



WORKFORCE ALLIANCE WIOA LOCAL PLAN MODIFICATION 2026-2027

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

Modification Submitted July 24, 2026 for Program Years 2026 & 2027

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 members are appointed to 3-year terms. Terms are staggered such that one-third expire each year. There are currently no limits on the number of terms that can be served.

- 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 of Directors. 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.

2026 Modification: Updated Labor Market information and review of Goals was presented to Planning Committee members on May 14, 2026, with final review of plan modifications scheduled for July 9. The CEO shared an executive summary of the modified plan shared to the Executive Committee and the chairman of the Chief Elected Officials Ex. Committee in July 2026. The CEO presented an executive summary to the full Board of Directors at its July 23 meeting.

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. Our comprehensive American Job Center (AJC) is in New Haven. We have affiliate locations in, Meriden and Middletown. WIOA services are also provided electronically and virtually. In August 2024, Workforce Alliance successfully completed the Recertification process for the New Haven, Hamden and Meriden American Job Centers. The process included the identification and coordination of a committee that conducted a planning meeting, review of documents, site visit of each AJC, scoring, and submission of an application to the CT Department of Labor. The purpose of the process was to ensure tat each site meets all federal and state requirements and to identify areas for continuous improvement to better serve its customers. The New Haven American Job Center located at 370 James Street, 4th Floor, is the region’s comprehensive center. The Hamden location was closed by the CT Department of Labor and its staff fully embedded at the New Haven AJC in October 2025. 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 the Unified State Plan, published by the CT Office of Workforce Strategies, and the five strategic pillars in America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age. It is primarily 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., As noted in the 2024-2027 plan, we continue to see more people than ever who

are self-employed, a trend that is expected to continue and that will influence the development of entrepreneurial services, small business supports, and a new Youth Center scheduled to open Jan. 2027.

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 April 2026 employment rate was 4.4% in the South Central CT Workforce Development Region. The total number of unemployed in our region was 19,846 with a total labor force of 388,681. There has been an increase in unemployment rate for 29 of 30 towns in South Central CT since July 2025, with the exception being Durham, CT. Meriden, CT has had the highest unemployment rate in the region since December 2025, peaking at 7% in Feb. 2026.¹ The US unemployment rate was 4% in April 2026, which is lower than the regional and the state rate of 5.2%.

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 2022-2032. Base employment in the region is shown as 388,427 and was expected to grow by 9.8% to 426,667 by 2032. These are the first post-pandemic projections. Since 2020, base employment has been projected down from a 10-year predicted positive change of 12.1%. Based on the 2022-2032 projections, the industries projected to have the largest employment in 2032 are Education & Health Services; Healthcare & Social Assistance; Trade, Transportation & Utilities; Professional and Business Services; Leisure and Hospitality; Retail, Self-Employment, and Manufacturing (see Table 1).

Table 1: South Central CT Industry Sectors 2022-2032

Industry Title	Base Employment 2022	Projected Employment 2032	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Total All Industries	388,427	426,667	38,240	9.8
Education and Health Services	123,996	136,321	12,325	9.9
Health Care and Social Assistance	70,457	78,553	8,096	11.5
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	69,611	76,605	6,994	10.1
Professional and Business Services	42,437	46,700	4,263	10.1
Leisure and Hospitality	32,097	38,103	6,006	18.7
Retail Trade	34,273	34,142	-131	-0.4
Self Employed Workers, All Jobs	27,811	30,729	2,918	10.5
Manufacturing	29,758	30,608	850	2.9
Transportation and Warehousing	20,273	26,835	6,562	32.4
Financial Activities	15,185	16,141	956	6.3
Government	14,330	15,342	1,012	7.1
Construction	13,635	15,178	1,543	11.3
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	5,187	6,178	991	19.1
Information	4,615	4,769	154	3.3
Personal Care Services	2,403	2,771	368	15.3
Total Federal Government Employment	2,631	2,739	108	4.1

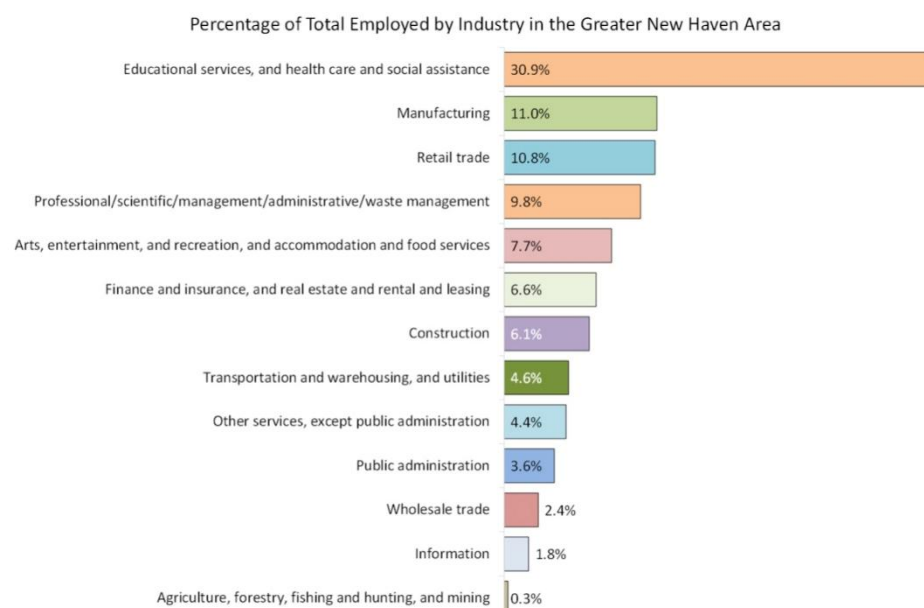
Source: CT Department of Labor, Office of Research

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

Industry Forecasts: Looking at the Industry Sectors, it is interesting to see how the projected forecasts have changed in just two years. Total base employment is higher, but the rate of 10-year growth projected has dropped from 12.1% to 9.8%. A slight uptick is projected for Education & Health Services, which is consistent with Help Wanted Online Postings. Air, truck, and water transportation; passenger transit and warehousing will keep growing. Professional and Business Services (includes information technology, legal services, accounting, architecture and consulting) was not projected to grow as rapidly – but the advent since 2022 of Artificial Intelligence (AI) may impact actual numbers. Leisure and Hospitality did increase since 2020, but the 10-year projected job growth rate is reduced by half from what it was pre-COVID. Projected employment in manufacturing is now on the decline; while job openings remain if not for new jobs then for replacement jobs in this sector. Self-employment exceeded the last 10-year projection by two years, and is expected to grow another 10% by 2032. Government, including federal employment, remained relatively flat despite initial fears of job losses due to DOGE cuts. In the construction sector, we see consistent job numbers and growth, which aligns with feedback from our trades industry partners on opportunity.

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 2032.

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 remains a focus/goal of Workforce Alliance's Local Plan..

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 (most recent available), and what is projected by 2032. 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 600 specific job titles.

Table 2: South Central CT Occupational Categories

Occupation Type	Regional Employment, Q1 2023	Regional Projected Employment 2032	Regional Annual Openings through 2032	Regional Average Hourly Wage*	Regional Entry Wage*
Architecture and Engineering	5,850	6,946	486	\$47.76	\$30.27
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	3,510	8,253	882	\$35.76	\$18.75
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	12,410	18,063	2,481	\$20.38	\$14.52
Business and Financial Operations	15,000	20,518	1,704	\$41.02	\$25.49
Community and Social Service	7,530	10,360	944	\$29.53	\$18.09
Computer and Mathematical	6,310	8,960	594	\$49.23	\$29.40
Construction and Extraction	10,310	14,564	1,310	\$33.44	\$21.47
Educational Instruction and Library Workers	30,070	35,686	3,304	\$43.28	\$20.24
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	180	618	91	\$18.38	\$14.41
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	26,190	31,652	5,918	\$18.86	\$14.28
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	26,710	32,728	2,048	\$51.44	\$27.99
Healthcare Support	19,220	24,429	3,582	\$19.51	\$15.53
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	11,740	14,410	1,320	\$31.58	\$19.33
Legal Occupations	2,470	2,946	182	\$60.54	\$26.93
Life, Physical, and Social Science	3,430	3,601	316	\$46.19	\$25.90
Management Occupations	26,340	37,135	2,994	\$65.85	\$34.31
Office and Administrative Support	44,000	48,815	5,517	\$25.54	\$16.97
Personal Care & Other Services	7,470	12,493	2,027	\$19.49	\$14.15
Production Occupations	18,320	19,504	2,090	\$25.18	\$16.58
Protective Service	7,040	7,532	840	\$29.80	\$16.51
Sales and Related Occupations	26,520	29,807	3,957	\$24.64	\$14.21
Transportation and Material Moving	31,140	37,647	5,119	\$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 remains 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 South Central CT region unless otherwise noted. These occupations often cross multiple industries and represent a range of occupational categories. In this table, livable wage is at least \$25.32 per hour, defined by the MIT Livable Wage Calculator as of June 2026. It must be noted that entry level wages do not always meet the livable wage threshold.

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 through 2032	South Central CT Employment (Currently Working in this Job Title) Q1 2023	South Central CT Projected Employment by 2032	Education/Work-Experience Requirement
Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	NA	34.43*	14	80	166	Post-Secondary
Architectural and Civil Drafters	24.05	30.59	16	170	167	Associate
Audio and Visual Technicians	20.62	29.72	17	110	177	Post-Secondary/Short-Term
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	16.42	26.17	185	1660	2,105	Post-Secondary, Short-Term
Captains, Mates and Pilots of Water Vessels	22.37	34.78	17	130	170	Post-Secondary, > 5 years
Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians	28.19	41.17	12	110	172	Associate
CNC Tool Programmers	31.7	42.45	11	90	103	Post-Secondary, Moderate
Crane and Tower Operator	24.82	39.67	11	80	155	Post-Secondary
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	37.14	46.29	23	260	374	Associate
Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technologists and Technicians	22.94	35.55	25	390	257	Associate
Electrical and Electronics Drafters	NA	39.92*	5	80	55	Associate
Electrical and Electronics repairers, Commercial and Industrial Equipment	22.55	35.58	5	40	63	Post-Secondary, Long-Term
Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Powerhouse, Substation, and Relay	NA	46.38*	4	NA	60	Post-Secondary, >5 years
Firefighters	33.12	38.36	57	NA	711	Post-Secondary, Long-Term
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	20.87	27.47	516	3520	4,708	Post-Secondary, Short-Term
HVAC mechanics and installers	24.4	35.41	102	970	1,106	Post-secondary, Long-Term
Technologists and Technicians	18.16	28.95	24	220	255	Associate
Library Technicians	19.49	29.17	31	40	188	Post-Secondary
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurse	27.38	30.98	159	1960	2,036	Post-Secondary
Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists	34.51	43.15	9	80	155	Associate, < 5 years
Massage Therapists	17.93	28.28	84	160	593	Post-Secondary
Mechanical Drafters	28.30	36.24	9	150	107	Associate
Technologists and Technicians	26.93	40.13	5	50	58	Associate
Medical Equipment Repairers	22.86	34.98	25	150	244	Associate, Moderate
Morticians, Undertakers, and Funeral Arrangers	29.12	36.01	9	70	80	Associate, Long-Term
Nuclear Medicine Technologists	44.88	52.04	4	50	87	Associate
Occupational Therapy Assistants	28.68	34.31	61	120	442	Associate
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	24.84	33.07	97	850	975	Associate
Physical Therapist Assistants	26.86	34.86	32	150	222	Associate
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	29.36	38.66	129	1480	1,567	High School Diploma
Prepress Technicians and Workers	19.08	26.08	7	50	64	Post-Secondary
Psychiatric Technicians	21.93	27.88	19	190	240	Post-Secondary, Short-Term
Radiation Therapists	39.26	51.60	4	60	75	Associate
Technicians	30.76	38.97	47	560	805	Associate
Respiratory Therapists	32.41	38.34	31	350	514	Associate
Surgical Technologists	26.22	35.12	30	340	450	Post-Secondary
Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers, Except Line Installers	26.46	36.38	44	510	499	Post-secondary, moderate
Telecommunications Line Installers & Repairers	NA	29.99*	17	NA	188	HS Diploma, Long Term
Tool and Die Makers	27.24	37.37	31	370	307	Post-Secondary, Long-Term

Table 4: Additional Occupations Requiring Less Than a Bachelor’s Degree, South Central CT Wages and Projections, \$20-25 per hour

Additional Occupations Median \$20-25 per hour	South Central CT Q1 2023 Entry Level Wage	South Central CT Average Hourly Wage Q1 2023	South Central CT Annual Openings through 2032	South Central CT Employment (Currently Working in this Job Title) Q1 2023	South Central CT Projected Employment by 2032	Education/Work-Experience Requirement
Medical Assistants	18.37	22.27	347	2100	2,631	Post-Secondary
Ophthalmic Medical Technicians	18.7	22.44	21	110	185	Post-Secondary
Phlebotomists	18.87	22.30	77	580	585	Post-Secondary
Psychiatric Aide	18.23	20.93	18	90	119	Post-Secondary
Dental Assistants	18.90	24.00	130	660	903	Post-Secondary
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	17.32	22.48	48	420	472	Associate
Medical Transcriptionists	18.56	22.61	10	40	56	Post-Secondary
Chemical Technicians	18.01	25.14	19	140	155	Associate
Human Resources Assistants, Except Payroll and Timekeeping	19.73	25.41	21	200	182	Associate

[^]Livable Wage Defined as \$25.32-\$26.76 per hour. Source: MIT Livable Wage Calculator, South Central/Lower CT River Valley Planning Region (June 2026)

* Indicates statewide CT number

Source: CTDOL, 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 (most recent available). 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 in community health centers, rehabilitation services, traditional nursing homes, and assisted living facilities. In-demand

² Regional Labor Market Information – CT Department of Labor

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

skills for these positions include technical knowledge such as the EPIC EMR software, as well as communication skills. As shown in 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 shown 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 136,321 by 2032. 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 average.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 or educational systems or larger companies like banking or insurance which cross multiple functions.

That being said, the Professional and Business Services sector is expected to grow by 10% over the next six years, while there are close to 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, the CSCU Center for Quantum & Nano Technology, 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. The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the skills needed to use and incorporate AI into not only IT but all jobs is ever evolving. 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.

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, Transortation, Utilities; Information; Financial Activities; Public Administraiton	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 12% growth and 316 annual openings through 2032. 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.

Table 5: STEM Occupation Regional Employment & Projections

STEM Occupation Groups	Regional Employment Q1 2023	Regional Projected Employment 2032	Regional Annual Total Openings	Regional Average Hourly Wage	Regional Entry Wage
Architecture and Engineering	5,850	6,946	486	\$47.76	\$30.27
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	6,310	8,960	594	\$49.23	\$29.40
Life, Physical, Social Science Occupations	3,430	3,601	316	\$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.

In April 2026, manufacturing 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 across CT, including quality inspector, machinist, production worker/fabricator, and CNC operator.⁷ The Skill Up for Manufacturing program offered at both CT State Gateway and CT State Middlesex and work underway through the Women in Apprenticeships & Non-Traditional Occupations 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, perhaps driven below median livable wages. In April 2026, there were 732 accommodation and food service help wanted ads in South Central CT alone. Retail trade jobs had 1,901 openings during that period, with retail salespersons topping the list at 522. As a sector, employment in Leisure and Hospitality is projected to grow by 18.7% by 2032 – a significant decrease in 10-year growth projections made pre-COVID.

⁶ CT Help Wanted Online Data Series - April 2026

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 and is a significant part of the South Central CT economy now and projected through 2032. Workforce Alliance and the American Job Centers continue to 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 Q1 2025. The number of work sites that have less than 1 employee account for almost 22% of all the sites in our region and \$13.8m in wages. Companies with under 5 employees are almost 46% of the total and paid \$451m in wages – an indicator of self-employment and small business acumen. Companies of more than 50 employees account for less than 4% of the total sites, but more than 55% of the total number of employees.

Table 6: South Central CT Worksite by Size, Q1 2025

Company Size	Worksites	Worksite % of total	Employment	Employment % of total	Wages
0 to <1	5,791	21.9%	509	0.2%	\$13,839,043
1 to <5	12,091	45.7%	23,700	7.8%	\$461,580,210
5 to <10	3,451	13.0%	23,829	7.9%	\$382,666,676
10 to <20	2,441	9.2%	33,815	11.2%	\$540,745,659
20 to <50	1,750	6.6%	53,090	17.5%	\$912,141,563
50 to <100	547	2.1%	37,296	12.3%	\$715,966,719
100 to <250	318	1.2%	46,481	15.4%	\$814,388,718
250 to <500	49	0.2%	15,762	5.2%	\$335,456,053
500 to <1000	13	0.1%	8,829	2.9%	\$269,062,527
1000 and greater	15	0.1%	59,508	19.7%	\$1,553,630,178
Total	26,466	100.0%	302,819	100.0%	\$5,999,477,346

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 the capacity to learn the software that is almost universally used is essential. Job titles that require degrees are almost evenly split between bachelor’s and an

associate degrees.⁸ There are occupations that are in demand, offer median livable wages, and that are 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 2,036 jobs by 2032); Surgical Technologists (450); Dental Assistants (903); and Medical Assistants (2,631).

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 Skills Accelerator and Agentic AI Developer Bootcamp, Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC), AWS Certified Cloud Practitioner, and Python 1 & 2. The CT Institute of Technology at the University of New Haven and CT State Community College campuses are now also offering short-term training and digital badges and credentials as sharable and verifiable proof of skills and competencies.

The public-private partnership known as QuantumCT is largely based in New Haven and has seen a \$121m investment from the state of CT to kickstart a regional economic effort to support quantum computing – a growing technological field that applies quantum mechanics to boost computing speed and ability.⁹ New Haven-based Yale University is a main partner along with CT State Colleges and Universities and UCONN. Its initial 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.¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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

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

⁹ CT Mirror, “CT Trying to kickstart a quantum computer sector,” June 21, 2026

¹⁰ <https://quantumct.org/>

¹¹ 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 2.9% by 2032.

Since 2025, Workforce Alliance has made a strategic planning decision to strengthen its career pathway building in the construction-related skilled trades. This has been accomplished through enhanced input and cooperation with organized labor union apprenticeship training programs and the pursuit of specific funding opportunities to engage, train and place more individuals into trades and apprenticeships, while also building capacity. These efforts are driven by industry demand due to retirements and attrition, but also thanks to new housing, commercial, and infrastructure projects in the region. Skilled trades by far still account for the majority of Registered Apprenticeships in CT. While entry varies by trade and sponsor (employer), baseline candidate requirements are to be at least 18 years old, possess a high school diploma or GED, Social Security card, be physically fit, and have a valid CT driver's license and reliable transportation. Many programs also do aptitude or practical knowledge assessments and require personal interviews. Outside of the apprenticeship model, employers seek safety (OSHA 10 minimum) and practical skills knowledge for occupations that can be obtained through post-secondary training or work-based learning. State licensing for skilled trades, for example E2 for electricians, are required for skilled tradesman. Journeyman licensure is required to take on an apprentice. Entry level construction laborer roles may be filled with basic OSHA safety training, possession of tools, CT license and personal transportation. Additional driving endorsements like a CDL are also valued. The construction sector is expected to grow by 11.3% by 2032 with 1,523 openings each year.

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 2022-2032 South Central Occupation Projections, the employment base for Transportation and Material Movers occupation is 37,647, 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 5,119 each year through 2032. 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 all Connecticut job ads in April 2026.¹² 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, medical and bioscience, and occupational health and safety. These jobs often require advanced degrees, but some technician level jobs such as Chemical Technicians or Occupational Safety Technicians are reachable with an associate degree. English language proficiency, computer skills, and safety knowledge are consistently expected for these jobs.

¹² Connecticut Help Wanted OnLine Data Series - April 2026

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.¹³

Leisure & Hospitality, Arts and the Creative Sector:

In April 2026, there were 732 accommodation and food service help wanted ads in South Central CT alone. Retail trade jobs had 1,901 openings during that period, with retail salespersons ads at 500+. As a sector, Leisure and Hospitality is projected to grow 18.7% between 2022 and 2032. 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. It is projected to include 8,253 jobs by 2032 with an anticipated 882 total openings a year. 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. In response to this growth and also the need for resources to support entrepreneurship and creative content as both a product or service or to support a business start-up – particularly among young adults, Launch Haven is scheduled to open in January 2027.

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 struggles with a skills mismatch (ranging from basic to advanced), wage disparity, entry into livable wage career pathways, and labor force participation. As noted above, we have seen more people than ever who are self-employed, a trend that is expected to continue.

South Central CT Workforce Demographics

The April 2026 employment rate was 4.4% in the South Central CT Workforce Development Region. The total number of unemployed in our region was 19,846 with a total labor force of 388,681. There has been an increase in unemployment rate for 29 of 30 towns in South Central CT since July 2025, with the exception being Durham, CT. Meriden, CT has had the highest unemployment rate in the region since

¹³ *Biotech Development is Reshaping New Haven, Here’s Why* - BioPath Skills Academy (southernct.edu)

December 2025, peaking at 7% in Feb. 2026.¹⁴ The US unemployment rate was 4% in April 2026, which is lower than the regional and the state rate of 5.2%.

The South Central region has an educated workforce. About 42.5% 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 2024.¹⁵ This is higher than the national and state average. Nonetheless, enrollment in state institutions of higher education in CT has been declining since 2018.¹⁶ 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.

Table 5: Educational Attainment and Household Characteristics

High School Diploma or Equivalent Only	Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Households with at least one person under 18
28.5%	42.5%	24.2%

Source: American Community Survey 2024. 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.

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, 35% percent of households reported having at least one person over age 65, while only 24.2% have at least one person under age 18. The largest working cohort in South Central CT is between ages 25-34. Combined with those who are between 35-54 these workers comprise 60.2% of the regional labor force. Those aged 55 and over make up 27.2 % of the workforce, while workers who are age 24 and younger make up only 12.6%.¹⁷ These percentages have been relatively flat in the last two years. The low percent of younger workers may be related to the higher-than-average rate of college enrollment mentioned above or may be attributed to general disconnection from school or work. 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.

¹⁴ Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) – CT Dept. of Labor

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2024

¹⁶ *CT Public College Enrollment Trends*, Office of Legislative Research, CGA, May 2024

¹⁷ Information For Workforce Investment Planning (IWIP) South Central Report – CT Dept. of Labor

Other South Central CT Region Demographics (As of 2023 unless otherwise noted):

Male	47.0%
Female	53%
White	75.7%
Black or African American	15.8%
Hispanic	14.6%
Number of Individuals on Medicaid	248,775
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	112,936
Adult Ex-Offenders on Parole or Probation	6,394
Developmental Services (DDS) Program Recipients	3,854
Mental Health & Addiction Services (2024)	17,502

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 as of PY26, 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.

Women and Families Center - Women and Families Center Open DOHR program provides case management, occupational skills training, career readiness workshops and job placement services to out-of-school youth ages 18 to 24. Certificate trainings are provided by CT State Community Colleges (Middlesex, Gateway, etc.), Excel Academy, Hunter's Ambulance, Harborview School of Phlebotomy or Academy of Medical Training. Training areas include Certified Nursing Assistant, Emergency Medical Technician, Paraeducator, Microsoft Office Specialist, Pharmacy Technician and Phlebotomy Tech. For those youth completing occupational skills training, work-based learning experiences are developed and take place at worksites in and around the Greater Meriden, Middletown and New Haven areas.

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

Labor Force Participation, Skills and Wage Gaps: The skills gap for in-demand occupations may be exacerbated by the decline in the number of people attending college for either non-credit or credit programs or accessing WIOA-approved services training programs. The continued increase in Self-Employment as cited in previous sections may be a factor, though self-employed is counted as an employment sector. Other underlying factors may be that entry-level wages in the most abundant jobs that do not require a bachelor's degree continue to pay below what a typical household can survive on but do pay enough despite CT's minimum wage rising to \$16.94 as of July 1, 2026. 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."¹⁸

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

¹⁸ <https://www.umb.edu/csp/projects/>

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.

According to the MIT Livable Wage Calculator, a single person needs to earn between \$25.32-\$26.76 an hour and work full time to be able to afford to live in this region.¹⁹ 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 living in Greater New Haven needs to earn \$38,796 annually to meet the Household Survival Budget necessary to live in Greater New Haven.²⁰ 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."²¹

New federal legislation concerning work requirements for SNAP and Medicaid recipients is expected to impact labor force participation. In order to maintain benefits there is a requirement to work, volunteer, or participate in eligible training for at least 80 hours a month or 20 hours a week. The SNAP work requirements took effect Dec. 1, 2025, while HUSKY D (Medicaid) enrollees must do so starting Jan. 1, 2027. Those along with other policy and provision changes are projected to cause a loss of coverage for thousands of South Central CT residents, potentially impacting 12,000+ SNAP and 34,000+ HUSKY recipients, according to DataHaven. The American Job Centers are implementing enhanced services to assist this population including website enhancements for job and volunteer searches, a multi-lingual volunteer toolkit, new computer lab equipment for self-directed training, outreach and support services.

Despite all this, the 2025 DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey for Connecticut showed that more adults statewide say the availability of suitable employment for residents in their area is "excellent" or "good," and that fewer people consider themselves to be "underemployed."²²

Limited Transportation and Child Care: Access to transportation and adequate child care remain major barriers to high quality employment for many in our region. 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

¹⁹ Living Wage Calculator - Living Wage Calculation for Connecticut (mit.edu)

²⁰ <https://alice.ctunitedway.org/> (State of ALICE 2025)

²¹ <https://www.benefitscliff.com/what-is-a-benefits-cliff>

²² 2025 DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey Statewide Data Release report

out of our region to work. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2024, only 7.8% of the population takes public transportation to work, 16.3% walk, and 9.9% work from home in Greater New Haven. Work from home numbers are higher in the region's more affluent and/or rural communities, reaching close to 30% in some towns. Still, the unemployment rate for customers with a car is less than one-third that of customers without a car.²³ Assisting customers to obtain – or in many cases to regain – a 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 April 2026 across all sectors.

There is a gap of between 33 and 35 percent between the supply of licensed child care slots and the supply for Middlesex County and New Haven County, respectively, which mirrors the statewide average.²⁴ 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 contribute to a lack of candidates despite efforts to increase training capacity. Workforce Alliance continues to work with the CT Office of Early Childhood Education, regional early childhood providers, and collaboratives like CERCLE (Creating Equity and Resiliency for Childcare Leaders and Educators). CERCLE has launched FRAME: Future-Ready and More Equipped) a workforce development initiative to train for careers in early childhood through paid apprenticeships. CERCLE's main office has recently relocated to 370 James Street, New Haven and shares the same floor as Workforce Alliance and the New Haven American Job Center. The Early Childhood Education Endowment created by the state of Connecticut is a permanent "savings account" to help families access childcare, support higher wages for educators, improve childcare facilities, and more. Starting in July 2027 it will help pay for free or lower-cost childcare for more families in state-funded child care programs while also subsidizing higher payments to providers and higher wages for teachers, as well as professional development.²⁵

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. The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the last two years has added layer of urgency to digital skill building while trying to understand how jobs and job functions will change. As recently as 2023, 25% of individuals earning less than \$50,000 annually lack broadband connection, according to DataHaven. 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. From 2023 to 2026, Workforce Alliance operated GET IT (Growing Equitable Training in Info Technology), which offered free access to digital skills and also exploration into jobs in Information Technology. Our Section III STRATEGIES section includes a commitment to develop more eligible training program options through our education partners. Integrating AI into American Job Center functions to enhance efficiency and improve services is a priority for Workforce Alliance and the other CT workforce boards. With input from EdAdvance (a Regional Educational Service Center) and Jobs for the Future, we are adopting a plan for AI governance and structured enablement for tools and use cases while protecting sensitive information.

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

²³ *How Transportation Problems Keep People Out of the Workforce in Greater New Haven*, Greater New Haven Job Access and Transportation Work Group

²⁴ *Economic Impact of the Child Care Gap Between Supply and Potential Need, 2025*, Child Care Trust

²⁵ CT Office of Early Childhood Education, <https://ctoec.org>

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. 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, legal 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.

According to the 2024 American Community Survey, **foreign-born residents** made up 19.7% of the population in the South Central CT Planning Region and 15.4% of the Lower CT River Valley Planning Region.²⁶

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.²⁷ Program funding, awareness within the population (often referred to as “Opportunity Youth”), who would most benefit from programs like Project CEO as 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. The planned opening of LaunchHaven in 2027 will be another resource for young adults with entrepreneurial goals or who are 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.

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:

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.

²⁶ *American Community Survey 2024, U.S. Census Bureau*

²⁷ <https://www.daliophilanthropies.org/2023/10/12/dalio-education-bcg-report-op-ed/>

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.

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 updated Vision Statement was adopted by the Workforce Alliance Board of Directors on January 30, 2025:

“To develop and provide a comprehensive customer focused workforce investment system that inspires individuals to achieve the necessary skills to be competitive and to advance their careers. To continue to cultivate and strengthen a market-driven business services model that is responsive to evolving employer needs.”

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 early 2026 which include: Drive Growth, Build Skills, Expand Access.²⁸

GOALS

Workforce Alliance has four *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. *Decrease Under-Employment and increase Labor Force Participation 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.”*
2. *Reduce duplication of effort and redundant services to promote a cohesive and collaborative workforce eco-system in South Central CT, while advancing partner integration, referrals and co-enrollment.*

²⁸ <https://portal.ct.gov/ows/-/media/ows/ct-wioa-unified-state-plan-modification-2026>

3. *Dedicate resources toward activities that lead to training for and placement into livable wage jobs and identify career pathways toward those jobs.*
4. *Increase the number and variety of employers utilizing Workforce Alliance services and hiring WIOA jobseekers through business engagement and awareness.*

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 WIOA ITA resources toward training for occupations aligned with livable wage occupations, and develop career ladders toward occupations with an average livable wage.
- Expand and incorporate the parameters of “Good Jobs” 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.
- 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, Digital Literacy and Artificial Intelligence (AI)~

As one of the top workforce challenges, AI and basic digital literacy 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 proficiency, and interpersonal or “soft” skills within the context of workforce development. These skills combined will not only better prepare jobseekers for and make them 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 foreign-born 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.
- Work with higher education and training providers to offer embedded, integrated basic skills and/or tutoring and AI integration.
- 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, Program Development & Apprenticeships~

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 regional education and training providers to identify local and statewide workforce development needs so that gaps that can be addressed with strategic investments through non-credit, credit, adult education, and apprenticeship programs.
- Evaluate WIOA-eligible program relevance using CT DOL data, input from Workforce Alliance Business Services, Regional Sector Partnerships, chambers of commerce, and other business and industry associations to determine which programs correlate to livable-wage jobs and to 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, fellow workforce development boards and organized labor unions.

~Integrated Services~

Deepen our engagement with all partners to move toward a more integrated, transparent, and workforce system that works for all. 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 that are inclusive and responsive.
- Identify support services and funding streams that may be braided to improve services for job seekers.

~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 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 focused on new business development and entrepreneurship.
- Invest in Launch Haven, a youth-focused center for the Creative Sector that will support business development, mentoring, skill-building, and entrepreneurship.
- Continue to be active participants in the statewide system of Regional Sector Partnerships (RSPs) created to address the regional and local workforce needs through convening industry partners, educators, economic development practitioners. In our region, Workforce Alliances convenes and participates in two (2) South Central RSP's for manufacturing and healthcare and acts as a co-convenor for the statewide Architecture, Engineering and Construction RSP, thus creating opportunities with our partners that allow students and job seekers to explore different credentials that are tied to in-demand careers in CT.

~Data Visibility and Data-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. Our efforts continue 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.
- Participate in data visibility activities in conjunction with other workforce boards and WIOA partners such as adult education, the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services and other partners to improve cross-program functions and support regional data-sharing.
- Make recommendations to OWS and CT DOL for improvements to system policies and permissions to expand CT Hires functionality and expand partner access.

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 (South Central Regional and Lower CT River Valley COG) economic development and planning initiatives
- Partnerships with Adult Education providers for plan alignment and AJC activities integration
- Evaluation of the CT Unified Plan, the Strategic Plan of the Governor's Workforce Council, the CT Manufacturing Strategic Plan, CT's Workforce Development Alignment plan, and America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age.
- 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), the Labor Market Information (LMI) Institute, and the Council for Community and Economic Research 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 convenor 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 exist on the frontline **and** at the

executive suite level. Leadership is cognizant that 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 have 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 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 continue to collaborate on funding proposals and labor market research.

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

- **Regional Sector Partnerships:** Workforce Alliance is a convenor of the South Central CT Manufacturing RSP and a co-convenor with the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board for the statewide Architecture, Engineering & Construction RSP. Other RSPs in this region include health care and bioscience.
- **Industry-Driven Skills Initiative:** Workforce Alliance and the other workforce boards are sub-grantees of the CT Dept. of Labor to implement federally-funded incumbent worker training and increasing the capacity for trade apprenticeships through journeyman training and licensing.
- **AI Initiative:** Together with the other workforce boards, this will develop policies and procedures for the use of Artificial Intelligence to improve and streamline service delivery and to create a uniform approach to how AI is used as part of employment and training services.
- **CT Workforce Development Alignment:** Together with other workforce boards and the Office of Workforce Strategy, Workforce Alliance is participating in the development of ways to align with WIOA partners on system intake, data visibility, staff cross-training, partner integration, referrals and co-enrollment, remote and hybrid service delivery, marketing and branding, business engagement and braided funding.
- **CareerConneCT,** an online portal operated by the Office of Workforce Strategy which connects jobseekers to eligibility and funding for in-demand, short-term training.

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.

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 entryways 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 was redesigned in 2024. Enhancements are planned for new ADA compliance. 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 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.

Technology has allowed 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. Access to job leads and recruitments directly facilitated by Workforce Alliance's Business Services team remains available online and in person. 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. (TikTok, Instagram, X, Facebook, LinkedIn). Traditionally, we have used LinkedIn as a means of general networking and outreach. X (formerly Twitter), 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. Our social platforms incorporate digital paid advertising which allows us to boost our reach. 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.

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 current 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. There is a WIOA presence in New Haven, Middletown, and Meriden, but it is often difficult for individuals to come to one of the centers for service. Since the pandemic, we have maintained virtual services. This has provided an opportunity to reach more 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. As such, our Meriden location is now embedded within New Opportunities, a community-based organization. We will continue to take advantage of access at CT State Gateway, SCSU, local libraries, Adult Education centers, community action agencies, neighborhood groups and centers, among other places. In addition, our American Job Center provider has expanded outreach through AJC Ambassadors and Talent Engagement Specialists to both recruit and enroll new job seekers. Lastly, we offer online tools and workshops during the onboarding process to give jobseekers and immediate 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), Industry-Driven Skills Initiative, Women in Apprenticeships and Non-Traditional Occupations, 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.

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.

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 goal 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. See our GOALS and STRATEGIES in Sec. II for more details. Our participation in the CT Workforce Development Alignment Project together with other workforce boards and the Office of Workforce Strategy will also support these outcomes. The project focuses on aligning WIOA partners on:

- System intake
- Data visibility
- Staff cross-training
- Partner integration
- Referrals and co-enrollment
- Remote and hybrid service delivery
- Marketing and branding
- Business engagement
- Braided funding

A primary WIOA partner is Adult Education 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.

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 collaborate 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 are Education and Health Services, Manufacturing, Professional Services (including IT), Transportation, Distribution and Logistics, Skilled Trades, and Leisure, Hospitality and Retail . As shown in the Environmental Scan, there is also a significant Self-Employed sector in South Central CT, and an emerging bioscience and quantum computing sector. Starting in early 2027, Launch Haven will provide space and resources to support youth and young adults interested in the Creative Sector.

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 prioritizing WIOA Individual Training Account resources toward training for occupations that pay an average livable wage. This strategy may mean the development of new programs and the expansion of the ETPL and Workforce Pell-eligible programs 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 AJs 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 funded. A robust On-the-Job Training (OJT) program benefits both the job seeker and employers – with job seekers earning wages during training and employers receiving a subsidy while they train individuals to their specifications.

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 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 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.

Workforce Alliance is the convener of the well-developed South-Central Manufacturing Regional Sector Partnership and a community partner in the fledgling bioscience RSP, and a regional Health Care. Recently, we became co-convenor of the Architecture, Engineering and Construction 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. 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. With the availability of Workforce Pell funding for non-credit programming, Workforce Alliance anticipates working with regional providers on designation of eligible programs.

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 cooperates 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.

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 is 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 steps towards enrollment can create 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. It is also important to note that “informed customer choice” must be in alignment with the principles of WIOA, the local labor market and local priorities.

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 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 a job seeker’s 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. 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 are 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 are authorized at 75% of the point of three (3) days of enrollment, 25% at completion.

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.

Since 2017, 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.

In 2025, Workforce Alliance became one of 7 sites across the country and the only one on the East Coast to be awarded a Women in Apprenticeship and Non-Traditional Occupations (WANTO) It will expand apprenticeship opportunities for women in construction and building trades through enhanced training, employer engagement, and union collaboration; enhance manufacturing career pathways by updating pre-apprenticeship models and fostering employer partnerships to create Registered Apprenticeships; and implement statewide system-level changes to scale and sustain WANTO strategies.

Since 2025, Workforce Alliance has made a strategic planning decision to strengthen its career pathway building in the construction-related skilled trades where the apprenticeship model has been largely embraced. This has been accomplished through enhanced input and cooperation with organized labor union apprenticeship training programs and the pursuit of specific funding opportunities to engage, train and place more individuals into trades and apprenticeships, while also building capacity. These efforts are driven by industry demand due to retirements and attrition, but also thanks to new housing, commercial, and infrastructure projects in the region. Skilled trades by far still account for the majority of Registered Apprenticeships in CT.

The Industry-Driven Skills Initiative with the CT Dept. of Labor will also increase capacity for trade apprenticeships through journeyman training and licensing over the next two years.

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

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).

Over the next two years, the Industry-Driven Skills Initiative will be the centerpiece of incumbent worker training delivery. Workforce Alliance and the other workforce boards are sub-grantees of the CT Dept. of Labor for this initiative. In South Central CT, Workforce Alliance will support incumbent worker training that supports retention and advancement for employees in the network of community health centers which includes Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). Connecticut has 17 FQHC organizations operating numerous sites statewide employing 4,839 full-time employees in a variety of occupations which focus on primary care, behavioral health, and enabling services. According to the Connecticut Department of Labor, occupations with significant projected growth include Registered Nurses (+8.3%), Medical Assistants (+16.7%), Home Health and Personal Care Aides (+32.4%); and Dental Assistants (+8%). By supporting employees of FQHC, we are delivering on Pillar II of "America's Talent Strategy" by supporting training with clearly identified credentials that are valued in the labor market thereby creating worker mobility.

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.

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 as 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 2-Generational 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 recently piloted a Layoff Aversion WIOA Rapid Response program in PY24 for Adult, Youth and Dislocated Workers.

Activities included:

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.

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