



## **South Central CT WIOA Local Plan 2024-2028**

### **Executive Summary**

**Full Plan Approved by Workforce Alliance Board of Directors on May 23, 2024;  
& CT Governor's Workforce Council on Oct. 9, 2024**

## **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.

## **WORKFORCE ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN**

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).<sup>1</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) – CT Dept. of Labor

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**

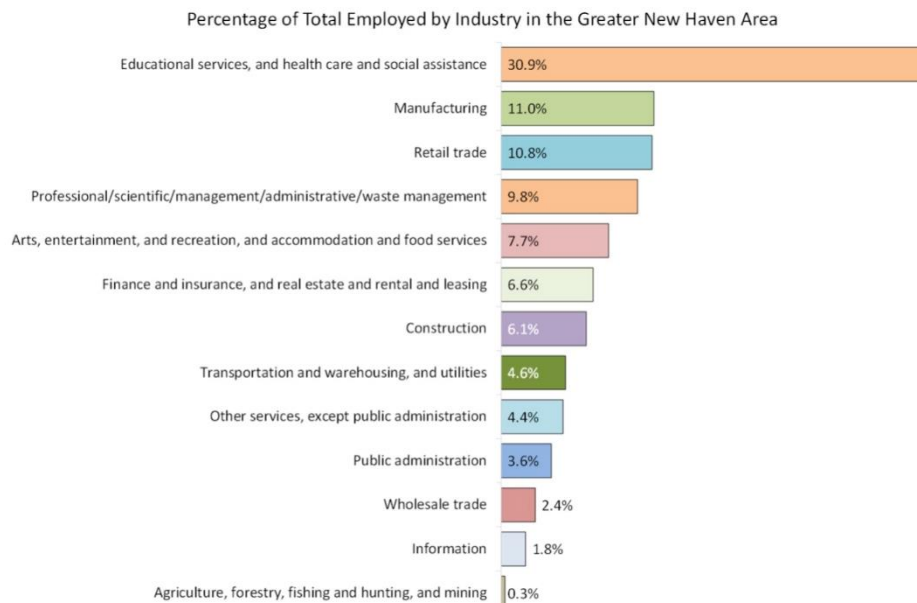
Industry Title	Base Employment 2020	Projected Employment 2030	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Total All Industries	363,004	407,003	43,999	12.1
Education and Health Services	122,900	131,706	8,806	7.2
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	63,942	73,487	9,545	14.9
Professional and Business Services	38,574	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.

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

### A Note on Self-Employment

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.

## **Livable Wages and Economic Mobility in South Central CT**

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

## VISION, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

### WORKFORCE ALLIANCE VISION STATEMENT

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

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.

### 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 workforce development services and eligibility for 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 negative impact of “benefit cliffs.”*
3. *Reduce duplication of effort and redundant services to promote a cohesive workforce ecosystem 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.
- 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 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 and digital skills crucial to good paying jobs. Use the example of the CfAL for Digital Inclusion and New Haven Adult Education, a joint endeavor funded by Workforce Alliance to boost digital skills and introduce jobseekers to IT jobs that combines the instructional capacity of adult education and 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:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 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. 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.