0.20%	15,967	5.20%
500 to <1000	14	0.10%	8,853	2.90%
1000 and greater	16	0.10%	60,542	19.60%
Totals	26,034	100.00%	308,983	100.00%

Source: CT Department of Labor, Office of Research

II. C. 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.

Healthcare Careers: As stated above, the range of jobs within the healthcare sector is vast. Not only must minimum education and certifications be met, but knowledge of record-keeping software such as EPIC EMR, and moderate to advanced communications skills are vital. Workforce Alliance and our partners focus on communications or “soft skills” as a component of job readiness, enhanced by work-based experience to understand work site culture and expectations. As we expand programs with our training providers, digital literacy and knowledge of or capacity to learn the software that is now almost universally used is essential. Job titles that require degrees are almost evenly split between bachelor’s and an associate degree.⁸ There are occupations that are in demand, offer median livable wages, and that are

⁸ Business-Higher Education Forum, CT Healthcare Labor Market Landscape, May 2024

obtainable with a high school diploma, good interpersonal skills, and post-secondary training (non-degree), making them accessible to a wider range of candidates. These are indicated in Table 3 and include but are not limited to License Practical and Vocational Nurses (projected 1,642 jobs by 2030); Surgical Technologists (up 55%); Dental Assistants (up 50%); and Medical Assistants (up 34%).

Educational Services: Connecticut has a documented teacher shortage at the K-12, career and technical education, adult education and higher education levels. The South Central region's concentration of employment in the educational services sector is 2.3 times higher than the rest of the state, and 4.3 times higher than national averages. While the majority of occupations in the educational services sector have significant educational requirements (bachelor's degree or higher) many do not. These roles can be found in operations, maintenance, and administration, or in supportive roles such as teaching assistants and library technicians. The skills and knowledge for these roles vary, but such things as English language proficiency, computers and electronics, basic math, equipment handling, safety, interpersonal, and clerical skills are common. On-going training both on the job and via professional development must be undertaken to stay current.

Information Technology: Similar to the educational sector, IT occupations regardless of the sector typically require a bachelor's degree even at the entry level, particularly if a candidate does not have enough experience. On-the-job experience and additional industry credentials are necessary in order to develop in this field. Trainings are now being offered at Southern CT State University, for example, to provide certificates in Drone Technology, AI Fundamentals, Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC), AWS Certified Cloud Practitioner, and Python 1 & 2. The Grow with Google suite, Google Project Management, Google Digital Cloud Leader, and Excel training provide in-demand skills and general knowledge that benefits a host of occupations not classified as IT but requiring digital literacy. Higher education providers including SCSU and CT State Community College campuses are now also offering digital badges and credentials as sharable and verifiable proof of skills and competencies. As an occupational group, South Central CT expects to see 645 openings a year through 2030. See Table 4 for a break out of occupations found in various sectors.

Recently, a public-private partnership called QuantumCT introduced its vision for accelerating the adoption of quantum computer technologies in Connecticut which includes training a new workforce and building a new talent pipeline. New Haven-based Yale University is a main partner along with CT State Colleges and Universities and UCONN to drive innovation and research in quantum sensing, cryptography, materials, computing and algorithms. Its current workforce vision includes online courses and certificate programs to upskill for new jobs that depend on quantum knowledge, work exchange programs to provide real-world experience, and quantum skills embedded into college curricula but introduced as early as elementary school.⁹ Workforce Alliance anticipates this initiative to gain momentum, and to determine how to connect our customers to related career opportunities.

Manufacturing & Trades: Occupations within the manufacturing sector are broken into "office" jobs and "on-the-floor" jobs. Both types have had steady jobs postings over the past five years across CT.¹⁰ Training programs in South Central CT have focused on entry-level "on-the-floor" jobs that require a range of analytical, mechanical, and technical skills (machining and hand tools) through Skill Up for Manufacturing, coupled with on-the-job training and apprenticeships. These can be accessed with a high school diploma/GED and short- to moderate-term experience. In our survey of regional manufacturers, machine

⁹ <https://quantumct.org/>

¹⁰ Business-Higher Education Forum, CT Manufacturing Labor Market Landscape, May 2024

operators far outpaced other occupations for openings, followed distantly by tool and dye makers, automation technicians, and welders. The skills cited for machine operators were largely characterized as having the *ability* to learn or be trained to operate machines, basic CAD reading, metric system, law materials and navigating software systems. Mechanical aptitude, problem-solving and working with a team are sought-after skills. Office-based manufacturing jobs call for more project management knowledge and a diversity of software skills. Degree-holders are favored for office jobs such as sales representatives and engineers. The sector as a whole is expected to grow by 5.2% by 2030.

Transportation, Distribution Logistics: Worker demand remains high in all roles within the sector due to e-commerce and Connecticut's proximity between New York and Boston (particularly South Central CT with its confluence of I95 and I91). According 2020-2030 South Central Occupation Projections, the employment base for Transportation and Material Movers occupation is 31,140, which includes Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Packers and Packagers, and drivers of all kinds including buses, watercraft, and heavy tractor-trailer, and industrial truck/tractor operators. This figure is expected to grow by 14% by 2020, with close to 5,000 openings a year. The baseline credential for driving-based occupations is a Commercial Driver's License (CDL), with varying classes for carrying passengers or hazardous waste. A valid driver's license was the number one qualification listed in Connecticut job ads in May 2024.¹¹ Employers also seek candidates with basic computer skills, Six Sigma for warehousing/distribution, and soft, transferrable skills such as working in teams, accuracy, timeliness and tenacity. For over-road drivers, the ability to be away from home regularly is also required.

Bioscience and STEM: With the exception of Computer and Mathematical occupations (addressed above), jobs in the STEM fields are considered part of Life, Physical and Social Sciences. These include biology, chemistry, environmental medial and bioscience, and occupational health and safety. These jobs often require advanced degrees, but some technician level jobs such as Chemical Technicians (included in Table 3) or Occupational Safety Technicians are reachable with an Associate degree. English language proficiency, computer skills, and safety knowledge are consistently expected for these jobs.

The building of 101 College Street Classrooms, BioPath Academy at SCSU, and partnerships with higher education in our region will increase and diversify interest in related jobs and pathways to them. According to analysis by the nonprofit economic development group AdvanceCT "Connecticut ranks second in academic bioscience investment and third in bioscience venture capital funding. The state has the fourth highest number of bioscience patents. New Haven anchors a substantial portion of the state's biotech real estate market." BioCT is a professional organization that represents the Connecticut biotech industry and has a business incubator in New Haven. To keep the momentum going, availability and affordability of housing and academic programs are areas of focus.¹²

A burgeoning Climate Sector in CT and the community resilience movement around environmental justice particularly in New Haven will impact the number of and access to jobs and career paths in the next four years.

Leisure & Hospitality, Arts and the Creative Sector:

The Leisure and Hospitality sector, and the retail sector, continue to struggle to recoup its workforce following the pandemic. While the demand has returned, employers do not have the ready supply of

¹¹ Conference Help Wanted OnLine Data Series - May 2024

¹² *Biotech Development is Reshaping New Haven, Here's Why* - BioPath Skills Academy (southernct.edu)

workers needed. In May 2024, there were 788 accommodation and food service help wanted ads in South Central CT alone. Retail trade jobs had 1,617 openings during that period, with retail salespersons topping 600. As a sector, Leisure and Hospitality was projected in 2030 to grow by more than 37% by 2030. Food and beverage service jobs require ServSafe™ food safety training certifications, which are offered online and are often embedded into culinary and hospitality programs. Retail sales and other hospitality jobs call for similar skills in sales and marketing, customer service and English language. Entry into these jobs is typically attainable with a high school diploma and on-the-job training, while advancement into management roles requires longer work experience and is aided by degree attainment.

With New Haven's standing as the cultural hub of Connecticut, there is a consistent demand to fill art, design, entertainment, and media occupations compared to the rest of CT. In sheer numbers, however, the total employment in this group is relatively small at 3,510 in 2020 with an anticipated 664 total openings a year through 2030. This group includes artists, editors, designers, music directors and composers, audio/visual technicians and writers, among others. Each has varying degree and experience requirements, often represented by a portfolio of examples of previous work.

Feedback from enrolled Project CEO participants has driven a project planned for the New Haven AJC to transform a computer lab into a Creative hub that will serve the needs of young entrepreneurs and those seeking to build a career in the creative sector. A separate space will be outfitted as a sound-proof studio to record podcasts, broadcasts, presentations, and other content. This project will be underway during the PY 24-25.

II. D. 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.

The economy in South Central CT has largely recovered from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in numbers of jobs lost, but still struggles with a skills mismatch (ranging from basic to advanced), wage disparity, entry into livable wage career pathways, and labor force participation. Since the last plan modification in 2022, we have seen more people than ever who are self-employed, a trend that is expected to continue.

South Central CT Workforce Demographics

The May 2024 employment rate was 3.9% in the New Haven Labor Market Area, practically flat compared to 3.3% in May 2023, and below a rate 4% in May 2022. The total number of unemployed in our region was 13,361, up from May 2023 (10,857), but down from May 2022 (13,598).¹³ These numbers do not necessarily indicate that more people have lost their jobs, but rather, that there are more people who are considered part of the labor force who are actively looking for work. Take for example the number of unemployment claims. In Q1 2022, there were 6,088 new claims, up slightly from the quarter before, but down more than 50% from the lowest Quarter post-COVID.¹⁴ For perspective, 59,065 people in our region alone filed claims between April-June 2020.

In 2022, the latest year available, the average weekly wage for all industries was \$1,340 or \$69,670 annually, which is up 27% from 2021, but remains below the state average of \$1,562 weekly and \$81,241

¹³ Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) – CT Dept. of Labor

¹⁴ Information For Workforce Investment Planning (IWIP) South Central Report – CT Dept. of Labor

annually. Public sector wages in South Central CT were slightly higher than private sector, at \$1,418 and \$1,329 respectively.¹⁵

Table 5: Educational Attainment and Household Characteristics

Planning Region	High School Diploma or Equivalent Only	Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	Households with at least one person under 18	People Living in Poverty*
South Central CT	28.8%	40.9%	19.4%	10.8%
Lower CT River Valley	24.7%	46.2%	16.6%	7.3%

Source: American Community Survey 2022. The 30 municipalities within the South Central CT Workforce Development Area are part of the South Central CT Planning Region and the Lower CT River Valley Planning Region.

**Federal Poverty Thresholds vary by family size and composition.*

The South Central region has an educated workforce. Between 41 and 46% of the region’s residents hold a bachelor’s degree or higher. Only about one-third of residents aged 25 or older have no more than a high school diploma or GED. Interestingly, almost 38% of all people indicated they were current college or graduate students in 2022.¹⁶ This is higher than the national average of 26.6% and the state average of 30.1%. This may be related to the Great Resignation and rethinking of career choices spurred by the pandemic, the abundant higher education choices located here, or the positive impact that education has on economic mobility. Nonetheless, enrollment in state institutions of higher education in CT is at its lowest since 2018, causing concern about workforce pipelines and the viability of programs.¹⁷

Despite this overall level of educational attainment, customers utilizing the One-Stop system in South Central CT consistently test below 9th grade levels in reading and math or both upon entry. This is true for adults, dislocated workers and youth. For this reason, remedial methods such as skills bootcamps and contextual learning during post-secondary training are often necessary. See our Goals and Strategies for more on this issue.

The workforce in our region includes a healthy cohort of people in their prime working years, as well as a significant percent that may exit the workforce by 2028, shrinking the labor force. In South Central CT, 34% percent of households reported having at least one person over age 65, while only 26.6% have at least one person under age 18. The largest working cohort in South Central CT is between ages 25-34. Combined, those who are between 35-54 comprise 60.3% of the regional workforce. Those aged 55 and over make up 26.9 percent of the workforce, while workers who are age 24 and younger make up only 12.8%.¹⁸ The low percent of younger workers may be related to the higher-than-average rate of college enrollment mentioned above. For those not pursuing higher education, livable wage opportunities must be developed, and career pathways mapped to include short-term training and on-the-job learning. See Also: Goals and Strategies.

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2022

¹⁷ *CT Public College Enrollment Trends*, Office of Legislative Research, CGA, May 2024

¹⁸ Information For Workforce Investment Planning (IWIP) South Central Report – CT Dept. of Labor

Other South Central CT Region Demographics (As of 2022 unless otherwise noted):

Male	47.4%
Female	52.6%
White	77%
Black or African American	14.5%
Hispanic	14%
Number of Individuals on Medicaid (2023)	248,775
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (2023)	112,936
Temporary Family Assistance/Jobs First (2023)	6,021
State Administered General Assistance (2023)	1,349
Adult Ex-Offenders on Parole or Probation	6,634
Developmental Services (DDS) Program Recipients	3,836
Mental Health & Addiction Recovery Services (2023)	17,277

Source: Information For Workforce Investment Planning (IWIP) South Central Report – CT Dept. of Labor

A deeper analysis of workforce participation in the region must also include an understanding of livable wages and economic mobility in South Central CT. See Table 3 and Section II.H. (GAPS) for more on this topic.

II.E. 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 through a variety of sector-specific programs unique to South Central CT, and also trainings from the CT ETPL (Eligible Training Program List). Core activities include:

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 also likely candidates for OJT. One-Stop Business Service Representatives match jobseekers with employers who are willing to provide skills training, and are reimbursed for a specific period of time to offset training costs.

Customized or Industry Pipeline Training in which an employer or a 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 objective.

Please see Section IV. Coordination of Services for more information.

II. F. 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 in Section II.E.

II. G. 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. Workforce Alliance requires specific design features and identified themes as part of programming including the following:

- Work-based Learning
- Improving Educational Achievement
- Sectoral Involvement and/or Employment
- Contextual Learning

The following are examples of these programs, all of which may serve youth with disabilities.

The Tri-Town Collaborative - Out-of-School Youth Program, consisting of the Adult Education Centers in Meriden, Middletown and Wallingford, assist youth in the attainment of their GED, HSD and development of work experiences within the community. The focus for the program will continue to be training and/or employment in the health professions, manufacturing and human services. There is an emphasis on case management, job shadows and internships in those fields.

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 education plan. Goal setting, action planning and real-life application supplement skills development in the classroom. Many services are available to youth including on-the-job training, occupational skills training, support services and work experience opportunities.

Children's Community Programs of CT - In-School and Out-of-School Youth Program providing services to eligible WIOA youth inclusive of case management, assessment, work experience, occupational skills training, job readiness and life skills training. Training opportunities include Certified Nursing Assistant, EKG and Phlebotomy. Also, enhanced Security Guard training will be offered including First Aide/CPR, AED, Active Shooter: Rapid Response and Event Survival Training.

Community Renewal Team – Out-of-School Youth Program designed to prepare for and place graduates into employment reflecting regional economic demand or job growth that can lead to a career pathway, contingent upon having successfully completed work readiness and vocational training. Occupational skills training leads to recognized credentials and employment as Certified Nurse's Aides, Emergency Medical Technicians, Pharmacy Technicians, Community Health Workers, Medical Billing and Coding Specialists, etc.

Summer Youth Employment Program - Every summer, Workforce Alliance puts more than 750 young people to work across the region. Over the last 12 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 23 of the region's 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 young people with disabilities.

Common Ground High School – This 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 twelve (12) weeks for between five (5) and twenty-five (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 schools' 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.

II. H. Identify gaps in service based on the above analyses.

Labor Force Participation, Skills and Wage Gaps: The skills gap for in-demand occupations, and specifically for occupations that pay desirable wages and also offer benefits is exacerbated by the decline in the number of people attending college for either non-credit or credit programs and also accessing WIOA-approved services training programs. This may be attributed to the increase in Self-Employment as cited in previous sections. Other underlying factors may be that entry-level wages in the most abundant jobs that do not require a bachelor's degree pay below what a typical household can survive on, but do pay enough to push families over a "Benefit Cliff" and risk loss of housing and other supports. In its regional Labor Market Study published in June 2023 with the Valley Community Foundation, the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven cited a study by the Center for Social Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston which showed that "for many families ... there is no net benefit until families are earning over \$25 per hour. For some individuals, the threat of loss of benefits such as health care or disability benefits keeps them out of the workforce altogether."¹⁹

Addressing this challenge requires a coordinated response among workforce stakeholders. Cultivating knowledge of employers' workforce needs and creating and delivering training programs at all skill levels that build sustainable talent pipelines beyond entry-level are critical. Educating jobseekers of the time and education investments to succeed economically, and continued outreach to engage in AJC services and join the workforce go hand-in-hand. See Section III, STRATEGIES for more information.

A deeper analysis of the workforce in the region begins with understanding livable wages and economic mobility in South Central CT.

¹⁹ <https://www.umb.edu/csp/projects/>

According to the MIT Livable Wage Calculator, a single person needs to earn \$24.13/hour and work full time to be able to afford to live in Connecticut.²⁰ That minimum amount increases with family size, as the cost of housing, food and other necessities rise. The United Way of CT's most recent ALICE report (*Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed*) states that a single adult needs to earn \$34,464 annually before any federal tax credits to meet the Household Survival Budget necessary to live in Greater New Haven.²¹ That amount may jump as much as 18.2% every two years.

Jobseekers must be supported through the seemingly opposing goals of increasing earnings and not falling over a "Benefit Cliff." People face a benefit cliff when they receive public benefits from the government, earn a raise or get a better paying job, and then discover that they make too much money to maintain the benefits while they are still not making enough money to sustain themselves and their household. According to the Leap Fund, which studies this issue, "the big challenge is that no one knows where the cliff begins, or when it will end, because it is individualized for each person, and based on a variety of factors."²²

Connecticut depends on the people living paycheck-to-paycheck to provide many basic services, but many of these households struggle to earn enough to meet a household survival budget. "The crux of the problem is a mismatch between earnings and cost of basics," according to the United Way of Connecticut.

Sub-livable wage earnings also disproportionately impact minority populations. Workforce Alliance did a 5-year analysis of placement outcomes for WIOA, Jobs First Employment Services, and special program customers, representing roughly one-third of all served in South Central CT. The study revealed that hourly wages for Black participants were \$3 to \$4 below that of White customers, despite outpacing Whites in the overall placement rate for the last three years. Those who identified as Hispanic had a higher credential attainment rate than Blacks or Whites, yet still earned less on average than Whites and only slightly more than Blacks in the same year. Consequently, 57% Hispanic and 54% Black households are below the ALICE threshold in Connecticut.

Limited Transportation and Child Care: Access to transportation and adequate child care remain major barriers to high quality employment for many in our region. Greater New Haven has large income and race disparities in vehicle access, with higher shares of Black and Latino households lacking access to a vehicle.²³ To address this for customers, continued investments in not only bus passes and gas cards, but utilizing ride-sharing services to offer a customized menu of transportation services is necessary for those lacking transportation to interviews and employment. On a policy level, expanding bus routes and service hours and programs like UPASS for students are advocacy priorities for Workforce Alliance. This is bolstered by the fact that a recent 5-year analysis of job placement locations showed that close to one-third of our jobseeker customers commute out of our region to work. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 40.7 percent of the labor force living in South Central CT commutes out of the region to get to work, while about the same percent commute in. The unemployment rate for customers with a car is less than one-third that of customers without a car.²⁴ Assisting customers to obtain – or in many cases to regain – a

²⁰ Living Wage Calculator - Living Wage Calculation for Connecticut (mit.edu)

²¹ <https://alice.ctunitedway.org/>

²² <https://www.benefitscliff.com/what-is-a-benefits-cliff>

²³ *Greater New Haven Community Well Being Index 2023*, DataHaven

²⁴ *How Transportation Problems Keep People Out of the Workforce in Greater New Haven*, Greater New Haven Job Access and Transportation Work Group

driver's license is a main utilization of supportive services. This allows workers to get to jobs, and also opens doors to obtain and retain jobs that require a license. As previously mentioned, a valid driver's license was the number one qualification listed in job ads in May 2024 across all sectors.

Childcare providers in the area only have enough licensed slots for 38 percent of the region's children from birth through age 4, according to DataHaven. This is attributed to a lack of qualified workers in this field, among other reasons. Wages for Early Childhood/childcare worker occupations remain low and contributes to a lack of candidates despite efforts to increase training capacity. This area is also one that feels the lingering effects of COVID 19. According to a report published in April 2022 by Child Care Aware of America, nearly 16,000 child care programs across 37 states have permanently closed since the pandemic began. The sector's volatility has contributed to women's ability to maintain employment during the pandemic.²⁵ Recently, US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo stated as a prelude to the National Child Care Innovation Summit, "Access to affordable, quality child care is not a social issue – it's an economic issue. If we're to train and retain workers for 21st century jobs, we need to provide them with the economic infrastructure they need to stay in those jobs and care for their families."²⁶

Workforce Alliance continues to work with the CT Office of Early Childhood and regional early childhood providers. Working with the economic development community may also help to expand resources for and improve access to services. For example, ConnCAT on Dixwell, a \$220 million redevelopment project by Connecticut Community Outreach Revitalization Program (ConnCORP) is designed to advance ConnCAT's mission to provide opportunities to New Haven's underserved residents and will include an early childhood/day care center along with housing, office space, a grocery store, and an arts center.

Digital and Basic Skills Deficiencies: Digital literacy not only includes physical components such as computers, but also access to the internet and a foundation of digital literacy for customers. According to DataHaven, 25% of individuals earning less than \$50,000 annually lack broadband connection. Since 2020, Workforce Alliance has supplied and will continue to seek funding to supply these items to participants. In addition, all of our training programs will now include a digital literacy component to cover virtual interview skills, and virtual workplace skills. Workforce Alliance regularly pursues funding to expand our partnership with Concepts for Adaptive Learning (CfAL) for Digital Inclusion and New Haven Adult Education to provide basic computer literacy instruction throughout the region in English and other languages. In 2023, Workforce Alliance also launched GET IT (Growing Equitable Training in Info Technology), which offers free access to digital skills and also exploration into jobs in Information Technology. This is included in our Section III Strategies section, and reflected in a commitment to expand WIOA-eligible training program options through our education partners.

Workforce Alliance's academic assessment score analysis of incoming WIOA jobseekers since 2005 has shown a downward trend, with more than 75% of both Adults and Dislocated Workers testing below 9th Grade levels in reading, math or both. Basic Skills includes not only reading and math, but also English-language proficiency. Additional ESL instructors who are available to teach at adult and basic education centers are needed in order to meet our goals for serving Hispanic jobseekers and others for whom English is a Second Language, and to implement and expand offerings such as a planned Spanish-language CfAL program in the next two years.

²⁵ U.S. News and World Reports, How the Pandemic Devastated State-run Early Education, April 26, 2022.

²⁶ U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo Announces First-of-its-Kind National Child Care Innovation Summit - U.S. Department of Commerce

Workforce Alliance and its Board of Directors also consider the development of “soft” skills, comprising communications, teamwork, attendance, conflict resolution, and other capacities that make someone a successful employee.

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, persons with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, and those who have been involved in the criminal justice system requires Workforce Alliance to adopt a range of best practices and to be effective service providers for a variety of customers and to ensure they are not a “hidden” workforce.

Between 2000 and 2020, the share of **foreign-born residents** in Greater New Haven increased from 9 percent to 14 percent of the population. There are immigrant communities from the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Africa.²⁷ American Job Center staff consistently work with IRIS, our local refugee re-settlement agency to develop and facilitate a customized work readiness curriculum for refugees and to explore eligibility for WIOA services. Havenly, which provides work skills to refugees, is also part of the South Central CT Partners Network.

A recent report, *Connecticut’s Unspoken Crisis: Getting Young People Back on Track*, funded by the Dalio Foundation, has put the issue of “**disconnected youth**” in the spotlight, naming this as a crisis not only for the young people not connected to work or school, but also for the economy.²⁸ Program funding, awareness within the population that would most benefit from programs like Project CEO (often referred to as “Opportunity Youth”), and helping the most at-risk to explore career options and choose viable pathways are all challenges. Our offerings through the American Job Centers and through Summer and Year-Round Youth Employment focus on career exploration and tangible work experience. Outreach through the Project CEO team and AJC Ambassadors is ongoing and year-round.

Feedback from enrolled Project CEO participants has driven a project planned for the New Haven AJC to transform a computer lab into a Creative hub that will serve the needs of young entrepreneurs and those seeking to build a career in the creative sector. A separate space will be outfitted as a sound-proof studio to record podcasts, broadcasts, presentations, and other content. This project will be underway during the PY 24-25.

Workforce Alliance is actively pursuing funding around the premise of workforce development as a preventative strategy for community violence for young adults and their families. Our model would provide workforce development and employment services to New Haven residents referred to the American Job Center who are victims of or at-risk for being involved in community violence. Funds would be used for the development of career plans that result in placing individuals into either 200 hours of paid Subsidized Employment (SEP) or full-time employment through On-the-Job (OJT) training.

See sections on **Youth** (Section II. G.) and **Persons with Disabilities** (Section III. D.) for more details on tailored services for these populations provided through the American Job Centers. Additional planned and on-going offerings include:

²⁷ *Greater New Haven Community Well Being Index 2023*, DataHaven

²⁸ <https://www.daliophilanthropies.org/2023/10/12/dalio-education-bcg-report-op-ed/>

Uniquely Abled Skill Up for Manufacturing - Workforce Alliance in partnership with CT State Middlesex is offering a 150-hour program to young adults with high-functioning autism, focusing on manufacturing fundamentals and employment readiness. Students receive specialized instruction equipping them with essential skills for entry level positions in the manufacturing industry

The Ticket to Work and Self Sufficiency (Ticket) Program – A federally-funded employment program designed to provide Social Security disability beneficiaries (i.e., individuals receiving Social Security Disability Insurance and/or Supplemental Security Income benefits based on disability) the choices, opportunities and support they need to enter the workforce and maintain employment with the goal of becoming economically self-supporting over time and to reduce or eliminate dependence on cash benefit programs. Workforce Alliance staff work with individuals to create an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) or Individual Work Plan (IWP), and may serve as liaison to employers and Business Services.

Finally, the Next Steps program helps job seekers who have been **involved with the criminal justice system** with life skills, job training, and workplace-readiness. We work with the police, the courts, probation, parole services, and community organizations to provide a program that increases the odds of success. New cohorts begin each month and kick-off with an intensive 5-Day orientation. Those who complete this move on to work with staff 1-on-1 to complete all eligibility requirements and begin job development. Next Steps works closely with other community based organizations to serve those returning home. The Greater New Haven Pathway Home Project will specifically serve participants transitioning from the New Haven Correctional Center (NHCC) to South Central CT by increasing credential attainment, employment and wages through a range of workforce services and coordination with employers willing to hire ex-offenders.

III. LWDB VISION, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

III. A. 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.

WORKFORCE ALLIANCE VISION

The following Vision Statement was adopted by the Workforce Alliance Board of Directors on March 28, 2024:

“To provide an inclusive, customer focused workforce system that inspires all individuals to develop the skills to advance their careers and meet the changing needs of employers.”

This statement emphasizes inclusion, a major tenet of our commitment to Racial Equity and Accountability, which has guided policy and program development under WIOA and beyond over the last four years. In very straightforward terms, it 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 the Strategic Pillars of the Connecticut WIOA Unified State Plan, as updated in Spring 2024 which include: Education and Career Pathways, Industry Leadership and Sector-Based Training, based on a foundation of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access and Data and Accountability.²⁹

GOALS

Workforce Alliance has five (5) *overarching* goals for 2024-2028 to address our region’s unique priorities and that align with WIOA priorities and Connecticut’s Unified State Plan.

1. *Increase Labor Force Participation by expanding our reach to individuals who will benefit from and are eligible for workforce development services.*
2. *Decrease “Under-Employment” by focusing on the advancement of the South Central CT labor force into full-time positions with clear pathways that fill employer needs, match jobseeker potential, and avoid the negative impact of “benefit cliffs.”*
3. *Reduce duplication of effort and redundant services to promote a cohesive and collaborative workforce eco-system in South Central CT.*
4. *Dedicate resources toward activities that lead to training for and placement into livable wage jobs and identify career pathways toward those jobs.*
5. *Increase the number and variety of employers utilizing Workforce Alliance services and hiring WIOA jobseekers.*

STRATEGIES

The following paragraphs describe several strategies and action items that Workforce Alliance plans to utilize to accomplish our Vision and Goals.

~Livable Wages~

Dedicate resources toward activities that lead to livable wage jobs and identify career pathways toward those jobs and address the mismatch between earnings and cost of basics. In order to assist jobseekers to access livable wage occupations, Workforce Alliance will use the following strategies over the next four years:

- Dedicate 60% of WIOA ITA resources toward trainings for occupations that pay an average livable wage.
- Develop career ladders toward occupations with an average livable wage
- Expand and incorporate the parameters of the Good Jobs Challenge into job development activities. This quality jobs framework includes compensation (pay/benefits), advancement, structure and agency/culture.

²⁹ <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/gwc/2024-2027-ct-unified-state-plan-3-1-24-v3.pdf>

- Partner with higher education and training providers in South Central CT to develop training programs for occupations that meet livable wage standards, and add those to the Eligible Training Program List (ETPL) for WIOA eligibility.
- Establish pipelines with labor unions into occupations that require moderate to long-term experience, either via apprenticeship or other work experience model.
- Verify through Workforce Alliance Business Services those jobs identified as having an average median wage with employers in South Central CT. Develop a dashboard tool to see and track this information that is accessible for staff and jobseekers.
- Expand research in Table 2 to include specific occupations in each large Occupational Group.
- Adjust career coaching curriculum and Individual Employment Plan building to incorporate awareness of wages and earnings, the impact of training, and potential for advancement through credential attainment.

~Basic Skills and Digital Literacy~

As one of the top workforce challenges, digital literacy and the “Digital Divide” continue to require dedicated resources to keep pace with the ever-changing economy. There remains, also, a need to couple improving digital literacy with efforts that strengthen basic math, reading, English-language, and interpersonal or “soft” skills within the context of workforce development. These skills combined will not only better prepare jobseekers for and make the aware of emerging jobs, but provide the foundation for middle skill and livable wage employment. This is true not only because of Greater New Haven’s large immigrant and refugee population, but for native born jobseekers who need additional supports. To help raise literacy rates, Workforce Alliance plans to:

- Partner with Adult & Basic Education providers in the South Central region to collaborate on building math, reading, English language and digital skills crucial to accessing well-paying jobs. For example, CfAL for Digital Inclusion and New Haven Adult Education is a joint endeavor funded by Workforce Alliance to boost digital skills and introduce jobseekers to IT jobs and combines the instructional capacity of adult education with the CfAL curriculum to offer classes in New Haven, Meriden and Middletown.
- Work with higher education and training providers to offer embedded, integrated basic skills and/or tutoring.
- Build options that are mobile and responsive to the needs of jobseekers and employers to deliver basic and digital skills, including onsite at employers or during alternative hours, as needed.
- Standardize supports such as laptop computers and access to internet hot spots so that technology is not a barrier to participation in workforce learning or employment.

~Training Provider Coordination & Strategic Program Development~

Connecticut's 12 community colleges successfully merged in 2023 to become one institution – CT State Community College – with 12 campuses including Gateway and Middlesex in South Central CT. These campuses will continue to be responsive to local needs, but will be more aligned statewide not only for non-credit traditional “workforce” training, but also with its credit programs. In addition, Southern CT State University in New Haven has renewed its focus on workforce through its Office of Workforce and Lifeline Learning (OWLL), adding to the robust mix of proprietary and for-profit training options in the region. In order for jobseekers to have access to relevant post-secondary options and to meet employer demand, Workforce Alliance will as part of this plan:

- Collaborate with CT State on identifying regional and statewide workforce development goals and strategies that reflect its statewide alignment and the economic needs of South Central CT, including pipelines between non-credit and credit programs.
- Evaluate WIOA-eligible program relevance of existing programs and, using CT DOL data, input from Workforce Alliance Business Services, Regional Sector Partnerships, chambers of commerce, and other business and industry associations, determine which programs correlate to livable-wage jobs and identify areas needing development.
- Pilot investment in alternative-learning models such as virtual reality, online learning, and self-guided, individualized activities that can extend learning.
- Strengthen partnerships with statewide entities that will benefit jobseekers and employers in South Central CT including the Dept. of Corrections, the Dept. of Social Services, Office of Workforce Strategy, and fellow workforce development boards.
- Link WIOA Youth to dual enrollment initiative through CT State, which will allow students to earn college credits before they graduate from high school, and provide for a seamless transition to earn an associate degree, with the potential to transfer credits toward a bachelors.

~Integrated Services~

Deepen our engagement with all partners to move toward a more integrated, transparent, and equitable workforce system. This includes the investments in digital and basic skills outlined above, as well as working with our partners to advocate for the state level policies and resources to bridge this divide. Action items to support this strategy over the next four years will include:

- Leverage the newly formed South Central CT Latino Partnership Network and Adult Education providers to focus on engagement and retention of participants Latino communities in order to reach goals of increasing Latino enrollments by 8-10 % annually.
- Work within the general South Central Partners Network to address the specific barriers that impact workforce success through a coordinated referral and tracking process that does not duplicate efforts.

- Institute new avenues of engaging with mandated and other partners that are inclusive and responsive.
- Identify support services that may be provided for job seekers to provide a bridge between entry level and the average (median) livable wage.

~Employer Engagement, Industry Pipelines and Entrepreneurship~

Use engagement with employers from diverse sectors to advance partnerships, improve training services and job opportunities for career seekers, and address specific employer needs.

- Refine offerings in key sectors of manufacturing, health, IT through a process that is based on projected growth, career advancement and livable wage potential. We will track industry trends and be responsive to new roles and occupational requirements in coming years.
- Expand engagement opportunities with employers through sector advisory bodies, virtual and in-person hiring events, and opportunities to advise on program offerings.
- Leverage relationships with entities in South Central CT that focus on new business development and entrepreneurship. Examples of this include the New Haven Equitable Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (NHE3) and New Haven-based COLLAB, which provide mentoring and resources for start-ups.
- Guide employers currently utilizing Business Services to become mentors to minority-owned businesses and start-ups and work with our employer partners to provide guidance and strategies with the goal of increasing diversity in recruitment and hiring practices.
- Continue to be active participants in the system of Regional Sector Partnerships (RSPs) created by OWS to address the regional and local workforce needs through convening industry partners, educators, economic development practitioners. By convening and participating in the two (2) South Central RSP's, we create opportunities with our partners that allow students and job seekers to explore different credentials that are tied to in-demand careers in CT.

~Data Accessibility and Equity-Driven Decision-Making~

Use data to drive continuous improvement and racial equity across all strategies. The next few years will see strides in not only using data across all operations to guide our program planning and performance measurement, but also to make data more accessible. Since the last update in 2022, Workforce Alliance has completed a disaggregated program outcome analysis of five years of data to fulfill a goal set as part of our Racial Equity & Accountability Roadmap. Our efforts before the next Local Plan update are to identify steps for areas of improvement, while also providing better tools and access in general.

- Continue to use the data collected to further understand wage disparities, improve service models, and track effectiveness.
- Test and launch a dashboard tool to view disaggregated data by special program, coupled with a schedule of generated monthly, quarterly, and annual reports.
- Continue implementation of the Racial Equity and Accountability Initiative Roadmap for 2024 and beyond, and connect Local Plan goals and strategies to our racial equity goals which include:
 - I: Enhance and increase client/customer service delivery
 - II: Enhance and increase employee support and well-being
 - III: Enhance and increase leadership development and training
 - IV: Strengthen and increase outreach and partnerships
 - V: Clarify and align workplace norms, values and culture
 - VI: Increase external advocacy role on behalf of racial/ethnic equity.

III. B. 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.

- Workforce Alliance participates in local COGs (SCROG and River COG) economic development and planning initiatives
- Partnerships with Adult Education providers and review PEP applications for plan alignment and AJC activities integration
- Evaluation of the CT Unified Plan, the Strategic Plan of the Governor’s Workforce Council, and the CT Manufacturing Strategic Plan
- The Workforce Alliance Planning Committee and Executive Committee have led 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 through the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals [NAWDP] and National Association of Workforce Boards, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and others for best practices.

III. C. 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 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.

Representatives from entities that carry out core programs serve on the Workforce Alliance Planning Committee and Youth Committee. The United Way of Greater New Haven serves as the One Stop

Operator and convenes a Greater New Haven Workforce Collaborative that includes but is not limited to: Community Action Agency of Greater New Haven, Career Resources, Salvation Army, Yale University, Christian Community Action Agency, LISC CT, CT Dept. Of Labor, New Haven Works, Columbus House, CT State Community College, Emerge CT, Liberty Community Services, ConnCAT, New Haven Promise, Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, CT Dept. Of Corrections, and state Dept. Of Education, Adult Education division. In partnership with the CT Department of Labor's Business Services staff, we convene quarterly South Central CT Business Partners meetings which includes the Office of Aging and Disability Services (Voc Rehab), CT Office of Apprenticeship, Veterans Services, Trade Adjustment Act (TAA), Adult Education and other invited community partners. In addition, we support the Wallingford/Meriden/Middletown Partners Network, the Employer Engagement workgroup, and the South Central CT Latino Partnership.

Working with the state Dept. of Education, Workforce Alliance annually collaborates on WIOA-funded Program Enhancement Projects with local adult education providers. These projects by definition must align with our Local Plan, improve pipelines to One-Stop services, and build upon or provide for workforce development activities that lead to either post-secondary credentials or direct placement into the workforce.

Workforce Alliance will continue to collaborate with the Eastern Workforce Investment Board (EWIB) to deliver the Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) in South Central CT through Skill Up for Manufacturing, a 5-week pre-apprenticeship program for basic manufacturing skills and job placement. In the next 2-3 years, pending funding availability, we will expand offerings in our region to include a Youth MPI in collaboration with K-12 districts. EWIB and Workforce Alliance have and continue to collaborate on funding proposals and labor market research.

In the healthcare sector, Workforce Alliance will also continue its coordination with EWIB on the Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative (ACI) - Health Careers Advancement Project. This leverages the MPI model to create employer-driven healthcare pipeline initiatives in Eastern and South Central CT to train for positions such as Patient Care Technician, CNA, Pharmacy Technician and Central Sterile Processing Technician.

Workforce Alliance also participates in statewide initiatives that cover multiple regions:

- CT Workforce & High-Tech Industry Skills Partnership (CT-WHISP) which develops new workers for the IT industry and retools the advanced manufacturing workforce;
- CareerConneCT, an online portal operated by the Office of Workforce Strategy which connects jobseekers to eligibility and funding for in-demand, short-term training in IT, transportation, healthcare, manufacturing and Green Jobs;
- CT Statewide Accessible Workforce Services (SAWS) Initiative, which uses a statewide WIOA National Dislocated Worker grant to expand equitable access to CT's public workforce system for dislocated workers and populations experiencing disparities in wages and education by offering real-time chat features on websites, online learning, expanded website language features, and outreach to marginalized communities.
- Funding through CT's Good Jobs Challenge, a statewide initiative funded by a grant from the US Economic Development Administration, entails coordination and shared goals across regions, funds manufacturing training and for Workforce Alliance to act as a convener of the South Central Manufacturing Regional Sector Partnership.

III. D. 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.

Workforce Alliance will continue to employ a full time Ticket to Work/Disability Resource Coordinator to oversee the following services and resources provided:

- **ASL** Sign Language Interpretation services for deaf or hard of hearing customers.
- Large Print Materials, Electronic Materials, Digital Accessibility available in multiple formats for diverse learners.
- **Assistive Technology:** TTY Machine, Large Print Keyboard with Braille, CCTV Clearview Magnifier, ZoomText Fusion with JAWS, **Dragon** Naturally Speaking Software, Talking Typing Teacher.
- Ongoing **staff training** and **technical assistance** provided concerning ADA requirements, Self-Disclosure and Reasonable Accommodation Requests.
- **Ticket to Work** – Benefits Counseling for Social Security disability recipients.
- **Universal Design** Accessibility to Facilities: Automatic Door Openers, Wheelchair Ramps; Adjustable Height Tables; Restroom call buttons; ADA signage.
- **Integrated Resource Team** development for shared jobseekers with partners, including co-location of vocational rehabilitation staff in the AJC.

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

Workforce Alliance's goals support the achievement of WIOA performance accountability measures through implementation of an action items that support the Strategies designed to meet these goals . We will dedicate WIOA resources toward activities that support self-sufficiency with employment and training support targeted at quality jobs within economically-sustaining career paths (Goal 4). Improving labor force participation (Goal 1) and decreasing underemployment (Goal 2) will impact employment rates and build talent pipelines for our region's top industries. Streamlining enrollment, data sharing and coordination of workforce services in the region (Goal 3) will lead to more transparency, better use of AJC services and shared goals that improve credential rates, skill gains, employment rates, and earnings. Finally, by increasing the number and variety of employers utilizing Workforce Alliance services and hiring WIOA jobseekers (Goal 5), we will support economic growth.

III. F. Indicate anticipated local levels of performance for the federal measures.

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

III. G. 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.

Workforce Alliance staff evaluates programs utilizing participant data to corroborate attainment of successful program outcomes. These program outcomes may include but are not limited to the following: numbers served; credential(s) attained (degree, diploma, certificate); measurable skills gained (educational/occupational); entered employment rates; employment retention (6 months and 12 months); and median earnings.

The successful implementation of staff and customer services, facilitated by our One Stop Services Provider the United Way of Greater New Haven has and will continue to inform decision making and drive necessary changes. Additionally, our Manager of Quality Assurance looks at information that documents program collaboration, leveraged resources and proper fiscal capacity. This position and other support staff also provide oversight and monitoring of programs and activities supported with funds that flow through Workforce Alliance as the fiscal agent to community-based vendors, as well as programs delivered on-site through the American Job Centers.

For community-based programs funded by Workforce Alliance, the minimum requirements for monitoring/oversight and evaluation of community-based include: Reviews of single audits; Reviews of quality of service to enhance program accountability; on-site visits to review records, documents, and observe operations; reviews of sub recipient financial and progress reports. We utilize a written monitoring format submitted within thirty (30) days of a monitoring visit.

IV. COORDINATION OF SERVICES

IV. A. 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 has developed a strong partners network, consisting of over 40 organizations and agencies in the region, which has resulted in more unified collaboration and coordination. This makes it much easier for job seekers to move through the workforce development system. Allowing customers to benefit from concurrent service planning, rather than sequential planning – and well beyond making a simple referral, as in the past. The Partners Collaborative has two geographic sub-committees - one serving Greater New Haven and the other serving Wallingford/Meriden/Middletown areas. At least once annually both groups are brought together to share regional data, set goals, and/or hear special presentations.

Additionally, there is a Workforce Service Delivery group, for direct service provision staff. This ensures that effective coordination, collaboration, and constructive interaction exists on the frontline **and** at the executive suite level. Leadership is cognizant that the real magic happens at the frontline. Our strengthened collaboration is wasted if the job seeker never benefits from it.

Our partner membership rosters include Vocational Rehab, Department of Labor, TANF/Jobs First Employment Services, State Department of Education and local Adult Education, community colleges,

housing, local community foundations, local municipalities, CAP agencies, other local community based organizations serving priority populations such as transitioning citizens, refugees and other immigrant populations, individuals facing homelessness, disenfranchised youth, veterans and individuals with disabilities.

The Partners Collaborative will continue to provide a platform to strengthen awareness and share information around 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 build upon the established planning, referral and continuous improvement protocols and procedures between the agencies. Our One-Stop Operator will continue to act as the ‘convenor’ of these partner groups and disseminate weekly partner information around special programs, services, and upcoming events. We have been clear that this ‘workforce system’ which goes far beyond the walls and services of the American Job Center, so the work of the Collaborative is essential.

Workforce Alliance and the partners will continue to embrace and provide customer/family-centered case management, but also a more customer-centered workforce development *system*. Family Centered coaching features a customer-centered modality and serves a customer base likely to benefit from the services of at least one of the WIOA core partners.

We will also continue to promote the development of integrated resource teams amongst partners, which started during our Secure Jobs pilot and expanded through our collaboration with Vocational Rehab partners, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind.

Many years ago, Workforce Alliance began to build a foundation of partner engagement, collaboration, and coordination. During the last four years we incorporated a new layer into our system that has strengthened partnerships: virtual and remote engagement and services. Several years ago, we started the discussion about the limitations of requiring partners (and job seekers) to sustain a *physical* presence within the walls of the American Job Centers. We began to envision how removing the in-person mandate might expand our reach to communities that might never visit an American Job Center. When COVID hit, our supposition became a reality. We have tangible evidence that remote and virtual engagement CAN work. According to surveys and focus groups, job seekers overwhelmingly favor virtual and remote service provision. While we have already expanded virtual and remote American Job Center services, our goal is to also expand virtual and remote access and engagement with **Partner** services through our centers. The hope is to offer a more robust, enhanced and expansive experience to job seekers who engage with us, whether in person or remotely.

IV. B. 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. Our Business Services Coordinator and other senior staff participate in the CEDS Workforce Development committee, the Regional Economic Development Forum of the South Central Council of Governments, and the Economic Development Committee of the Lower CT Valley Council of Governments, as examples of direct coordinated efforts. Workforce Alliance will continue to use these longstanding relationships as venues as a primary economic development coordination checkpoint. Our work with the Chief Elected Officials, Economic Development Commissions, Chambers of Commerce, Organized Labor and Trade Associations (with particular emphasis on trade associations representing

demand industries and well-paying occupations) enables us to participate early in on their efforts, and we will continue to share information about programs and services with those entities/organizations.

As we develop our focus on entrepreneurial and start-up services, and with a particular focus on minority-owned businesses, Workforce Alliance will leverage its relationship with the New Haven Equitable Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (NHE3), a project of the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, and COLLAB, an organization that aims to provide entrepreneurs with impactful, rigorous business support.

These groups frequently support Workforce Alliance applications for competitive grants, and are eager to participate in planning and execution of new projects.

IV. C. 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.

Goal #4 in Section III is: *Reduce duplication of effort and redundant services to promote a cohesive workforce eco-system in South Central CT.*

Workforce Alliance is committed to partnership and to the coordination of services in South Central CT to reach shared goals. As projects and funding opportunities surface in our region, we will advocate to be the provider of workforce development related activities in order to maximize our competency and capacity for program development and management, data tracking, performance, and reporting of outcomes. *Data Accessibility and Equity-Driven Decision-Making* is included in this plan as a Strategy in Section III. This speaks to our commitment to quality data, but also to building capacity to share information with our partners.

Education representatives serve on our board and its committees. Our postsecondary strategy includes program development and funding with adult education and CT State Community Colleges based upon employer need, and also the commitment made in this plan to create pathways to occupations and careers that can sustain individuals and families living in South Central CT.

As stated in Section II. G., our in-school WIOA Youth options are closely tied to secondary schools in our region, with the potential for more. In addition, the Summer Youth Employment program typically includes coordinate with school districts in our region. Our Project CEO program for WIOA Youth has the capacity to begin working with students prior to high school graduation, particularly those who do not have a plan to proceed directly into college.

Our relationship with post-secondary, adult education and secondary education includes frequent on-site information sessions and opportunities to visit the AJCs.

IV. D. 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, Workforce Alliance 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 give free transportation to matriculating credit students at the state's colleges and universities. The U-Pass program now also includes non-credit certificate students.

We continue to utilize Uber or other types of brokered services in developing customized transportation services to customers who need to get to interviews and employment in areas where public transportation is not an option, or hours of public transportation do not coincide with work hours.

Other support services include but are not limited to child care, assistance with tools, books, uniforms, exam fees, certifications/licensing, laptops and hotspots etc. The support services determination is carried out at the beginning of the workforce investment activity and individually tailored to customer needs.

IV. E. Coordination with Wagner-Peyser

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. Yes, Wagner-Peyser staff also have a regular, scheduled, in-person hours in the New Haven Office and at AJC satellite offices. Additionally, CTDOL staff serve on our Planning Committee and our Youth Committee. All Wagner-Peyser workshops are listed on our website calendar for job seekers to attend - with most available virtually. A Wagner-Peyser Business Services Representative co-chairs our jointly established Regional Business Services Network and Wagner-Peyser leadership attends all other local partner network meetings. Job listings and all recruitments are shared with our team for incorporation into our monthly calendar and distributed to staff, job seekers and local partners. All parties are committed to support a system that continually strives to strengthen service delivery and avoid duplication of services.

IV. F. 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 subparagraph (A) and (B)(i) of section 107(d)(11) and section 232, the review of local applications submitted under Title II.

Our local Adult Education programs are the 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 are 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” or “refresher courses” 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 Enhancement Plan (PEP) establishment of priorities, RFP review and selection process conducted by the State Department of Education (SDE) in our region. We will provide 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.

Other initiatives to be considered by the Workforce Alliance Planning Committee:

- Pilot programs that allow students to simultaneously attend classes to either finish their diploma or learn English, while attending training in a high demand field. Traditionally, students need to finish school before training. Allowing students to do both at the same time may lead to higher retention and achievement.
- Further develop cohorts that provide contextualized education in a specific area and fund training opportunities.
- Develop a preferred state or federal list of credentials to direct Adult Education planning.
- Explore "work-based learning" or on-site cohorts at local businesses in which adult education provides customized education to meet specific needs.

IV. G. Describe partnerships between one or more workforce development boards and/or bordering states that address needs.

Workforce Alliance’s President & CEO is the chair of the Connecticut Workforce Development Council (CWDC). The Council includes the leaders of each of the five workforce development boards in Connecticut. The boards serve thousands of jobseekers and employers each year, have representation of more than 70 businesses on their boards of directors, bring millions of dollars in workforce development resources to CT through competitive grants, implement crucial mandated programs including Jobs First Employment Services (JFES), and run a network of 19 American Job Centers in partnership with the CT Department of Labor. The Council advocates on behalf of all five regions in Connecticut on matters such as state funding for Youth Employment programs, and offers policy and perspective to CT’s Congressional delegation on broad matters including WIOA re-authorization.

Workforce Alliance also collaborates with fellow boards to operate programs, pursue funding, and expand the scope of successful models such as our partnership with the Eastern Workforce Investment Board (EWIB) to deliver the Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) in South Central CT through Skill Up for Manufacturing. Skill Up is a 5-week pre-apprenticeship program for basic manufacturing skills and job placement. In the next 2-3 years, pending funding availability, we will expand offerings in our region to include a Youth MPI in collaboration with K-12 districts. EWIB and Workforce Alliance have and continue to collaborate on funding proposals and labor market research.

In the healthcare sector, Workforce Alliance also coordinates with EWIB on the Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative (ACI) - Health Careers Advancement Project. This leverages the MPI model to create employer-driven healthcare pipeline initiatives in Eastern and South Central CT to train for positions such as Patient Care Technician, CNA, Pharmacy Technician and Central Sterile Processing Technician.

Workforce Alliance also participates in statewide initiatives that cover multiple regions and which rely on workforce board collaboration and implementation. These include:

- CT Workforce & High-Tech Industry Skills Partnership (CT-WHISP) which develops new workers for the IT industry and retools the advanced manufacturing workforce;
- CareerConneCT, an online portal operated by the Office of Workforce Strategy which connects jobseekers to eligibility and funding for in-demand, short-term training in IT, transportation, healthcare, manufacturing and Green Jobs;
- CT Statewide Accessible Workforce Services (SAWS) Initiative, which uses a statewide WIOA National Dislocated Worker grant to expand equitable access to CT's public workforce system for dislocated workers and populations experiencing disparities in wages and education by offering real-time chat features on websites, online learning, expanded website language features, and outreach to marginalized communities;
- Funding through CT's Good Jobs Challenge, a statewide initiative funded by a grant from the US Economic Development Administration, entails coordination and shared goals across regions, funds manufacturing training and for Workforce Alliance to act as a convener of the South Central Manufacturing Regional Sector Partnership.

IV. H. 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) 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. **PENDING**

V. LOCAL ONE STOP SYSTEM

V. A. General System Description: Describe the one-stop delivery system in your local area including the roles and resource contribution of One Stop Partners.

1. Who are the required WIOA partners included in your one-stop delivery system? Describe how they contribute to your planning and implementation efforts.

The roles and contributions are articulated in the MOUs. See Attachment E.

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

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

3. The LWDB, the agreement of the chief elected official, shall develop and enter into a memorandum of understanding between the one-stop partners.

See Attachment E.

V. B. 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.

1. 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. As part of the One-Stop certification/re-certification process occurring in Spring/Summer 2024, our One-Stop Operator reviews ADA-compliance guidelines regarding physical and programmatic accessibility of AJC programs and services. Our Disability Resource Specialist monitors technology and materials for ADA-compliance as well as provides regular, on-going training and support to staff and partners to address needs of individuals with disabilities. The specialist has also led a project to plan and monitor ADA compliant entry-ways at the new American Job Center location in New Haven.

We look to our partnership with the Department of Aging and Disability Services as well as the Bureau of Education Services for the Blind to provide ongoing guidance and assistance in training resources.

2. Describe how entities within the one-stop delivery system are utilizing principles of universal design in their operation.

The American Job Centers utilize principles of universal design when ensuring accessibility to facilities including automatic door openers and wheelchair ramps, and accommodations within the centers such as adjustable height tables, restroom call buttons, and ADA signage.

3. Describe how the LWDB facilitates access to services provided through the local delivery system, including remote areas, through the uses 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 is in the process of a redesign which will be completed by late Spring/Early Summer 2024. Planned enhancements include the addition of an AI Chat feature for real-time customer service, enhanced language options, ADA-compliance enhancements, and more video-based content. Dedicated sections for annual reports and both the full and executive summary of the Local Plan will remain.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, several activities for both jobseekers and employer customers are offered online including one-stop orientations, job clubs, workshops and hiring events. The demand for virtual services has remained high. In a customer-centered system, the challenge is to be effective in all modes of service. Maintaining the blend of in-person and virtual services for training, job search, interviewing, on-boarding and on-the-job tasks are integral to our success in this area moving forward.

Workforce Alliance and its One-Stop Provider, Equus Workforce Solutions, continue to deliver video-based orientations to American Job Center services in addition to in-person orientations. Applicants have an option to upload documentation directly into CTHRES using the WIOA pre-application function *or* customers may choose to drop off documents using our contactless system or drop them off in-person to the AJC Ambassadors. The blending of in-person and virtual services continues from there, which removes barriers caused by lack of transportation and child care.

As with general American Job Center (WIOA) services, select programs including the G.E.T. IT, Health Careers Advancement Program, Skill Up for Manufacturing, Project CEO and Next Steps for Re-Entry have dedicated program pages that provide online orientations/overview slideshows to give the same information to individuals online that they would receive during an in-person orientation session. A multi-program application form accessible on each page begins the application and staff engagement processes.

Our site is also a conduit to CTHIRES and CareerConneCT. CT Hires is 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. CareerConneCT is an online portal developed by the Office of Workforce Strategy that connects applicants to local workforce development boards to enroll and access state funding for specific in-demand, short-term certificate programming in IT, CDL, healthcare, manufacturing, and Green Jobs.

Technology has allowed for our facilitators to conduct in person workshops while simultaneously presenting to those who prefer to participate virtually. We also have several taped workshops on our website and also available on our YouTube channel. In addition to workshops, Job Clubs are now recurring online events that bring together jobseekers and employers. Attendance at these online events continues to surpass attendance at previous in-person Job Clubs. Employers regularly participate in these virtual Job Clubs, which is also a draw. Since 2020, hundreds of hiring events have taken place, with more planned.

Access to job leads and recruitments directly facilitated by Workforce Alliance's Business Services team remains available online and in person. For enrolled customers, Talent Market is an online jobs database populated by Business Services which is used to match customers with Business Services sourced job leads. In the fall of 2020, Connecticut entered into an agreement with Indeed for a CT jobs portal that complements the CTHIRES job board.

We continue to make extensive use of social media to inform our community. Our recently established Communications team has expanded the use of social media to platforms such as TikTok, SnapChat and Instagram. Traditionally, we have used LinkedIn as a means of general networking and outreach. Twitter (now X), has a more tech savvy audience and provides short bursts of information, usually linking to more information. Twitter has been a good platform for increasing cross-marketing efforts with our partners. 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 in establishing LinkedIn accounts for networking and job search. By expanding to other social platforms, we are able to incorporate digital paid advertising which allows us to boost advertising on social platforms. We have continued to see our digital footprint grow, and increase our geographic mapping in the areas that are often hard to reach.

One of our biggest ways of keeping direct connection to our jobseekers has been our use of email engagement through Constant Contact. This platform has been a good vehicle to send bulk notices of career/job fairs and also surveys. These efforts are also echoed by our texting platform “Engage by Cell.” This platform allows us to send shorter messages directly to jobseekers’ mobile phones.

We 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.

V. C. 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 Connecticut Department of Labor designated business system, CTHIRES, as our case management system. This system is integrated with Wagner-Peyser, Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA), Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and Veterans services currently provided by the Connecticut Department of Labor. The CTHIRES system allows CT Department of Labor access to WIOA and JFES participation, thus further facilitating integration. Inspired by our Racial Equity and Accountability Initiative, Workforce Alliance is in the process of building an in-house dashboard that will integrate data downloaded from CTHIRES and other case management platforms used for special projects in order to track performance, service levels and trends. This dashboard tool will be demonstrated in the 4Q of PY 2024 and is expected to launch in Q1-Q2 of PY25.

V. D. 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 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires that all One-Stop Operators be selected or appointed through a competitive process. Training and Employment Guidance Letter 15-16 (TEGL 15-16) Competitive Selection of One-Stop Operators provides information on the requirements for the competitive process in Section 121(d)(2)(A) of WIOA.

Senior Administrative staff at Workforce Alliance competitively procured a new One-Stop Operator for the American Job Centers in South Central, CT October 1, 2022. The competitive procurement timeline, which began May 25, 2022, included solicitations for RFPs, a bidders' conference, proposal review, interviews, Operator selection, and contract negotiation.

Workforce Alliance senior administrative staff along with the Planning Committee finalized the selection of the One-Stop Operator with the CEO's approval. On October 1, 2022, Workforce Alliance and the new One-Stop Operator entered into a mutually agreed-upon contract that explained the scope of work and included the OSO budget.

The new One Stop Operator is United Way of Greater New Haven, 370 James Street, Suite 403, New Haven, Phone: 203-772-2010.

V. E. 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 our 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/Family-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 service delivery. We have migrated to a customer-centered design in both WIOA and JFES having had staff development provided by the CT Department of Labor in 2021. In addition, Jobs First Employment Services case managers utilize *motivational interviewing* methodology in their assessment and employment plan development with job seekers. Newly hired staff participate in similar training to ensure they are also equipped with these strategies and standards. Veteran staff will regularly participate in refresher training to reinforce these concepts.

The region is composed of thirty cities and towns. Considering there currently only being a WIOA presence in New Haven, Middletown, and Meriden, and part-time in Hamden, it is often difficult for individuals to come to one of the centers for service. In 2020, post pandemic, we made the decision to bring more services to our outlying areas and to continue to offer more services virtually. This has provided an opportunity to reach more diverse populations, including those who traditionally did not access our services, which were always delivered in-person. However, we find that co-located and out stationed staff are key to reaching historically marginalized communities in our urban communities. This allows us the opportunity to meet people where they are – right in their local neighborhoods, community-based organization, or educational institution with whom they are most comfortable. As such, we will continue to provide on-site office hours at Gateway Community College, Middlesex Community College, local libraries, Adult Education centers, community action agencies, neighborhood groups and centers, among other places.

In addition to bridging the physical gap between our centers and vulnerable and marginalized communities we seek to serve; we want to ensure that our staff are equipped with the knowledge and empathy necessary to effectively serve such populations. From a diversity, equity, and inclusion perspective this means that both our American Job Center and Workforce Alliance staff make up mirrors the very communities we serve. We have a diverse staff and will continue to be purposeful in maintaining that standard. We believe this should be true of frontline staff, middle managers, department directors and even our Board of Directors. Staff training and development will be a focus – assuring team members have the resources, knowledge, and perspectives necessary to reflect our mission, vision and values while meeting the needs of our regions' job seekers.

Our American Job Center Provider has expanded their outreach department with additional Outreach Ambassadors and Talent Engagement Specialists to both recruit and engage new job seekers. Over the next four years, we plan to expand engagement of the Latino community in greater New Haven and Middlesex through expanded partnerships with Latino organizations and employers.

Our marketing and communications team has expanded our social media footprint, recognizing the need to be multi-dimensional and inclusive in our outreach efforts. This methodology will continue to increase our engagement of all populations, but particularly older youth, and young adults under 30. We have modified the upfront requirements to ease the process to engage and motivate individuals to sustain their connection and can now use WIOA funding to support customers in obtaining required documentation to prove WIOA eligibility. This will also provide job seekers with the documentation employers require as part of their hiring/onboarding process. Lastly, we offer online tools and workshops during the onboarding process to get people started while waiting. This assures that job seekers immediately feel a sense of engagement while they also obtain information and soft skills to aid them in their career search efforts.

We regularly monitor and evaluate customer data & demographics to track engagement and enrollment levels and associated outcomes. The customer feedback loop is a priority. We issue customer satisfaction surveys throughout the continuum of services and have charged our One-Stop Operator with conducting regular customer focus groups to identify opportunity areas and best practices. Our goal is to ensure that we meet the changing needs of the individuals we serve while, most importantly, ensuring racial equity and inclusion.

We will continue to provide a more seamless delivery of services in the region, with extensive cross training of Business Services Teams, comprised of partners who carry out that function. Workforce Alliance, in partnership with the CT Department of Labor's Business Services staff convene quarterly SC Business Partners meetings which includes partners such as Office of Aging and Disability Services (Voc Rehab), Apprenticeship, Veterans, TAA, Adult Education as well as other invited community partners. In addition, we will support the convening of the Greater New Haven Collaborative and the Wallingford/Meriden/Middletown Partners Network with the United Way of Greater New Haven, and the Employer Engagement workgroup. Our American Job Center Provider also convenes a bi-monthly regional Workforce Service Delivery workgroup, comprised of frontline staff and/or coordinators who provide direct services to our job seeker community. These organic collaboratives bring together regional not-for-profit providers to share information, ideas, best practices and identify areas where we can partner and/or provide support.

VI. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM SERVICES

VI. A. 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, Skill Up for Manufacturing, the Health Care Advancement Program (HCAP), Growing Equitable Training in Information Technology (GET IT), and several statewide initiatives described in this plan.

Adult Education Programs in the region currently operate programs to provide basic skills remediation, academic and functional boot camps, ESL instruction, occupational training, besides their legislative 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.

VI. B. Sub Grants and Contracts: Provide a description of the competitive process used that avoids potential conflict of interest to award subgrants and contracts in the local area for WIOA-funded activities and the services to be made available.

The 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. An RFP was released in November 2021, which contained the specifications, using the goals and principles outlined in this plan as general guidance. Public notice of the RFP was made available through our website and social media. A special effort was made to attract minority bidders. A letter of intent was required by prospective bidders. Once proposals were received in January, 2022, a detailed review process was used to select a vendor. This process included proposal review and evaluation and interviews of finalists. Our Planning Committee Chair presented the committee's recommendations to the full Board of Directors, who approved the recommendation at our March 2022 meeting. An RFP for One Stop Provider will be issued by 2028.

A similar competitive procurement process was used to procure the region's One-stop Operator which occurred in May 2022. We issued the RFQ, identified a vendor, and started contracting with them October 2022. Workforce Alliance expects to extend this for a third year in September 2024.

The competitive process 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 eligible 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.

VI. C. 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.

Workforce Alliance's goals for increasing labor force participation and decreasing under-employment, coupled with our Integrated Services strategy will all contribute to co-enrollment and improving access to activities leading to post-secondary credentials.

A key factor is collaboration with Adult Education providers in South Central CT. It has been a long-standing effort to establish and nurture clear and accessible bridges from completion of adult education to the American Job Centers to either seek immediate employment or post-secondary training. A challenge has been a lack of a compatible platform that allows for seamless data sharing and participant activity tracking. This could begin when students matriculate with adult education and are earmarked to move forward to WIOA services. It will also help to provide services prior to completing, co-enrollment before graduation, and the ability to report on the shared outcome of measurable skills gains. Our current co-enrollment standard with the CT Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) and our Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) customers provides a possible model.

Jobs for the Future's CT Project is underway to looking at all systems in the Connecticut workforce ecosystem, and devise a plan to integrate data across required partners. Workforce Alliance looks forward to the results of the CT Project, and investment by the Office of Workforce Strategy into a statewide solution for accessible and consistent data.

It is also important that staff at each of our core partners clearly understand and can articulate the benefits of co-enrollment. This requires on-going training of not only the process, but also the function and purpose of each partner. For example, co-enrollment with ADS leads to collaboration on ADA accommodations and the resources of the Bureau for Rehabilitative Services (BRS) and the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB). Conversely, co-enrollment with the AJC avails participants to post-secondary training assistance, but also other supportive services (i.e. transportation, funds for work attire, uniforms or tools) that might not otherwise be available. A customer-tracking/data sharing platform will help to define the role of each partner, the plan for each participant, and information on outcomes including training completion, credential attainment and job placement.

VI. D. 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 key industry sectors in South Central CT continue to be Healthcare, Manufacturing, Technology (IT), and Transportation, Distribution and Logistics. As shown in the Environmental Scan, there is also a significant Self-Employed sector in South Central CT, and an emerging bioscience sector. In the next two years, the American Job Centers will also dedicate space and resources to support youth and young adults interested in the Creative Sector. This is supported by the city of New Haven's Career Pathways initiative and will also support entrepreneurship.

Per our Strategies in Section II, Workforce Alliance has committed to dedicating resources toward activities that lead to livable wage jobs through working with employers in our key industries to identify career pathways toward those jobs. Part of implementing this strategy will include dedicating 60% of WIOA Individual Training Account resources toward training for occupations that pay an average livable wage. This strategy will likely mean the development of new programs and the expansion of the ETPL in order to be able to provide relevant Individual Training Accounts. Accomplishing this will rely on partnerships with higher education and training providers in South Central CT and input from employers. As these practices will impact ITAs, career coaching curriculum and Individual Employment Plan building within the AJCs will incorporate awareness of wages and earnings, the impact of training, and potential for advancement through credential attainment.

Workforce Alliance's Business Services staff will work with employers in key industries for those jobs identified as having an average median wage. Other alignment practices will include establishing pipelines with labor unions into occupations that require moderate to long-term experience, either via apprenticeship or other work experience model. It will be essential to 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 (ITAs) is the most appropriate training modality, based on the needs for credentialing. Should the need arise for large scale hiring in a certain role and/or target industry, we will employ a Contract for Training modality, where an entire cohort of students can be purchased. In addition, Workforce Alliance provides the largest On-the-Job Training (OJT) program in the state of Connecticut, currently supported by seven (7) funding streams. We have been very successful with this program on both the job seeker and employer side; job seekers 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 Support Employment Programs (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 for SEP (for workers who need to establish-or reestablish- a credible work history) and IWT (as a business expansion, role modification or duties due to COVID-19 or a layoff aversion strategy) moving forward.

VI. E . 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.

Workforce Alliance is a partner in Connecticut's Strengthening Sector Partnership's Initiative which is designed to mobilize support and investment from critical non-employer support partners with a shared stake in the success of in-demand industries and on behalf of jobseekers in their communities through Regional Sector Partnerships (RSPs). Connecticut's RSPs utilize the industry-driven, community-supported Next Gen Sector Partnerships model in which employers of all sizes in the region are engaged in the following ways a) the agenda is driven entirely by business leaders who define the priorities, which ensures sustained industry commitment; b) business leaders craft their own solutions and personally champion priorities leading action teams that drive results, and; c) the partnership is supported by a coordinated team of partners representing regional workforce development, education, community-

based, and economic development organizations who together respond to industry needs with an integrated approach. Therefore, the partnership serves as a coordinating body to respond to industry needs and build career pathways that connect people to jobs. There are ten (10) RSPs across three priority sectors and the state's five economic regions.

Workforce Alliance is the "backbone" or convener of the well-developed South-Central Manufacturing Regional Sector Partnership and a community partner in the fledgling bioscience RSP, the Capital Area Tech Talent (IT) RSP, and the newly created statewide Healthcare RSP. These partnerships serve as a coordinating body to respond to local industry needs and build career pathways that connect people to jobs by:

- 1) Understanding critical occupations, skills, and high-demand credentials. The RSPs address disconnects between high-demand skills and available training by engaging employers, conducting skills gap analyses, and reviewing data to understand high-demand skills in their industry and thereafter build industry-driven pathways into employment.
- 2) Deepening engagement of community-based partners by supporting regional teams in garnering support from partners rooted in underserved communities to ensure that workforce solutions promote equity and access for underserved and historically marginalized populations.
- 3) Promoting careers in the industry. All RSPs have identified a need to increase awareness of career pathways existing within their industries and to specifically market high-demand training programs, with a focus on reaching historically marginalized populations to promote equity.
- 4) Providing demand-driven training. All system development and program design activities serve the purpose of informing the development and delivery of accessible, demand-driven training programs that prepare workers – including those with barriers to training and employment – for immediate, quality job opportunities on pathways to family-wage careers.

VI. F. In Demand Training: Describe the process utilized by the LWDB to ensure that training provided is linked to in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area or in another area to which a participant is willing to relocated.

The process of a training program being placed on the ETPL requires that the training be in a demand occupation. Providers must provide the Connecticut occupational projections based on CT DOLs Labor Market information for each program seeking eligibility. 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.

VI. G. 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.

Workforce Alliance employs a team of Business Service Representatives to provide customized assistance for employers to expand businesses through hiring, enhance the skills of existing workers and inform decision-making when it comes to employment and training resources in South Central CT.

To complement the strategies and services of the Regional Sector Partnerships. Workforce Alliance's Business Services unit engages employers of all sizes through Chambers of Commerce, Industry Associations, and business to business networking events. Support is provided to employers through

recruiting events, micro-grants for lay-off aversion activities, On-the-Job Training contracts and incumbent worker training funding. Working in collaboration with the CT Department of Labor's Business Service department, employers are also referred for services such as Registered Apprenticeships, unemployment resources, tax credits and incentives, employment and training consulting, veterans support and other Department of Labor resources such as wage and hour, and workplace standards.

Business Services Representatives conduct on-site employer visits and other activities to introduce Workforce Alliance services and establish employer needs, including skill requirements and job descriptions for open positions. This engagement leads to developing a service plan tailored to each employer that can include recruitment, candidate screening, enhancing the skills of existing staff, labor market data, and *all* available state and federal incentives that may defray labor and training costs.

The Business Services unit helps facilitate cooperation with CT Department of Labor Employer Services on a regional and state level. Business Service Representatives also provide professional development to American Job Center and related staff working directly with job seekers concerning occupational, workplace and technical requirements, and coordinate with job readiness facilitators to discuss job openings, results of participant interviews, upcoming events and data relevant to employer needs.

Business Services direction is also addressed in Workforce Alliance's Racial Equity & Accountability Roadmap, 2022-2025. Goal IV is to "Strengthen and increase outreach and partnerships." The objective is as follows:

Expand efforts to serve Black and Brown-owned or led businesses (nonprofits and for profit) and entrepreneurs through our Business Services unit. This objective will be accomplished through the following action items:

- a) Review existing Business Services policies to ensure that Black and Brown owned businesses and start-ups are not excluded from services.
- b) Collaborate with existing community programs with a shared mission to reach and serve Black and Brown-owned businesses.
- c) Strengthen relationships with business and community organizations, affinity groups to better understand the issues and challenges faced by the Black and Brown business community and to identify strategies to increase coordination.
- d) continue to support employers to diversify recruiting and hiring.
- e) Document efforts to present a diverse slate of jobseeker candidates to employers for open positions.
- f) Encourage employers currently utilizing Business Services to become mentors to Black and Brown-owned businesses and start-ups.

VI. H. 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 serves and training services in the Adult program.

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

VI. I. Training Services: Describe how training services will be provided, 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 ensure the vendor to apply to be accepted to the state Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) if it feasible to institutionalize the training.

VI. J. Customer Choice: Describe processes utilized by the LWDB to ensure customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how often the training services are to be provided.

Customer choice is the foundation of our interaction with every customer from the very first point of contact. We begin by offering the customer the choice to engage with us either in-person or virtually. We recognize that taking even preliminary steps towards enrollment can place an undue hardship on the job seeker if they are experiencing limitations around availability, transportation, childcare, or mobility. Customer choice is integrated into every aspect of our service delivery model.

At the One-stop orientation (both in-person and virtually), the concept of Customer Choice is highlighted as we empower customers to control the pace of the enrollment process through timely follow-through during the enrollment process, returning requested documents, attending scheduled appointments, expand their knowledge of labor market trends, sectors/specific occupations and pathways, along with associated educational requirements, credentials and wages. Promoting customer choice and empowerment begins with the outreach and engagement teams from the first point of contact. It is reiterated by the Talent Development team when coaching job seekers to identify and promote their skills, experience and strengths in alignment with their potential career pathway. Customer choice is further integrated into the Individual employment plan (IEP) development phase with AJC Job Seeker Consultants who act as co-pilot to build a practical and achievable service strategy. They will later become a coach to help support the job seeker through their stages of enrollment and as a cheerleader as the job seeker meets their established benchmarks towards successful attainment of their career plan.

If occupational skill development is part of the service continuum, the job seeker will review and research programs using labor market information and chose a training provider on the eligible training provider list and select a program that best meets their identified career training needs. The Job Seeker Consultant will provide job seekers with tips and suggestions for assessing and selecting their potential training vendor. This same value is applied when supporting the job seekers employment search efforts. Job Seekers will always be provided with the information to aid them in making informed decisions throughout the engagement, enrollment, and services continuum all the way through after exit retention. We recognize that our role is to combine the characteristics of information broker, co-pilot, navigator and coach as we support and assist the job seeker on their journey.

It is important to note that, "informed customer choice," must be in alignment with the principles of WIOA, the local labor market and local priorities. Ongoing customer-centered training occurs for front-

line and leadership staff, as well as traditional and real-time Labor Market Information provided by a variety of sources.

VI. K. 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 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 benchmark payments for training is authorized at 75% of the point of three (3) days of enrollment, 25% at completion. See attachment H.

As mentioned in our Strategies, Workforce Alliance plans to direct at least 60% of its training resources toward activities that lead to livable wage occupations.

B. Describe any exceptions to the use of ITAs.

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.

VI. L. Enhancing Apprenticeships: Describe how the LWDB will enhance the use of apprenticeships to support the local economy and individual's career advancement. Describe how job seekers are made aware of apprenticeship opportunities in the area's career center.

AJC staff have been trained by the Connecticut Department of Labor in the various apprenticeship programs offered. Apprenticeships are mentioned in the AJC orientation and in RESEA presentations. Apprenticeships are an important product in the WDB's "Work-based Learning Toolkit".

Workforce Alliance offers pre-apprenticeship training in Manufacturing through our *Skill Up for Manufacturing* program. Graduates earn 175 pre-apprenticeship hours in addition to obtaining credentials in OSHA-10 and Six Sigma Yellow belt. Participants are also provided with an overview of what Registered Apprenticeships are and the benefits. They are encouraged to seek employment with those who offer Registered Apprenticeship opportunities.

VI. M. 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 pathways 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).

We plan to participate in any incumbent worker training or 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. See more in Section VI. P. Rapid Response.

VI. N. Service Provider Continuous Improvement: Describe the LWDBs efforts to ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services, including contracted service providers and providers on the eligible training provider list.

All providers (both those on the ETPL and those contracted service 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 exam both program completion and placement into training-related services in an effort to address the needs of local employers and job seekers.

VI. O. 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 fourteen (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 fourteen (14) program elements ad described in WIOA, whether directly through the vendor or through referrals.

Our Out of School Youth program design is based upon three (3) 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 to 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 implemented 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. Last year 100 youth were served in Project CEO. Since its inception in October 2018, Project CEO has served 370 youth through the AJC.

1. **Define 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 jobs, 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 an individual assessment of all applicants for suitability for WIOA Youth programs. Additionally, contracted vendors do their own suitability assessments.

2. **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 I.

VI. P. Rapid Response: Provide a description of how the LWDB will coordinate workforce development activities in the local area with rapid response activities.

Workforce Alliance has recently entered into an agreement with the CT Department of Labor to pilot a Layoff Aversion WIOA Rapid Response program starting in PY24 that can benefit people across Adult, Youth and Dislocated Workers.

We will design and implement layoff aversion activities such as:

1. Design an employer assessment to identify the needs and preferences with respect to layoff aversion strategies
2. Conduct outreach and engagement activities with employers through the coordination of designated WDB board staff with the regional American Job Center business services staff.
3. Provide employers with a description of the program goals and potential benefits to employers.
4. Select employers and small business to be beneficiaries of small grant awards, with selection based on requirements and prioritization methods as established in the following section.
5. Distribute contract funds through grant awards in amounts up to \$20,000 each to selected employers that can be used to enhance the marketability of small businesses, prevent layoffs, and facilitate recruitment or training efforts.
6. Identify and conduct additional activities needed by employers (if any) that are not listed herein.

Workforce Alliance will continue to participate in other local Rapid Response activities, including employee meetings to determine extent and scope of the layoff, possible aversion strategies and planning on Early Intervention meetings. A representative from the Workforce Alliance's Business Services' team participates in Early Intervention activities and meetings to explain the programs and services of the American Job Centers and to encourage affected workers to obtain WIOA Dislocated Worker certification.

SUBMITTED June 28, 2024