

USP DRAFT  
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**STATE OF  
CONNECTICUT**

**WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT**

**Unified State Plan**

**DRAFT**

**December 30, 2015**

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**[Note on this DRAFT:** This DRAFT of the State of Connecticut Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Unified State Plan is intended to elicit public comment from interested parties.

It remains intentionally a work-in-progress that will be modified in its final version to address public input received and incorporate updated supporting information prior to submission to the Secretary of Labor.]

## **WIOA State Plan Type – Unified State Plan**

The State of Connecticut has opted to submit a Unified State Plan encompassing the six core programs covered by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) – Adult Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program, Wagner-Peyser Act Program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

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## **BACKGROUND**

Coordination of Connecticut’s planning efforts has been provided by the Connecticut Department of Labor, Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC), in conjunction with: Governor Malloy’s Office, State agencies with administrative responsibility for the core programs under WIOA [Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL), Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), and Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)], local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), and the State Workforce Board - Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC). With CETC’s endorsement, OWC and State and Local partners established four Work Groups in Spring 2015 to allow for a wide variety of stakeholder input into Connecticut’s WIOA planning process. These include:

- Service Design and Delivery Work Group – Focusing on the effective and efficient operations of Connecticut’s American Jobs Centers One-Stop career system.
- Technology, Data, Outcomes Work Group – Addressing the collection and reporting of data across core WIOA programs to support transparent performance accountability.
- Business Engagement Work Group – Proposing actions to promote strong employer-led industry partnerships, sector strategies and career pathways initiatives.
- Administration/Governance Work Group – Responsible for ensuring that requisite administrative policies, agreements, procedures and structures are in place to support and sustain an aligned and integrated statewide workforce system.

Each Work Group is co-led by senior managers from CTDOL and Connecticut’s five WDBs. Work Group participants include designated representatives of key State agency partners and each of the five WDBs. Several CETC members volunteered to participate on the Work Groups as well. Collectively the work groups and State agency partners contributed the specific content comprising this Unified State Plan. In addition, OWC and State Agencies and local WDBs solicited input from businesses, job seekers, Chief Elected Officials, community-based organizations, educators, and philanthropy.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING ELEMENTS

### Economic, Workforce and Workforce Development Activities Analysis

#### Economic Analysis

Connecticut is in the final stages of economic recovery from the recession of 2008 – 2010. The pace of employment growth, moderate and steady since 2010, appears to be quickening. All economic sectors except Information have shown at least some employment growth in the last 12 months. The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) short-term forecast for employment growth through 2016 projects a modest annual growth rate of 0.7%, while more recent data indicates the economy is creating jobs at a faster pace. Incomes have been slow to recover since the recession. Some of this is due to the natural demographic phenomena of relatively well-paid retirees being replaced by younger age cohorts who are early in their earnings path. The income growth challenge is also impacted by the fact that some of the fastest growing segments in the economy recently have been in traditionally low-paying fields.

#### Overview of Economic Conditions and Trends

Review of economic data and labor market information recently developed by the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) (*Labor Situation*, September 2015) and jointly by CTDOL and the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) (*The Connecticut Economic Digest*, November 2015) suggests positive trends in state economic and employment growth.

Highlights include:

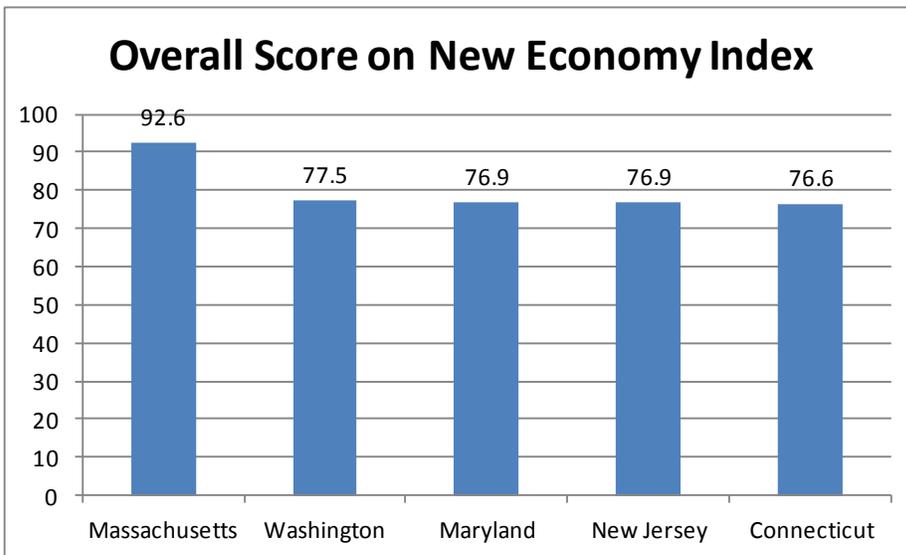
- Connecticut's real state gross domestic product, the broadest measure of the state's economic health, increased 0.6% in 2014.
- Connecticut's nonfarm employment increased by 26,800 positions in the past year, to a level of 1,699,700 jobs.
- Connecticut has recovered 105,700 jobs, or 88.8% of the 119,000 seasonally adjusted total nonfarm jobs lost during the March 2008-February 2010 employment recession. The state's jobs recovery is now 69 months old, averaging approximately 1,532 new jobs per month since February 2010.
- Private sector job recovery has been faster, approximately 1,643 monthly, regaining 101.6% (113,400) of the 111,600 private sector jobs lost during the employment downturn. Connecticut needs to add 19,500 more nonfarm jobs to reach the full employment level of 1,713,000 jobs, including 6,300 more private sector jobs fully restore that sector
- The state's labor force is down 3,400 in the past year, November 2014 – November 2015.
- The state's unemployment rate was estimated at 5.1% (seasonally adjusted), nearly matching the national rate of 5.0%, after peaking at 9.4% in 2010, and hovering around 8% in 2013. This is a significant decline from the 6.3% rate in September 2014, and more than two full points lower than the 7.4% rate in December 2013. Connecticut's unemployment rate has not been this low since April 2008.
- The number of unemployed Connecticut residents fell by 23,200 in the past year (November 2014 – November 2015), down 19.4%.
- Of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) ten industry "supersectors", all except for Manufacturing, Financial Activities, and Government have added jobs since the recovery began.

- Average hourly earnings in Connecticut increased to \$29.82 (not seasonally adjusted), up 4.0% from November 2014. Resulting private sector average weekly pay is \$1,010.09, up 3.1% from November 2014.
- Personal income in the first quarter of 2016 is expected to increase by 2.2% from the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2015 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2016. New England Economic Partnership (NEEP) is forecasting a 4% increase in calendar year 2016 from calendar year 2015. Latest data show a 1.3% quarterly increase in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2015. Increases in personal disposable income indicate stronger growth in consumer spending, which can lead to additional gains across the economy.
- NEEP forecasts a gain of approximately 24,000 jobs in 2016.
- Continued growth of the state economy is anticipated in 2016.

### **Competitiveness**

In *2010 State New Economy Index: Benchmarking Economic Transformation in the States*, (produced by the Information Technology & Innovation Foundation), the 50 states are ranked across a spectrum of 26 indicators, in five broad categories, used to assess each state’s level of preparedness for the advent of “the new economy”. These major categories include: knowledge jobs; globalization; economic dynamism; transformation to a digital economy; and, technological innovation capacity. **Figure 1** documents that Connecticut ranked 5<sup>th</sup> nationally in 2010, improving from 6<sup>th</sup> place in 2007. While not placing first in any single category in this index, Connecticut ranked second or third on more indicators than any state other than Maryland.

**Figure 1: New Economy Index Overall Score**

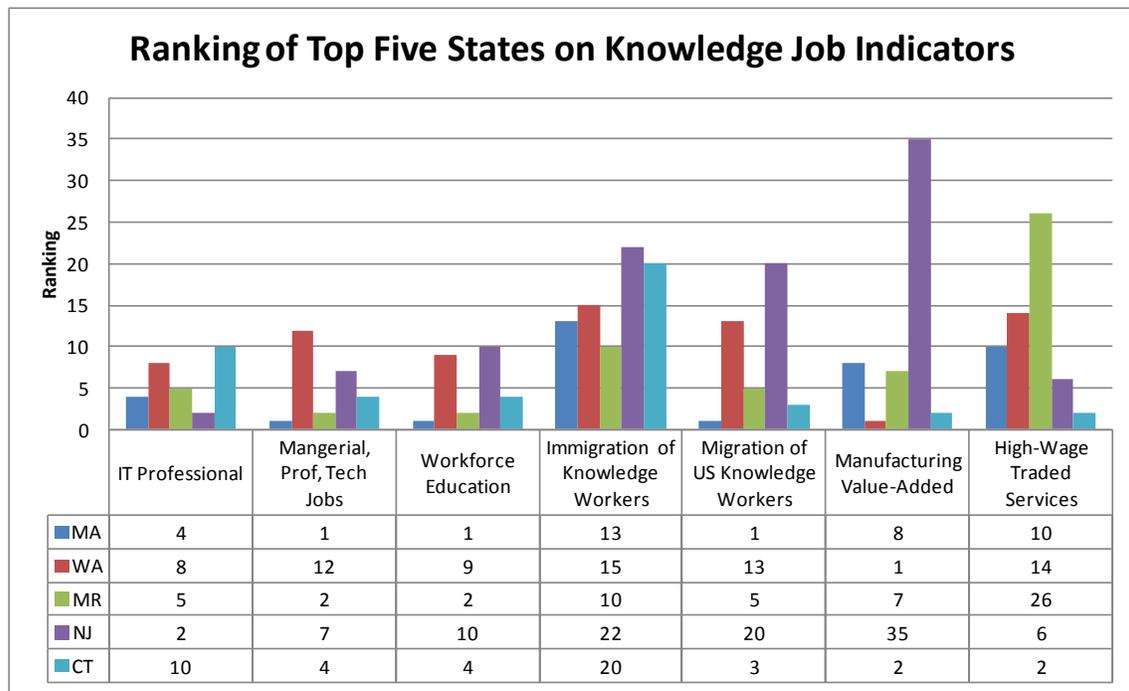


Among the cluster of indicators most closely associated with overall rank in this index is “knowledge jobs”. As documented by **Figure 2** (shorter bar indicates a higher rank), Connecticut ranks second nationally in the knowledge jobs category, which includes average years of education, value added per production hour in manufacturing, proportion of managerial professional and technical jobs, and share of employment in traded service sectors (e.g., insurance, financial services, legal services). The chart shows that Connecticut fares well in each of several areas relevant to overall workforce quality.

**Figure 2: Knowledge Job Ranking for Top Five States**

**Figure 2** compares Connecticut’s mix of the jobs that are important contributors to overall rank in the Knowledge Jobs category to other leading states – “managerial, professional, and technical jobs” and “high-wage trade service” jobs (e.g., financial services, insurance). Connecticut is number two in value-added manufacturing, another area that demands highly skilled workers. The high education level of the Connecticut’s workforce supports these industries’ demand for highly skilled workers and rounds out the knowledge jobs picture.

Another key indicator of economic vitality is per capita GDP, providing a measure of the productivity of Connecticut workers and industries. The higher the GDP per capita, the more efficient the state’s revenue generating capacity. According to the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, since 2007 CT’s per capita GDP has ranked 4<sup>th</sup> nationally. This suggests that relative to most other states Connecticut’s is a highly productive economy, dependent on highly-productive workers.



**Recovery from the Great Recession**

Connecticut’s economic recovery has progressed slower than the nation, but faster than some neighboring states. The trough date of Connecticut’s recession was February 2010. Only recently has Connecticut approached employment levels experienced prior to the recession. As of July 2015, Connecticut is 69 months into recovery. The jobs recovery has occurred across most industries. **Figure 3** displays a year-by-year breakdown of growth in nonfarm employment since the trough, providing a better idea of how each industry has shaped the state’s current situation. **Figure 4** portrays how each industry was positioned during each year of the recovery.

The first year of recovery (2011) started strongly with an increase of 17,100 jobs. Momentum has slowly tapered off each subsequent year. From 2013 to 2014, Connecticut added 12,500 nonfarm jobs, a growth rate of 0.8%.

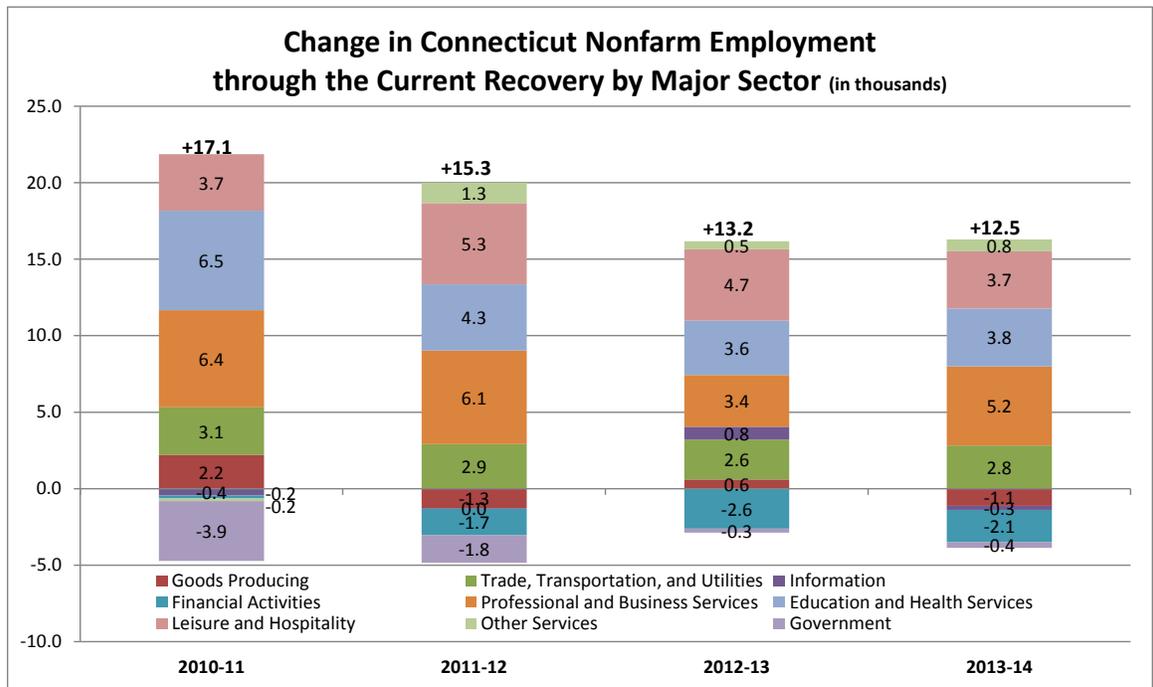
Four major industries have provided steady year-over-year growth throughout the recovery. Leisure and Hospitality experienced the largest yearly average percentage increase at 3%, while Professional and Business Services had the largest average of jobs added each year at 5,300. Education and Health Services experienced an average of 4,500 jobs added each year of the recovery. Trade, Transportation and Utilities is the other sector that has shown consistent growth year-over-year.

**Figure 3: Growth Recovery of Annual Nonfarm Employment (in thousands)**

See Connecticut’s Short-Term Employment Outlook, page 18 (CTDOL Office of Research)  
<http://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/pubs/CTShort-TermEmploymentOutlook.pdf>

Two industries have been a drag on the recovery. Employment levels in Financial Activities and Government have decreased year-over-year. Government started in 2010-2011 with its largest drop of 3,900 jobs, but has had slower losses since, with only 400 from 2013 to 2014. Local Government is the largest subsector in the Government category and includes Indian tribal employment. Financial Activities experienced an opposite trend, losing only 200 jobs the initial year of recovery, but 2,100 in the most recent year-over-year data. On a hopeful note, Financial Activities increased by 2,300 (1.8%) from November 2014 – November 2015.

**Figure 4: Change in CT Nonfarm Employment through Current Recovery by Major Sector**



**Improving Labor Market**

Connecticut is in the fifth year of recovery from the 2008-2010 “great recession”. During that period, Connecticut lost over 5% of its nonfarm employment, roughly 119,000 jobs based on

March 2008-February 2009 the monthly employment statistics. Largest losses occurred in Construction, Manufacturing, Trade, Transportation and Utilities, and the professional and business services sectors, accounting for 79% of jobs lost. Education and health care and social services were the lone sectors able to create jobs during the recession.

As of August 2015, Connecticut had yet to regain all of the nonfarm employment lost in the recession. The 104,900 gain since February 2010 is 88% of the decline. All Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) industry supersectors except Manufacturing, Financial Activities and Government have added jobs since the recovery began. Manufacturing has dropped 2,400 jobs since February 2010, bringing its total loss to 27,300 jobs since the recession hit in March 2008. Financial Activities sector lost 6,600 jobs since the trough year, making a total loss of 14,800 jobs since the peak. Similarly, Government has lost 6,300 jobs since the trough, creating a drop of 14,600 jobs since the peak.

Three supersectors in Connecticut reached or exceeded their 2008 levels. Professional and Business Services lost 14,800 jobs during the recession, but has since gained 21,100 jobs, taking it 6,300 jobs higher than in 2008. Leisure and Hospitality suffered a small dip of 3,800 jobs from 2008 to 2010, but is now 13,600 jobs greater than pre-recession. The sector that has grown the most in recent years is Education and Health Services, which grew by 10,100 jobs while the rest of the economy was in a downfall, and has grown by another 18,100 since 2010.

**Figure 5** shows the annual averages of Connecticut nonfarm employment throughout the current cycle. The table compares employment levels from the peak in 2008, trough in 2010, and most recent complete year of data in 2014, and shows the change in jobs from peak-to-trough, trough-to-recent year, and peak-to-recent year. **Figure 6** highlights Connecticut's major industry sectors and shows how the job share of each has shifted throughout this cycle.

**Figure 5: Nonfarm Employment through the Current Cycle (Annual Averages)**

	Peak Year	Trough Year	Recent Year	Change in Jobs		
	2008	2010	2014	2008-10	2010-14	2008-14
<b>TOTAL NONFARM EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>1,699,000</b>	<b>1,608,000</b>	<b>1,666,100</b>	<b>-91,000</b>	<b>58,100</b>	<b>-32,900</b>
	<b>1,446,500</b>					
<b>TOTAL PRIVATE</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,363,800</b>	<b>1,428,200</b>	<b>-82,700</b>	<b>64,400</b>	<b>-18,300</b>
<b>GOODS PRODUCING INDUSTRIES</b>	<b>252,700</b>	<b>215,400</b>	<b>215,800</b>	<b>-37,300</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>-36,900</b>
<b>CONSTRUCTION, NAT. RES. &amp; MINING</b>	<b>66,100</b>	<b>50,600</b>	<b>56,100</b>	<b>-15,500</b>	<b>5,500</b>	<b>-10,000</b>
<b>MANUFACTURING</b>	<b>186,700</b>	<b>164,800</b>	<b>159,700</b>	<b>-21,900</b>	<b>-5,100</b>	<b>-27,000</b>
<b>Durable Goods</b>	<b>143,500</b>	<b>127,300</b>	<b>124,300</b>	<b>-16,200</b>	<b>-3,000</b>	<b>-19,200</b>
Fabricated Metal	33,100	28,100	29,800	-5,000	1,700	-3,300
Machinery	17,700	15,000	13,900	-2,700	-1,100	-3,800
Computer and Electronic Product	14,200	13,300	12,500	-900	-800	-1,700
Transportation Equipment	44,300	42,200	40,100	-2,100	-2,100	-4,200
Aerospace Product and Parts	32,400	30,500	27,700	-1,900	-2,800	-4,700
<b>Non-Durable Goods</b>	<b>43,200</b>	<b>37,500</b>	<b>35,400</b>	<b>-5,700</b>	<b>-2,100</b>	<b>-7,800</b>
Chemical	13,800	11,800	10,200	-2,000	-1,600	-3,600
	<b>1,446,300</b>					
<b>SERVICE PROVIDING INDUSTRIES</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,392,600</b>	<b>1,450,300</b>	<b>-53,700</b>	<b>57,700</b>	<b>4,000</b>
<b>TRADE, TRANSPORTATION, UTILITIES</b>	<b>309,900</b>	<b>289,800</b>	<b>301,300</b>	<b>-20,100</b>	<b>11,500</b>	<b>-8,600</b>
Wholesale Trade	69,200	62,700	63,000	-6,500	300	-6,200

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Retail Trade	188,100	178,200	185,600	-9,900	7,400	-2,500
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	21,200	19,200	20,900	-2,000	1,700	-300
Building Material	15,600	14,100	15,300	-1,500	1,200	-300
Food and Beverage Stores	41,700	42,100	44,700	400	2,600	3,000
General Merchandise Stores	27,100	27,500	28,600	400	1,100	1,500
Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities	52,700	48,900	52,600	-3,800	3,700	-100
Utilities	8,700	7,900	7,400	-800	-500	-1,300
Transportation and Warehousing	44,000	41,000	45,300	-3,000	4,300	1,300
<b>INFORMATION</b>	<b>37,800</b>	<b>31,700</b>	<b>31,800</b>	<b>-6,100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-6,000</b>
Telecommunications	13,000	10,200	9,100	-2,800	-1,100	-3,900
<b>FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>143,400</b>	<b>135,200</b>	<b>128,600</b>	<b>-8,200</b>	<b>-6,600</b>	<b>-14,800</b>
Finance and Insurance	122,900	116,300	109,400	-6,600	-6,900	-13,500
Credit Intermediation	29,700	27,000	26,300	-2,700	-700	-3,400
Securities and Commodity Contracts	26,500	26,300	25,400	-200	-900	-1,100
Insurance Carriers & Related Activities	65,500	61,700	57,700	-3,800	-4,000	-7,800
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	20,500	18,900	19,300	-1,600	400	-1,200
<b>PROFESSIONAL &amp; BUSINESS SERVICES</b>	<b>205,500</b>	<b>190,700</b>	<b>211,800</b>	<b>-14,800</b>	<b>21,100</b>	<b>6,300</b>
Professional, Scientific	93,200	86,700	95,400	-6,500	8,700	2,200
Legal Services	14,000	13,100	13,000	-900	-100	-1,000
Computer Systems Design	22,000	21,100	25,600	-900	4,500	3,600
Management of Companies	26,700	26,300	30,600	-400	4,300	3,900
Administrative and Support	85,600	77,700	85,800	-7,900	8,100	200
Employment Services	28,800	24,700	28,100	-4,100	3,400	-700
<b>EDUCATION AND HEALTH SERVICES</b>	<b>296,800</b>	<b>306,900</b>	<b>325,000</b>	<b>10,100</b>	<b>18,100</b>	<b>28,200</b>
Educational Services	57,200	59,200	63,500	2,000	4,300	6,300
Health Care and Social Assistance	239,600	247,700	261,500	8,100	13,800	21,900
Hospitals	60,000	61,000	59,300	1,000	-1,700	-700
Nursing & Residential Care Facilities	60,000	61,300	62,700	1,300	1,400	2,700
Social Assistance	43,000	45,600	52,800	2,600	7,200	9,800
<b>LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY</b>	<b>137,400</b>	<b>133,600</b>	<b>151,000</b>	<b>-3,800</b>	<b>17,400</b>	<b>13,600</b>
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	24,200	23,600	26,600	-600	3,000	2,400
Accommodation and Food Services	113,200	110,000	124,400	-3,200	14,400	11,200
Food Serv., Restaurants, Drinking Places	100,900	99,200	112,700	-1,700	13,500	11,800
<b>OTHER SERVICES</b>	<b>63,100</b>	<b>60,500</b>	<b>63,000</b>	<b>-2,600</b>	<b>2,500</b>	<b>-100</b>
<b>GOVERNMENT</b>	<b>252,500</b>	<b>244,200</b>	<b>237,900</b>	<b>-8,300</b>	<b>-6,300</b>	<b>-14,600</b>
Federal Government	19,500	19,700	17,400	200	-2,300	-2,100
State Government	70,200	67,400	67,000	-2,800	-400	-3,200
Local Government**	162,800	157,100	153,400	-5,700	-3,700	-9,400

\*\*Includes Indian tribal government employment  
Detail may not add to total due to rounding.  
Source: B.L.S. Current Employment Statistics

**Figure 6: Nonfarm Employment through Current Cycle by Major Sector (as percentages)**

	Peak Year	Trough Year	Recent Year	Change in Job Share
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	2008	2010	2014	2008-10	2010-14	2008-14
<b>Total Nonfarm</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>			
Goods Producing	14.9	13.4	13.0	-1.5	-0.4	-1.9
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	18.2	18.0	18.1	-0.2	0.1	-0.2
Information	2.2	2.0	1.9	-0.2	-0.1	-0.3
Financial Activities	8.4	8.4	7.7	0.0	-0.7	-0.7
Professional and Business Services	12.1	11.9	12.7	-0.2	0.8	0.6
Education and Health Services	17.5	19.1	19.5	1.6	0.4	2.0
Leisure and Hospitality	8.1	8.3	9.1	0.2	0.8	1.0
Other Services	3.7	3.8	3.8	0.1	0.0	0.1
Government	14.9	15.2	14.3	0.3	-0.9	-0.6

### **Uneven Recovery**

Despite lower unemployment, the recovery has left behind many residents, including people of color, young workers, those paid low wages, and many with low levels of education. These trends contributed to record levels of child poverty and made it more difficult for families to afford basic needs. Connecticut's job recovery is relatively weak. Although unemployment has fallen significantly, at 5.2% it remains higher than pre-Great Recession rates. Connecticut is nearly 20,000 jobs short of full recovery and the rate of job growth continues to trail the national average, as it has consistently for the past 25 years. The state economy has struggled to recover and retain high-paying jobs, with job growth concentrated in industries and occupations that typically pay lower wages.

Employment opportunities differ by education, community, race/ethnicity, and age. Unemployment rates are higher in urban centers, including Bridgeport (10%), Hartford (12.1%) and Waterbury (9.5%). Unemployment for Black residents (13.1%) is more than double the rate for Whites (5.1%). Workers with lower education levels experienced a steeper decline in their rate of employment. In 2014, the youth unemployment rate of 12.1% roughly doubled the rate for older workers.

Wage stagnation and disparity are a feature of the state's economy. If Connecticut's wage growth had kept pace with productivity since 1979, the average worker would have made a median hourly wage of \$35.24 in 2013, compared with the actual average wage of \$20.46. Workers of color in Connecticut receive a median hourly wage that is, on average, \$7.25 to \$8.00 lower than that of White workers. Between 1979 and 2014, earners at the top 10% enjoyed a raise of over 45%, from \$33.17 to \$48.17 an hour, while those at the bottom 10% saw real wages fall by \$0.26 per hour.

Improving labor force measures vary by age and race/ethnicity. Since 2013, Connecticut's labor force participation rate has rebounded at a higher rate than that of similar states. Yet the percentage of workers ages 25-54 participating in the labor force continues to sink even lower than pre-recession levels for people of color.

## **Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations**

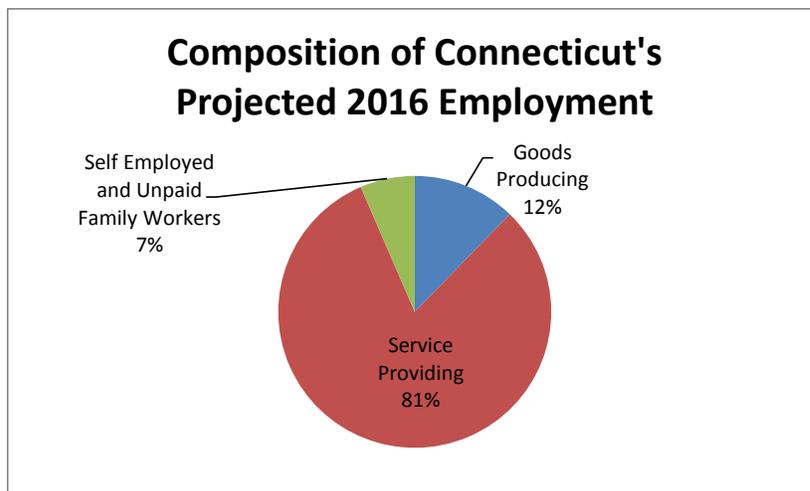
### **Short-Term Employment Projections by Industry: 2014-2016**

Current short-term employment projections developed by the Connecticut Department of Labor’s Office of Research for the two-year period 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2014 - 3<sup>rd</sup> third quarter 2016 are presented in **Figure 7**. Connecticut is expected to continue its rebound from the recent recession over that period. The anticipated average annual growth rate is 0.7%, bringing the employment level to 1,823,049 by third quarter 2016.

Goods producing industries are expected to contract at an annual average rate of 0.6% over the two-year period. The largest contributor to that decline is Manufacturing, expected to contract by 5,454 jobs. Construction has a bright outlook, projected to grow on average 2.2% annually.

Connecticut’s significantly larger service providing industries are forecasted to grow 0.9% on an annual average basis. **Figure 8** shows the extent to which service providing industries make up Connecticut’s employment. Projected growth is largely aided by Education and Health Services, expected to grow 1.4% annually, consistent with recent trends. Other sectors contributing significantly to anticipated employment growth are: Trade, Transportation and utilities; professional and business services; and, Leisure and Hospitality. Information, Financial Activities, and Government are likely to shrink over the next two years.

**Figure 7: Composition of Connecticut’s Projected 2016 Employment**



**Figure 8:**

Industry	2014 Employment	2016 Projected Employment	Avg. Annual Growth Rate (%)
<b>Total All Industries</b>	<b>1,799,082</b>	<b>1,823,049</b>	<b>0.7</b>
<b>Goods Producing</b>	<b>226,341</b>	<b>223,520</b>	<b>-0.6</b>
Natural Resources and Mining	7,098	7,100	0.0
Construction	59,611	62,242	2.2
Manufacturing	159,632	154,178	-1.7
<b>Service Providing</b>	<b>1,455,087</b>	<b>1,481,366</b>	<b>0.9</b>
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	296,252	299,374	0.5
Information	32,050	31,959	-0.1
Financial Activities	129,566	128,322	-0.5

Professional and Business Services	214,718	220,389	1.3
Education and Health Services	446,494	458,814	1.4
Leisure and Hospitality	171,027	177,329	1.8
Other Services (except Government)	76,000	76,419	0.3
Government	88,980	88,760	-0.1

### **Short-Term Employment Forecast by Occupations: 2014-2016**

Connecticut's 2014-2016 employment is expected to grow by nearly 24,000 jobs. **Figure 9** presents these projections by major occupational category. Major categories with the largest anticipated employment change are: Food Preparation and Serving Related; Education, Training and Library; Personal Care and Service; and, Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance occupations. **Figure 10** and **Figure 11** identify the fastest growing and fastest shrinking occupations.

**Figure 9:**

Occupation	2014 Employment	2016 Projected Employment	Emp. Change
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,799,082</b>	<b>1,823,049</b>	<b>23,967</b>
Management	135,313	136,335	1,022
Business and Financial Operations	94,899	95,431	532
Computer and Mathematical	47,516	49,165	1,649
Architecture and Engineering	33,787	33,458	-329
Life, Physical, and Social Science	13,203	13,335	132
Community and Social Service	37,911	38,915	1,004
Legal	15,242	15,301	59
Education, Training, and Library	119,293	123,402	4,109
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	36,917	37,196	279
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	105,660	107,205	1,545
Healthcare Support	53,490	54,316	826
Protective Service	35,456	35,855	399
Food Preparation and Serving Related	139,510	144,188	4,678
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	76,989	79,210	2,221
Personal Care and Service	92,842	96,497	3,655
Sales and Related	179,960	180,415	455
Office and Administrative Support	268,983	269,054	71
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	4,676	4,675	-1
Construction and Extraction	58,810	60,639	1,829
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	56,814	57,188	374
Production	96,922	94,801	-2,121
Transportation and Material Moving	94,889	96,468	1,579

**Figure 10: Fastest Growing Occupations by Percentage, by Minor Occupation Group**

Fastest Growing Occupations by percentage, by Minor Occupation Group	2014	2016	% Change
Water Transportation Workers	870	1,014	16.6

Helpers, Construction Trades	1,384	1,461	5.6
Postsecondary Teachers	32,000	33,614	5.0
Other Personal Care and Service Workers	59,223	62,163	5.0
Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapist Assistants and Aides	1,761	1,836	4.3
Entertainment Attendants and Related Workers	6,753	7,020	4.0
Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	11,418	11,857	3.8
Computer Occupations	44,775	46,356	3.5
Food and Beverage Serving Workers	75,408	78,069	3.5
Preschool, Primary, Secondary, and Special Education School Teachers	48,094	49,640	3.2

**Figure 11: Fastest Shrinking Occupations by Percentage, by Minor Occupation Group**

<b>Fasting Shrinking Occupations by percentage, by Minor Occupation Group</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Printing Workers	2,982	2,722	-8.7
Communications Equipment Operators	1,589	1,532	-3.6
Supervisors of Production Workers	8,081	7,851	-2.9
Plant and System Operators	2,415	2,355	-2.5
Other Production Occupations	23,595	23,023	-2.4
Religious Workers	2,848	2,784	-2.3
Assemblers and Fabricators	21,198	20,744	-2.1
Drafters, Engineering Technicians, and Mapping Technicians	8,578	8,396	-2.1
Metal Workers and Plastic Workers	28,398	27,798	-2.1
Material Recording, Scheduling, Dispatching, and Distributing Workers	42,513	41,984	-1.2

## Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

### Long-Range Employment Projections by Industry: 2012-2022

Every two years, the Connecticut Department of Labor Office of Research forecasts ten-year employment by industry and occupation using national projections produced by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Current projections are for 2012-2022, assuming a full-employment economy by 2022. The long-range industry projections are produced with the assumption that the economy will have full employment at the end of the projection period because predicting the timing of the business cycle over a ten-year period is difficult, if not impossible.

The largest sector, expected to add the most jobs over the next ten years, is Health Care. Driven by Connecticut's rapidly aging population, employment is projected to grow by nearly 40,000 jobs by 2022. Most of that growth is expected in Ambulatory Care settings – offices of practitioners and outpatient centers. Home health care services are also expected to add employment. Hospitals and Assisted Living Facilities are expected to grow while employment at Skilled Nursing Facilities (nursing homes) is expected to remain flat.

Educational Services is projected to add almost 18,000 jobs over the next ten years, the second largest sector in terms of job growth, as elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities (public and private) are expected to add employment. This is a smaller increase than experienced over the past 10 years, driven by slower projected growth in school-aged population.

Close behind education, in a turnaround from the previous ten years, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services are projected to add 17,500 jobs, with the largest gain in the Computer Systems Design industry. Similar to national projections, Management Consulting, Accounting, and Architectural and Engineering Services are projected to grow strongly.

Most other sectors are expected to add jobs over the next ten years. Construction is expected to add over 11,000 jobs after a comparable decline over the past decade, with all major industries in the sector expected to grow strongly. In another major turnaround, Manufacturing is projected to add jobs. While the growth is less than 1% over 10 years, this follows a decline exceeding 40,000 jobs over the prior decade. Growth is uneven – with some manufacturing industries growing while others contract. The low number of job openings might suggest that manufacturing is less important than other, larger sectors. However, Connecticut ranks number two nationally in the “Value Added Manufacturing” area. The New Economy report from ITIF notes that although manufacturing produces a relatively small number of annual job openings, high value-added advanced manufacturing is particularly crucial to the success of Connecticut’s future competitiveness and economic growth.

Two sectors expected to decline are Information, and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, although declines will be significantly smaller than the prior decade. Newspaper publishing is the main contributor to the Information decline, while increased competition from other states for Connecticut’s casino business will cause declines in the Entertainment sector.

This sector analysis fails to document the dynamic aspects of the state’s economy, forces with the potential to become new engines of economic strength. According to the New Economy Index report cited earlier, Connecticut ranks 5<sup>th</sup> on the Deloitte Technology Fast 500 measure of Inc. 500 firms as a proportion of all businesses in the state. This high ranking demonstrates the vitality of the state’s entrepreneurial environment and promise for business growth and new jobs creation. Recent state investments in bioscience and life science reinforce this strength.

Collectively this information lays out the challenge. Connecticut’s entrepreneurial sector will need skilled, creative employees for these new businesses to grow. Manufacturing needs workers with higher skill levels (especially STEM skills) who also must be creative problem solvers. Healthcare and Education will continue to demand skilled workers, especially those with strong STEM skills. Connecticut will maintain its competitive edge and critically important high-skill, high-value, good-paying jobs and career opportunities by meeting the talent demands of these key industry sectors. The bottom line is that Connecticut needs a highly-skilled workforce to fill a diverse array of high value-added jobs in key industries critical to the state’s economic growth that will generate many job openings for the foreseeable future.

### **Anticipated Occupations in Demand**

Consistent with these industry projections, the largest employment increases are anticipated in Healthcare, Education and Personal Care categories. Registered Nurses, Physical Therapists, Home Health Aids, Personal Care Aides and Teachers (at all levels) are all projected to grow significantly over the next ten years. Office and Administrative Support, Management, Food Preparation and Serving, Business and Financial Operations, Construction and Extraction, and Sales occupations are all expected to add thousands of new jobs.

In addition to growth through creation of new jobs, the preceding projections include estimated openings due to replacement of workers who will retire or move on to new jobs. Occupations with most openings – Retail Salespersons, Cashiers, Waiters/Waitresses, Food Preparation and Serving workers – are those with high replacement needs. While some workers make productive careers in these occupations, for many these jobs are held for a few years before the worker moves on. Interestingly, the increased demand for health care workers is such that Registered Nurse, a career-oriented occupation, is fifth in terms of total openings.

## **Priority Industry Sectors**

The Malloy administration has targeted a core group of industry sectors expected to drive economic growth over the next decade: aerospace and advanced manufacturing, bioscience/life-sciences, insurance/financial services, and several emerging industries including bio-medical research, digital media and entertainment, green/sustainable technology, medical device production and high-tech manufacturing. These sectors typically include high value-added businesses that require ready access to a deep and continuous pool of high-skilled, well-educated, extremely productive talent as their lifeblood of success. Worker productivity in Connecticut must be at the highest level to maintain the state's competitive advantage.

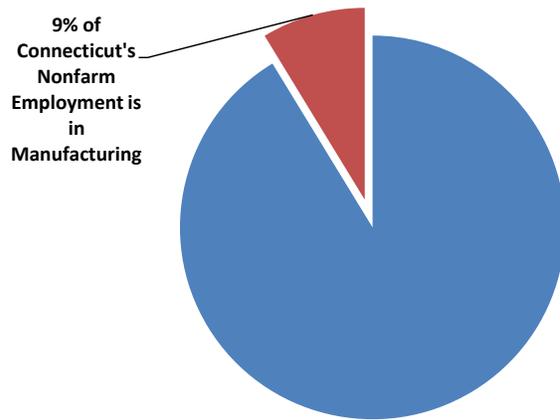
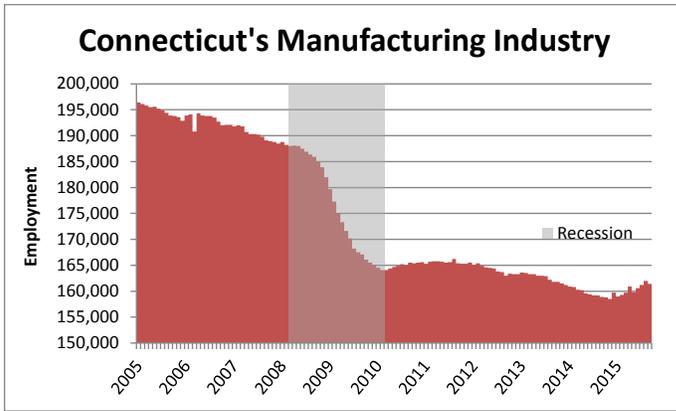
In addition, Connecticut's five regional WDBs have identified industry sectors of strategic importance at the regional level, where industry partnerships and sector-focused initiatives have been developed to focus on critical workforce supply/demand priorities.

Following is a brief overview highlighting selected information about key industry sectors that serve as a strategic focus for much of Connecticut's workforce development efforts. Information was derived from labor market data available through the Connecticut Department of Labor Office of Research and other public sources.

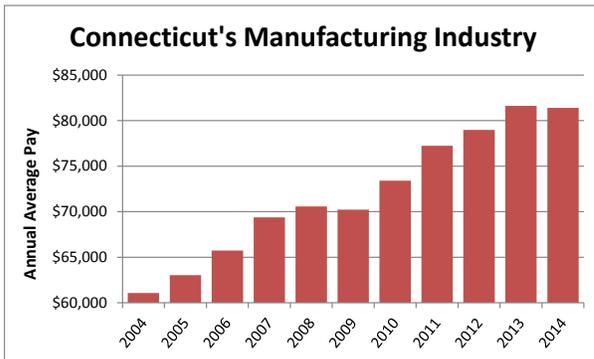
### **Manufacturing in Connecticut**

Manufacturing is a significant component of and contributor to Connecticut's economy. As the nation's 18<sup>th</sup> most intensive manufacturing state [U.S. Bureau of the Census], aerospace and defense manufacturing has a location quotient of 6.86, a proportion of manufacturing jobs approximately 6.86 times more than the national rate [Deloitte Consulting 2009 Report: *Examining Advanced Manufacturing in a Networked World*]. More than half of the top 100 companies headquartered here are manufacturers [CBIA – Manufacturing; Vital to Connecticut's Future]. Manufacturing accounts for almost \$25 billion (11.4%) of Connecticut's gross state product [U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis].

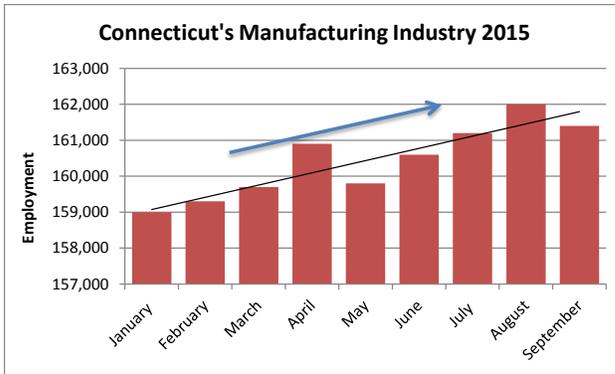
According to the Connecticut Department of Labor, the employment level for Connecticut's manufacturing industry currently is at 161,800 workers, representing 9.5% of Connecticut's non-farm employment, and 11.1% of Connecticut's private-sector payroll.



Manufacturing wages in Connecticut have grown 33% in the past ten years.



Manufacturing has shown promising growth in 2015.

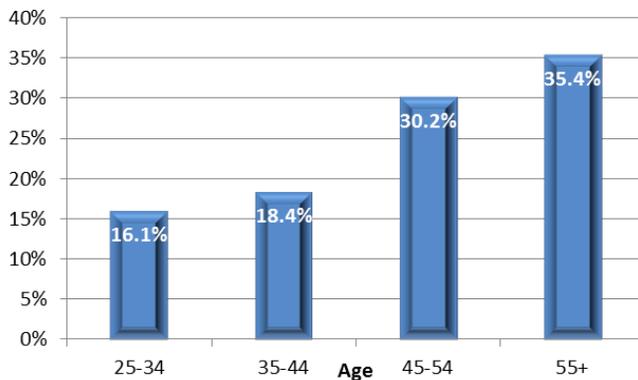


Manufacturing exports account for more than 90% of all Connecticut exports, in products including transportation equipment, industrial machinery, fabricated metal, electronic equipment, chemicals and food products [National Association of Manufacturers]. Major Connecticut manufacturers will experience significant growth over the next decade. Pratt and Whitney is in the process of transforming production operations and those of its supply chain of small/medium manufacturers in preparation for the imminent ramp-up in orders for the F135 jet engine program and PurePower Geared Turbofan engine for Airbus. The U.S. Navy recently awarded Electric Boat \$17.6 billion for construction and delivery of the next block of Virginia Class Submarines. Despite uncertainties in federal defense spending, Electric Boat’s submarine and undersea production efforts are anticipated to grow and its business outlook is strong.

Labor economists project consistent employment in Connecticut manufacturing over the next decade, forecasting a modest increase of 1,300 manufacturing jobs, reflecting improved efficiencies in design and innovative production technologies and processes. As a rapidly aging skilled manufacturing workforce reaches retirement and leaves the workplace, and as major companies experience surges in defense and commercial contracts, a wide array of manufacturing jobs and career opportunities will become available for skilled workers in respective supply chains. The “graying” of Connecticut’s manufacturing workforce necessitates developing an effective talent pipeline of skilled young workers. Forty-seven percent of Tool and Die Makers and 36% of Machinists are aged 55 and over.

Training workers to replace experienced retirees will be a major strategic focus.

**Age Distribution of Manufacturing Workers in CT**



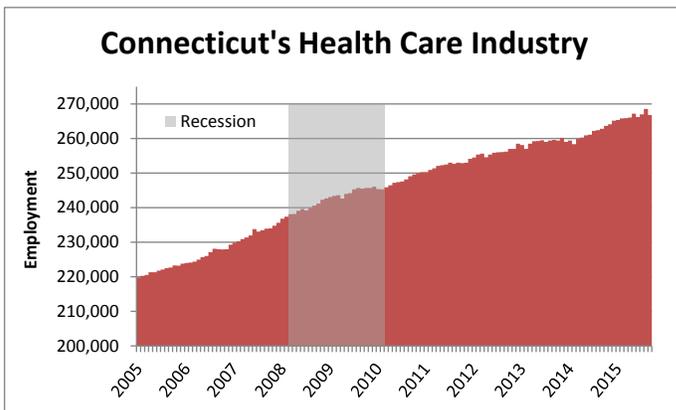
Manufacturing jobs will be available across a spectrum of occupations and skill requirements, ranging from entry-level production workers to highly technical specialized engineering jobs

requiring advanced education and training. Machinists are expected to have the most annual openings from 2014-19. Over the next decade, manufacturing in Connecticut will have a significant number of vital middle-skill jobs to be filled, usually requiring post-secondary education and/or training. Concurrently, in the near-term, recent surveys indicate that manufacturers are particularly concerned about filling skilled production jobs that typically require 5-7 years direct, hands-on, relevant workplace experience.

<b>Top Manufacturing Occupations</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Machinists	8,201	8,922	9
Team Assemblers	8,032	7,804	-3
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	6,541	6,443	-2
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	6,271	6,740	7
Mechanical Engineers	5,297	5,535	4
General and Operations Managers	4,472	4,479	0
Industrial Engineers	3,159	3,273	4
Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks	2,667	2,613	-2
Industrial Production Managers	2,588	2,546	-2
Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal and Plastic	2,523	2,937	16

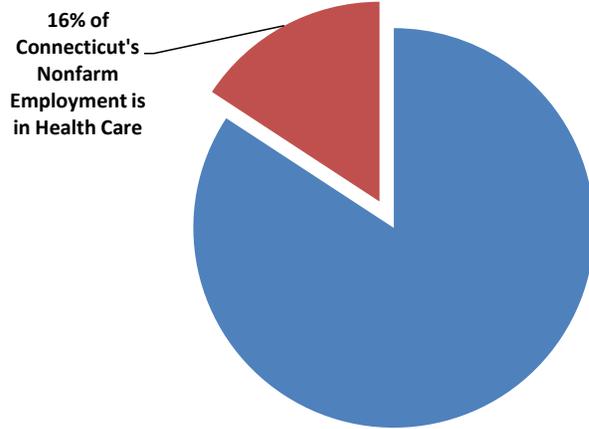
### **Health Care in Connecticut**

The healthcare workforce is one of Connecticut’s largest. According to CTDOL, the employment level for Health Care and Social Assistance is at 268,000 as of November 2015.

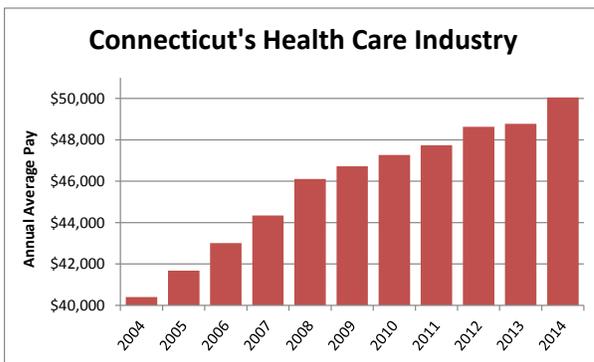


Health Care and Social Assistance is growing steadily, comprising 16% of Connecticut’s non-farm employment. CTDOL projects a steady rise in overall health-related employment, increasing by 2020 to 325,928.

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Healthcare wages in Connecticut have grown 24% in the past ten years.



Healthcare jobs range from entry-level positions requiring a high school diploma and some technical training to professions requiring advanced degrees. Employers report particular need for professionals with middle-skills and relevant experience. For instance, health information technology is an area expected to grow over the next 3-5 years with the emphasis on electronic health records and medical billing and coding. Demand for registered nurses and physicians continues to grow with the industry's increasing demand for primary care, while demand for entry-level direct care workers needed to provide services in home and community settings also continues to rise. The simultaneous aging of Connecticut's general population and its healthcare workforce, and the increasing complexity of health-related conditions will impact these demands. Although online postings for Registered Nurses have declined over the past year it remains a high demand occupation. Largest growth is expected for Personal Care Assistants, with other high growth occupations to include Home Health Aides and Medical Assistants.

The following table displays the top Health Care and Social Assistance employing occupations in Connecticut. All twenty of the occupations listed are projected to grow steadily.

Top Employing Occupations	2012	2022	% Change
Registered Nurses	30,835	35,864	16
Nursing Assistants	21,743	22,552	4
Personal Care Aides	19,731	27,316	38
Home Health Aides	7,956	11,019	39
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	7,799	9,334	20

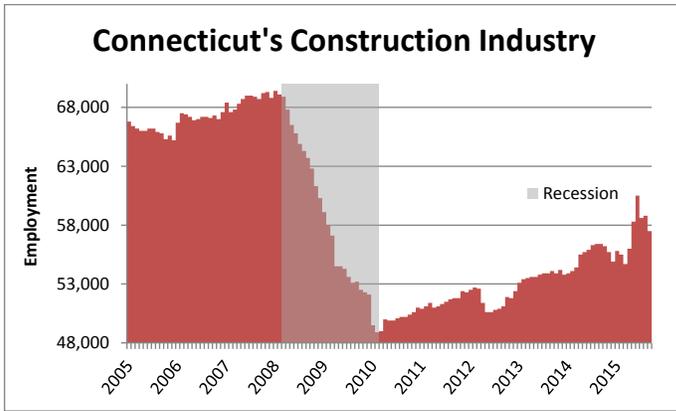
Childcare Workers	7,361	8,540	16
Medical Assistants	6,978	8,933	28
Receptionists and Information Clerks	6,663	8,100	22
Social and Human Service Assistants	6,400	7,946	24
First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	5,922	7,214	22
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	5,633	6,499	15
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	5,370	6,189	15
Office Clerks, General	5,287	5,606	6
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	4,302	4,907	14
Medical Secretaries	4,104	5,399	32
Dental Assistants	4,085	4,425	8
Medical and Health Services Managers	3,933	4,770	21
Dental Hygienists	3,620	4,168	15
Physical Therapists	3,567	4,669	31
Physicians and Surgeons, All Other	2,943	3,546	20

Connecticut’s aging population will impact the state’s healthcare-related workforce and projected job openings, requiring increased services, such as nursing and residential care. Connecticut ranked second nationally in percentage of population aged 65 and over, and 90 and over [Connecticut Department of Social Services. 2013. *Strategic Rebalancing Plan: A Plan to Rebalance Long Term Services and Supports 2013-2015*]. This trend alone will affect both the demand and supply of health-care employment in the next decade. Growth in long-term services and supports will shift delivery of care from residential facilities to community-based services, redistributing the workforce from skilled nursing facilities to home care agencies. Increases in the rates of chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension will increase demand for ambulatory care and hospitalizations. All of these changes will require a Connecticut healthcare workforce with strong interpersonal and technical skills as well as hands-on knowledge learned both in the classroom and on the job.

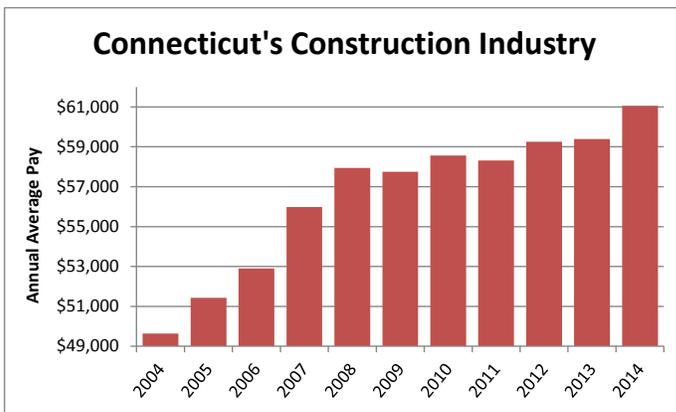
The age of Connecticut’s healthcare workforce is another compounding factor. The state’s aging population will require more health care services at the same time the healthcare workforce trained to provide that care is also aging rapidly. According to CTDOL, between 2011 and 2013, 25% of Connecticut’s health-related workers were between the ages of 45-54, and 18% were 55-64 [Connecticut Department of Labor, *Connecticut Employment Trends: Focus on Health Care, 2013*]. This “graying” of Connecticut’s healthcare workforce, as in manufacturing, demands preparation and production of skilled new workers both in the short- and long-term.

**Construction/Green Technology in Connecticut**

According to the Connecticut Department of Labor, the construction industry in Connecticut currently employs 57,500 workers as of November 2015. Construction peaked in 2008 and has been slow to recover from the recession. Construction employment grew in the past several years and is expected to have expanded by 7,500 jobs between 2010 and 2022.



Construction wages in Connecticut have grown 33% in the past ten years.



The construction workforce has a relatively young demographic, with 22% of workers aged 55 and over, although some trades are experiencing more age-related attrition. As in other key industries, an aging workforce will create the need for new workers to move into anticipated vacancies in the next 5-10 years. Construction management, telecommunications installers and HVAC mechanics/installers are among construction-related middle-skill jobs projected to grow by 2022. It is also anticipated that there will be a need for skilled laborers.

Although construction jobs generally are not filled as in other sectors, occupations expected to show strong growth from 2014-19 include Electricians, Plumbers, Laborers, and Carpenters.

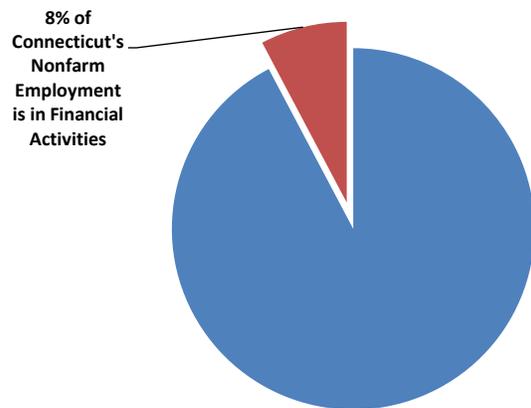
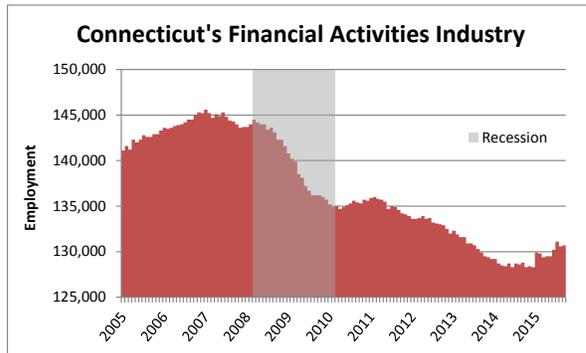
Top Construction Occupations	2012	2022	% Change
Construction Laborers	4,972	6,084	22
Carpenters	4,530	5,468	21
Electricians	4,055	5,223	29
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	2,991	3,743	25
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	2,587	3,388	31
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	1,831	2,227	22
General and Operations Managers	1,749	2,124	21
Construction Managers	1,678	2,102	25
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	1,443	1,884	31

Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	1,420	1,740	23
Painters, Construction and Maintenance	1,271	1,370	8
Cost Estimators	1,148	1,459	27
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,036	1,234	19

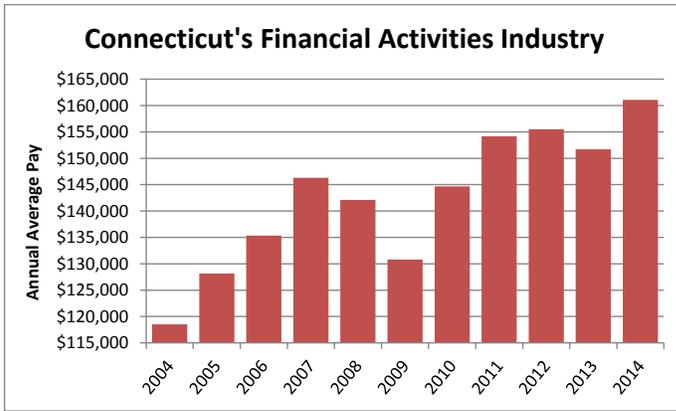
While there is no commonly agreed upon definition of “green industries” or “green technologies”, implementation of Connecticut’s Comprehensive Energy Strategy – with its shift towards natural gas conversion and incentives to increase use of alternative and renewable fuels, energy conservation and efficiency technologies – will likely produce related job opportunities with increased skill requirements for new and incumbent workers.

**Insurance/Financial Services in Connecticut**

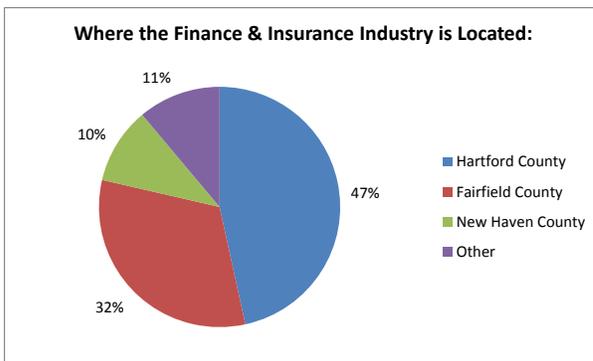
The financial sector continued to lose jobs, even as the rest of the economy recovered both in banking and in Connecticut’s historically important insurance industry. The most recent data suggests that the decline is over, as the industry has added jobs in recent months, and it remains a critically important component of Connecticut’s economy, with an employment level of 130,700 as of November 2015, representing 8% of Connecticut’s nonfarm employment.



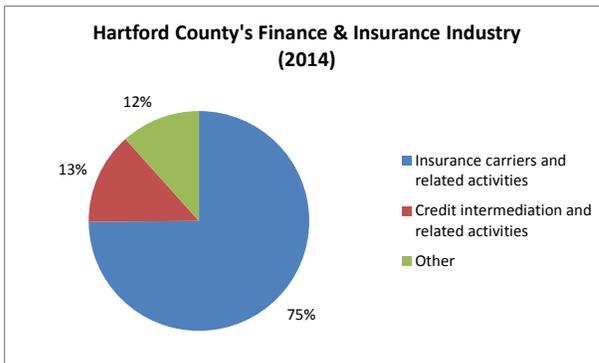
Wages have grown 36% in the past ten years and continue to be the highest in Connecticut.



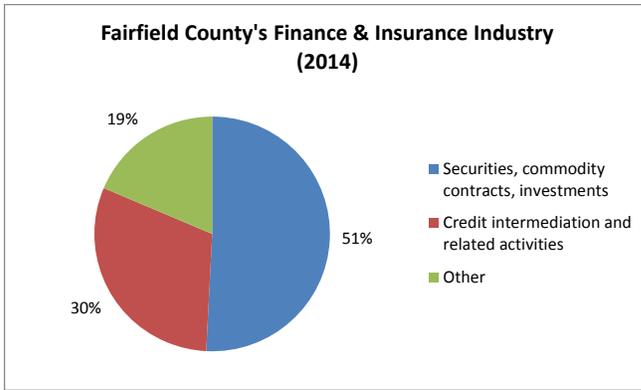
The Finance and Insurance Industry is located primarily in Hartford and Fairfield counties.



Hartford County's Finance and Insurance industry consists mainly of insurance carriers.



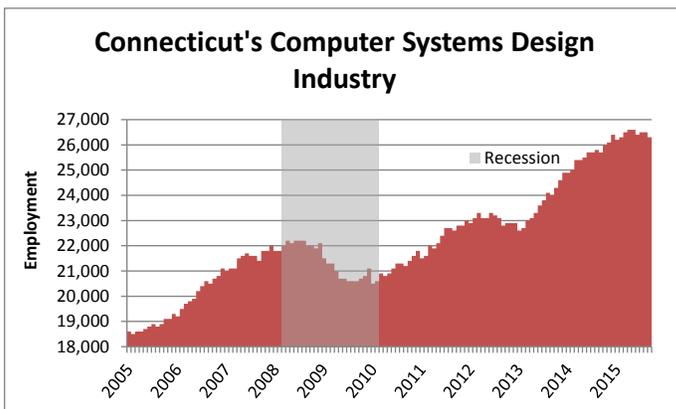
Fairfield County's Finance and Insurance industry is predominantly in securities, commodity contracts and investments.



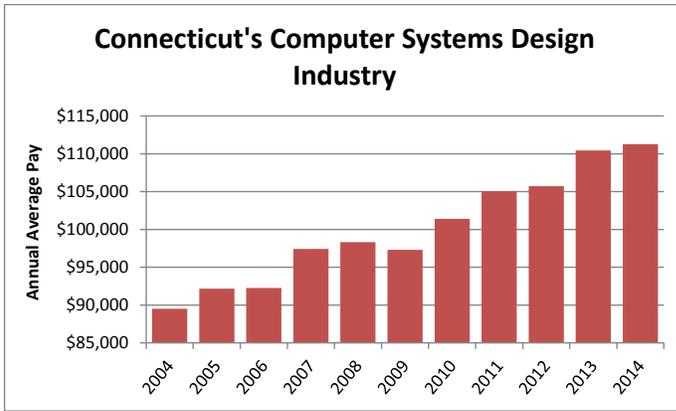
Insurance is a keystone in Connecticut’s economy, with 1,415 insurance entities doing business in the state and 57,734 insurance carrier and related full-time employees in 2014. Connecticut’s insurance industry is one of the world’s largest. At 2.7%, Connecticut ranks first nationally in insurance carrier employment as a percentage of total employment. Connecticut leads the nation in insurance payroll, contributing 5.3% of total state payroll. The insurance industry contributes 5.9%, or \$14.8 billion, to Connecticut’s gross state product (GSP), ranking second nationally on this measure. (Insurance and financial services – excluding real estate – combined comprise 14.2% of Connecticut’s GSP.) Insurance carrier full-time employment decreased by 2,857, or 6.1%, falling from 47,149 workers in 2013 to 44,292 in 2014. Insurance carrier and related (carriers and others) employment also declined, by 2,258, or 2.3% from 2013 to 2014, falling from 59,992 to 57,734. Office and administrative jobs declined the most, by 440 employees, or 3%. At 5.3%, Connecticut ranks first nationally in insurance payroll as a percentage of total payroll. Although employment levels dropped, most occupations saw the average wage increase in their respective occupational category. Connecticut has the highest concentration of actuaries in the country, and third highest annual mean wage for actuaries nationally.

**Information Technology in Connecticut**

The employment level for the Computer Systems Design and Related Services industry in Connecticut is at 26,600 workers as of November 2015.



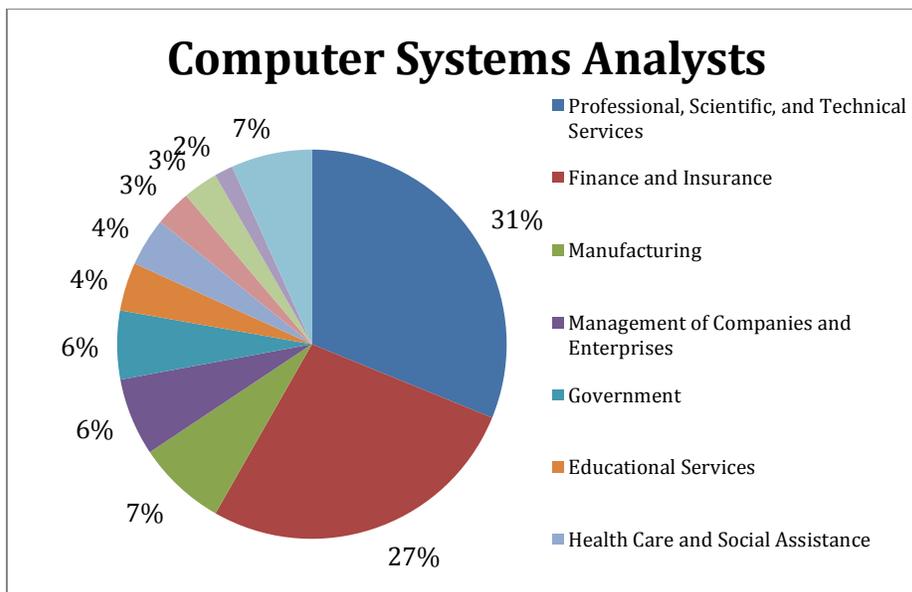
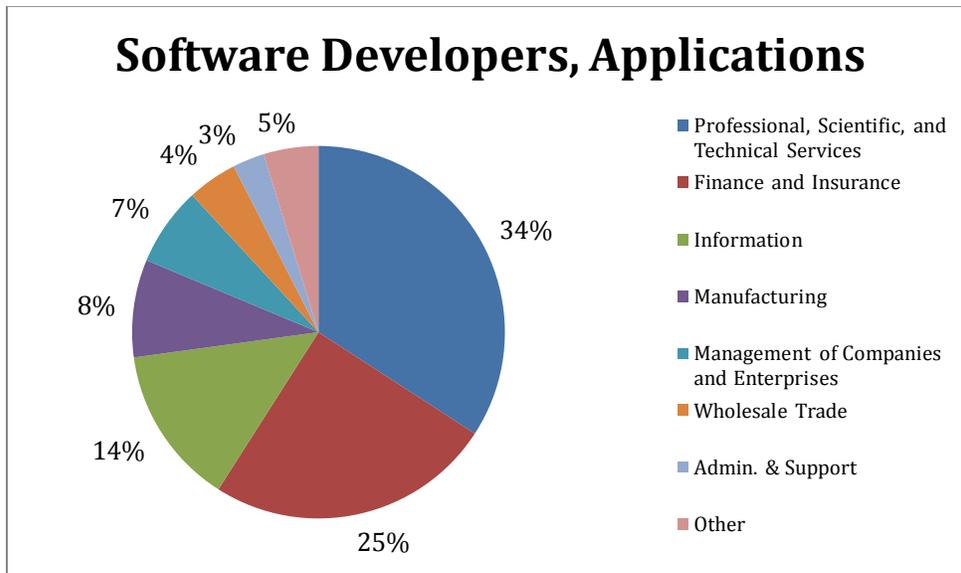
Computer Systems Design is one of the top-paying industries in Connecticut.



The top employing occupations (most requiring a Bachelor’s degree at a minimum) in the Computer Systems Design industry are:

Occupation	2012	2022	% Change
Software Developers, Applications	2,413	3,388	40
Computer Systems Analysts	2,381	3,106	30
Customer Service Representatives	1,799	2,348	31
Software Developers, Systems Software	1,593	2,237	40
Computer User Support Specialists	1,578	2,355	49
Computer Programmers	1,516	1,780	17
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	1,327	1,731	30
Computer and Information Systems Managers	1,194	1,565	31
General and Operations Managers	828	1,080	30
Management Analysts	749	977	30

The following two charts show how widespread information technology occupations are across various industries, using the top two occupations – Software Developer, Applications, and Computer Systems Analyst – as proxies.



## Employers' Needs

### Workforce Demographics

Connecticut's 2014 workforce totaled 1,626,000, having grown by 166,400(9.4%) since 2012. Overall, Connecticut's workforce is aging rapidly, suggesting the importance of strategies both to accommodate and retain older workers who continue to contribute importantly to economic growth while simultaneously accelerating the preparation of skilled younger workers and other populations to move into vacancies to be created by increasing numbers of retirements. Manufacturing employed 164,100 workers in 2014, growing modestly by 1,300 (0.8%) from 2012, with workers who skew much older than the typical Connecticut worker. The major employment challenge in manufacturing is training sufficient qualified workers to replace experienced retirees. Health Care and Social Assistance employed 264,200 in 2014, growing

rapidly by 55,100 from 2012, a 19.9% increase, with an age profile similar to the statewide workforce, fast growth expected due to an aging population requiring increasing services, and a diverse range of professional, technological and support occupations. Construction employed 57,900 in 2014, with rapid growth of 11,800 jobs since 2012, a 22.9% increase, continued fast growth projected, and age distribution similar to the typical Connecticut worker. Finance and Insurance employed 112,100 workers in 2014, an increase of 3,400 (3% from 2012, with modest growth expected and a workforce weighted towards 45-54 year olds, not yet necessarily retirement age. Information employed 36,400 workers in 2014, losing 500 (-1.8%) in the prior two years, with no growth expected, and age distribution weighted towards 45-54, not yet ready to retire. The number and range of job opportunities and age profile in each industry sector suggests different workforce strategies customized to differing realities and trends.

### **Education and Training Requirements**

A significant and growing number of Connecticut jobs require post-secondary education as an entry-level criterion. Two of every three new jobs (66%) created by 2018 will require at least some post-secondary education [*The Basic Economic Security Tables for Connecticut, Wider Opportunities for Women, 2012*]. Jobs with high wages, health benefits and advancement opportunity will be out of reach for workers lacking requisite reading, math and English proficiency needed at that postsecondary level.

CTDOL's Office of Research assigns each occupation a minimum education requirement, based on the minimum education needed to enter the occupation. Particular jobs may have different requirements, but in most cases these will be at or above the minimum requirement for the occupation. Some occupations require related work experience. Additional on-the-job training, apprenticeship or internship may be required to become proficient in the occupation.

The projections show significant new jobs growth anticipated in 2012-2022 in many occupations that require a college degree, professional degree or advanced degree, particularly in Health Care, Education, Finance, and Information Technology, in addition to the need to replace many of these workers who will retire over the next decade.

### **Middle-Skill Jobs**

Not all jobs requiring postsecondary education require a four-year degree. These jobs, typically referred to as "middle-skill jobs", require training beyond high school, but not necessarily a four-year degree. This can include an associate's degree, occupational certification, or an apprenticeship. Some middle-skill openings are newly created due to job growth, others are due to retirements or workers changing jobs in the normal course of their careers. But, like all middle-skill jobs, they are defined by the requirement of a two-year degree or equivalent training as the minimum qualification for employability. In 2012 in Connecticut, 15% of all jobs were low-

skilled, 49% were middle-skill occupations, and 36% were high-skilled. Connecticut appears to have an oversupply of individuals prepared for high-skill jobs (41%) and low-skill jobs (19%), but only 39% of workers had the requisite skills needed to qualify for middle-skill jobs (at a minimum), creating a significant potential middle-skills gap. [National Skills Coalition, Middle Skill Jobs State by State: Connecticut, August 2012]

These middle skills jobs are (and will continue to be) a critical component of Connecticut's economy, representing nearly 40% of all jobs today and in the foreseeable future. These jobs

exist throughout key industries. They provide good wages and often open pathways to career advancement for workers who improve their skills. These middle skill jobs pay at least \$14 dollars an hour and often much more. Preparation requirements for these jobs range from moderate on-the-job training to an associate's degree, in fields as diverse as construction, installation, maintenance, and repair, manufacturing occupations, and service and health occupations.

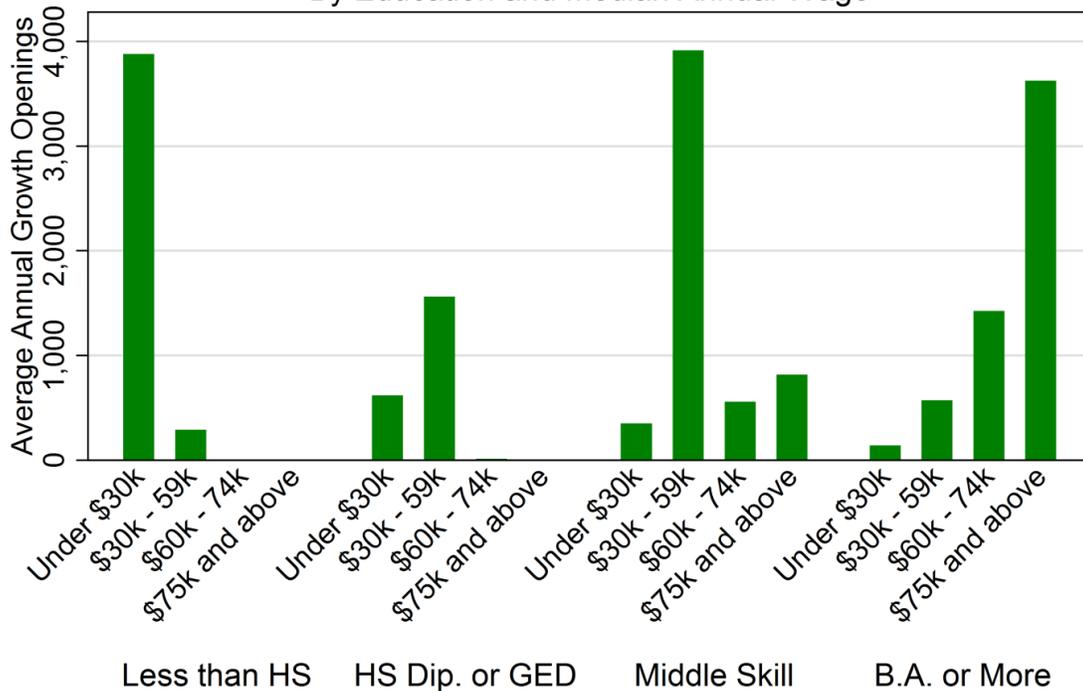
The largest occupation in the middle-skill category is Registered Nurse, since it is possible to become an RN without a Bachelor's Degree, although it is required for many nursing jobs. Other middle-skill occupations projected to grow over the next ten years in Connecticut cover a wide variety of fields including Health Care, Education, Construction and Transportation. Less growth is expected in occupations requiring only a high school diploma, although some growth is anticipated in Childcare, Security, and Clerical occupations. Finally there will be growth in occupations that do not necessarily require a high school diploma, such as Personal Care Aides, Retail Sales Clerk, or Waiter/Waitress. Any particular job within an occupation may have additional requirements, if individual employers decide to require a high school diploma or other credential, even if the expected minimum criterion to enter the occupation is lower.

### **Education and Wages**

These projections suggest that educational attainment remains critical in terms of wages/earnings and prospects for career advancement. While thousands of annual openings are forecasted in occupations requiring a minimum education of less than a high school diploma, the current median annual wage for these occupations is less than \$30,000 (assuming full-year full-time work). By comparison, most of the openings in high-paying occupations (current median annual wage of \$75,000 or higher) require a college, professional or advanced degree. **Figure 13** shows the number of annual growth openings projected for occupations by current median annual wage and minimum education and training requirements. Workers in low-skill/low-paying jobs will have opportunities to increase their incomes by gaining an educational credential to enter a middle-skill occupation, while those able to graduate from college will greatly improve their chances of a high-paying career.

**Figure 13: Annual Growth Openings 2012-2022 – By Education and Median Annual Wage**

## Annual Growth Openings 2012-2022 By Education and Median Annual Wage



### Workforce Analysis

To address the demand for qualified workers in increasingly demanding jobs, Connecticut employers draw from a talent pool that has both a high percentage of well-educated and highly-skilled workers and a significant number of individuals with limitations that must be addressed if they are to compete effectively in the workforce. Of Connecticut’s 2,266,232 residents aged 18-64, 9% (205,558) are without a high school diploma or equivalent, while 26% (585,008) have a high school diploma but lack college experience. [US Census Bureau, 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Projections]

Individuals with limited education face barriers to consistent and rewarding employment, including basic and technical skill deficiencies, limited access to transportation, childcare challenges, etc. While 20% of the state’s population has not acquired the literacy skills necessary to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce, Connecticut’s urban centers are particularly impacted by the widening gap in adult (employment-related) functional literacy. Connecticut’s urban centers have an illiteracy rate of 65%-70%. Less than 10% of the state’s African-American students meet math goals. Only 20% of our 9<sup>th</sup> graders are achieving critical post-secondary credentials and degrees. With an estimated 40% of Connecticut’s future workforce residing in our urban communities and first-ring suburbs, a significant skills gap will emerge in Connecticut if these trends continue, particularly for young and minority residents, negatively impacting worker preparedness and employer competitiveness statewide.

### **Connecticut's Workforce**

Connecticut has a highly educated workforce. Thirty-eight percent of Connecticut's population aged 25 years and older has a college degree, compared to just 30% for the nation as a whole. Ninety percent have at least a high school diploma or GED, compared to 87% for the nation. However, Connecticut has a significant educational achievement gap among population groups. As shown in **Figure 14**, educational attainment is significantly lower for Connecticut's African-American and Hispanic population than for the white non-Hispanic population. This educational achievement gap is of particular concern given the changing nature of Connecticut's workforce. As shown in **Figure 15**, approximately 16% of the Connecticut's labor force aged 45 and over is Black or Hispanic, compared to more than 30% of the labor force aged 25-34.

**Figure 14: Educational Attainment – CT Population Age 25 and Over**

<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>White (Non Hispanic)</b>	<b>Black/African- American</b>	<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>
<b>Connecticut Population age 25 and over</b>				
Less than high school	10%	6%	14%	28%
High school diploma or GED	28%	27%	33%	33%
Some college but less than Bachelor's	25%	25%	31%	22%
Bachelor's Degree or more	38%	42%	21%	17%

Source: American Community Survey 2014 one-year sample.

**Figure 15: Labor Force by Age Group**

<b>Labor Force By Age Group</b>	<b>Less than 25</b>	<b>25 to 34</b>	<b>35 to 44</b>	<b>45 to 54</b>	<b>55 and over</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>White not Hispanic</b>	63%	62%	64%	76%	83%	71%
<b>Black</b>	12%	12%	11%	9%	7%	10%
<b>Hispanic</b>	20%	19%	17%	10%	6%	13%
<b>Other</b>	6%	7%	8%	5%	4%	6%

Source: American Community Survey 2013. IPUMS-USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).

### **Changing Demography – Aging Workers and The Emerging Workforce**

Demographic trends in Connecticut suggest an impending mismatch between employers' needs for well-educated and highly skilled employees and a ready pool of requisite talent. As Connecticut's highly-skilled aging workers retire at an increasing rate, there is an insufficient pipeline of adequately skilled/educated young replacements. This shortfall will have a profound impact in key industry sectors critical to future state economic growth.

In 2010 Connecticut's population was 7<sup>th</sup> oldest in the nation, with a median age of 40. Connecticut's workforce is aging rapidly. The size of our working-age population is projected to begin declining after 2015. As evident from the chart below, the median age of workers in several key industries is very high, especially utilities and manufacturing.

- Population projections forecast the number of retirees (age 65-plus) in Connecticut to increase from 506,000 in 2010, 647,000 in 2020, and 817,000 in 2030. The percentage of the state's population 65 and older will increase from 14% in 2010 to 22% by 2030.

- Over the next ten years a significant percentage of Connecticut's adults are likely to stop working entirely or cut-back significantly on work hours. This trend will accelerate through 2030.

Jobs in these industries typically require significant experience and high skills. Connecticut must be able to fill these openings created by increasing rates of retirement and normal job churn to keep these industries and high-paying jobs in the state.

### **Critical Workforce Segments**

Incumbent Workers: Connecticut's incumbent workers – individuals presently employed – are an important resource for business success. Employers value highly the asset represented by their current employees. As they contemplate ways to increase productivity, assure profitability and grow their businesses, many Connecticut employers look to build the capacity of their current workers. Incumbent worker training is the most effective way to ensure that currently employed workers have the fast-changing skills they need to increase productivity and advance their careers.

Dislocated Workers: Workers at-risk in rapidly changing industries, many of whom are aging and/or have not kept up with increasing skills demands in new workplace technologies and processes valued by employers and essential to remaining productive and competitive. While the number of newly certified dislocated workers in Connecticut is comparably small (2180 in the second quarter of 2012), they are a significant pool of valuable talent – ideal for targeted training in the middle-skill occupations projecting large numbers of openings.

Veterans: Connecticut's recently returned military veterans are a pool of under-utilized talent whose skills and experience should contribute to state economic growth. The state's workforce/talent system has struggled to access these veterans, to assess their transferable skills and get them onto pathways that match them efficiently with viable job opportunities in Connecticut's labor market. Additional coordination among veteran-serving organizations will help to tap this talent pool. A state-level cross-agency plan is currently under development.

Undereducated Adults: Although Connecticut ranks high nationally on educational attainment, it still faces a significant challenge in meeting the needs of undereducated adults. According to the 2014 American Community Survey, Connecticut has a population of 3,596,677 with 2,821,801 adults over the age of eighteen. More than 288,478 individuals, or 9.9% of the adult population, do not have a high school diploma; 103,816 individuals have less than a ninth grade education; and 184,662 have some high school education, but no diploma. At a time when economic and labor trends all point to the importance of education and training for self-sufficiency, the number of undereducated adults in Connecticut approximates its entire K-12 population.

According to the Connecticut State Department of Education's *Connecticut Adult Reporting System* (CARS), in 2014 adult education programs served 24,751 students (10,773 males and 13,978 females), or 11.9% of the total population 18 or older without a high school diploma and 4.4% of the population 18 or older who do not speak English very well. While performance indicators are positive for individuals who attend adult education programs, very few undereducated adults have enrolled in these programs. This disparity, mirrored on the national level, indicates that adult education is critically underutilized by undereducated adults.

According to *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce* (Report of the National Commission on Adult Literacy, June 2008), 70% of Connecticut jobs will require postsecondary education and training by the year 2020. The report states that to fill this gap, Connecticut will need 10,875 more people to receive postsecondary education and training. There are not enough high school graduates to fill that void – Connecticut must rely on getting older adults back into the classroom. Adults need to improve their literacy skills and earn degrees and/or certificates to be able to make family-sustaining wages, but the fact remains that a limited number of the most undereducated people in Connecticut are enrolling in programs geared to help them improve their skills, get a high school equivalency, and enroll in postsecondary education and training. In the *2007 State New Economy Index*, Atkinson and Nager stated that in today’s New Economy, knowledge-based jobs are driving prosperity – jobs held by individuals with at least two years of college. Although the 2014 report shows that the average educational attainment grade level for people in Connecticut is 14.6, that is not enough to fill the anticipated skills gap (Information Technology and Innovation Foundation).

Limited English Proficient: Approximately 50% of the two million immigrants who come to the U.S. each year have low literacy levels and lack high school education and English language skills, severely limiting their access to jobs and job training, college, and citizenship (*Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce*). Immigrants represent one-third of America’s low-skilled adults, more than in comparison countries that have fewer immigrants overall (PIAAC). Of 3,407,815 residents of Connecticut (aged 5 or older), 8.1% or 276,033 state they speak English less than “very well” and 21.8% or 742,903 speak a language other than English at home (2014 American Community Survey). The number of adults who are limited English proficient (LEP) is more prevalent in the larger metropolitan areas. The number of LEP adults in New Haven is 51,204 or 9% of the population; in Hartford, 61,152 or 7.6%; in Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk, 86,549 or 14.3%. Adult education programs in Connecticut served 120,195 adults, or 4.4% of the population 18 and older who do not speak English well, during the 2013-2014 program year. Those lacking a high school diploma who speak English very well earn more than those with a high school diploma or some college who don’t speak English well or at all. Working-age LEP adults earn 25%-40% less than their English-proficient counterparts and are more concentrated in low-paying jobs and different industries than other workers (*“Investing in English Skills: The Limited English Proficient Workforce in U.S. Metropolitan Areas,”* Brookings Institute, September 24, 2014).

Individuals with Disabilities: According to the 2014 Census, 191,185 of Connecticut adults between the ages of 18-64 have a disability. The American Community Survey (ACS) of the U.S. Census analysis of employment and disability status reports 76,791 persons with a disability employed in Connecticut in 2014, and 13,116 unemployed. (Numbers not strictly comparable to the unemployment rates other tables as they come from a different survey with a different methodology.) Median earnings for people with disabilities in 2014 were \$21,756, while people without disabilities earned \$40,249. U.S. adults with a diagnosed learning disability are about twice as likely to have low skills as those without such disabilities (PIAAC).

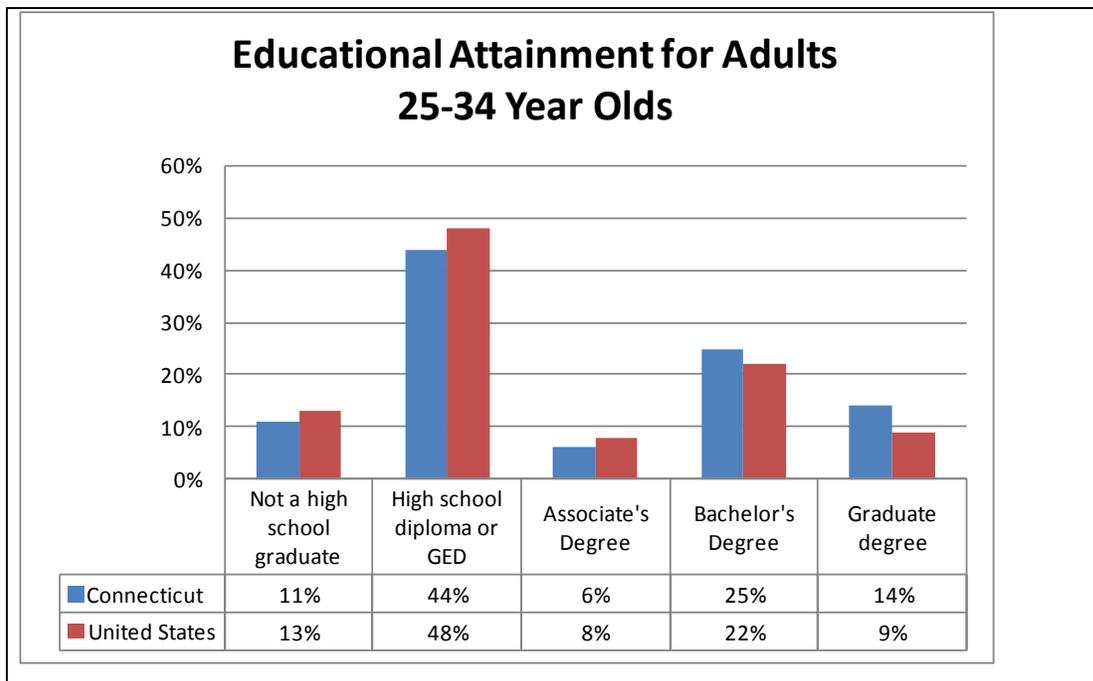
<b>Employment Status by Type of Disability</b>		
<b>Type of Difficulty</b>	<b>Number of Individuals Employed</b>	<b>Percent of Individuals with Specific Disabilities Employed</b>
Hearing Difficulty	19,308	25%
Vision Difficulty	12,854	18%

Cognitive Difficulty	27,611	36%
Ambulatory Difficulty	24,431	32%
Self-Care Difficulty	5,858	8%
Independent Living Difficulty	14,691	19%

The Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) has identified 11,854 individuals in Connecticut who meet these criteria and are listed on the Bureau’s Blind Registry. Of that number, 10,766 of these individuals are adults and 1,088 are children.

Low-Skilled/Low-Income: A significant portion of Connecticut’s current labor force – more than 500,000 adults – lacks the essential skills needed to secure rewarding employment and/or pursue postsecondary education/training. As seen in **Figure 16**, 55% of adults 25-34 years old have no more than a high school diploma, not enough to prepare them adequately for the middle skill jobs that are available. Given effective opportunities for education, training and other supports, many of these individuals can be more productive workers, a talent asset helping employers to meet their workforce needs.

**Figure 16: Educational Attainment for 25-34 Year Old Adults**



In the U.S., the odds of being low-skilled are ten times higher for low-educated adults born to low-educated parents than for higher-educated adults born to higher-educated parents, much greater than in other countries (PIAAC). According to the National Institute for Literacy, improving a mother’s literacy skills is the best way to ensure that children have higher skills (*Improving Mothers’ Literacy Skills May Be Best Way to Boost Children’s Achievement, 2010*).

Connecticut’s 2014 overall poverty rate was 10.8%, but 11.3% for women and 15% for children. The percent of single parent families with related children that are below poverty was 30% (*Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity, 2014*). The relationship between low-skills and low-

wages is strong in the United States, pointing to a critical need to provide adult education and family literacy services to undereducated parents and their children, especially in urban areas, to address immediate health, education and economic challenges.

Accessing affordable efficient transportation to/from work is an obstacle to sustained, productive employability for many Connecticut workers. Public transportation services are inadequate for many workers – particularly low-wage workers from urban communities – pursuing job opportunities outside of their local community, in the wider surrounding region. For many families, childcare also presents a significant barrier to employment. For example, according to the United Way’s ALICE Report, the average cost of attending a full-time, accredited childcare center in Connecticut is \$1,893 per month (\$1,038 per month for an infant and \$855 per month for a four year old). Childcare for two children is by far the greatest expense and accounts for 28% of United Way’s Household Survival Budget. While alternatives in Connecticut such as family daycare centers and state subsidized pre-school programs offer less expensive and more accessible childcare options, high occupancy rates limit their availability.

Funding and resources available to provide basic skills instruction and technical training is limited in the face of the legitimate level of need for those services. Most of the available resources come with individual eligibility requirements – such as public assistance participation or high school dropout – that limit access to services for many prospective participants. Non-credit community college courses, offering opportunity for short-term technical training leading to more immediate employment, are ineligible for federal or state financial aid, forcing (limited-income) students to pay the cost of those courses directly themselves.

Out-of-School Youth: Connecticut has one of the best high school graduation rates of all states for non-low-income students. The overall graduation rate has risen from 81.8% in 2010 to 87% in 2015. However, the dropout rate of Connecticut’s low-income youth is of critical concern. Connecticut has been one of the lowest states for graduation rates of low-income students, but is closing the gap. The 2011 gap between low-income students and their more affluent peers was 27 percentage points, but lessened to 21 percentage points in 2013 (*Connecticut’s Graduation Gap is Big, But Shrinking*, CT Mirror, May 2015). According to PIAAC, 15-year-old Americans have “mediocre” basic skills. Focusing on the challenge of educating and training to improve the skills of out-of-school youth is critical.

In FY 2013-2014, Connecticut adult education programs served 6,041 students under age twenty-two. Adult education programs currently target and reach some youth from Connecticut’s urban centers, but the majority of recent high school dropouts are not enrolling in education programs. These young adults face serious barriers to employment attempting to compete in a labor market demanding viable interpersonal, problem-solving and technical skills, even at the entry-level.

Ex-Offenders: One in every 100 U.S. adults 16 and older is incarcerated. Of 2.3 million individuals behind bars in state and federal prisons and local jails in 2005, about 43% of 18-60 year-olds lack a high school diploma or its equivalent. Further, the 2005 NAAL survey reported that 56% of inmates function at the two lowest levels of prose literacy (*National Adult Literacy Survey, 2005*), documenting the need for adult education programs for the incarcerated.

In Connecticut, 16,025 men and women were incarcerated in correctional facilities during 2015 – 14,941 male, 1,084 female. The Unified School District #1 – the Connecticut Department of

Correction (DOC) – reported serving 2,669 students in ABE, GED, ESL, and Vocational Education instruction. Performance reports indicate that student scores improved by an average of 2 years/3 months in reading; 2 years/1 month in math; and 2 years/7 months in language arts on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Five hundred and seventy-seven students earned the General Educational Development diploma (GED), 6 earned the External Diploma and 15 students were awarded the Credit Diploma Program (CDP) diploma. Despite this demonstrable success, these programs served only 17% of the total number of inmates.

## Employment and Unemployment

### Connecticut's Unemployed

Connecticut's unemployment rate has been falling since the recession's end in 2010, and as of November 2015 was at 5.1%, slightly higher than the national average of 5.0%. The average state unemployment rate for 2014 was 6.6% (**Figure 17**). The unemployment rate was higher for men than for women, higher for Black and Hispanic workers than for whites, and higher for those with less education (**Figure 18**).

**Figure 17: Unemployment Rates 2014 (%)**

Unemployment Rates 2014 (%)	Men	Women	Total
Total	7.0	6.1	6.6
White	6.2	5.8	6.0
Black/African American	14.9	10.2	12.5
Asian	4.3	2.0	3.3
Hispanic or Latino	12.0	9.7	10.9

**Figure 18: Unemployment Rates 2014 (%) by Educational Attainment**

Unemployment Rates 2014 (%) by Educational Attainment	
Less than a high school diploma	10.8
High school graduate, no college	8.7
Some college or associate's degree	6.1
Bachelor's degree and higher	3.1

### Unemployed/Underemployed Adults

In 2014 Connecticut tied for 3<sup>rd</sup> highest per capita income among the states, with an average annual income of \$65,753, yet its unemployment rate of 5.2% remains slightly higher than the overall national rate (Bureau of Labor Statistics, August 2015). Connecticut was labeled one of the "richest and most unequal states" by the Wall Street Journal in October 2015. Of the 24,751 students enrolled in Connecticut's adult education program, 9,422 (38%) were employed in full- or part-time jobs, 9,780 (40%) were unemployed, and 5,549 (22%) were not actively seeking employment. Since 1997, part-time employment in Connecticut has averaged about 20% of total employment (*"Part-time Employment Trends: An Update,"* The Connecticut Economic Digest, May 2014). There was an increase in Connecticut firms hiring part-time and temporary workers in 2014 resulting in an increased rate of 22.2%. Based on the increased state rate, it appears

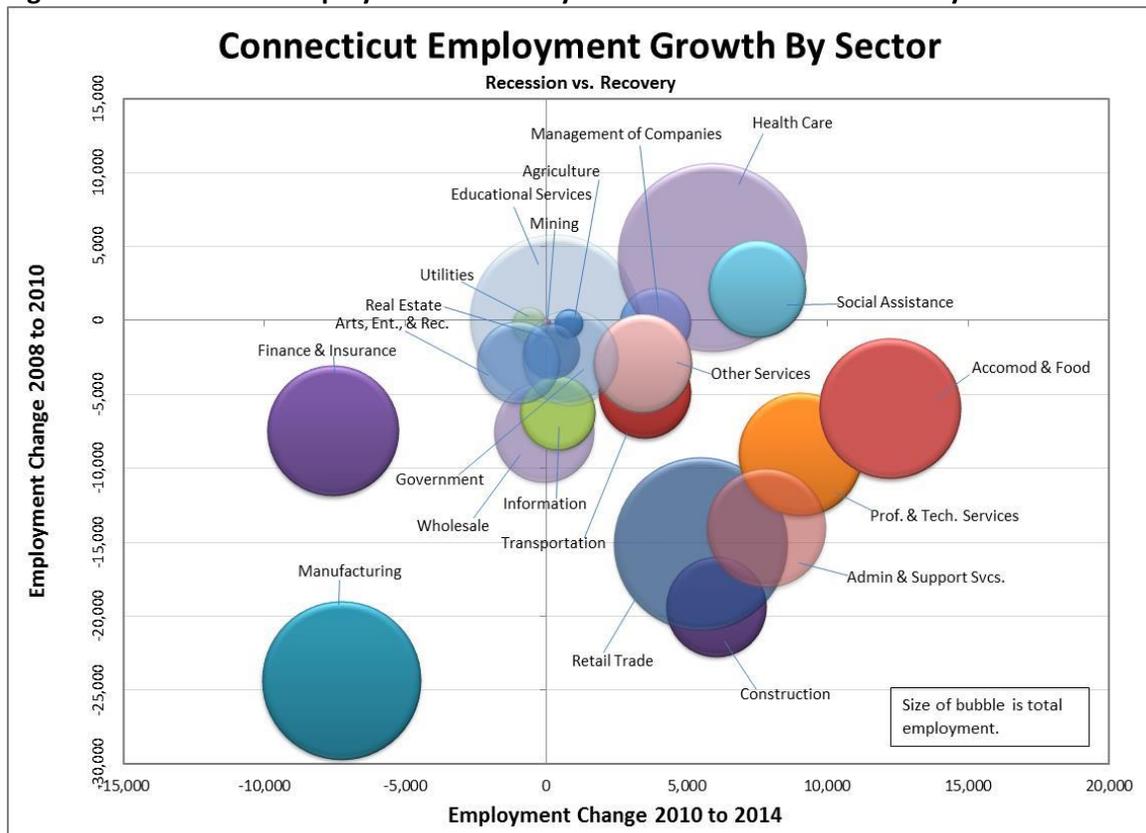
that over 2,000 adult education students could be in part-time or temporary jobs. Temporary employment does serve as reentry to the workforce, but the lack of health and other benefits coupled with a lack of job security and limited promotion opportunity significantly impacts the employee’s ability to progress toward self-sufficiency.

## Labor Market Trends

### Labor Market Shift and Associated Average Wages

The table below shows how the labor market has shifted throughout the past recession and recovery. The size of the bubble is representative of how large the industry is in Connecticut’s current economy. The placement of the bubble along the y-axis indicates how the industry was impacted by the recession that lasted from 2008 to 2010. The placement of the bubble along the x-axis shows the employment change in the current recovery. Those industries placed in the top right quadrant have fared well throughout the recession and have continued to grow in the recovery phase. The industries in the bottom right quadrant lost employment during the recession, but have since gained jobs. The bottom left quadrant contains the industries that lost employment during the recession and continue to do so.

**Figure 19: Connecticut Employment Growth by Sector – Recession vs. Recovery**

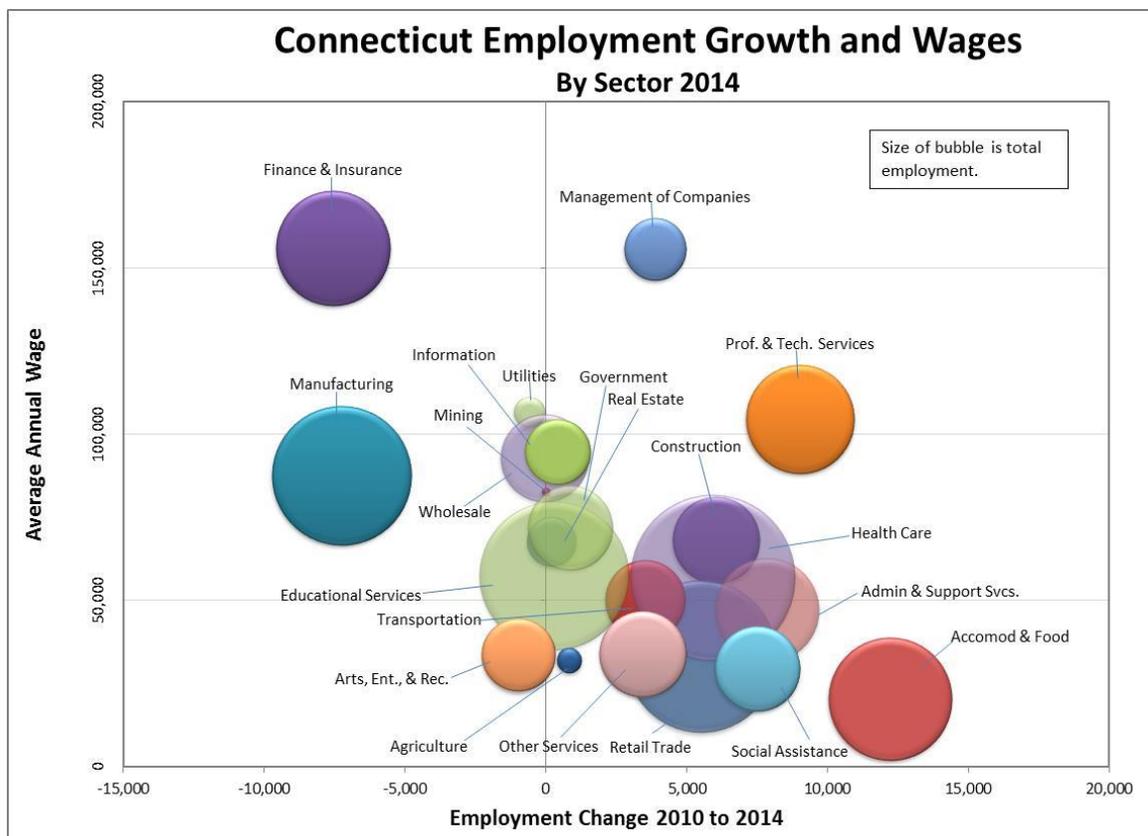


**Figure 20: Nonfarm Employment through the Current Cycle by Major Sector (as percentages)**

	Peak Year 2008	Trough Year 2010	Recent Year 2014	Change in Job Share		
				2008-10	2010-14	2008-14
<b>Total Nonfarm</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>			
Goods Producing	14.9	13.4	13.0	-1.5	-0.4	-1.9
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	18.2	18.0	18.1	-0.2	0.1	-0.2
Information	2.2	2.0	1.9	-0.2	-0.1	-0.3
Financial Activities	8.4	8.4	7.7	0.0	-0.7	-0.7
Professional and Business Services	12.1	11.9	12.7	-0.2	0.8	0.6
Education and Health Services	17.5	19.1	19.5	1.6	0.4	2.0
Leisure and Hospitality	8.1	8.3	9.1	0.2	0.8	1.0
Other Services	3.7	3.8	3.8	0.1	0.0	0.1
Government	14.9	15.2	14.3	0.3	-0.9	-0.6

The following table (Figure 21) illustrates the employment growth throughout the current recovery and the industry’s average annual wage.

**Figure 21: Connecticut Employment Growth and Wages By Sector 2014**

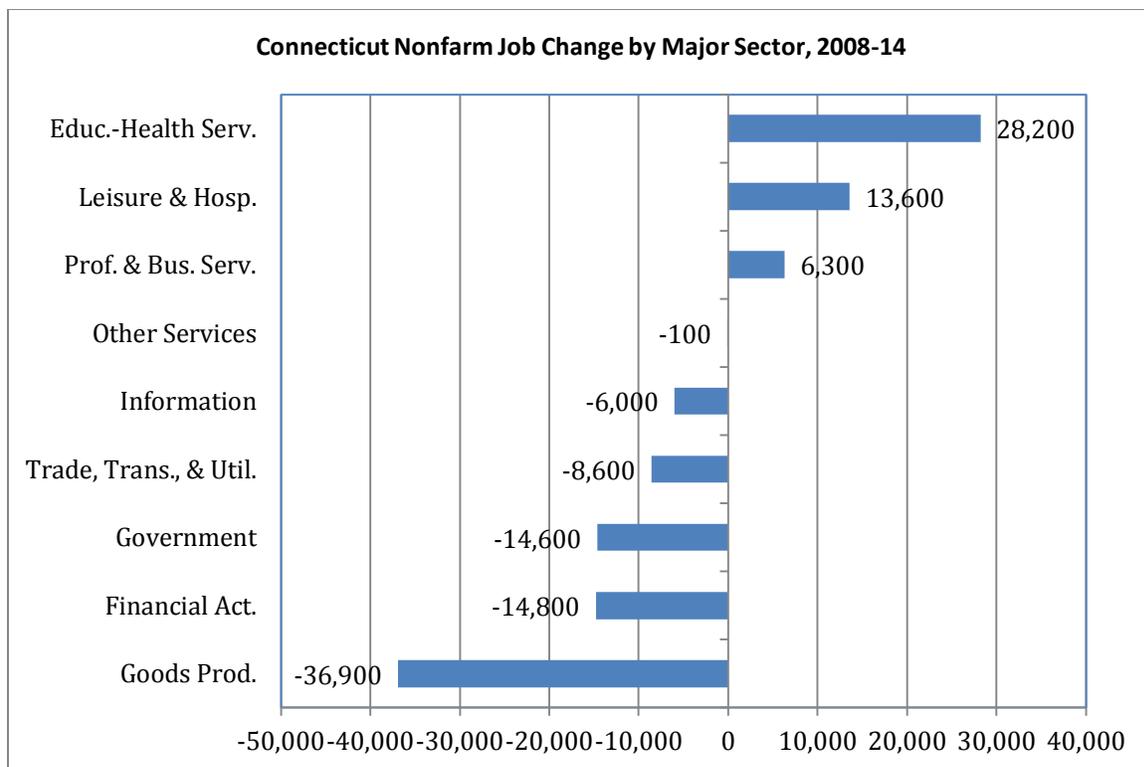


**Change in Employment Share**

Steady growth in Education and Health Services has shifted its position to become the top-employing sector in the Connecticut economy, now accounting for 19.5% of the state's employment. That top spot in 2008 had belonged to Trade, Transportation and Utilities. The largest drop in job share came in the Goods Producing sector, falling from a 14.9% share in 2008 to 3.0% in 2014.

**Figure 22** and **Figure 23** present the major sector data, depicting how levels of nonfarm employment by major sector have changed since the annual average levels of 2008. The information in the graphs and tables provides a better sense of how the recession affected Connecticut's economy. **Figure 24** shows the current structure of employment in Connecticut. Notably, even after the declines described above, Manufacturing is the fourth largest sector (after Health Care, Retail, and Education).

**Figure 22: Connecticut Nonfarm Job Change by Major Sector, 2008-14**



**Figure 23: Connecticut Nonfarm Job Share Percentage Change by Major Sector, 2008-14**

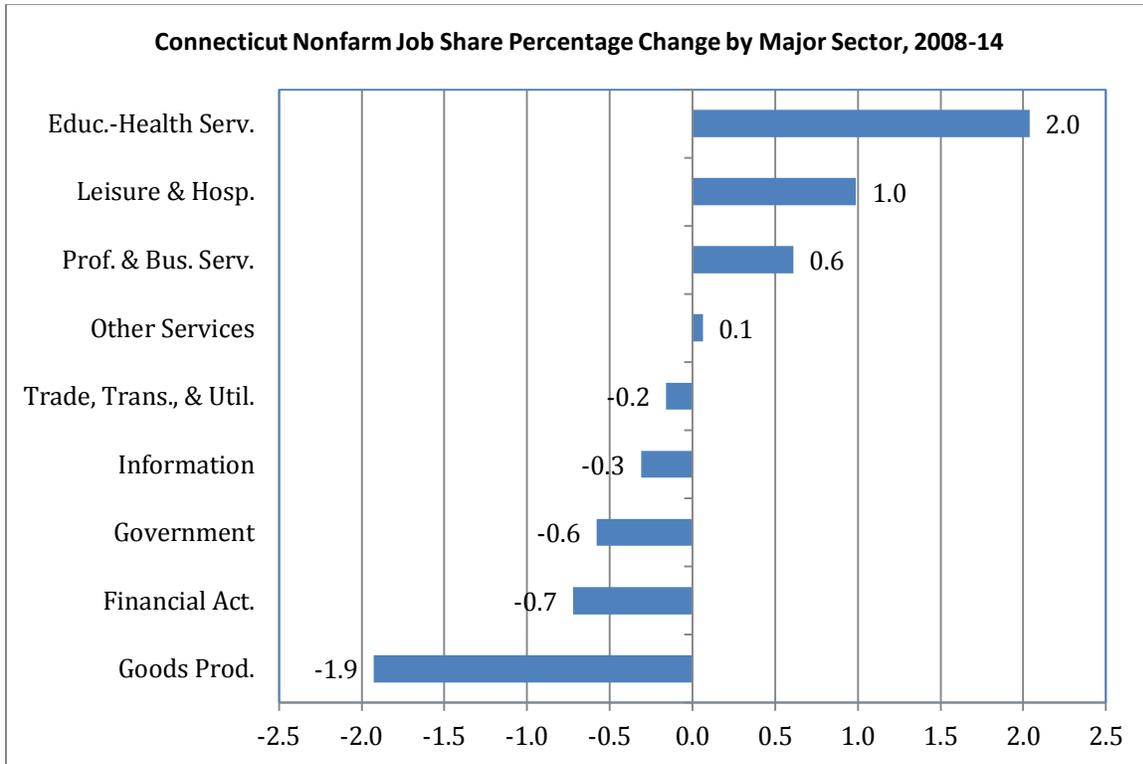
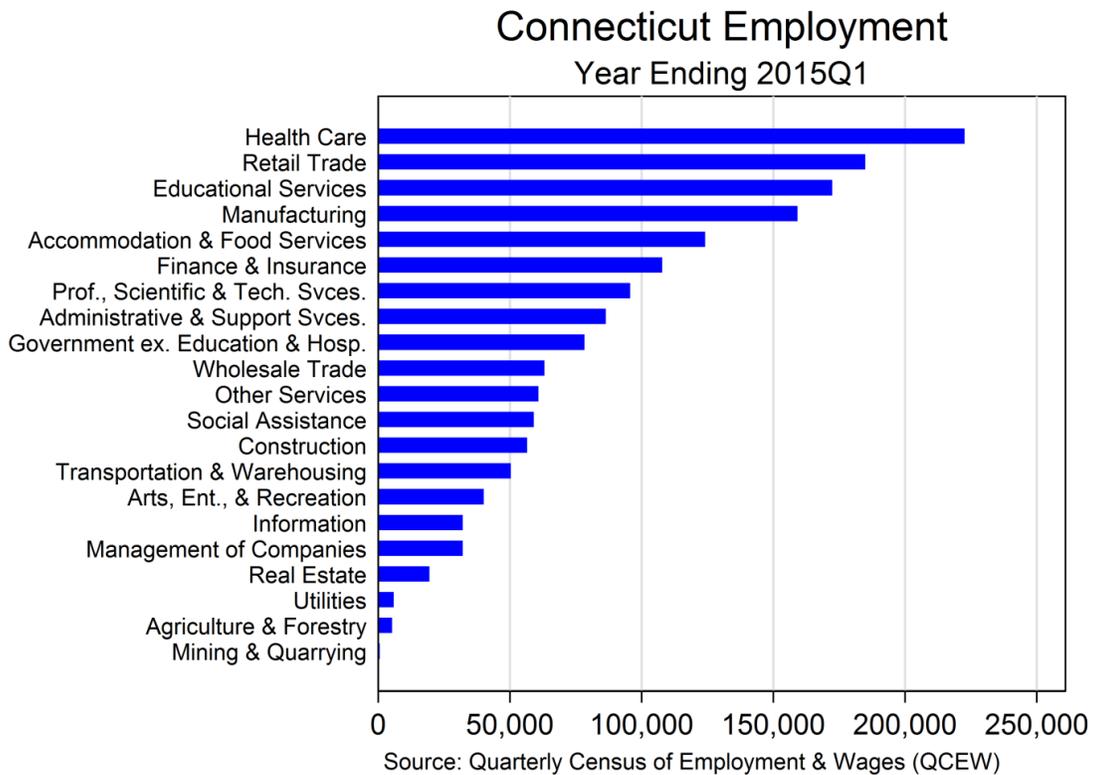


Figure 24: Connecticut Employment-Year Ending 2015Q1



## **Workforce Education and Skill Levels**

[Note: Brief summary description of Connecticut labor force's education and skill levels will be drafted and included in final version of Plan.]

## **Skill Gaps**

[Note: Brief discussion of apparent/perceived skills gap will be drafted and included in final version of Plan.]

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## **Workforce Development, Education and Training Activities Analysis**

The various entities, partners and stakeholders comprising Connecticut's extensive informal workforce development system have planned and implemented a broad array of innovative initiatives addressing Connecticut's workforce development priorities. Following is an illustrative sample of selected recent noteworthy efforts:

### **Supporting Business Growth**

#### **Subsidized Training and Employment Program (Step-Up)**

Established in the 2011 Jobs Bill, Step-Up is a joint venture of the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and the state's five regional WDBs. Originally providing two employer incentives – *Wage Subsidy* and *Small Manufacturing Training Grant* – to encourage eligible Connecticut businesses to hire more qualified workers, the focus has been on small businesses and manufacturers and economically threatened unemployed residents of high unemployment communities. Step-Up expanded in 2012 to include the *Unemployed Armed Forces Member* incentive for employers of any size to hire eligible veterans. Step-Up participants typically are Connecticut residents possessing some of the qualifications needed for work but require additional on-the-job training experience to meet the job-specific needs of participating employers. Wage Subsidy incentives for new hires extend over a six-month period and can amount to a \$12,000 employer reimbursement. Small Manufacturing Training Grants provide up to \$12,500 per new hire.

Jobs for which Step-Up participants have been hired cover a wide range, including CNC operators, machine operators, CAD designers, engineers, production coordinators, plant operators, graphic designers, sales representatives, warehouse support specialists, marketing support specialists, customer service representatives and office assistants. Through December 2014, a total of 705 employers participated in the Subsidized Wage and Small Manufacturing initiatives, resulting in the hiring of 2,590 individuals, at an average hourly wage of approximately \$14.76. Average employer reimbursement was approximately \$9,576 per new employee.

#### **Connecticut Manufacturing Innovation Fund**

In 2014 the General Assembly created a \$30 million Connecticut Manufacturing Fund to support innovation and growth in the state's advanced manufacturing sector. The fund assists manufacturers develop or modernize critical equipment, support technological advancement, encourage research and development, and provide critical workforce training. The objective is to strengthen the supply chain network of small/medium manufacturing companies and ensure

a productive, flexible, well-trained advanced manufacturing talent pool with competitive skills. The Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) provides administrative oversight, with the counsel and support of an eleven member advisory board, the majority from manufacturing companies. The Fund encourages company/university research efforts; creates a voucher program to support targeted business development and technical needs; provides access to training and educational programs to develop required workforce skills; provides matching funds for federal grants; and helps attract new manufacturers to Connecticut. Funding is also provided to support incumbent worker training and Registered Apprenticeships as specified in the next two pages.

### **Incumbent Worker Training**

In 2013 the General Assembly adopted legislation consolidating into a single program the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Job Training Program administered by the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and the Incumbent Worker Training program previously operated by the WDBs. The resulting consolidated Incumbent Worker Training program is administered by CTDOL. The program provides critical resources to help Connecticut businesses and employers partially defray the instructional costs of enhancing the skills of current employees. Goals are to sustain economically vital industries with high-growth occupations and assist workers obtain skills to advance their careers. CTDOL Business Service Consultants work directly with participating companies to develop training projects and locate qualified training providers. Participating employers are required to provide a minimum match of 50%. IWT grants are structured to be flexible in meeting the company's training objectives.

In the 2013-14 program year CTDOL expended approximately \$700,000 in Incumbent Worker Training funds, writing a total of 88 training contracts with Connecticut employers. The governing legislation mandates that a minimum of 50% of available state funds go to employers that had not previously participated in the program, thereby encouraging a variety of companies to utilize these resources. Priority is given to high-growth businesses committed to creating career ladders for their front line employees, providing a safe and healthy workplace, and offering wages and benefits that exceed industry averages. CTDOL far surpassed this legislative requirement by expending 81% of available funds with new employers. A total of 2,061 employees participated in these training offerings. That number does not include three statewide contracts executed with Central Connecticut State University's Institute of Technology and Business Development, CONNSTEP, and the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce, respectively, which included training in the Manufacturing, Allied Health, and Green Technology sectors.

**The Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF) Incumbent Worker Training program** is administered by the Connecticut Department of Labor and funded through the Department of Economic and Community Development. The program provides financial assistance to Connecticut manufacturers for growing innovative and technology-based manufacturing business in Connecticut. The goals are:

- to support advanced manufacturing and innovative companies in their efforts to train incumbent workers in the appropriate skills to meet current and emerging market needs,
- to bring technological innovation to the market and help manufacturing companies leap ahead in productivity and efficiency by enhancing the skills of their current workforce and
- to maintain sales and grow revenue and profitability.

The MIF Incumbent Worker Training program is a matching fund program to help manufacturing companies provide training for their workforce. It offers up to up to \$100,000 maximum per employer, per calendar year equal to the approved amount.

### **Apprenticeship**

The Office of Apprenticeship Training (CTDOL) manages registered apprenticeships in Connecticut. Significant efforts are underway to expand apprenticeship opportunities in targeted industries, including healthcare, information technology, and a major emphasis on advanced manufacturing. Starting in 2014 participants in the community college-based Advanced Manufacturing Centers have been able to earn 576 hours of related instruction toward an Apprenticeship in manufacturing. The Step-Up program recently added a new apprenticeship component. Aggressive outreach by the Office of Apprenticeship Training has increased the number of manufacturers enlisted as employer sponsors and the number of full-time manufacturing apprentices and pre-apprentices. More Connecticut employers have taken advantage of the Manufacturing Apprenticeship Tax Credit. The new \$7.8 million Manufacturing Innovation Fund Apprenticeship Program was launched in July 2015.

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and its Office of Apprenticeship Training is lead applicant in Connecticut's successful bid to win a highly competitive American Apprenticeship Grant of \$5 million to fund the Connecticut American Apprenticeship Initiative. A key component of the initiative is introduction of Competency and Competency/Time-Based Hybrid models of apprenticeship. The initiative will enroll and serve 1,000 registered apprentices and 500 pre-apprentices statewide in high-demand Advance Manufacturing, Healthcare and Business Services occupations. Significant commitments for apprenticeship placement were provided by employers ranging from small machine shops to General Dynamics Electric Boat division, the regional WDBs, and the Board of Regents for Higher Education.

**The Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF) Apprenticeship Program**, funded through the Department of Economic and Community Development, is administered by the Connecticut Department of Labor. It provides financial assistance to Connecticut manufacturers that have a Registered Apprentice Program as well as, approved Apprentice Related Instruction Training Providers. The goals of the MIF Apprenticeship Program are: to support manufacturing companies in their efforts to train Registered Apprenticeship workers in the appropriate skills to meet current and emerging market needs and occupational skills; to provide real time demand driven registered apprenticeship program that combines a structured work schedule of on the job training together with related classroom instruction. The MIF Apprenticeship Program assists manufacturing companies to provide training for new apprentices that are registered on or after July 1, 2015.

The MIF Apprenticeship Program has three components:

### **Types of Assistance**

1. **Wage Subsidy Reimbursement:** The MIF Registered Apprenticeship funding per apprentice in manufacturing occupations is the "**lesser**" of the following:

Funding of \$5 per hour multiplied by the total number of hours worked during the company's program per year by apprentice not to exceed more than 50% of the annual salary., or Funding of \$6,000 per qualified apprentice for year one and \$7,000 per qualified apprentice for year two.

**2. Related Instruction Tuition Reimbursement:** Reimbursement of apprentice tuition/training costs or payments on behalf of an apprentice duly registered with a qualified Apprenticeship Sponsor to a Related Instruction Provider chosen by the sponsor company and approved by the Connecticut Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship Training shall not exceed \$2,500 in year one and \$1,250 in year two.

**3. Competency/Performance Reimbursement:** Reimbursement of reasonable and customary costs for Competency/Performance registered apprenticeships that have interim credentials embedded in the work and related instruction schedules shall not exceed \$1,000 in year one and year two.

Applicants may seek assistance in the form of a wage subsidy, tuition and credentialing reimbursement. The funds do not need to be repaid by the applicant, provided the applicant meets the deliverables and complies with the terms and conditions of the agreement.

**Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Programs - Jobs First Employment Services**

In 2011, the Department of Labor (CTDOL) and Department of Social Services (DSS) convened a workgroup to recommend strategies to help Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) participants increase competitiveness in the job market, while meeting federal TANF work participation requirements. JFES is a component of the State's Temporary Family Assistance program. Participants receive employment services from American Job Center One-Stop staff or contracted service providers. Services include job search assistance, vocational education, adult basic education, subsidized employment, case management, and other support services such as transportation assistance.

In FY2013-2014 the legislature designated \$1.7 million for "additional programming and evaluation" for (JFES) Program participants. CTDOL used the FY2013-14 designated funding to implement an "Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)" pilot program statewide, based on the state of Washington's nationally recognized model. I-BEST is an evidence-based model providing vocational skills training simultaneously with adult basic education. Curriculum is designed jointly and classes are co-taught by an adult education instructor and a specialist in the appropriate vocational field. I-BEST has proven to help participants improve basic skills and achieve progress towards a secondary education credential while attaining an industry-recognized credential.

The JFES I-BEST pilots were administered by CTDOL through the WDBs, operating as regional intermediaries, subcontracting with service providers. WIBs received funding in proportion to their enrollment of JFES participants. The WIBs divided their programs across a total of 10 subcontractor service providers statewide.

Primary goals included attainment of industry-recognized credentials and improved post-program employment, creating incentives for the WIBs to develop training opportunities meeting local labor market needs. Programs were expected to result in the following credentials: Certified Nursing Assistant; Introduction to Culinary Arts Certificate; Level 1 NIMS (National Institute for Metal Working Skills) Certificate; Medical Office Assistant; Medical Office Receptionist Certificate; Medical Terminology Certificate; Microsoft Technology Certificate;

National Professional Certificate in Customer Service (National Retail Federation); Qualified Food Handler License (OSHA 10, First Aid, CPR); Software Application Certificate.

The period of instruction varied from four to twenty-one weeks. More than half of the service providers incorporated some type of post-program work experience, including unpaid internships, paid internships, or subsidized employment. Among those with a prior high school credential, sixty percent (60%) completed the training. For those without a high school credential, fifty-four percent (54%) completed the training. The overall completion rate was fifty-eight percent (58%), comparing favorably to the forty-four percent (44%) completion rate achieved IN Washington's I-BEST program's pilot year (2005).

Of participants successfully completing the training, seventy percent (70%) passed the relevant certification exam. Among those who completed the training and had a high school credential, seventy-two percent (72%) passed the exam to receive the industry credential. For those without a high school credential who completed the course, sixty-five percent (65%) passed the relevant certification exam.

### **Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Programs – Adult Education Programs**

Since 2010 the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has invested in Program Improvement Project (PIP) grants to implement the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) program model across Connecticut to accelerate basic skills learning and career enhancement for adult education learners. Initial grants provided two years of incentive funding. PIP grants are underwritten with Workforce Investment Act Title II funds, to expand and improve educational services for adults lacking the basic skills and literacy skills for effective parenting, citizenship and employment. Eligible participants are students enrolled in mandated adult education classes (e.g., at least 17-years-old and officially withdrawn from high school). Objectives are to help adult secondary-level students and English-as-a-second-language learners improve reading, writing, math, English language acquisition and/or obtain a high school diploma while earning an industry-recognized credential in fields offering good wages and opportunities for career advancement.

CSDE selected seven adult education providers to operate the I-BEST projects: New London Adult Education, EASTCONN, Enfield Adult Education, Capitol Region Education Council, Women and Families Education Center, Education Connection, Waterbury Adult Education. Providers collaborate with a training partner to offer funding for the technical aspects of instruction. In FY2012-13 and FY2014-15 a total of \$210,000 in PIP funding was awarded to support educational (not technical) dimensions of the training, serving a total of 192 participants. The projects offer certifications in manufacturing, auto technician, culinary arts, emergency medical technician, pharmacy technician, certified nursing assistant, and software, serving individuals in English as a Second Language, adult basic education and high school completion programs.

### **Jobs Funnels**

The Jobs Funnel was launched as a pilot in Hartford to provide qualified workers opportunities to pursue careers in the construction trades. Jobs Funnels programs now operate in two local workforce areas – north central and northwest – under the aegis of the respective regional WDBs. State-level coordination is provided through the Office of Workforce Competitiveness. State general fund dollars help support Jobs Funnel efforts. A three-year \$5.8 million Green Jobs Innovation Fund USDOL grant (extended to 2015) helped to promote career pathways in “green construction” jobs. That successful effort was cited for several noteworthy and promising

practices. These include the effective use of targeted outreach to job candidates, strong partnerships with the organized building trades, significant statewide partnerships among key stakeholders, proactive engagement of women in construction training, employment and innovative local hiring ordinances.

Jobs Funnel services typically include: outreach/recruitment, assessment, case management, pre-employment training, job placement, and retention support services. Since their inception, the various regional funnel initiatives have helped to place more than 3,900 individuals in a variety of construction-related jobs, in both union and non-union settings, and in apprenticeships. The average hourly starting wage for participants who have completed the Jobs Funnel training is approximately \$15-18. The Jobs Funnels are an example of innovative public-private partnerships involving employers, labor, community-based organizations, state and local agencies, non-profits and local funders to address shared objectives.

### **Go Back to Get Ahead**

By 2020 approximately 70% of Connecticut jobs will require post-secondary education. To help address this challenge the Board of Regents for Higher Education in June 2014 launched the *Go Back to Get Ahead* initiative. The initiative targets individuals who had taken college courses before December 2012 but left school prior to completing their degree, or had achieved an associate's degree but not a bachelor's degree – approximately 65,000 individuals in Connecticut. The initiative provides up to nine (9) free credits towards degree completion, via courses offered in a classroom setting or online, at the seventeen (17) institutions of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system. At the start of the 2014 Fall semester, a total of 942 individuals had enrolled in *Go Back to Get Ahead*.

### **Platform to Employment**

The Platform to Employment program – P2E – was launched by The Workplace, Inc., the regional WDB of southwest Connecticut, to assist the long-term unemployed return to work, while addressing employers' needs to recruit skilled workers. P2E is a public-private partnership providing businesses a risk-free opportunity to evaluate and consider hiring qualified participants in a work experience program. P2E is geared to individuals who have exhausted their unemployment benefits. Participants engage in a structured preparatory program including skills assessment, career readiness workshops, employee assistance services, coaching and other supports. Upon completion participants are helped to find open positions at local companies. Placements occur on a provisional basis, partially subsidized over an eight-week trial period. The expectation is that a company satisfied with a candidate's performance will offer a full-time job. The General Assembly allocated \$3.6 million to implement P2E statewide in 2014-15, intended to serve 500 Connecticut residents. The first statewide P2E class of 100 participants began in September 2014. P2E operates as a partnership of the Connecticut Department of Labor, the Department of Rehabilitation Services and the five regional WDBs, managed statewide by The Workplace, Inc.

## **Strengthening Connecticut's Current Workforce**

### **Advanced Manufacturing Technical Centers**

As a result of the 2011 Jobs Bill, State bond funds were committed to establish three new community college-based Advanced Manufacturing Centers, modeled on the successful Manufacturing Machine Technology Program at Asnuntuck Community College (Enfield). The new centers opened in August 2012 at Housatonic Community College (Bridgeport), Naugatuck

Valley Community College (Waterbury) and Quinebaug Valley Community College (Danielson). Their mission is to offer a variety of credit and non-credit advanced manufacturing courses for incumbent workers, displaced workers, returning veterans, current community college students, adult education students and high school students from both technical and comprehensive high schools. Overall program coordination is provided through the Board of Regents for Higher Education.

Students earn a one-year/two-semester Advanced Manufacturing Certificate, plus 576 hours of related instruction toward an Apprenticeship in manufacturing, as well as the OSHA 10 Certificate. Manufacturers/employers are intensively involved in all phases of program planning, design and implementation, through advisory boards at each Center and through a Statewide Advanced Manufacturing Advisory Committee (SAMAC). Graduates can acquire a minimum of 4 National Institute of Metal Skills (NIMS), towards the 11-credential Machine Level I certificate. Recent enrollment data shows 323 students had enrolled across the four Centers in Fall 2013 (for both Level I and Level II); 213 had graduated by June 2014; 86 student participated in internships; 192 students were employed in Summer 2014; and 331 students enrolled in Fall 2014. Manufacturing companies employing the most program graduates represent tool and die, aerospace, stamping, automotive, medical device, plating, molding, construction, commercial lighting, and general manufacturing. As of June 2014 graduates of the four Centers had a 90% job placement rate.

#### **Connecticut Advanced Manufacturing Initiative**

In September 2014 the US Department of Labor awarded a \$15 million grant to implement the Connecticut Advanced Manufacturing Initiative (CAMI) across the eleven community colleges that do not have Advanced Manufacturing Centers, along with Charter Oak State College. CAMI builds on the foundation of the nationally recognized Advanced Manufacturing Centers, and expands post-secondary manufacturing education to every community college in Connecticut. Grant funds pay for capital equipment to provide hands-on training, new teachers and educational assistants, and development of registered apprenticeships for high-demand manufacturing jobs. Manchester Community College serves as leader of the multi-college CAMI consortium.

#### **Natural Gas Transmission Workforce Initiative**

Connecticut's *Comprehensive Energy Strategy* was produced in 2013. A key feature is the emphasis on moving to natural gas, as a lower-cost, cleaner, more reliable foundation for Connecticut's future energy needs. It lays out a game plan to expand natural gas access to 300,000 Connecticut homes, businesses and other customers. That \$7 billion gas conversion will create demand for a substantial number of skilled workers qualified to build the new natural gas pipeline infrastructure. Workers will be needed across a spectrum of construction services, including civil, construction and operating engineers, logistics, project managers, laborers, pipe fitters, inspectors and safety professionals.

To ensure that state companies and the workforce is ready, Connecticut Construction Industries Association (CCIA) President and CEO (and CETC Chair) Donald Shubert convened a Natural Gas Transmission Workforce Committee, including representatives of the three investor-owned utilities, the Natural Gas Association (NGA), CCIA, contractors, organized building trades, Connecticut Department of Labor, Department of Economic and Community Development, WDBs and the Connecticut Technical High School System. Initially the committee completed an inventory of all skills required for the jobs and tasks, to ensure contractors know what is needed

to train and certify workers involved in the gas conversion. Subsequently, representatives of the utilities and NGA collaborated to develop specific requisite contractor and workforce qualifications needed to perform gas conversion work under Federal operator qualification (OQ) regulations. These efforts led to development of a covered task list for OQ in Connecticut (and also in New York, New Jersey and the rest of New England).

This initiative contributes to efforts of apprenticeship training programs, Jobs Funnels, training providers and contractors to align training efforts and create a pool of companies and workers qualified to perform the impending gas conversion work in Connecticut. Participants in the Natural Gas Transmission Workforce Initiative intend to work together going forward to ensure that Connecticut companies have the skilled and qualified workers needed to perform the pipeline expansion as it comes on line over the next decade.

### **Next Generation Connecticut**

The Next Generation Connecticut initiative is intended to significantly expand educational opportunities, research and innovation in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines at the University of Connecticut. The broad objective is to leverage UConn's strengths and resources to help build Connecticut's future workforce, create jobs and invigorate the state economy. The cornerstone of the effort is a major increase in student enrollment, faculty expansion, development of facilities for enhanced STEM research and teaching, and expansion of critical programs at UConn's Hartford and Stamford campuses.

Next Generation Connecticut aims to transform UConn into an elite public research institution, fueling Connecticut's economy with new technologies, training highly skilled graduates, creating new companies, patents, licenses and high-wage jobs. Components include: hiring research and teaching faculty in STEM disciplines; building research facilities for materials science, physics, biology, engineering, cognitive science, genomics and related disciplines; constructing teaching laboratories; creating a STEM Honors program to attract high achieving undergraduate students; upgrading aging infrastructure; expanding Stamford degree programs; providing student housing in Stamford; and relocating the Greater Hartford campus to downtown Hartford. This aggressive investment hopes to dramatically increase UConn STEM research and graduates, producing innovations and inventions contributing directly to sustainable economic growth in Connecticut, with high-wage jobs for a STEM-skilled and educated workforce.

### **Developing Future Talent**

#### **Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative**

The Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative brings together leaders and stakeholders from key systems – education, youth development and workforce development – to improve outcomes for “opportunity youth”, defined as 6-24 year olds lacking a high school diploma, or who have a diploma but are not in school and not working, estimated at 6,000 youth in Hartford. This effort is one of 21 grantees nationally of the Aspen Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund. A collective impact approach is used to demonstrate best practices to improve outcomes and scale-up effective practices across systems. The resulting comprehensive plan is expected to decrease the number of Hartford youth disconnected from education and employment.

Success indicators are post-secondary credentials and/or two- and four-year degrees obtained, and securing employment in targeted sectors/career field. Capital Region Education Council offers contextualized learning to prepare justice-involved high school dropouts for the GED,

offering industry credentials and internships. Blue Hills Civic Association partners with Capital Community College to offer an enhanced certificate and associate degree program for allied health careers, with Success Coaches creating individual service plans and offering financial aid counseling. Our Piece of the Pie partners with Asnuntuck Community College to deliver contextual learning including occupational skills instruction in manufacturing, welding and electronics, leading to certificates relevant to manufacturing careers.

### **Jobs for America's Graduates**

Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) is a state-based national program dedicated to preventing dropping out of school by youth who are most at-risk. JAG operates in 31 states, and in more than three decades has delivered consistent, compelling results. Key outcomes nationally include a 91% graduation rate, doubling the rate that at-risk youth get jobs, and tripling the rate at which they get full-time jobs. JAG operates within partner school districts to deliver the proven

JAG professional-skills curriculum as a one-credit elective course. The program focuses on personal engagement and accountability, education and training needed for in-demand careers, and employment. JAG also includes mentoring, project-based learning, community engagement and 12 months of post-graduation follow-up.

### **Early College Programs**

The label "early college" program encompasses various models focusing on the transition of high school students to college and into the workforce. The premise of the early college strategy is that all high school students should pursue some form of post-secondary education, recognizing that multiple pathways lead to success. The mix of strategies under the early college umbrella ranges from individual high school students taking college courses in a college setting or at their home high school, to high schools where all students graduate with an industry-validated certificate or associate's degree, with multi-year curriculum pathways, supports and experiences. Some early college programs focus exclusively on academics and college readiness, while others emphasize career pathways and exposure to career options. Successful early college programs rely on collaborations and partnerships among school districts, high schools, community colleges, universities and businesses and employers.

Early college initiatives have proliferated in Connecticut, reflecting these strong partnerships. Examples of innovative efforts with potential for replication include: New Haven Public Schools developmental initiative with Gateway Community College; Pathways in Technology (P-TECH)

Early College High School (Norwalk Early College Academy); Asnuntuck Community College Fifth Year Program with East Granby School System; Waterbury Career Academy partnership with Naugatuck Valley Community College; Fundamentals of Early Childhood Education program of the Meriden School District and Middlesex Community College; and, Manchester Community College's College Career Pathways program. It is anticipated that these and similar early college efforts will expand going forward.

### **Norwalk Early College Academy**

Norwalk Early College Academy (NECA) formally opened its doors in August 2014 with approximately 90 students in Grade 9. Built on the IBM Pathways in Technology (P-TECH) model, NECA will add one grade per year, ultimately serving grades 9 – 14, enabling students to earn both a high school diploma and a no-cost associate's degree in Applied Science within six years

from Norwalk Community College. The model puts young adults on a path to a career in a growth industry. NECA graduates will acquire the skills and knowledge needed to continue their studies and/or begin careers in a range of competitive jobs in the Information Technology (IT) industry, with good pathways to future career opportunities.

NECA is collaboration of Norwalk Public Schools, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Norwalk Community College and IBM Corporation, with the support of other private and public sector partners. It is open at no cost to all Norwalk students. Admission is by lottery and students of all abilities are eligible. No testing or screening is required for admission. NECA enables students to begin their college and professional lives quickly, with more support than the traditional school-to-work pathway.

NECA students take regular high school courses required to earn a high school diploma. They receive individual support and guidance as they plan their high school years and begin taking college courses. Students receive mentoring support and internship opportunities to help prepare them for college and competitive careers in IT. They take courses with college faculty during normal school hours. Students participate in real-world work experiences to learn teamwork and develop the skills needed for personal growth and professional success. Students explore career options through internship, coaching and mentoring opportunities provided by IBM Corporation and other local companies. Upon graduation students may continue studies at Norwalk Community College or apply to four-year institutions.

### **Waterbury Career Academy**

Following several years of planning by community leaders, educators, workforce system representatives and local businesses, construction began in 2011 on the \$65 million state-of-the-art facility for the new Waterbury Career Academy, a public high school with a curriculum intended to address the workforce priorities of industry in Waterbury and surrounding municipalities for talented, educated, skilled future employees. The Academy operates within the Waterbury Public Schools system. Responding to demands of local businesses and employers, four educational strands focus academic/classroom instruction and career readiness preparation: Computer Information Technologies, Engineering/Manufacturing Technologies, Human Services, and Health Services. Industry partners helped to establish and serve on Advisory Panels to assist with curriculum development, student selection criteria, and ongoing technical assistance and support.

The Academy opened in September 2013, welcoming an initial class of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. Grade 9 students explore each of the four strands before choosing an area of focus. Each strand offers three career pathway options: employment following high school graduation with one of several certifications; two-year community college degree track with college credits; four-year college degree track with college credits. Honors and Advanced Placement courses are offered to qualifying students. World language courses are offered. The Academy has an articulation agreement offering eight (8) dual credit courses with Naugatuck Valley Community College. All 10<sup>th</sup> grade students have the opportunity to earn at least 3 college credits in their chosen strand.

### **Summer Youth Employment Program**

Connecticut's five regional WDBs strive to offer youth aged 14-20 meaningful employment experiences. Various national studies document the positive impact of structured work experience on academic performance and earnings. Since 2007 between 4,300 – 7,400 young

people annually have been able to participate in the state's Summer Youth Employment program, coordinated statewide by the WIBs. In FY2015 the program was supported by a mix of \$5.5 million in State funding, \$637,500 from the Department of Children and Families, and a variety of leveraged private funds totaling nearly \$1.9 million. Unfortunately no Federal funding has been available to support the summer jobs program since 2010. In summer 2014 a total of 5,025 youth participated. For many it was a first job. This was a modest reduction from the 5,270 participants in summer 2013, due to a combination of reduced leveraged funding, the increased minimum wage, and placement of some youth in year-round employment-based programs. The larger underlying story is the fact that more than 6,600 eligible Connecticut youth were unable to participate in 2014 due to limited funding and resources.

### **Manufacturing Mania**

October 2014 marked the third annual *Connecticut. Dream It. Do It.* Manufacturing Month, proclaimed by Governor Malloy to recognize the importance of the manufacturing industry to Connecticut and showcase manufacturing career opportunities statewide to middle school students, their teachers, counseling staff and parents. With advanced, computer-driven tools and streamlined, clean and brightly lit facilities, manufacturing today is more advanced than ever before. So too are the talents, skills and teamwork required of the next generation of Connecticut's manufacturing workforce.

### **College Readiness and Completion - Implementation of Public Act 12-40**

In 2012 the General Assembly enacted Public Act 12-40: An Act Concerning College Readiness and Completion. The law addresses the challenge of having many recent high school graduates unable to qualify for college credit courses upon registering at the state's community colleges, and the limitations of remedial instruction strategies. PA12-40 was intended to match developmental education with the capabilities of incoming community college students, and requires alignment of high school curricula with Common Core Standards. Community colleges were allowed significant latitude in creating courses to meet the new law's requirements. The legislation outlined a three-tiered structure colleges could use to provide developmental instruction:

- Embedded: College-level instruction, with embedded developmental support designed for entering students with 12<sup>th</sup> grade skills (or close), who are approaching college readiness but require modest remediation.
- Intensive: One semester of developmental education instruction or an intensive readiness experience for entering students with skills below the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level.
- Transitional: For students who test below the intensive level of readiness.

### **Student Success Center**

In March 2014 the Board of Regents for Higher Education won a \$500,000 grant from the Kresge Foundation to establish a statewide Student Success Center, working across Connecticut's twelve community colleges, to help more low-income, first-generation and under-represented students complete college and earn degrees or certificates. Connecticut is one of seven states to establish these centers. Based at Central Connecticut State University, the Student Success Center serves as a statewide hub to support access to, retention in, and graduation from college, promoting effective strategies to encourage persistence and degree completion. The Center promotes coherence and cohesion between policy and best practices, fostering collaboration among college students, faculty, administrators and staff, to develop a culture of academic and personal success for students as they work towards degree and certificate completion.

### **Tomorrow's Framework Strategic Action Plan - CT Technical High School System**

The Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) statewide system of 16 degree-granting technical high schools and one technical education center serves approximately 10,800 full-time high school students annually, offering education and training in 36 occupational areas. CTHSS also serves approximately 5,500 part-time adult students annually in apprenticeship and other programs. In recent years CTHSS has received considerable attention as a valued asset in addressing the state's workforce priorities in critical occupational areas of need.

Connecticut's 2012 education reform legislation established a new CTHSS Board, including representatives of businesses and partnering state agencies, to promote and guide CTHSS strategic development. In 2014 Dr. Nivea Torres was appointed Superintendent. Under the leadership of the Board and Superintendent, CTHSS collaborated with numerous partners to develop the *Tomorrow's Framework Strategic Action Plan 2014-2017* addressing the CTHSS mission of providing a world class career technical and academic education to prepare students for careers in business and industry.

*Tomorrow's Framework's* goals are to: partner with business and industry in developing career technical education providing students the skills and work habits to succeed in a dynamic 21<sup>st</sup> century work environment; align K-12, post-secondary and adult programs in a continuum of educational services resulting in career and college readiness; transform CTHSS via programs responsive to Connecticut's workforce needs, positioning the system as a leading force in career technical education; and, invest in developing faculty and staff to support the core CTHSS mission. Those goals build on fourteen foundational imperatives, establishing a strategic direction, addressing expectations of students, emphasizing program quality, and focusing on STEM skills, employer responsiveness, structured career exposure for students, strength of faculty and staff, visibility and collaboration.

CTHSS Central Office leadership, CTHSS schools principals and CTHSS faculty are actively engaged in a wide range of partnerships and collaboration with employers, post-secondary institutions, K-12 schools, workforce agencies and others, to meet the aggressive goals set out in the action plan. Much has already been accomplished. Going forward these efforts and partnerships will become increasingly important elements of the state's broad workforce development strategy, particularly in occupations in critical industries demanding specific technical skills.

### **Transforming System Capacity**

#### **Disability Employment Initiative**

In October 2013 Connecticut was one of eight states to receive a grant through the U.S. Department of Labor's Disability Employment Initiative (DEI). CTDOL's Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) administers the three-year \$3,058,706 award from USDOL's Employment and Training Administration and Office of Disability Employment Policy. Broad objectives are to provide additional education, training and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and to expand the workforce system's capacity to serve eligible beneficiaries in the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work Program. The initiative features strong partnerships and collaboration among key agencies; service coordination through an Integrated Resource Team; integrated services and resources, including blended, braided and leveraged funding and resources; and, innovative asset development strategies.

Services are offered in two of Connecticut’s workforce regions. Two participating WIBs employ Disability Resource Coordinators to implement project activities and coordinate services. Integrated Resource Teams address individual needs and provide increased support for jobseekers with disabilities. Partners include CTDOL’s Office for Veterans Workforce Development and the Departments of Rehabilitative Services, Labor, Education, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Social Services, Transportation, and various other public and private sector representatives.

DEI efforts focus on:

- Promoting inclusiveness of disabled individuals to enhance competitive advantage
- Organizing business-to-business forums to share strategies on recruiting, hiring and retaining people with disabilities
- Creating employer/service provider partnerships to develop internships and strengthen connections for ongoing collaboration
- Improving service coordination among American Job Centers and partner agencies
- Increasing transportation alternatives and awareness of transportation resources
- Improving staff knowledge of employment’s impact on benefits individuals with disabilities
- Upgrading assistive technology software and technologies
- Providing sensitivity training for staff regarding LGBT jobseekers with disabilities
- Advocacy for state-level change (e.g., expanding Medicaid waiver option)

Anticipated outcomes include increases in the rates of individuals with disabilities who get and retain jobs; increased wages; increased number of persons with disabilities served by the One-Stop system; increased number of participants earning industry-recognized credentials; and, increased number of individuals with disabilities co-enrolled with One-Stop partners.

**P20 WIN Data Sharing System**

Connecticut’s *Preschool through Twenty and Workforce Information Network* – P20 WIN – represents a groundbreaking approach to education and workforce training-related data sharing in Connecticut. P20 WIN provides a secure data vehicle producing critical information to understand patterns over time and inform policy and strategy decisions to improve outcomes of education and training programs for Connecticut students. With P20 WIN, Connecticut can evaluate how well public education and training programs prepare students for additional education and careers in Connecticut. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) and Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) are the State agencies actively participating in P20 WIN. An inter-agency data governance structure and data sharing agreements support collaborative decision-making about data access and use. As it evolves, P20 WIN will provide a systematic, secure and repeatable process to gather and analyze critical data to understand the impact of investments in education and workforce training programs, leading to better outcomes.

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**Workforce System Capacity**

[Note: Brief description of the overall capacity of Connecticut’s workforce system to address challenges and opportunities, consistent with preceding overview of recent workforce development activities, will be drafted and included in final version of Plan.]  
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## Strategic Vision and Goals

### Vision

Upon taking office in January 2011 Governor Dannel Malloy asserted as a policy priority the **VISION** that, building on its proud heritage, **Connecticut will create and sustain the global economy's best-educated, most-skilled, highest-productive workforce, capable of pursuing rewarding careers, such that every Connecticut business has access to a qualified, skilled, job-ready workforce.** In the ensuing five years the Governor and Connecticut General Assembly have partnered effectively to embrace the critical importance of skilled talent as the essential resource in efforts to grow Connecticut's economy, create and retain rewarding jobs, and increase opportunities for financial success through productive employment. Over the past four years the fundamental importance of this workforce agenda and vision has gained attention and support across a broad spectrum of state business leaders and policymakers.

From the outset of his administration, Governor Malloy rolled-out a series of wide-ranging initiatives and investments focusing on various aspects of the state's broad workforce challenges, encompassing early childhood development, strengthened career and technical education, industry-driven enhancements in higher education, innovative apprenticeships, and specialized training for targeted workers. Likewise, the General Assembly has raised the broad workforce development, education and training agenda to a new level of attention and support through an array of investments in innovative programs. With the Governor's encouragement, the General Assembly adopted several major, innovative, structural policy initiatives that, taken together, create a strong foundation from which to pursue the Governor's vision. Connecticut businesses have increased their active support and participation in numerous partnerships and initiatives to build the skills of the workers they need for their companies to prosper.

Connecticut's challenge – and the opportunity WIOA offers – is to ensure that a comprehensive, aligned, integrated workforce development system is in place and sustained into the future to achieve this vision of developing and maintaining the best-educated, most-skilled, highest-productive workforce in the increasingly competitive global economy. This Connecticut Unified State Plan establishes the framework to achieve the vision.

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### Goals

To bring focus to the Governor's broad vision, the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission – CETC, the State Workforce Board – has adopted four overarching and complementary goals, as a policy and strategic framework for the numerous business sector, government, labor, community-based and non-profit partners and stakeholders engaged in Connecticut's innovative workforce efforts:

1. **Support Business Growth:** Connecticut businesses – particularly those in key industry sectors that drive economic growth – will have access to the skilled, talented employees they need to compete effectively, prosper and create new and rewarding jobs and career opportunities for Connecticut workers.
2. **Strengthen Current Workforce:** Connecticut workers will possess the critical skills and credentials needed to prosper and advance in careers that pay well and allow them to support their families.

3. **Develop Future Talent:** Connecticut’s young people will be equipped and ready for career and postsecondary success as productive contributors to a vibrant and competitive state economy and in their communities.
4. **Transform System Capacity:** Connecticut’s multi-faceted workforce/talent-development system will integrate and align goals, strategies, policies, investments, services, infrastructure and technology for effective, accountable performance.

To accomplish the Governor’s vision and meet these goals, CETC endorses a set of guiding principles for Connecticut’s workforce system, calling on all stakeholders to embrace them in the work they do:

- Connecticut’s efforts must be business-driven and customer-focused.
- Collaboration among partners and stakeholders is essential.
- Innovation is crucial, including use of technology and new approaches.
- Data and evidence must be used to shape strategy.
- Continuous improvement must be a way of life.

CETC’s Performance Evaluation Committee will develop a corresponding set of objectives and measures for ongoing review to support effective system performance and continuous improvement.

**Vocational Rehabilitation Services (BESB)**

In addition to the overarching goals for Connecticut’s workforce system (outlined above), the following goals (each with objectives and accompanying measures) specific to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program of the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) have been developed with the full participation and guidance of the State Rehabilitation Council. Details on related objectives, strategies and measures are available in the state plan for vocational rehabilitation and supported employment services included in this Unified State Plan.

**Goal A:** Increase employment opportunities for eligible individuals of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program

**Goal B:** Provide coordinated services to students with disabilities to prepare for careers and postsecondary education after exit from high school.

**Goal C:** Utilize Innovation and Expansion authority to identify services that can benefit groups of individuals with disabilities to increase access to career information, adaptive technology, and credential attainment.

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**Performance Goals**

[Note: Table with expected levels of performance to be inserted pending further clarification from USDOL. Anticipated to be included in final version of Plan.]

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**Assessment**

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) Performance and Accountability Unit and WIOA Administration Unit, in collaboration with colleagues in comparable functions at the DORS Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and Bureau of Education and Services to the Blind (BESB)

and CSDE, will develop and maintain a dashboard tool to capture and summarize selected data concerning program effectiveness and the aggregate impact of Connecticut's workforce system in addressing the vision, goals, and principles described above.

The dashboard will be reviewed quarterly by the CETC Performance Evaluation Committee, to identify opportunities for improvement and convene system partners and stakeholders to share information and develop strategies to rectify identified challenges. Broad measures to be reviewed regularly are likely to include:

1. Business engagement and delivering value to business/employer customers.
2. Measurable skills development in terms of educational attainment and workforce credentials that matter to Connecticut businesses.
3. Securing jobs in demand occupations showing promise for long-term growth in industry sectors valuable to Connecticut's economic expansion.
4. Earned wages that help jobseekers and workers attain financial security and demonstrate career advancement.
5. Workforce system investments that generate a quality return.

## **State Strategy**

### **Strategies to Achieve Vision and Goals**

The Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC – the State Workforce Board) and the State agencies responsible for administration of the core WIOA programs encompassed by this Unified State Plan – Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL), Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DORS) – propose and will support a set of broadly-conceived strategies intended to achieve the vision and goals outlined above. These strategies will serve as a framework for Connecticut's implementation efforts, with corresponding detailed State and local implementing actions to be developed.

#### **A. Support Business Growth:**

1. Promote implementation of **business/employer-led industry partnerships** at both State and regional/local levels, focusing on targeted sectors. Consistent with principles and criteria developed by the WIOA Transition Business Engagement Work Group. Focus of these partnerships will be on high-priority, high-value, high-demand sectors and occupations.
2. Promote effective implementation of **regional/local sector-based initiatives** in targeted sectors, consistent with principles and criteria developed by the WIOA Transition Business Engagement Work Group, intended to address employers' priority needs, building on the achievements of existing successful regional sector initiatives. Strategically connect qualified jobseekers produced by the workforce system to job opportunities with businesses/employers benefitting from public investments, to strengthen the link between workforce development and economic development strategy.
3. Implement a **coordinated business/employer services model** through the American Job Center One-Stop system, engaging coordinated participation by a broad array of partners and stakeholders, to address business/employer customers' workforce needs, consistent

with the “single point of contact” model principles and criteria developed by the WIOA Transition Business Engagement Work Group.

4. Promote implementation of a **robust labor market information system** to buttress effective workforce system planning at State and regional/local levels, engaging the analytic capabilities of workforce system partners, including insight and intelligence from businesses and employers, to promote data-informed and data-driven decisions about program strategy and related investments. Build on and maximize the capabilities of CTDOL’s Training and Education Planning System (TEPS) tool to improve capabilities to analyze labor demand and supply, to help focus workforce development strategy. Develop and utilize a dashboard tool to capture, distill and analyze data on critical indicators to inform workforce planning and strategy. Strengthen the capabilities of the P20-WIN longitudinal data system.

**B. Strengthen Current Workforce:**

5. Promote expanded implementation of **effective incumbent worker training programs and services**, focusing on targeted industry sectors, maximizing opportunities for business/employer participation, consistent with administrative criteria and principles established by the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL).
6. Promote expanded implementation of **effective integrated employment and training/contextualized learning strategies** to improve skills acquisition and employment outcomes for targeted low-skill jobseekers, including adult education students and participants in time-limited public assistance. Expand proven best practices as feasible to include additional prospective participants, working closely with businesses/employers in key sectors seeking qualified skilled workers. Maintain fidelity to rigorous program standards. Use the recommendations of CETC’s 2015 State Plan Addressing Contextualized Learning, Early College and Career Certificate Programs as a framework.
7. Promote development and implementation of **aligned career pathways strategies** as an integral feature of industry partnerships and sector-based initiatives, with multiple on-off ramps for participants of varying skills and abilities, leading to employer-valued/validated credentials and certifications, consistent with principles and criteria developed by the WIOA Transition Business Engagement Work Group. Career pathways are equally valuable for adult jobseekers and young people, including students and out-of-school youth.
8. Maximize **opportunities for success for all individual jobseekers and workers** in Connecticut’s talent pool, promoting innovation, effective coordination, resource alignment and integrated service delivery to advance the employability and career prospects for the broadest possible range of customers, including (but not limited to) veterans, the long-term unemployed, public assistance participants, individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders, homeless individuals, out-of-school youth, low-skilled adults, limited English proficient, etc.

**C. Develop Future Talent:**

9. Build Connecticut’s **K-16 talent pipeline**, engaging a broad spectrum of education, higher education, workforce system and business partners and stakeholders, to prepare Connecticut youth with work and career readiness skills. Focus on regional/local sector-based initiatives, emphasizing career pathways approaches. Integrate a strengthened and

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expanded Summer Youth Employment Program into a comprehensive youth career pathways strategy. Expand early college programs, consistent with recommendations of CETC's 2015 *State Plan Addressing Contextualized Learning, Early College and Career Certificate Programs*.

10. Promote implementation of effective **developmental/transitional instruction and learning strategies** to ensure that recent Connecticut high school graduates are qualified for credit-bearing courses level upon college matriculation, or can quickly get up to speed.
11. Develop **pathways for mediocre-performing at-risk students and out-of-school youth**, leading to certifications and credentials that enhance their viability in the job market. Build on and expand the Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) program model to prepare academically at-risk high school students for college success. Build on and expand the opportunity youth coordinated career pathways model to help targeted out-of-school youth acquire valuable post-secondary credentials and get a job.

**D. Transform System Capacity:**

12. **Re-imagine delivery of customer services** to individual jobseekers and workers in the American Job Center One-Stop system. Develop and implement streamlined service flow with efficiently aligned and integrated processes implemented by coordinated service teams representing the full range of contributions from system partners and stakeholders, consistent with principles and criteria developed by the WIOA Transition Service Design and Delivery Work Group. Build on lessons learned from implementation of the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) and Secure Jobs pilots as models for innovative and effective multi-partner service coordination.
13. Develop and implement strong, effective **cross-entity/cross-program functional partnerships** to enhance efficient delivery of effective customer services. Develop shared governance structure with clear policies and procedures. Develop consensus on unified consistent messaging and communications to key audiences/market segments. Pursue critical resources collaboratively. Braid and leverage available resources strategically. Implement consistent cross-agency/cross-program staff training on shared/common functions and responsibilities.
14. Strengthen **regional collaboration between WDBs and Community Colleges** to focus strategy and align program design responsive to business/employer demand to develop students/customers qualified for good jobs in the local labor market.
15. Implement a **transparent performance system** for all WIOA core programs, expandable as feasible over time to include informative performance-related data from relevant programs not specifically included in this Unified State Plan. This strategy will build on the successful foundation of the *CETC Legislative Report Card* produced annually by the CTDOL Office of Research, to review labor market data and outcomes for recent graduates of the public higher education system and participants in key job training programs and services. Utilize and analyze cross-program performance measures. Use the performance accountability process to regularly review, monitor, assess and report on the impact of workforce system programs and related investments. Align technology systems and data platforms across agencies and programs as feasible to maximize efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

16. Conduct ongoing research and analysis to **identify opportunities for system continuous improvement** and maximize system capacity, making strategic use of data to focus training efforts and align resources. Develop, maintain, analyze and report on an updated statewide inventory of workforce-related programs, to inform strategy and as a source of information to help the American Job Center One-Stop system apprise customers of opportunities. Focus training investments and advocacy on clearly identified best practices for each targeted sector and each customer segment.
17. Invest in **state-of-the-art technology to improve cost-effective service delivery**, including technology-based instruction and e-learning, efficient access to employment opportunities, integrated across agencies to enhance general accessibility to programs and services for all customers irrespective of barriers and/or disabilities, etc.

**Vocational Rehabilitation Services (BESB)**

In addition to the broad system-wide goals and strategies discussed above, BESB and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) adopted a complementary set of strategies reflecting a commitment to increase employment opportunities for legally blind or visually impaired people through provision of vocational rehabilitation and supported employment services. Adopted strategies focus on: methods to expand and improve services; how a broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided at each stage of the rehabilitation process; outreach procedures to identify and serve Individuals with Disabilities from un-served and underserved populations; methods to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities; strategies to improve performance accountability measures; strategies to assist other components of the statewide workforce development system; and how these strategies will be used to achieve goals and priorities consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment and support innovation and expansion activity. Details are available in the plan for vocational rehabilitation and supported employment services included in this Unified State Plan.

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**Alignment Strategies**

As described in this Unified State Plan, representatives of State agencies responsible for administering core WIOA programs – CTDOL, DORS and CSDE – joined by representatives of other critical workforce system collaborators and stakeholders, will participate in ongoing integrated State- and local-level monitoring and oversight to identify gaps to be addressed and opportunities for effective program and resource alignment.

Lead responsibility to review and assure alignment of programs and resources falls to the CETC Executive Committee, which includes senior representatives of the core WIOA agencies and leaders of CETC committees and work groups. The Executive Committee’s focus on alignment will be informed by regular input from the Performance Evaluation Committee. This Committee will be supported by the CTDOL Performance and Accountability Unit and Office of Research and will be charged to: review system performance to ensure value and productivity of investments; analyze labor market information to identify gaps, needs and opportunities for innovation and improvement; and provide insight and guidance to the Executive Committee and CETC on appropriate actions.

## OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

### STATE STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

#### State Board Functions – Connecticut Employment and Training Commission

The Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) serves as Connecticut’s State Workforce Development Board. Originally established under the former Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), CETC was authorized in 1998 as the State Board under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and in July 2015 Governor Malloy designated CETC to serve as the State Workforce Development Board consistent with “alternative entity” provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The United States Department of Labor (USDOL) subsequently approved that designation.

Governor Malloy designated the Connecticut Department of Labor Office of Workforce Competitiveness to coordinate WIOA implementation efforts in Connecticut in its capacity as a workforce development policy advisor to the Governor and staff to CETC. With CETC’s endorsement, OWC established four Work Groups in Spring 2015 to prepare for the implementation of WIOA:

- Service Design and Delivery Work Group – Focusing on the effective and efficient operations of Connecticut’s American Jobs Centers One-Stop career system.
- Technology, Data, Outcomes Work Group – Addressing the collection and reporting of data across core WIOA programs to support transparent performance accountability.
- Business Engagement Work Group – Proposing actions to promote strong employer-led industry partnerships, sector strategies and career pathways initiatives.
- Administration/Governance Work Group – Responsible for ensuring that requisite administrative policies, agreements, procedures and structures are in place to support and sustain an aligned and integrated statewide workforce system.

Moving forward into 2016, it is anticipated that CETC will revise its organizational structure to be able to address the priorities identified in this Unified State Plan and to satisfy its functional responsibilities as the State Board under WIOA. That organizational structure will be consistent with WIOA requirements while also reflecting CETC’s unique history and experience.

As CETC’s revised organizational structure evolves, it is likely that the Work Groups described above – or similar in form and function – will remain in existence at least through calendar year 2016, to provide operational guidance and direction to Connecticut’s WIOA implementation efforts. During this ongoing transition period CETC members will be encouraged and invited to participate on the Work Groups. Some information, insights, ideas and proposals developed by the Work Groups may be shared with and reviewed by CETC for endorsement as necessary.

Although details remain to be worked out, and changes are inevitable, it is envisioned that in its capacity as the State Workforce Development Board, CETC is likely operate through a structure comprising the following committees and work groups:

**Executive Committee** – Comprising CETC officers, Executive Director of the Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC), Co-Chairs of standing committees and work groups, and selected CETC

members appointed by the CETC Chair. Executive Committee will act on CETC's behalf as necessary in the interim between regularly scheduled CETC meetings, a particularly important role during the upcoming months of system transition under WIOA. Going forward, the Executive Committee will focus on ensuring system alignment and will serve as CETC's de facto planning body during at least the first two years of implementation covered by this Unified State Plan.

To ensure that critical transitional responsibilities are addressed efficiently and effectively, it is anticipated that the Administration/Governance Work Group described above will function as a key resource in the year ahead. The Work Group will report to the CETC Executive Committee as needed, to coordinate CETC's responsibilities to:

- Oversee development, implementation, and modification of the Unified State Plan.
- Review administrative policies, program efforts, and recommendations intended to support a comprehensive, streamlined, integrated statewide workforce system.
- Propose actions to strengthen, continuously improve and overcome barriers to system coordination and alignment, to avoid duplication.
- Propose workforce regions for effective planning and designation of workforce areas.
- Collaborate with CTDOL's WIOA Administrative Unit and Office of Workforce Competitiveness to develop and approve funding allocation formulas for local workforce areas concerning adult and youth programs.
- Propose other policies that may be required to promote adopted statewide workforce objectives and enhance the performance of Connecticut's workforce system.

***Business Partnership Committee*** – Comprising CETC members representing business, invited employers representing key industry sectors, and selected workforce system stakeholders. This committee will focus on: developing strategies to promote effective business-led industry partnerships, sector strategies focusing on key in-demand and emerging sectors driving economic growth in Connecticut; career pathways initiatives reflecting best practices; and, other partnership opportunities to enhance the responsiveness of Connecticut's workforce system in meeting the talent and skills needs of Connecticut employers. It is anticipated that the committee will serve as an umbrella/framework for sector specific work groups, addressing the workforce priorities of designated high priority sectors, at both State and regional/local levels.

Over time it is anticipated that CETC will promote the idea of supporting sector-specific work groups that operate quasi-independently, but use CETC as a vehicle to share information on a regular basis concerning priorities, challenges, opportunities, proposed strategies and initiatives, etc. The committee intends to work with existing industry-led sector partnerships – at the State and local levels – as an overarching vehicle to promote and support their efforts.

Initially the Business Partnership Committee will reach out to CETC business membership to identify prominent industry sector work group to solicit input from.

The Business Partnership Committee will have lead responsibility within CETC to develop and promote policies and strategies reflecting evidence-based best practices intended to:

- Build and sustain strong industry partnerships and sector strategies in targeted sectors.
- Develop effective strategies to reach out to, engage with and meet the needs of Connecticut businesses and employers as valued customers of the state's workforce system.

**Service Coordination Committee** – Comprising selected CETC members and representatives of State agencies and other entities participating as partners in Connecticut’s American Job Centers One-Stop career system, this committee will pick up on the work conducted by the Service Design and Delivery Work Group (see above), lead responsibility within CETC to:

- Identify and promote dissemination of best practices information concerning operation of effective One-Stop centers, training programs responsive to real-time labor market analysis, and development of effective local boards.
- Develop effective strategies to reach out to individuals in need of and seeking assistance in developing necessary skills and opportunities to pursue career objectives.
- Propose statewide policies to coordinate and continuously improve One-Stop system services, including: criteria and procedures for WIBs to use in assessing One-Stop effectiveness and pursue continuous improvement; guidance for the allocation of One-Stop infrastructure funds; roles and contributions of One-Stop partners.
- Develop strategies for One-Stop system technological improvements to: enhance digital literacy skills; accelerate acquisition of skills and credentials; strengthen staff professional development; ensure technology accessibility.
- Propose development of staff training strategies across partner agencies.

Comparable partner transition teams will be established within each local workforce area as necessary. The broad objective is to ensure that all relevant partners are engaged in a productive effort to ensure maximum coordination of services for workforce system customers to achieve desired outcomes and pursue opportunities for continuous improvement.

**Career Pathways Committee** – Comprising selected CETC members, partners and stakeholders representing the interests of both youth and incumbent workers for whom effective pathways strategies are critical to pursue productive careers, reflecting best practices from recent initiatives in Connecticut and nationally. Engaging businesses in key sectors to help propose strategy and design initiatives addressing employers’ specifications and occupational requirements, the committee will promote examples of and lessons-learned from successful career pathways efforts. The Career Pathways Committee will have lead responsibility within CETC to:

- Support effective career pathways initiatives closely linked to sector strategies.
- Propose strategies to increase access to and acquisition of industry-validated, portable, stackable credentials.

**Performance Accountability Committee** – Comprising selected CETC members and designated senior staff from key partner agencies and workforce system stakeholders, this committee will provide support for and oversight of Connecticut’s efforts to implement an effective, comprehensive, transparent workforce data collection and reporting strategy consistent with WIOA requirements. The committee will receive and review regularly scheduled/produced performance status reports – including a quarterly dashboard – and propose actions as necessary to address improvement opportunities, reporting to CETC on a quarterly basis. The Performance Accountability Committee will have lead responsibility within CETC to:

- Collaborate with the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) Performance and Accountability Unit and other State agency partners and stakeholders to develop and update comprehensive State workforce system performance accountability measures.

- Collaborate with CTDOL Performance and Accountability Unit and other State agency partners and stakeholders to help develop and monitor implementation of strategies to align technology and data systems across One-Stop partner programs.
- Collaborate with CTDOL Performance and Accountability Unit and State agency partners and stakeholders to help prepare, review and endorse annual performance reports.
- Collaborate with CTDOL Office of Research and other State agency partners and stakeholders to help develop and monitor a statewide workforce and labor market information system.

Within available resources, CTDOL's Office of Workforce Competitiveness will coordinate professional staff support and technical assistance for CETC's efforts to meet its obligations as the State Workforce Development Board.

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### **Implementing State Strategy – WIOA Core Program Strategies**

Core WIOA program activities in Connecticut will be aligned as partners build upon existing inter-agency relationships and program collaborations.

#### **American Job Centers Customer Flow:**

- Walk-in customers at comprehensive American Job Centers (with exception of Hamden/New Haven) will be greeted at main reception desk by a team of CTDOL and WIB partner staff, as front desk coverage will be a shared responsibility between the two partners.
- CTDOL will provide a full time Unemployment Insurance staff expert at the front desk of the Hartford, Bridgeport, New London, Waterbury and Hamden offices to answer any Unemployment Insurance-related inquiries from customers.
- The Career Centers in each comprehensive American Job Center will be staffed jointly by CTDOL and WIB staff (With the exception of New Haven), with each partner committed to assigning a minimum of one staff member on a full time basis.
- When a job seeker enters an American Job center seeking services, the American Job center staff will first determine whether or not the customer is registered in to the new CTHires system used to track the services provided to each job seeker. If the customer is not registered, they will be guided to a computer and asked to complete the CTHires customer registration. If the customer needs assistance in completing the registration process, staff assistance will be provided to them.
- All American Job Center customers will be provided with some form of orientation to the employment services that are available to them through all of the various partners. Job Center staff will discuss the customer's job search plans to steer her/him in the right direction. Customers will get the opportunity to sign up for a number of free employment readiness workshops, such as Job Search Strategies, Job Interviewing Techniques, Resume Preparation and many others. If the customer needs one-on-one job search assistance, career counseling, or a resume critique, every effort will be made to provide that service. If the customer is interested in self-service activities, s/he can utilize the Career Center computers, fax machines, copiers, resume paper, free postage for applications and resumes, etc. Customers will also be informed about the various services available under WIOA.
- Customers who self-identify as Veterans will complete a Veterans Triage form to determine if they have a significant barrier to employment and qualify for one-on-one job search

assistance from a CTDOL Veterans Representative. Jobseekers with a self-disclosed disability may be referred to either a Disability Program Navigator or Disability Employment Initiative representative (depending on region). Jobseekers with disabilities may also be referred to DORS for service. All customers have the option of accessing the universal services available to everyone in the Center.

- Two full-time staff will be assigned to each of the career centers in the comprehensive American Job Centers to support and assist jobseekers in whatever way needed. Jobseekers needing to improve computer skills will be referred to a computer skills workshop or drop-in computer skills classroom to work on developing or enhancing their computer skills.
- Customers interested in WIOA services will be connected to the appropriate WIOA representative or WIOA information session.

Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) services and WDB Title I services will be co-located wherever/whenever possible with Title II/Adult Education and Title IV/Rehabilitation Services. It is understood that space availability and cost may be barriers to achieving the objective of co-location with Adult Education and DORS, but that remains the objective. If/where co-location is not feasible, all staff in each of the comprehensive American Job Centers will be trained to become familiar with services provided by Adult Education and DORS and be able to make an intelligent, informed decision about when to refer a customer to one of these agencies. In turn, all staff at Adult Education and DORS will be trained to become familiar with the services available at the American Job Centers across Connecticut, capable of making referrals to those Job Centers for any customer.

The American Job Centers will be hubs from which jobseekers can be referred to sector-focused programs in targeted sectors such as Manufacturing, Health Care or Construction. Job Developers from organizations like DORS may choose to join the Regional Business Service teams in each region. American Job Center staff will be familiar with these targeted sector grants and programs in each region and capable of making informed referrals to them. In some situations, targeted sector programs may be co-located at an American Job Center. Accessible printed information will be available to jobseekers concerning these programs.

#### **CTDOL-Administered Services**

WIOA Title 1 and Wagner-Peyser services will be available through four of Connecticut's comprehensive American Job Centers. The one exception is the south central local workforce area where CTDOL devotes considerable Wagner-Peyser resources to support an office in Hamden and the WDB, Workforce Alliance, devotes considerable resources to support an office in New Haven. Ultimately these offices will merge into a single, affordable, comprehensive center, preferably in New Haven, in a site that meets customers' needs of our customers, is on a public bus line, has adequate parking, and is ADA compliant.

In four of Connecticut's five comprehensive AJC centers – Hartford, Waterbury, New London, Bridgeport – and also in Hamden, CTDOL will provide the following services:

**Wagner-Peyser Labor Exchange:** Under the Wagner-Peyser Act, CTDOL Employment Services (ES) receives federal funding to provide universal access to an integrated array of employment-related labor exchange services, including job search assistance, job referral, and placement assistance for jobseekers, reemployment services to unemployment insurance claimants, and recruitment services to businesses with posted job openings. During the last full program year a total of 28,668 Wagner-Peyser customers benefitted from employment services, including:

assistance with career choices and job searches; job search resources (i.e., fax machines and computers with Internet connection); workshops on résumé writing, interviewing, and career exploration; information about specific companies and labor market trends; and, one-on-one career counseling. An additional 9,042 individuals received résumé services at CTDOL-sponsored events and in the AJC centers. Résumé preparation services were provided by staff with board-certified credentials from the Professional Association of Résumé Writers.

Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA): The Unemployment Insurance (UI) program delivers a key service in the integrated workforce system by providing temporary financial assistance to eligible workers during periods of unemployment. The reemployment needs of UI claimants and the prevention and detection of UI improper payments are addressed through the UI Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment program (REA), providing claimants an entry point to a full array of services available at the American Job Centers, ensuring that claimants comply with all UI eligibility requirements. Recent studies have concluded that REA has helped other states accelerate the time it takes the unemployed to return to the workforce.

Connecticut's UI REA program will be implemented statewide in five American Job Centers and will target claimants with higher weekly benefit rates who are least likely to exhaust their unemployment benefits and thus, return to work quicker. CTDOL will conduct one UI REA per selected claimant for a total of 7,500 UI REAs in the program's first year (2016). UI REA appointments will be conducted in the Bridgeport, Hartford, Hamden, New London, and Waterbury offices. All claimants selected to participate will be required to report in-person to receive the mandated services listed below. Each claimant will be referred to appropriate service(s) and/or training consistent with a reemployment plan.

#### Required REA Services

- UI eligibility assessment and referral to adjudication, as appropriate, if a potential issue is identified
- Provision of labor market and career information that is specific to the claimant's needs.
- Registration with the state's job bank.
- Orientation to AJC services.
- Development and review of an individualized reemployment plan that includes work search activities, accessing services provided through an AJC or using self-service tools, and/or approved training.
- Referral to at least one reemployment service and/or training based on an assessment of the claimant's most critical need identified in the individualized reemployment plan.

The Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program will replace UI Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) program. Once CTDOL transitions to the RESEA program, the target population served will be those claimants most likely to exhaust their UI benefits and UCX claimants. Under WIOA, the UI program is a vital workforce system service and mandatory One-Stop partner in the American Job Centers. UI claimants continue to be priority customers. Both reemployment programs require the leveraging of partner programs to meet the needs of UI claimants in order to expedite their return to work.

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA): Trade Adjustment Assistance helps individuals belonging to worker groups certified by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) whose jobs were believed to be affected by increased imports or production shift to a foreign country. To assist

eligible workers return to suitable employment as quickly as possible, benefits include training; job search, relocation and readjustment allowances; health coverage tax credit; and wage subsidies for individuals 50 and older who return to lower-paying work. TAA activity during the program 2014-15 program year included:

- *Worker group certifications*: Petitions filed on behalf of workers from 11 companies were approved this past program year, with the workers determined by USDOL to be adversely affected by foreign trade and certified as eligible to apply for TAA; petitions filed on behalf of workers from five companies were denied.
- *Individual applications*: 432 individuals were identified by USDOL as potentially eligible to apply for TAA benefits and 286 eligibility determinations were issued in response to submitted applications.
- *Training*: 252 individuals entered TAA-approved training programs and 548 individuals were active in training. Training payments totaled \$2,649,822.
- *Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA)*: A total of \$5,418,267 was paid for 11,124 weekly TRA claims, representing 3,581 weeks of basic TRA, 6,980 weeks of additional TRA, 246 weeks of remedial TRA and 317 weeks of completion TRA. Individuals who satisfy applicable program requirements may receive one or more types of TRA income support: up to 26 weeks of basic TRA; up to 52, 65, or 78 weeks of additional TRA, depending on the Trade Act petition number; and up to 26 weeks of remedial/completion TRA.
- *Reemployment/Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance (R/ATAA)*: A total of \$294,860 in payments was issued to eligible workers.
- *Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC)*: HCTC tax credit covered 72.5% of qualified health insurance premiums for eligible individuals and their families. This IRS program expired January 1, 2014, and the credit was not available during this program year.

Customer Co-Enrollment into Wagner-Peyser and WIOA: In June 2015, CTDOL implemented a policy in coordination with the five WIBs to ensure that all TAA-eligible customers are referred to the WIOA provider in each region for co-enrollment into WIOA, thereby enabling TAA participants to take maximum advantage of benefits available through both programs.

Enhanced Reemployment Services (ERS): CTDOL staff will continue to prioritize Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants served by the Enhanced Reemployment Services (ERS) program. ERS identifies UI claimants likely to exhaust their benefits, unlikely to return to their previous occupation, and in need of job search assistance services to make a successful transition to a new job. In the 2014-15 program year, orientation sessions were conducted for 7,434 ERS participants. Sessions included provision of labor market information, career guidance, information about CT.jobs, overview of American Job Center services, and details on UI benefit rights and responsibilities. Many ERS participants also benefited from direct, individual employment services and training to facilitate their return to work, resulting in 20,803 additional reemployment services provided to facilitate their return to work.

Veterans Services: Connecticut's 300,000 veterans represent 9% of the state's population. The CTDOL Office for Veterans Workforce Development advocates for and assists Connecticut veterans and Covered Persons with their employment and training needs through job service assistance, referral to supportive services, intensive career services (case management), State and federal program information/referral, insuring priority of services for veterans and encouraging the use of all American Job Center resources. One-on-one job search assistance will be available to veterans in all of the six American Job Centers in Connecticut either on a walk in basis or by appointment. Veterans qualifying for one-on-one services include: Military members

who have separated within the past 36 months; Service connected disabled veterans; Campaign badge veterans; Veterans with non-service disabilities; Veterans with 180 consecutive days active duty, not serving in support of any conflict; National Guard/Reserves members (Title 10); Homeless veterans; and other Covered Persons. Several outstations also provide veterans services including: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs-Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Office; Connecticut State Colleges and Universities; VA Medical Centers; US Veterans Affairs Veterans Centers; and local homeless shelters. During the last full program year a total of 5,660 Veterans were served by all staff in the American Job Centers. A total of 1,985 Veterans were served by CTDOL Veterans Workforce Development staff.

### **Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)**

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) administers core programs and services listed in the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (WIOA Title II). Each local and regional board of education must establish and maintain a program of adult classes or provide for the participation in a program of adult classes for its adult residents (Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-69).

#### **CSDE-Administered Activities**

1. To support shared governance structure, CSDE will participate in shared governance with regard to WIOA Unified Plan programs through the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC), the State Workforce Investment Board.
2. To strengthen interagency partnerships, CSDE will:
  - a. Share system infrastructure costs.
  - b. Provide services through the One-Stop system.
  - c. Make funding available to each of Connecticut's five designated local workforce areas.
  - d. Review and evaluate proposals with a team including representatives of the WDBs and One-Stop system partners.
  - e. Assess local workforce areas' needs and WDBs' goals in conjunction with each WDB.
  - f. Refer students to One-Stop Centers, monitor, act on referrals from One-Stop Centers.
  - g. Provide appropriate training for One-Stop partners.
3. To strengthen coordination and collaboration with key educational sectors and employers, CSDE will:
  - a. Align Integrated Basic Education and Training (I-BEST) training curriculum with employer/labor market needs. (I-BEST is Connecticut's contextualized integrated education and training program strategy.)
  - b. Partner with community colleges to assist adults' transition to postsecondary education and training.
  - c. Work with the One-Stop system to address the needs of local customers and employers and link adult education strategically to other employment and training services.
4. Work with the State's longitudinal data system and use a common intake form to provide consistently defined and applied data from adult education programs.
5. To continue to invest in integrated technology to meet the unified technology requirements of WIOA and other Federal initiatives, CSDE will work to interface the Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS) with the State's common intake and reporting system.
6. To support engagement in continuous research and analysis to realize the potential of state's workforce programs and delivery systems, CSDE will continue to offer the I-BEST program and ensure that it is aligned with labor market needs.

7. To assist the entire WIOA partnership deliver a unified message, CSDE will participate in coordinated system-wide efforts to increase awareness of the Connecticut workforce system.

#### **DORS (BRS/BESB)-Administered Activities**

BRS will fund the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment (SE) Programs assisting people with disabilities to find jobs.

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#### **Alignment Outside Unified State Plan**

Activities conducted for and services provided to jobseekers, workers and employers through the core WIOA programs covered by this Unified State Plan represent a significant portion of Connecticut's larger informal workforce development system. Other vital entities and stakeholders in the broadly conceived workforce system include the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS), Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), Board of Regents for Higher Education/Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (BoR/CSCU); Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) K-12 comprehensive schools system, Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS), an extensive network of private colleges and universities represented by the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), proprietary schools, regional/local Chambers of Commerce, sector-focused business associations, organized labor, community-based organizations (CBOs) and non-profit service providers.

A sample of recent innovative workforce-related initiatives implemented by various entities includes [Note: Brief descriptions of these efforts will be drafted/included in final version of Plan]:

- DSS: SNAP E&T
- DECD: Manufacturing Innovation Fund
- BoR/CSCU: Advanced Manufacturing Centers
- CSDE: Norwalk Early College Academy
- CTHSS
- CCIC
- Chambers: Northwest CT Manufacturing Coalition
- Business Associations: NHMA or EAMA
- Labor: LIUNA Training/Education Fund or 1199 Training Fund
- CBOs
- Non-Profits: Career Resources/STRIVE

Collectively this spectrum of stakeholders represents more workforce development-related resources and programs, serving more participants, than do the core WIOA programs covered by this Unified State Plan. The stakeholders in Connecticut's broad and informal workforce system identified above have an impressive history and track record of collaboration in developing effective strategies and minimizing duplication. The broad objective of the WIOA Transition Work Groups is to share and review timely information about relevant programs and services offered among all pertinent workforce stakeholders, to identify opportunities for alignment and coordination, and to minimize unintended duplication of effort. Similar regional partner transition teams may be established by each regional WDB to develop and share comparable information among workforce stakeholders at the local/regional level.

OWC will update CT's inventory of workforce development programs and services, built on the information generated by these teams, to help target opportunities for coordination and to minimize the likelihood of duplication. The inventory will be a valuable resource for the CETC and the workforce system.

**CSDE: Alignment with Activities Outside of the Plan**

CSDE will work in conjunction with Unified State Plan partners through ongoing participation in the efforts of CETC (the State Workforce Investment Board) to align activities with other agencies that operate outside scope of this Unified State Plan.

**DORS: Alignment with Activities Outside of the Plan (BESB)**

Department of Rehabilitation (DORS) Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and Bureau of Educational Services to the Blind (BESB) collaborate and cooperate in a coordinated manner through a set of specific agreements with a wide array of organizations, entities and programs among workforce-related partners and stakeholders not specifically covered by this Unified State Plan, to pursue and achieve their respective objectives. Details are available in the state plan for vocational rehabilitation and supported employment services incorporated in this Unified State Plan.

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**Service Coordination for Individual Customers**

Key State agency and local WDB partners have all been directly engaged in the statewide process of planning for WIOA implementation at State and local levels, emphasizing coordination of services and resources to provide high quality customer services and requisite support services. The Commissioners of CTDOL, DORS and CSDE, respectively, serve as members of the CETC, the entity responsible for review, endorsement and modification of the Unified State Plan to ensure coordination objectives are met. Senior staff from each agency are active participants in the WIOA Transition Work Groups established to develop cross-program/cross-agency strategies to coordinate service delivery efficiently for individual workforce system customers and jobseekers.

Staff from these agencies played major roles in developing proposals reached by these Work Groups (addressing: data collection and reporting for performance accountability, effective engagement with businesses partners, and service design and delivery through the One-Stop system) that form the core of this Unified State Plan, much of which describes the commitment to planned coordination. Commitments to service and resource coordination among these State agencies are captured in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) executed by the respective State agency Commissioners.

Similarly, at the regional/local level, representatives of these State agencies participated in the planning efforts of each of Connecticut's five WDBs to develop local WIOA plans, emphasizing cross-agency/cross-program coordination consistent with provisions described in the endorsed Unified State Plan.

Connecticut will establish a coordinated State/local process that enables the key State agencies responsible for core WIOA programs – Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL), Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education – and other relevant and appropriate

partners and stakeholders to make informed, collaborative decisions concerning how the workforce system responds to the needs of the jobseekers and employers.

At the State-level, it is anticipated that the WIOA Transition Work Groups (which will include CETC members) will be operational through 2016. Their term beyond 2016 will be determined based on need. The Office of Workforce Competitiveness will provide support and technical assistance.

At the local level, Regional Partner Transition Teams will be convened and organized as necessary in each of Connecticut's five local workforce areas by the local WDBs. The WDBs and regional CTDOL staff will collaborate to ensure that each team receives requisite support – convening and facilitating meetings communicating among participants, etc., necessary to function effectively. Each Regional Partner Transition Team will consist of well-informed and empowered regional representatives of the core WIOA State agencies (as feasible) and selected regional partners and stakeholders. The WDBs and CTDOL will identify and reach out to prospective participating entities, which will select their own representatives to participate. The objective is to be inclusive while maintaining a group of manageable size.

Regional Partner Transition Teams will meet on a bi-monthly basis to review and discuss the status of service delivery efforts for individuals and jobseekers served by the integrated regional workforce system, identify service delivery gaps, and consider improvement opportunities for coordinated service delivery. Each team will serve as a forum where regional partners can raise concerns to the attention of the others, clarify the resources at their disposal to help address shared challenges, strategize as a team and problem-solve collectively. This approach is similar to the Consortium model currently operating in the North Central local workforce area, where partner organizations meet on a regular basis to provide oversight and guidance to the regional One-Stop system. Regional Partner Transition Teams will include stakeholders from organizations representing individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders, the homeless, low-literate individuals, older individuals, TANF participants, etc., to ensure that their needs are met.

The Administration WIOA Transition Work-Group staffed by OWC, will receive regular updates and information from the Regional Partner Transition Teams on how WIOA implementation efforts are progressing within each of Connecticut's five workforce areas, and will be responsible for providing guidance and direction to the five Regional Partner Transition Teams. The work group will be both receiver and disseminator of information to ensure that there is a consistent approach and realistic transition strategy throughout Connecticut that all key partners understand and support. It is anticipated that CETC will develop and embrace performance benchmarks focusing on effective cross-agency/cross-program partnership and coordination in delivering effective services that achieve results for individuals and jobseeker customers of the workforce system.

CETC will adopt One-Stop certification criteria emphasizing resource and service coordination. CETC will adopt benchmarks that measure the effectiveness of service and resource coordination. The CETC Performance Accountability Committee will monitor and report regularly on the status of this priority objective.

Connecticut's American Job Center (AJC) One-Stop system is the vehicle through which service delivery and targeting, leveraging and braiding of available resources is coordinated. Connecticut has a history and tradition of innovative collaboration among multiple partners and

stakeholders to coordinate services and resources at the local level through its One-Stop system. To establish an overarching framework for consistent service and resource coordination going forward, CETC adopted a vision and guiding principles for Connecticut's AJC One-Stop system, based on proposals developed by the Service Design and Delivery Work Group, comprising experienced staff from key workforce system partners.

Vision: Comprehensive American Job Centers in Connecticut will provide excellent customer service to jobseekers, workers and businesses, in Centers that reflect innovative and effective service design, operated with integrated management systems and high-quality staffing, to achieve desired outcomes.

Guiding Principles: Connecticut's AJC One-Stop system will operate in a manner consistent with the following guiding principles.

Customer Service:

- Comprehensive Centers provide a welcoming environment to all customer groups served, by staff who are courteous, polite, responsive and helpful.
- The One-Stop system strive to improve the skills of jobseekers and worker customers, using labor market information to focus training efforts on genuine career opportunities, offering access to training that develops skills leads to industry-validated credentials, and placing customers into productive employment.
- The One-Stop system pursues opportunities for individual jobseekers and workers at all levels of experience.
- One-Stop system offers career services that motivate, support and empower customers.
- The One-Stop system emphasizes the importance of demonstrable skill development, through effective assessment and training services.
- Comprehensive Centers develop, offer and deliver quality services to business customers. Business Services staff understand their customers' needs and priorities, identify and develop effective strategies, and align available services among partners.

Service Design:

- Comprehensive Centers utilize an integrated intake process, coordinated by effective, expert front line staff for all customers.
- The One-Stop system connects business customers to practices and strategies that actively engage industry partnerships, making effective use of timely economic and labor market information, linked to sector strategies and career pathways efforts.
- The One-Stop system strikes a balance between its traditional labor exchange role and the need for strategic talent development targeting employers' priorities, emphasizing the importance of regional approaches.
- One-Stop system facilities, programs and services are physically and programmatically accessible to all customers.
- The One-Stop system includes both Center-based service delivery and through virtual alternative sites, including public libraries, community-based organizations, etc.)
- The One-Stop system incorporates and values innovative evidence-based service effective delivery strategies.

Management and Staffing:

- Regular operations of comprehensive Centers reflect robust partnerships among partners, with integrated staff offering seamless services.
- One-Stop system staff are all properly trained and equipped to do their job. Staff are cross-trained by function.
- One-Stop system services are organized and integrated by function, rather than by program, relying on effective, cross-agency/cross-program functional teams.
- The One-Stop system employs an efficient, integrated case management strategy.
- Comprehensive Centers are staffed with experienced, effective, trained career counselors.
- One-Stop system activities are guided by explicit set of operational policies/procedures.
- The One-Stop system uses common performance measures.

#### Services for Jobseekers:

One-Stop system services generally available to jobseekers (including military veterans, individuals with disabilities, mature/older workers, etc.) in comprehensive AJC Centers include: common intake (CTHires); access to labor market information; skills assessments; Dislocated Worker certification; Workshops; resume development/interviewing assistance (group/individual); access to support services (e.g., transportation assistance, child care, etc.); job postings; access to copier/fax/phones; computer access; job search assistance; access to Trade Adjustment Act services; career counseling; job placement services; Unemployment Insurance access assistance; case management; referrals to occupational skills training; access to adult education services (ABE/GED); linkage to SNAP E&T; Jobs First Employment Services (JFES); and benefits counseling.

#### **CSDE: Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Individuals**

Through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, CSDE will solicit eligible agencies to provide services to eligible individuals who are 16 years old or older, are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under Connecticut law, are basic skills deficient, do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or are English language learners. Adult education programs will serve as the major Unified Plan Partner entry point for individuals who lack basic skills. Once a participant has enrolled, adult education provider staff will refer participants to a One-Stop Center or Youth Provider to conduct a workforce assessment and develop an educational/career plan. Once participants meet adult education exit criteria, they will be sent back to a One-Stop Center for re-evaluation. A unified referral management system will help local programs track participants as they move from agency-to-agency. This system will allow programs to give timely assistance to participants if they get stuck or seem to be dropping out. Information will be shared with adult education partners about adult education eligibility requirements, as well as dates, times, and locations of sites where adult education is offered.

#### **DORS: Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Individuals**

BRS provides services in 16 offices across Connecticut where consumers may apply for assistance. In three of these locations, BRS is co-located with at least one core partner program. In several other locations, offices are in close physical proximity to partners. As long-term lease obligations and other logistical issues prevent movement toward increasing the number of co-locations, it is believed that formalizing referral processes and creating a service delivery structure that encourages partner collaborations will lead to improved coordination in services. BRS intends to assign staff specifically to each American Job Center (AJC) to act as a dedicated liaison. In addition, he/she will be expected to serve on all relevant committees and work groups at the AJC. This will allow partner agencies to easily direct AJC customers who have disabilities

to BRS, and BRS staff to connect consumers to appropriate AJC partners directly. BRS will continue these relationships in the places where they exist and create them in all other AJCs.

The Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program offers a wide range of services to eligible individuals, including guidance and counseling, mobility training, rehabilitation technology, adaptive equipment, rehabilitation teaching, job coaching, on-the-job training, low vision services, as well as a variety of skills assessments, are among the services provided.

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### **Service Coordination for Business Customers**

Connecticut's One-Stop workforce system has a strong tradition of cooperation among partners and coordination of effort across agencies in providing services to business customers. Each comprehensive American Job Center features a distinct Business Services Team comprising designated professional staff from the CTDOL, the regional WDB in that local workforce area, and/or the entity contracting with the WDB to provide business services, and other stakeholders and partners, the mix varying by region and local circumstances. Going forward, central to the efforts to serve employer customers framed in this Unified State Plan, Connecticut has adopted a set of criteria to serve as a framework guiding the efforts of partners in providing comprehensive high-quality services to address business' workforce priorities. These criteria were developed by the Business Engagement Work Group, comprising expert staff, experienced in and knowledgeable about working directly with business customers, and reflect lessons learned from effective practice in Connecticut.

Each comprehensive American Job Center will organize Business Services functions to serve business customers in a single, unified, coordinated team structure. Participants will include: regional staff of CTDOL, the local WDB, contractual operators of the business services function in the Center, representatives of the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD); Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) Vocational Rehabilitation Program (including Bureau of Education and Services to the Blind – BESB), Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Bureau of Adult Education (and/or designated local adult education providers), regional community colleges, and other stakeholders that may be invited to participate, including representatives of the Technical High Schools, etc. The Business Services Teams will be encouraged to reach out proactively to engage and communicate with regional/local economic development officials to share intelligence, identify job-matching opportunities, etc. As feasible, these economic development professionals will be encouraged to participate on the regional teams.

Each regional Business Services Team will strive to operate as a "single point of contact" in dealing with business customers to ensure efficiency in delivering effective services that meet their needs. Each Business Services Team will attempt to manage and limit the number and frequency of contacts with individual businesses, assuming responsibility to collaborate in coordinating services from among a broad range of options available across programs and across agencies, to provide each business customer a set of services options and strategies, and to communicate consistently and easily. What happens among workforce system partners "behind the curtain" of the system is and should be irrelevant to business customers and the quality of service they receive.

The guiding principles that frame this unified, coordinated Business Services Team structure are adopted from standards developed and used successfully in the North Central workforce area:

- It's not about us – It's all about the Business!
- We are committed to providing service to Business customers that is seamless.
- All job openings for which recruitment support is provided must be posted by Business customers in the CTHires databank.
- All posted job openings will be communicated/accessible to the full network of prospective jobseekers.
- All job openings and recruitment efforts will be communicated to all Business Services Team members within 24 hours of becoming known.

Business Services Team participants will use one common information system – CTHires. The Business Services Team will schedule regular working meetings among all participating partners to share information and coordinate strategy. Participants on the regional Business Service Teams will be cross-trained on an ongoing basis to ensure consistency of effective practice in serving employer customers.

Recruitment efforts with business customers will be scheduled collectively among partners, to maximize impact. Businesses seeking services and support from the Business Services Team will be vetted to ensure their eligibility and appropriateness. While it is understood that job opportunities identified and developed by the publicly funded workforce system are accessible to all prospective jobseekers, the Business Services Team will conduct a responsible level of pre-screening of candidates to promote an opportunity for satisfactory job matches. It is anticipated that efforts to match qualified jobseekers with vetted job openings will be a key feature of customized regional sector strategy initiatives.

Information developed to describe the programs and services available to business customers will be consistent, addressing the full range of options available in the local area. Efforts to promote available business services will be marketed extensively, consistent with a focused customer outreach strategy in each region. Effective use of social media will be promoted as a priority tool to drive customer traffic and communicate about service options. The *Business Services Weekly* newsletter will be used as a common vehicle to communicate consistent information among regional Business Services Team members statewide.

#### **CSDE: Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Employers**

CSDE promotes workforce preparation skills including literacy instruction, employability skills, career exploration and development, and links to employment, employment services and other options to respond to the evolving workforce needs of Connecticut's business community and promote individual self-sufficiency. Providers develop partnerships with local businesses for on-site workforce education classes to assist employees perform specific job tasks and increase productivity.

#### **DORS: Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Employers**

A "Team CT" model of cross-agency collaboration in serving businesses/employers will be established, providing a full range of available services through coordinated points of contact. What happens among system partners should be seamless for business/employer customers. One "Team" in each region should include (at minimum) knowledgeable, empowered representatives of: CTDOL, WIBs, One-Stop operator/contractor, DORS/BRS/BESB, Adult Education (mix of CSDE staff and/or rotating local adult education entities), Community Colleges (rotating among regional colleges), local economic development officials...plus any other

relevant entities, to be determined/customized to meet regional/local realities (e.g., DECD, Technical High School, independent colleges, etc.)

Business participants need some “training” from system reps about what system has to offer, to help business partners become more effective in that role.

Co-location of Business Team partner staff is an aspirational ideal. Space availability, staffing limitations, etc. may limit feasibility, but still to strive for if/as/when feasible.

From the perspective of the DORS Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB), the primary goal of coordinated activities with employers is to establish long-term partnerships that foster a mutually beneficial relationship for both the employer and BESB clients. A key component of BESB’s Employment Management Professionals strategy is working with employers to develop long-standing relationships built on genuine interest in the work of each employer, their needs and their priorities. This could mean that an actual job opening for a particular client may not come along for some time, but the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is nonetheless a resource employer can turn to for information, referrals to other service providers, and to learn about job site accommodations and provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

With these relationships, even when employers may not be immediately hiring, they can offer other valuable services such as informational interviews, job shadowing opportunities and work assessment site hosting. Company tours can further be arranged for BESB clients to learn about a wide variety of careers, particularly important to transition-age youth clients who may otherwise have very limited exposure to actual job sites. Worksites where current or former BESB clients of the Bureau are employed are particularly beneficial. The opportunity to mentor these young people helps them to learn directly from another legally blind individual about careers in many of the occupations that provide solid earnings and long-term stability.

BESB is enthusiastic about participating actively in a strong and collaborative strategy with the other workforce partners who engage in employer outreach, with a focus on offering employers a seamless and coordinated team approach to job order placing and matching candidates from participating programs to the needs of the employers.

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### **Engagement with Education**

Connecticut education leaders and their key staff participate in decision-making processes defining and driving workforce system policy and strategy at both State and local levels.

At the State level, Connecticut’s Commissioner of Education (executive leader of Connecticut’s K-12 public schools system), and the President of the Board of Regents for Higher Education/Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (executive leader of a system of public 4-year universities and 2-year community colleges) sit as voting members of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC), the State Workforce Board, and are thereby directly engaged in all phases of workforce development planning, strategy design, oversight and coordination. In addition, the Director of the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) participates as an ex-officio CETC member, ensuring that the contributions of CTHSS are included, critical information is shared, and opportunities for coordination of programs and

services are pursued, addressing the shared goal of ensuring that youths and adults (students) are ready for productive work in Connecticut's key industry sectors.

Representatives of the Connecticut State Department (CSDE) Bureau of Adult Education are active participants in the Work Groups charged to develop Connecticut's WIOA transition strategy, and will continue to participate on these partnership teams as the focus turns to the realities of coordinated implementation in the months ahead. It is also anticipated that key representatives of the K-12 system, CTHSS and the community colleges will participate on relevant CETC committees and ad hoc work teams going forward with the WIOA implementation process in the weeks and months ahead.

As senior managers in the Executive Branch, the Commissioner of Education meets on a regular basis with the Commissioner of Labor, Commissioner of Economic and Community Development, and the Academic Dean of the University of Connecticut as an executive working group, reporting to Governor Malloy, to share information and coordinate strategy on integration of workforce development, educational strategy and economic development efforts to promote Connecticut's broad talent development efforts.

At the local level, selected leaders and representatives of local school districts in the K-12 system, CTHSS and community colleges, respectively, have served – and will continue to engage – both as members of Connecticut's five local WDBs and as active participants on the respective WDBs' various standing committees and work groups, thereby assuring that educational leaders are directly connected to critical workforce development planning and strategy design with other key system representatives close to where most program-level decisions get made.

Connecticut's *Preschool through Twenty and Workforce Information Network* – P20WIN – is a groundbreaking approach to education and workforce training-related data sharing in Connecticut. P20WIN provides a secure data vehicle producing critical information needed to understand patterns over time and inform policy and strategy decisions to improve education, training and employment outcomes for Connecticut students. This new system allows Connecticut to evaluate how well our public education and training programs prepare students for additional education and careers in Connecticut. Executive leadership and senior research staff from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) and Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) actively participate in P20 WIN. An inter-agency data governance structure and data-sharing agreements support collaborative decision-making. Going forward, P20WIN provides a systematic, secure and repeatable process to gather and analyze critical data to understand the impact of investments in education and workforce training programs, supporting coordination, alignment and integration consistent with WIOA principles, leading to better outcomes.

Connecticut's P20WIN longitudinal data analysis capability will allow for improved understanding of how Connecticut's various education and training providers and programs – including K-12, CTHSS, community colleges – perform in helping students complete programs of study and perform in the workforce.

**CSDE: Partner Alignment with Educational Institutions**

CSDE will promote partnerships among local adult education providers and institutions of higher education, especially community colleges, to promote the successful transition of participants to

postsecondary education and training. CSDE will rely on information from the workforce development system to track the progress of participants who have exited from their programs and have entered postsecondary education and training.

**DORS: Partner Alignment with Educational Institutions (BESB)**

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program at the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind is actively involved in a variety of transition school-to-work initiatives, with extensive collaboration and coordination at the administrative and service delivery levels of the organization. Through a cooperative agreement with the State Department of Education, the roles and responsibilities of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the public educational system are clearly defined, including financial responsibilities and coordination of services and staff training. To facilitate this coordination, the BESB Transition School to Work Coordinator serves on an interagency transition task force and an appointed representative from the Connecticut State Department of Education serves on the State Rehabilitation Council to BESB.

Regarding higher education, BESB and Council of Regents have established a cooperative agreement addressing services available in the university setting for students with disabilities. This agreement includes the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and describes responsibilities to ensure that students with disabilities achieve equal access to classroom instruction, internships, and school-sponsored activities.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors participate in Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings of clients in junior high or high school and assist in developing Individualized Education Programs (IEP's) for students. BESB conducts career exposure camps for high school students who are visually impaired or legally blind. These programs include opportunities to interact with former VR participants who are successfully employed in a variety of careers. Some are held on college campuses, where the students gain a firsthand perspective of residential campus life in addition to gaining insight into a variety of careers that former clients are now engaged in.

VR Program staff participate and present information at BESB-organized in-service training programs for public school teachers and guidance counselors on issues affecting students who are blind or visually impaired. BESB Children's Services Program provides a comprehensive training series every year for school district staff about low vision aids and adaptive technology, braille instruction, expanded core curriculum activities and resources that are available to facilitate the education and transition of students served by BESB.

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**Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access**

In 2013 the OWC produced a comprehensive inventory and analysis of funding and investments that support Connecticut's workforce development system. This was one effort in OWC's continued work to advance the workforce system, to ensure it is responsive to jobseekers and businesses, and positions the state for economic growth. The inventory identified resources, sources of funds, targeted populations and services reported through an online survey. In gathering data OWC confirmed the complexity of the programs, number of relevant State agencies, identified hundreds of agencies involved in providing relevant services. Data was derived from reports and information from State agencies receiving and/or providing workforce-related funding, including the Departments of Labor, Education, Economic and Community Development Social Services, Developmental Services, and Children and Families. An online survey of one hundred agencies and providers across Connecticut yielded a 73% response rate.

Information concerning relevant funding and resources was reviewed and updated during the process of developing Connecticut's Unified State Plan. It is anticipated that in 2016 OWC will refresh this information, again working directly with designated staff in key State agencies and from the local WDBs (and their regional networks of local stakeholders). The inventory will be updated regularly and shared with key partners and stakeholders to identify opportunities to leverage resources to achieve maximum impact. Information will be shared with and reviewed by CETC.

In recent months, key Connecticut workforce development stakeholders have been notably successful in winning grant awards. This provides opportunities for innovative leveraging of resources across institutions and programs to improve access to training and education opportunities to build the skills and capabilities needed for employment success. [Note: This information will be drafted/updated in final version of Plan]

CETC and OWC will work particularly closely with executive leadership of CTDOL, DECD, BOR/CSCU, CSDE, DORS, DSS, CWDC and Connecticut Council on Philanthropy to identify relevant investments, identify prospective grants/funding opportunities and grant awards, share that information among these parties and convene/facilitate discussions to explore and pursue leveraging opportunities with a shared/common goal of increasing opportunities to increase access to education and training programs and services for more individuals

**CSDE: Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access**

CSDE provides funding to local workforce areas for literacy programs, using a competitive RFP process to distribute funding provided by the United States Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. Grantees will be required to align with system-wide goals and the labor market needs of local workforce areas.

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**Access to and Acquisition of Credentials**

Connecticut recognizes the value and importance of postsecondary credentials and certificates to workers and businesses, and that they vary significantly by industry sector and specific occupation. As described earlier in this Unified State Plan, Connecticut has identified six sectors that are likely to be the focus of workforce development efforts at both State and local levels: Manufacturing, Healthcare, Construction/Energy/Green Technology, Insurance/Financial Services, Information Technology, and Tourism. A variety of sector-specific initiatives will be supported and implemented at within each of Connecticut's five designated local workforce areas, most in conjunction with the appropriate regional WDB.

It is anticipated that the CTDOL Office of Research will analyze labor market information to help identify relevant credentials and licenses that are legally required and/or desirable for key in-demand occupations by targeted sectors in each region. WDBs and their business partners (including business associations such as the New Haven Manufacturers Association, Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Association, Connecticut Construction Industries Association, Connecticut Hospital Association, Connecticut Insurance and Financial Services Cluster, and regional Chambers of Commerce, etc.) will reach out to employers through existing business-led sector initiatives to identify and verify the credentials employers value and that actually contribute to hiring, productivity and opportunity for career advancement.

The sector initiatives will identify programs where relevant credentials and certifications can be acquired and will develop specific strategies and pathways to improve access and acquisition, customized to the requirements of each target sector and occupations. To the extent feasible these efforts will build on and expand proven effective models, including the State’s Incumbent Worker Training program, STEP-UP, the community colleges’ Advanced Manufacturing Technical Centers, Integrated Basic Education Skills Training programs (I-BEST), Job Funnels, Connecticut Technical High Schools focused education and training, etc.

Efforts will be pursued to expand apprenticeship opportunities in key sectors. In July CTDOL’s Office of Apprenticeship Training was awarded \$7.8 million state funds from the DECD’s Manufacturing Innovation Fund to significantly expand the number of registered apprentices pursuing careers in Connecticut’s advanced manufacturing sector. In addition, CTDOL and the Office of Apprenticeship Training received a highly competitive American Apprenticeship Grant of \$5 million from USDOL to fund the Connecticut American Apprenticeship Initiative (CT-AAI). A key component of this five-year initiative is the introduction of Competency and Competency/Time-Based Hybrid apprenticeship models. CT-AAI will enroll and serve 1,000 registered apprentices and 500 pre-apprentices statewide in high-demand Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare and Business Services occupations. Significant commitments for apprenticeship placement were provided by employers ranging from small machine shops to General Dynamics Electric Boat, the various regional WDBs, and the Board of Regents for Higher Education.

**CSDE: Improving Access to Postsecondary Credentials**

CSDE offers the three programs leading to a high school equivalency diploma: Adult High School Credit Diploma (AHSCD), General Educational Development (GED), and the National External Diploma Program (NEDP). Local adult education programs also provide basic skills and workforce education through its highly successful contextualized integrated education and training program, I-BEST. All participants in adult education, including those in Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language, will learn about career pathways and will be taught the skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education and training. Participants who earn the high school equivalency diploma will be referred to community colleges and other institutions of higher education to transition to postsecondary education and training.

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**Coordination with Economic Development**

Connecticut recognizes the critical value and importance of coordinating workforce development and economic development strategy, investments, programs and services at the State and local levels. The Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) is a voting member of the CETC. In that role she participates in the review and oversight of Connecticut’s integrated workforce development system, helping to identify and promote integration and alignment of workforce development and economic development efforts statewide. The need for skilled talent in critical occupations in key industry sectors has been identified as a critical strategic priority by DECD, providing an incentive for continuing close cooperation and coordination of workforce development and economic development efforts going forward. Key elements of DECD’s Economic Development Plan concerning the needs and priorities of Connecticut’s in-demand and emerging industries and businesses have been integrated into strategies described in this Unified State Plan.

As senior managers in the Executive Branch, the Commissioners of Economic and Community Development, Labor, and Education, respectively meet on a regular basis, along with the Academic Dean of the University of Connecticut as an executive working group, reporting to Governor Malloy, to share information and coordinate integration of workforce development, economic development and educational strategy and promote Connecticut’s broad talent development efforts. These Commissioners will continue to have input and participation in the review of Connecticut’s Unified State Plan to ensure that opportunities for coordination are identified and developed.

In addition, leaders of the state’s largest business membership organization – the Connecticut Business and Industry Association – and several prominent regional/local Chambers of Commerce – Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce, Business Council of Fairfield County, Bridgeport Regional Growth Council, Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce – serve as active members of CETC, collectively representing the interests of thousands of Connecticut businesses, large and small, providing insight and guidance on industry’s views on the convergence of economic development and workforce development policy and strategy.

Designated DECD staff participate on the WIOA Transition Business Engagement Work Group, providing intelligence and insight to inform strategies – concerning business-led industry partnerships, sector strategies, career pathways initiatives – included in this Unified State Plan. DECD representatives will continue to play a valuable role at the State level as participants in the CETC committees and work groups that will promote coordination of workforce and economic development efforts statewide going forward. It is anticipated that State and local economic development experts will play a key role in the efforts of CETC’s Business Partnership Committee.

At the local level, representatives of DECD, regional/municipal economic development agencies, regional/local Chambers of Commerce and various business associations serve as members of Connecticut’s WDBs and participate on key local WDB committees and work groups to ensure workforce development and economic development strategic coordination customized to local conditions, priorities and opportunities. These strong existing working relationships will be fostered as WIOA implementation proceeds.

The Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) Executive Director and staff will continue to work closely with designated senior staff colleagues from DECD to develop future opportunities for collaboration and coordination. Recent examples of OWC/CTDOL/DECD coordination include: Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF) Registered Apprenticeship Program and MIF Incumbent Worker Training Program, Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership (IMCP) Designation, etc.

These efforts exemplify the kinds of workforce development/economic development collaboration that will be pursued as Connecticut transitions to active implementation of WIOA.

**CSDE: Coordinating with Economic Development Strategies**

CSDE will participate in and support efforts of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC – State Workforce Board) to assist Connecticut business employers by continuing to develop and implement contextualized integrated education and training I-BEST programs that address the workforce needs of those businesses.

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## **STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES**

As administrative entity for WIOA implementation in Connecticut, CTDOL has lead responsibility to ensure that appropriate operating systems are in place and used effectively by all WIOA and workforce system partners, with appropriate oversight by CETC. CTDOL is currently working to refine the details of these necessary operational systems, including the state-level labor market information system, communication system, case- management system, job bank, and data/reporting systems. This process will continue in the weeks and months ahead, with key roles to be played by the various WIOA transitional work groups described earlier. Descriptions of key operating systems will be included in the final version of this Unified Plan for submission to USDOL. Meanwhile, a description of Data Collection and Reporting elements is included below.

### **Data Collection and Reporting**

#### Connecticut State Department of Labor (CTDOL)

Data collection for the six core WIOA programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education and Literacy Activities, and Title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) will occur within separate case management systems located at each of three State agencies: including Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL), Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), and Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), including the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) and Bureau of Rehabilitation Services.

CTDOL has contracted with Geographic Solutions to implement a web-based case management system – CTHires – by the close of December 2015, to provide virtual services to individual jobseekers and employers, and to collect data required by WIOA for reporting on self-services and staff-assisted services for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) programs. The CTHires system is planned for expansion in 2016 to incorporate the Jobs First Employment Services Program (JFES – a welfare-to-work program), Foreign Labor Certification Program, and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Program.

#### Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

All adult education providers funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, collect and report through the Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS). The data entered in CARS are used by CSDE to meet reporting requirements at the Federal and State levels. CARS data are the basis for completing the Federal reporting requirements of the National Reporting System (NRS).

CARS is a longitudinal database containing student information. The Student ID created for each new student in CARS is unique to that student across adult education providers and fiscal years. Students returning to adult education in a future fiscal year maintain the same CARS Student ID. Students who transfer from one adult education provider to another, or prepare in adult education and then register for the GED test are also able to utilize the same CARS student ID.

#### Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)

DORS has a contract with a software provider to maintain a case management system for the vocational rehabilitation programs for BRS and BESB. This system runs locally on servers housed within DORS and contains case information relevant to individual consumers and reportable

data. The vendor has maintained an active relationship with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) who governs data collection for BRS and BESB. Modifications to the system are currently being planned to manage the upcoming changes in data collection required by WIOA. RSA data elements will be adjusted to be compatible with the WIOA-Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) document.

#### WIOA Annual State and Local Area Reporting

Reporting processes for the WIOA Annual State Performance Report will involve CTDOL obtaining electronic files for each report period from the three Connecticut State agencies for each of the six WIOA core programs. The WIOA Annual Local Area Performance Report is a subset of the WIOA Annual State Performance Report, covering only the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. Individual records in each of these electronic program files will be matched against the CTDOL database that stores the WIOA unique identifiers to determine if such identifier already exists. If it exists, the unique identifier will be appended to the record. If it does not exist, CTDOL will assign a unique identifier for each participant and will append it to the participant record. This process will ensure a common unique identifier across the six WIOA core programs, and will ensure that this unique identifier will be the same for every period of participation.

These same electronic files will be matched to each of the electronic files for each of the six WIOA core programs to determine if an individual was co-enrolled in one or more of those programs. If the participant was co-enrolled in another core program, the specific code value identified in the WIOA Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) that applies to those services will be appended to the participant record.

These same electronic files will be used to obtain employment information for each program participant who has a social security number and an exit date from one or more of the six WIOA core programs. CTDOL currently is responsible for reporting wages, entered employment rates, and employment retention rates for exiters in the Wagner-Peyser, Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs. CTDOL's responsibilities will expand to include exiters from all six WIOA core programs, thereby appending wage and employment information to each individual exiter's record.

Each program's electronic file containing the assigned WIOA unique identifier, co-enrollment data, wages, and employment information will be returned to each of the three State agencies for use in their Federal report submissions.

#### Eligible Training Provider (ETP) Performance Report

CTDOL will use the new CTHires case management system to collect data and generate the Eligible Training Provider Performance Report on all students in programs, and on WIOA participants, as required under WIOA.

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### **State Workforce System Policies**

As lead administrative entity for WIOA implementation in Connecticut, CTDOL has responsibility to ensure that an appropriate and comprehensive set of state workforce system policies are established and are in place to guide effective WIOA implementation. CTDOL has demonstrable experience and expertise in this role, having been responsible for administrative oversight and direction of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) implementation in Connecticut for the past 16

years, Building on a foundation of administrative policy developed during that time, CTDOL Administration is systematically drafting and developing the necessary inventory of WIOA-related workforce system policies. This is a work-in-progress that will continue through the weeks and months ahead. The policies generated by this process may be generated and/or reviewed by the Transitional Steering Committee, or CETC as appropriate. Key workforce strategies will include industry partnerships, sector-focused initiatives and career pathways projects.

#### Data Collection and Reporting

Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) maintains and operates an automated Workforce Development Business System to support the operational and management needs of the State of Connecticut's One-Stop employment service delivery system under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). To address these operational, management, and reporting needs, CTDOL requires that state and contractor staff funded under the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Wagner-Peyser programs enter data into the new CThires system. Staff delivering services under the Trade Adjustment Assistance program also record data for this federal program into the new CThires system. Current plans are to incorporate the Jobs First Employment Services program into the new CThires system in 2016. JFES-funded staff currently records data in the CTDOL CTWBS legacy system.

CTDOL also requires authorized representatives of contractor agencies funded under WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs to sign a Data Access Agreement, to ensure the protection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in their possession. United States Department of Labor (USDOL), Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) No. 39.11 is appended to the Data Access Agreement. In addition, staff members of these agencies that will access the new CThires system are required to sign a form entitled *Acknowledgment of Receipt of Confidential Information* to advise them of responsibilities with respect to confidential information.

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## **STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW**

### **State Agency Organization**

[Note: Organizational chart for Connecticut's workforce system will be included in final version of Plan for submission to USDOL.]

#### **Department of Rehabilitation Services**

The Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) provides a wide range of services to individuals with disabilities, children and families who need assistance in maintaining or achieving their full potential for self-direction, self-reliance and independent living. The primary customers of the agency are individuals with disabilities. In the employment-based programs, business/employers are a dual customer. The DORS mission is to maximize opportunities for people in Connecticut with disabilities to live, learn and work independently.

DORS is divided into four major bureaus:

1. The Bureau of Disability Determination;
2. The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind;
3. The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services; and
4. The Bureau of Organizational Support.

DORS is the designated state agency for the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) and the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS or the bureau).

BRS is the designated state unit providing vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to help individuals with disabilities to prepare for, obtain, maintain or advance in employment. *[BESB provides these services to residents who are legally blind, or have significant visual impairments.]*

Consumers with disabilities who need help finding employment may apply for assistance at one of the local BRS offices. They may seek help with their job search when their disability poses a barrier **and** when they need VR services to help them prepare for, enter into or maintain gainful employment in a competitive setting. Services may include vocational counseling, benefits counseling, job search assistance, skill training and career education, school-to-work transition services, on-the-job training in business and industry, assistive technology services for mobility, communication and work activities, vehicle and home modifications, supported employment services, restoration services for a physical or mental condition and assistance accessing transportation options. Once eligibility has been determined, consumers work with a VR counselor to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) to identify the target employment goal and the services that BRS can provide to assist them in reaching that goal. The IPE also identifies the consumer's responsibilities to help reach the desired job goal.

See attached for DORS organizational chart.

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## **Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC)**

### **Roster and Affiliations**

The twenty-four voting members of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC), the State Workforce Board under WIOA, and their professional affiliations, include:

- Donald Shubert, CETC Chair/Connecticut Construction Industries Association
- Roderick Bremby/Connecticut Department of Social Services
- Christopher Bruhl/Business Council of Fairfield County
- Andrea Comer/Connecticut Business and Industry Association Education Foundation
- Chris DiPentima/Pegasus Manufacturing
- Elliot Ginsberg/Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology
- Mark Ojakian/Board of Regents for Higher Education
- John Harrity/Connecticut State Council of Machinists
- Carlton Highsmith/SPG PaperWorks (Retired)
- Lawrence McHugh/Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce
- Deborah Monahan/Thames Valley Council for Community Action
- Raymond Oneglia/O&G Industries
- Norma Ortega/Travelers Companies
- Sharon Palmer/Connecticut Department of Labor
- Lori Pelletier/Connecticut AFL-CIO
- Amy Porter/Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services
- Stuart Rosenberg/St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center/Johnson Memorial Hospital
- JoAnn Ryan/Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce
- Catherine Smith/Connecticut Department of Community and Economic Development
- Jeff Smith/Pratt and Whitney

- Paul Timpanelli/Bridgeport Regional Business Council
- Dianna Wentzell/Connecticut State Department of Education
- Lyle Wray/Capitol Region Council of Governments
- Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman/State of Connecticut

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## **Staff Support and Responsibilities**

The organizational structure of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) – the State Workforce Board is described above. Leadership of CETC in conducting its business as the State Board is provided by Chairman Donald J. Shubert, President of the Connecticut Construction Industries Association (CCIA). Mr. Shubert has served as CETC Chair since his appointment by Governor Malloy in August 2011. A respected business leader in Connecticut, providing expert knowledge about and representing the crucial construction industry sector, Mr. Shubert is an experienced and effective leader of CETC. Mr. Shubert is well aware of CETC's statutory obligations, and demonstrably capable of working effectively with members from business, labor and government to achieve consensus in meeting CETC's strategic and operational responsibilities.

CETC's organizational structure described above is intended to be flexible, adjustable as necessary to meet changing circumstances. The core standing committees – Executive, Business Partnership, Service Coordination, Career Pathways, Performance Evaluation – ensure that CETC is prepared to meet its State Board functions and accountabilities. Committees are constructed to engage individual CETC members in working on topics and in areas to which they bring relevant professional experience and expertise, to contribute productively in meeting each committee's responsibilities and deliverables. To supplement the work of CETC's committees, Chairman Shubert may appoint additional, time limited, CETC work teams on an as-needed basis.

Professional staff expertise and technical assistance to support the Governor and CETC's efforts in meeting its Federal and State statutory responsibilities is provided by the Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC). OWC is housed in the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and has ready access to their workforce, research and legal experts.

OWC and CETC act as workforce development policy advisors to the Governor. OWC collaborates with multiple partners and workforce system stakeholders to help align resources, coordinate strategy, promote policy and synchronize employment, education and training programs and services to address industry's job growth needs and achieve the vision and goals discussed previously in this Unified State Plan. OWC's Executive Director works closely with the CETC Chair to ensure that State Workforce Board functions are implemented consistently, effectively and efficiently. CTDOL is committed to support the efforts of OWC and CETC by offering additional professional expertise and support from other units as appropriate and as necessary. Staff expertise from other State agency partners is also solicited when necessary.

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## **ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAMS AND PARTNERS**

### **Annual Assessment of Core Programs**

Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL), Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), and Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) including the Bureau of

Education Services for the Blind (BESB), will use the primary indicators of performance specified in section 116(b) of WIOA and contained in State Performance Reports to assess the performance of the six core programs. Each program’s actual performance will be assessed in relation to the State adjusted levels of performance and revised State adjusted levels of performance. Connecticut does not have any additional indicators of performance referenced in section 116(b)(2)(B) as part of this Unified State Plan.

This State assessment will utilize quarterly wage records to determine program quality and effectiveness with respect to outcomes including employment rates and median earnings for participants with a social security number that exited from one or more of the six core programs. Also, the average cost of those participants who received career and training services, respectively, during the most recent program year and the 3 preceding program years will be assessed, while considering relevant economic conditions e.g., unemployment rates and characteristics of participants.

Additionally, CTDOL will use the Local Area Performance Report broken down by local area for the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs to determine each local area’s performance on the primary indicators with respect to local performance targets. This local area data will be used to identify best practices and opportunities for improvement.

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### **Annual Assessment of One-Stop Partners**

Connecticut’s Unified State Plan outlines a four-year strategy for the six core programs:

- The Adult Program (Title 1 of WIOA)
- The Dislocated Worker Program (Title 1)
- The Youth Program (Title 1)
- The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (Title II), and
- The Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV.)

Assessment of these core programs is outlined on pages (X-X). Other One-Stop delivery system partner program services included in the Workforce Performance Accountability, Information, and Reporting System that are reportable to USDOL will be assessed annually using outcome measures on the Program Performance Scorecard e.g., employment rate, and median earnings.

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### **Previous Results (Prior 2 years)**

[Note: Information to be provided in the future as it becomes available]

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## **DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS**

### **Title I – Youth, Adult, Dislocated Worker Activities**

As noted above, CTDOL is in the process of drafting policy concerning methods/factors to distribute funds to local areas for Youth activities, Adult and training activities, Dislocated worker employment and training activities. Proposed methods and factors will be reviewed with and approved by for CETC.

## **Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy**

### **How CSDE will award multi-year grants or contracts on a competitive basis to eligible providers in Connecticut, including how CSDE will establish that eligible providers are organizations of demonstrated effectiveness.**

Through CSDE, the State of Connecticut will award two-year grants to eligible providers through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to enable providers to develop, implement and improve adult education and literacy activities. Grantees will have the opportunity to continue for a second year depending upon satisfactory performance and funding from Congress.

The following agencies are eligible for funding through the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE):

- a. A local educational agency;
- b. A community-based organization or faith-based organization;
- c. A volunteer literacy organization;
- d. An institution of higher education;
- e. A public or private nonprofit agency;
- f. A library;
- g. A public housing authority;
- h. Other nonprofit institutions that have the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals;
- i. A consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above;
- j. A partnership between an employer and an entity described above.

CSDE will make funding available in each of Connecticut’s five designated local workforce areas. In conjunction with each WDB, CSDE will help to assess local area needs and WIB goals. In each local area, funds will be divided among defined priorities on a percentage basis. Eligible providers will select the appropriate priority area when drafting and submitting the proposal to CSDE.

CSDE will use the 13 WIOA considerations for funding to award grants, including the following consideration: “past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State-adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance”, described in WIOA section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy. Past effectiveness will be evidenced by meeting or exceeding performance measures based on documentation from the Connecticut Adult Reporting System database and annual reviews of previously funded providers, and evidenced by comparable objective performance measures demonstrating successful student outcomes for new eligible providers.

### **How CSDE will ensure direct and equitable access to all eligible providers to apply and compete for funds and how CSDE will ensure that it is using the same grant or contract announcement and application procedure for all eligible providers.**

To ensure direct and equitable access for all eligible providers, the Connecticut State Department of Education will publish a *Notice of Availability* in all major newspapers throughout Connecticut and post the notice on the CSDE’s web page. The RFP will be mailed to all local education agencies and higher education institutions; to a master list of current and past

providers including community-based organizations, regional education service centers, housing authorities, volunteer organizations, Department of Correction, other correctional facilities and institutions; and to all current providers and WDBs. A Bidder's Conferences will be publicly advertised with the *Notice of Availability* and held at a central location to provide answers to questions regarding appropriateness of proposed projects and application procedures.

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**Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation**

Under the Rehabilitation Act, the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) provides vocational services to individuals seeking employment through the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and the Bureau of Education and Services to the Blind.

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**PROGRAM DATA**

**Data Alignment/Integration and Systems Interoperability**

Connecticut has a plan under consideration to ultimately make the management information systems for the core programs interoperable. CTDOL's new web-based CThires system has four of the six core programs resident within it, including: WIOA Adult, WIOA Dislocated Worker, WIOA Youth, and Wagner-Peyser programs. This system also currently has resident within it the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program. This central database is contracted to expand in 2016 to include the Jobs First Employment Services welfare-to-work program, Foreign Labor Certification program, and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program. CThires also has the capability to add programs through a generic programs module.

Currently the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) collects data and reports through the Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS) for the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program. Also, Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) has a case management system for the vocational rehabilitation programs within DORS, i.e., the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and the Bureau of Education Services for the Blind (BESB). Long-term plans under consideration by the three State agencies include development of an interface among these separate systems to exchange common data elements efficiently. In the interim, batch processes are planned across the six core programs to enable each agency and program to generate required federal reports.

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**Data Systems Integration**

Connecticut currently has an integrated web-based data system for four of the six core programs and includes the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program. Connecticut is looking for integrated system options as they become available in the near future.

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**Technology and Data Systems Alignment**

Connecticut is hopeful of funding to enable alignment of technology and data systems across mandatory One-Stop partner programs. This future system would provide for a common intake and data collection across multiple agencies and programs. This alignment would improve service delivery to individuals by enabling data to be collected once and shared by service providers within the system, resulting in efficiencies. This common system would also foster communication and collaboration among service providers to ensure optimum service delivery using a variety of funding and resources while minimizing duplication of services. The Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) will assist the Governor align

technology and data systems to improve service delivery by participating on interagency work groups to identify financial and other resources necessary to accomplish this work.

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**Performance Reports**

Connecticut has formed a WIOA transition interagency work group on Technology, Data and Outcomes. The work group and its technology subcommittee met several times to develop various options to enable reporting for the six (6) core programs across three state agencies – Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL), Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), and the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS,) including Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB).

Data collection for the six core programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education and Literacy Activities, and Title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) will occur within separate case management systems located at each of three State agencies.

Reporting processes for the WIOA Annual State Performance Report will involve CTDOL obtaining electronic files for each report period from the three State agencies for each of the six core programs. The WIOA Annual Local Area Performance Report is a subset of the WIOA Annual State Performance Report, only for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. Individual records in each of these electronic program files will be matched against the CTDOL database that stores the WIOA unique identifiers to determine if such identifier already exists. If it does exist, the unique identifier will be appended to the record. If it does not exist, CTDOL will assign a unique identifier for each participant and will append it to the participant record. This process will ensure a common unique identifier across the six core programs, and that this identifier will be the same for every period of participation.

These same electronic files will be matched to each of the electronic files for each of the six core programs to determine if an individual was co-enrolled in one or more of the six core programs. If the participant was co-enrolled in another core program, the specific code value identified in the WIOA Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) that applies to those services will be appended to the participant record.

Also, these same electronic files will be used to obtain employment information for each program participant who has a social security number and an exit date from one or more of the six core programs. CTDOL currently is responsible for reporting wages, entered employment rates, and employment retention rates for exiters in the Wagner-Peyser, Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs. CTDOL will continue this work and expand its responsibilities to include exiters from all six core programs. Therefore, CTDOL will append wages and employment information to each exiter’s record.

Each program’s electronic file containing the assigned WIOA unique identifier, co-enrollment data, wages, and employment information will be returned to each of the three State agencies to use in their federal report submissions.

**Eligible Training Provider (ETP) Performance Report**

CTDOL will use the new CThires case management system to collect data and generate the Eligible Training Provider Performance Report on all students in programs, and on WIOA participants as required under WIOA.

## **Post-Program Success**

[Note: Information to be developed and drafted for inclusion in final version of Plan for submission to USDOL.]

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### **UI Wage Data for Performance Accountability**

The electronic files containing records for the six core programs will be used to obtain employment information using Unemployment Insurance Wage Record data for each program participant that has a social security number and an exit date from one or more of the six core programs. CTDOL is currently responsible for reporting wages, entered employment rates, and employment retention rates for exiters in the Wagner-Peyser, Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs. CTDOL will continue this work and expand its responsibilities to include exiters from all six core programs. Therefore, CTDOL will append wages and employment information to each exiter's record.

Each program's electronic file containing the assigned WIOA unique identifier, co-enrollment data, wages, and employment information will be returned to each of the three State agencies for use in their federal report submissions.

Also, CTDOL will use the new CThires case management system to collect data and generate the Eligible Training Provider Performance Report on all students in program and on WIOA participants, as required under WIOA. CTDOL will use Unemployment Insurance Wage data for employment rates, median earnings, and credential rates for all students in a program on the Eligible Training Provider Performance Report.

Unemployment Insurance Wage Record data will also be used to comply with federal evaluation requirements, and to inform workforce and labor market information available to customers.

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### **Privacy Standards**

[Note: To be drafted by CTDOL Administration, including safeguards per section 444/General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws. Will be included in final version of Plan for submission to USDOL.]

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## **PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS**

### **Priority of Service for Veterans and Eligible Spouses**

Veterans and eligible spouses (Covered Persons) are given priority of service for receipt of employment, training and placement services provided under all US Department of Labor-funded programs. Veterans and eligible spouses are entitled to precedence for such services. This means that a Veteran or eligible spouse either receives access to a service earlier than others, or if resources are limited, the Veteran or eligible spouse receives access to the service instead of others. Veterans or eligible spouses should identify themselves as such when inquiring about any Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) programs or services to take full advantage of this priority. The following definitions apply to CTDOL programs.

**Veteran**: A person who served at least one day in the active military, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable, as specified in 38 U.S.C. 101(2). Active

service includes full-time Federal service in the National Guard or a Reserve Component. The definition of “active service” does not include full-time duty performed strictly for training purposes (i.e., that which is referred to as “weekend” or “annual” training), nor does it include full-time active duty performed by National Guard personnel who are mobilized by State rather than Federal authorities.

**Eligible Spouse:** As defined in 38 U.S.C. 4215(a), means the spouse of any of the following:

- A. Any Veteran who died of a service-connected disability;
- B. Any member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who, at the time of application for the priority, is listed in one or more of the following categories and has been so listed for a total of more than 90 days:
  - i. Missing in action;
  - ii. Captured in the line of duty by a hostile force; or
  - iii. Forcibly detained or interned in line of duty by a foreign government or power.
- C. Any Veteran who has a total disability resulting from a service-connected, as evaluated by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Intensive Services are available to maximize job training opportunities for Veterans with the following Serious Barriers to Employment (SBEs) as defined by VPL 03-14:**

- 1. A special disabled or disabled veteran, as defined in 38 U.S.C § 4211 (1) and (3) are those:
  - A. Entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans’ Affairs; or,
  - B. Discharged or released from active duty because of a service connected disability;
- 2. Homeless, as defined in Section 103(a) of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302(a));
- 3. A recently-separated service member, as defined in 38 U.S.C § 4211(6), who at any point in the previous 12 months has been unemployed for 27 or more consecutive weeks;
- 4. An offender, as defined by WIA Section 101(27), released from incarceration within the last 12 months;
- 5. Lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate; or
- 6. Low-income (as defined by WIA at Sec. 101(25)(B)).

And those barriers amended by the Secretary to be identified as priority veterans.

**Assessment and Management of Veteran Customers**

During the initial intake or registration, information will be solicited via Veterans Triage Form to determine the level of services needed. A specific criterion has been established to assess the veteran’s need for intensive or case management services. Such established criteria will include those outlined in CTDOL Memorandum 770 and Veterans Program Letter 03-14.

Once potential SBEs are identified, the veteran will be contacted by DVOP Specialists to setup an appointment to further assess the level of intensive services or if case management is necessary, as well as other supportive services available through the CTDOL or WIOA partners. Veterans with SBEs will be classified as job-ready or not job-ready. Veterans deemed not job-ready will receive intensive services from the DVOP Specialist, CTDOL Career Development Specialist, VA staff professionals, other WIOA partners, or supportive services to assist in resolving issues that hinder gainful employment. Services will include job search planning or employment

development plan, career planning, resume writing assistance, professional counseling services, and any other supportive service to assist the veteran attain job-ready status.

Once the veteran is determined to be job-ready, the DVOP Specialist will work with the LVER to make employment connections while DVOP will continue to provide case management and providing other intensive services as appropriate. Career guidance, educational employment assistance workshops or seminars, employment planning, specialized counseling services will all become an integral part of this process. CTDOL Career Development Specialists, VA and State of Connecticut Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, and other social service case managers will be partners to assist the veteran overcome these barriers to employment.

**Homeless Veterans**

The existing networks of LVER and DVOP Specialists and homeless shelters within the workforce development areas will continue to be used to make services available to homeless veterans. Services to homeless veterans will be coordinated with the Homeless Veteran’s Reintegration Project (HVRP), Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF), and Veterans’ Outreach Pilot Program (VOPP) through grants from the U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and the State of Connecticut.

**VA Vocational Rehabilitation Participants**

CTDOL has a long history of collaborating with state and federal agencies to provide services to veterans who may benefit from vocational rehabilitation. CTDOL continues to maintain those relationships and explore new approaches to improve effectiveness. An updated addendum to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be established between CTDOL and the Hartford Regional Office of the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services (VR&E) of the (USDVA) and the Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS). This MOU will redefine the Partnership between those named, to assist veterans being served under the auspices of Title 38, Chapter 31 of the United States Code.

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**ONE-STOP SYSTEM ACCESSIBILITY**

Connecticut’s One-Stop system currently provides and will continue to ensure physical and programmatic access to facilities, programs, services technology and materials for individuals with disabilities in a variety of ways. With respect to physical accessibility, all five of Connecticut’s comprehensive One-Stop American Job Centers, along with the Danielson American Job Center, are designated ADA-compliant. All five comprehensive American Job Centers provide adequate public parking for individuals seeking to use the facilities and have been determined to provide adequate handicapped parking options for jobseekers with disabilities. Each of the comprehensive American Job Centers is located on a public bus route. Four of the five comprehensive American Job Centers feature power-assisted front doors. The CTDOL Facilities Unit is committed to pursue installation of power-assisted doors for the fifth office, in New London, when its current lease expires.

Assistive technology is available to assist jobseekers with disabilities in each of the comprehensive American Job Centers. These technologies include electric adjustable workstations, large screen visual magnifiers, TTY lines for hearing impaired customers, and large-font computer keyboards in the Career Center.

Individuals seeking unemployment-related information or services will be assisted by a full-time CTDOL Unemployment Insurance staff expert located at and providing service from the front desk in each of the five comprehensive American Job Centers. These staff unemployment experts will be able to process paper unemployment claims directly, in-person, for jobseekers with disabilities who may have difficulty filing applications over the phone or via the Internet. In October 2013, Connecticut was one of eight states to receive a grant under USDOL's Disability Employment Initiative (DEI). Awarded to OWC, the three-year, \$3,058,706 grant promotes strategic approaches to enhance employment services for individuals with disabilities served by the public workforce investment system.

As a critical innovative feature of this grant, Disability Resource Coordinators establish key partnerships across multiple workforce and disability service systems, coordinate services, and leverage funding to meet the needs of jobseekers with disabilities in the American Job Centers, assess and recommend solutions to physical, programmatic or communications accessibility workplace barriers. Working with DEI Case Managers, jobseekers with disabilities gain access to a wide range of employment assistance, including assessments, career readiness skills, training and education services. As required by DEI, two local WDBs – Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board and Capital Workforce Partners (North Central area) – became active Employment Networks (ENs) in the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work Program, thereby expanding the Connecticut workforce system's capacity to serve eligible beneficiaries. DEI also requires the State's participation in an evaluation process to measure the project's impact on outcomes for jobseekers with disabilities.

The DEI grant provides for extensive staff training to build the capacity of Connecticut's One-Stop system to serve jobseekers with disabilities. In PY 2014, American Job Center staff received training on disability awareness and etiquette, universal design, cognitive limitations, mental health, American Sign Language, deafness and deaf culture. This common, cross-agency staff training will be continued as a key feature of Connecticut's coordinated workforce system efforts going forward. Up-to-date assistive technology has been purchased and installed for the American Job Centers. Through DEI, CTDOL has collaborated successfully with several State agencies and community organizations to plan four regional Diverse Ability Career Fairs across Connecticut. The first was held in Rocky Hill in April 2015. Forty-eight employers participated, seeking to fill entry-level to advanced positions in a variety of industries including manufacturing, finance, healthcare, transportation, distribution, and education. More than 600 job seekers attended the event. The second Diverse Ability Career Fair took place in Waterbury in October 2015. Two remaining career fairs are planned for 2016.

The DEI experience in Connecticut is consistent with the long-established commitment of the state's One-Stop system to recognize and meet the rights and needs of individuals with disabilities to access the facilities, programs and services of the workforce system. CTDOL, the Department of Rehabilitation Services (Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, and Bureau of Education and Services to the Blind) and the local WDBs have partnered together effectively for years to address the challenges confronting these valued customers. Lessons learned from these agency-to-agency, staff-to-staff shared experiences, and from the formal evaluation of the DEI experience, will be used to inform effective collaboration among key partners going forward in each local area to meet the objective of accessibility for all individuals and jobseekers.

The principle of ensuring accessibility will be a priority focus in CETC’s oversight of the statewide workforce system. CETC will establish specific accessibility criteria as a key feature of formal State administrative policy concerning the certification of One-Stop Centers in Connecticut.

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**COMMON ASSURANCES (for all WIOA core programs)**

1	State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a CETC or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;
2	State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of CETC and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;
3	Lead State agencies with responsibility for administration of core programs reviewed and commented on appropriate operational planning elements of Unified State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of populations served by such programs;
4	(a) State obtained input into development of Unified State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, and general public, and that Unified State Plan is available and accessible to general public; SRC helps to develop the State Plan and will co-host the public meetings with BRS to review the State Plan. (b) State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by CETC, including State agency official(s) for Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a CETC member;
5	State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for adult, dislocated

	worker, and youth programs to carry out workforce investment activities under chapters 2 and 3 of subtitle B;
<b>6</b>	State has taken appropriate action to comply with WIOA section 188, as applicable;
<b>7</b>	Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;
<b>8</b>	State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by CETC) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;
<b>9</b>	State has a One-Stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all One-Stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);
<b>10</b>	Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate;
<b>11</b>	State will conduct evaluations and research projects on activities under WIOA core programs; such projects will be coordinated and designed in conjunction with State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, that the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA.

## PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

<b>Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Activities under Title I-B</b>	CT Unified State Plan must include: General Requirements (regions and local workforce development areas; statewide activities); Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Requirements (alternative training models; registered apprenticeship; training provider eligibility procedure); Youth Program Requirements (6 items); Waiver Request (optional – 7 items). State Plan must include 12 specific Title I-B assurances. (From CTDOL WIOA Administration Unit)
<b>Wagner-Peyser Act Program (Employment Services)</b>	CT Unified State Plan must address specifics of Wagner-Peyser program, including: professional staff development; provision of information/assistance to UI claimants; strategy for re-employment assistance; use of W-P funds to support UI claimants; Agricultural Outreach Program. CT Unified State Plan must include 4 specific Wagner-Peyser assurances. (From CTDOL UI Unit)
<b>Adult Education and Literacy Programs</b>	CT Unified State Plan must include – pertaining to Adult Education and Literacy programs under Title II, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) – description of: Aligning of Content Standards; Local Activities; Adult Education and Literacy Activities (WIOA Section 203) (including Special Rule); Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals; Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program; State Leadership; Assessing Quality. CT Unified State Plan must include 8 specific signed certifications and 4 specific assurances. (From CSDE)
<b>Vocational</b>	CT Unified State Plan must address (as required by Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA):

<b>Rehabilitation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Input of State Rehabilitation Council</li> <li>• Request for waiver of state-wideness</li> <li>• Cooperative agreements</li> <li>• Coordination with education</li> <li>• Cooperative agreements with non-profits</li> <li>• Agreements/cooperative agreements for supported employment</li> <li>• Coordination with employers</li> <li>• Interagency cooperation</li> <li>• Personnel development</li> <li>• Statewide assessment</li> <li>• Annual estimates</li> <li>• State goals and priorities</li> <li>• Order of selection</li> <li>• Goals/plans to distribute Title VI funds</li> <li>• State’s strategies</li> <li>• Evaluation and progress reports</li> <li>• Quality, scope, extent of supported services</li> <li>• Unified State Plan must include 9 specific signed certifications and 7 specific assurances.</li> </ul> <p>[NOTE: BESB provided DRAFT versions of all program-specific requirements for State Plan for State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for State Supported Employment Services Program as of 11.20.15]</p>
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## TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

### State Plan must include assurances that:

<b>1</b>	The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of career and training services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients or basic skills deficient;
<b>2</b>	The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program’s Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;
<b>3</b>	State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for appointment of local workforce investment board members;
<b>4</b>	The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);
<b>5</b>	Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;
<b>6</b>	The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;
<b>7</b>	The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);

<b>8</b>	The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;
<b>9</b>	If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;
<b>10</b>	Priority of Service for covered persons is provided for each of the Title I programs; and
<b>11</b>	The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.
<b>12</b>	The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);

## **WAGNER-PEYSER ACT PROGRAM (Employment Services)**

### **Employment Services Professional Staff Development**

- **Professional development to ensure Employment Services staff is able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers.**
- **Strategies to support training and awareness across core programs and Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and training provided for ES and WIOA staff on identification of UI eligibility issues.**

As funding allows, the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) will continue to promote the professional development of its staff, leveraging state, agency, and, as applicable, federal grant funds to increase the skills of its workforce. CTDOL will continue to pursue Professional Resume Writer Certification for all American Job Center staff utilizing agency staff for training and test preparation. CTDOL will provide professional development opportunities for American Job Center staff, including Business Services staff to attend annually a workforce development conference such as the CT Learns and Works Conference or the Conference on Serving Adults with Disabilities, and other conference or training opportunities that may develop through in-kind contributions or agency sponsorships. As a capacity building goal, CTDOL will train staff in the American Job Centers to facilitate a variety of job readiness workshops to build the capacity of each office. The agency will increase capacity and staff knowledge through cross-agency staff training consistent with Connecticut's coordinated workforce system efforts. In addition, in-service training courses offered each Fall and Spring by the Department of Administrative Services may be made available to American Job Center staff as funding allows to enhance their

capabilities in computer, communication, writing, public speaking, presentation and supervisory skills.

**How State will provide information and meaningful assistance to individuals requesting assistance in filing claim for unemployment compensation through One-Stop centers.**

A full-time unemployment insurance (UI) expert will be stationed at the front desk of the Hartford, Waterbury, Bridgeport, New London and Hamden Job American Job Centers to assist customers with unemployment related inquiries. This assistance may include processing continued claims, releasing payments when appropriate, processing address changes, assisting claimants with filing appeals, providing identity verifications, printouts or status letters, as well as information on Shared Work or Rapid Response. The UI experts will also provide handouts or desk aids to customers for questions that can be answered via the web ([www.filectui.com](http://www.filectui.com)) and inform claimants of other services provided by the American Job Centers. These UI experts can also grant requests for a reasonable accommodation by taking initial and/or additional unemployment claims for claimants that experience physical and/or cognitive limitations that make it difficult to file their claims over the telephone or on the internet. UI experts in the American Job Centers will also have access to language line services to accommodate customers with Limited English Proficiency.

**State's strategy to provide reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals.**

**State use of W-P funds to support UI claimants, and other communication between W-P and UI, including: coordination and provision of labor exchange services for UI claimants; registration of UI claimants with State's employment service; administration of the work test for State unemployment compensation system, including eligibility assessments and job-finding and placement services for UI claimants; and referrals-to and application assistance-for training and education programs and resources.**

Connecticut's strategy to provide reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals will be multi-faceted. First, CTDOL implemented the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) program in October 2015. This Unemployment Insurance (UI) program delivers a key service in the comprehensive, integrated workforce system by providing temporary financial assistance to eligible workers during periods of unemployment.

Reemployment needs of UI claimants and prevention/detection of UI improper payments are addressed through the UI Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment program (REA), providing claimants an entry point to a full array of services available at the American Job Centers, ensuring compliance with all UI eligibility requirements. Recent studies conclude that REA has helped other states accelerate the time it takes the unemployed to return to the workforce.

Connecticut's UI REA program has been implemented statewide in five American Job Centers and will target claimants with higher weekly benefit rates who are least likely to exhaust their unemployment benefits, and thereby return to work quicker. CTDOL will conduct one UI REA per selected claimant for a total of 7,500 UI REAs in the program's first year, October 13, 2015 – September 30, 2016. UI REA appointments will be conducted in the Bridgeport, Hartford, Hamden, New London, and Waterbury offices. All claimants selected to participate will be required to report in-person to receive mandated services listed below. Each claimant will be

referred to appropriate service(s) and/or training consistent with a reemployment plan.

Required REA Services include:

- UI eligibility assessment and referral to adjudication, as appropriate, if a potential issue is identified
- Provision of labor market and career information specific to the claimant's needs.
- Registration with the State's job bank.
- Orientation to AJC services.
- Development and review of an individualized reemployment plan that includes work search activities, accessing services provided through an AJC or using self-service tools, and/or approved training.
- Referral to at least one reemployment service and/or training based on an assessment of the claimant's most critical need identified in the individualized reemployment plan.

#### Enhanced Reemployment Services Program

CTDOL staff will continue to prioritize Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants served by the Enhanced Reemployment Services (ERS) program. ERS identifies UI claimants likely to exhaust their benefits, unlikely to return to their previous occupations, and in need of job search assistance services to make a successful transition to a new job. In Program Year 2014-2015, orientation sessions were conducted for 7,434 ERS participants. Sessions included provision of labor market information, career guidance, information about CT jobs, overview of American Job Center services, and details on UI benefit rights and responsibilities. Many ERS participants also benefited from direct, individual employment services and training to facilitate their return to work, resulting in 20,803 additional reemployment services provided.

The Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program will eventually replace the Enhanced Reemployment Services program. Once CTDOL transitions to the RESEA program, the target population served will be those claimants most likely to exhaust their UI benefits and UCX claimants. Under WIOA, the UI program is a vital workforce system service and mandatory One-Stop partner in the American Job Centers. UI claimants continue to be priority customers. Both reemployment programs require the leveraging of partner programs to meet the needs of UI claimants in order to expedite their return to work.

First, CTDOL will mail a Claimant's Guide to Unemployment benefits to all initial unemployment claim filers. This booklet will contain all necessary information related to a person's eligibility for unemployment benefits as well as a listing of the American Job Centers throughout Connecticut and information about the employment services they provide to job seekers. When a person files for unemployment benefits some of her/his basic demographic information will be carried over into our new CTHires system to create a "shell" registration that will require some additional work by the claimant to complete the registration. Connecticut does not require all UI claimants to be registered with the state's employment service. CTDOL will administer the work test for UI claimants through the REA program. All clients selected to come into an American Job Center as part of the REA program will have a CTDOL staff member review their efforts to find work. Any customers determined to have insufficient work search efforts that will have a stop put on their unemployment claim and be referred to the CTDOL Adjudications unit for action. The process for referring claimants to Adjudications is already in place. All jobseekers who attend their initial one-on-one REA appointment will be required to participate in at least one additional mandatory employment service activity, which could be any activity the CTDOL staff member thinks would help in

12.30.15

getting the claimant back to work. Services include referrals to employment readiness workshops, resume critiques, career counseling, WIOA orientation sessions, or any other service available in the American Job Center.

Wagner-Peyser labor exchange services will be available at the American Job Centers in Hartford, Bridgeport, Hamden, Waterbury, New London and Danielson. These services include job readiness workshops on topics such as Job Search Techniques, Resume Preparation and Job Interviewing Techniques, one-on-one career counseling, one-on-one resume critiques, employer recruitments, job readiness assessments and Career Center services. In the Career Centers located in the American Job Centers, jobseekers will be able to work on their resumes and cover letters, complete online job applications, research companies, review job postings and conduct any other business related to their job search. They will have access to copy machines, fax machines, free postage on the resumes and applications they are sending out to employers and, most importantly, in-person support of CTDOL and Workforce Development Board contractor staff who will provide whatever guidance and support they might need. Career Center customers with disabilities will have access to accessible technology, such as large screen computer monitors, large screen visual magnifiers, TTY machines, computer keyboards with enhanced lettering and any other reasonable accommodation the customer might need. Labor exchange services detailed above will be available to all jobseekers at any time regardless of the order in which they are seeking services.

#### Business Services

CTDOL will continue to deploy a team of Business Service Specialists across Connecticut whose sole focus will be working with employers. Business Services Specialists will identify employers interested in scheduling recruitment events in the American Job Centers and will coordinate those events around the state. They will ask employers to post job openings into the new CThires system to generate employment opportunities for UI claimants. Business Services Specialists will write Incumbent Worker Training contracts with employers, provide business consultations with to identify the company's needs, promote tax credit and wage reimbursement programs such as WOTC and STEP-UP, and provide customized labor market and UI information.

All American Job Centers will have a process in-place that allows all staff to refer customers to education and training programs and resources. Some referrals will be made "in-house" to other partner agencies under the roof of the American Job Center while others may be to organizations that are located in separate venues. Trade Act clients will be co-enrolled into WIOA as a standard operating procedure.

#### **Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP)**

**Each State agency must develop an AOP every four years as part of Unified State Plan required under sections 102 or 103 of WIOA. AOP must include:**

##### **Assessment of Need**

**Assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers in the area based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State. Needs may include, but are limited to, employment, training and housing**

### **Review of the previous year's agricultural activity in Connecticut**

In PY 2014, there was no change from PY 2013, in the estimated number of farms or MSFWs working in Connecticut. Approximately 4,900 farms are located in Connecticut with a total of 400,000 acres dedicated to farming based on census data. CTDOL estimates 5,920 farm workers present in the state, based on Connecticut's Labor Market Information. Connecticut is not a significant state in regards to MSFWs.

During PY 2014, agricultural employers in Connecticut continued to seek qualified U.S. workers through the placement of job orders with CTDOL. Several employers were allowed to recruit foreign labor due to a shortage of U.S. workers available for agricultural positions. The majority of growers continued to recruit on their own through word of mouth, while others obtained workers through Farm Labor Contractors.

CTDOL continued to promote recruitment assistance, available through the Department of Labor in outreach contacts, to several agricultural employers throughout the state. CTDOL's Alien Labor Certification staff, in collaboration with the State Monitor Advocate (SMA), continued a screening process for jobseekers interested in agricultural job openings. This screening process not only ensured that qualified applicants were referred but also allowed the prospective applicant to gain a thorough understanding of the terms and conditions of each job opening.

Carefully matching jobseekers with prospective employers proved to be instrumental in establishing credibility with our agricultural employers.

In PY 2014, 36 agricultural employers participated in the H-2A program. These employers placed 58 job orders and requested a total of 506 workers. Approximately 44 referrals were made to these positions. Referrals included both local workers and workers from Puerto Rico, Connecticut's primary supply state. The SMA performed 22 peak-harvest field checks/visits on agricultural worksites to which JS placements were made, and 7 peak-harvest migrant housing inspections. During these visits, the SMA verified field sanitation standards, general working conditions, and housing conditions. All housing checks were in compliance and no deficiencies were found. A couple of employers were found in possible violation of field sanitation standards, but corrective action was taken by these employers and the apparent violations were resolved through informal resolution, eliminating the need to elevate or notify U.S. Wage & Hour.

CTDOL records also indicate that in PY 2014, approximately 7,040 non-agricultural job orders with entry-level experience and less than high school educational requirements were placed in Connecticut's job bank, CT.Jobs. These counts do not reflect job orders placed by employers through indexing.

### **Review of the previous year's MSFW activity in Connecticut**

<b>12.30.15 Major Crop Activity in Connecticut PY 2014</b>		
<b>Crop</b>	<b>Months of Heavy Agricultural Activity</b>	<b>Primary Region</b>
<b>Tobacco</b> (Shade & Broadleaf)	June through September	North Central
<b>Fruit</b> (Apples, Peaches, Pears)	July through October	Central
<b>Nursery</b>	February through July	South Central
<b>Greenhouse</b>	March – June, and October - December	South Central

<b>Review of Previous Year’s MSFW Activity in Connecticut (Estimates from Connecticut’s Labor Market Information) PY 2014</b>		
<b>Crop</b>	<b>MSFWs Employed</b>	<b>Labor Shortage</b>
<b>Tobacco</b> (Shade & Broadleaf)	1000	Yes
<b>Fruit</b> (Apples, Peaches, Pears)	350	Yes
<b>Nursery</b>	550	Yes
<b>Greenhouse</b>	800	Yes
<b>Other</b>	760	Yes

**Projected level of agricultural activity in the State for the coming year.** Connecticut Labor Market indicators, as calculated by the CTDOL Office of Research, project an increase in agricultural related employment by 11.2 % from 2012 to 2022. During this period, employment growth across all industries is projected at 9.4 %, with sectors such as construction and manufacturing growing by 22.8 % and 0.8 % respectively. For PY 2015, agricultural employment levels are expected to increase by less than 30 positions.

**Projected number of MSFWs in the State for the coming year, which must take into account data supplied by WIOA 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees, other MSFW organizations, employer organizations and federal and/or State agency data sources such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Employment and Training Administration.**

Crop activity and the projected number of MSFWs in each crop activity are projected to remain the same for PY 2015:

<b>Estimated Major Crop Activity in Connecticut PY 2015</b>		
<b>Crop</b>	<b>Months of Heavy Agricultural Activity</b>	<b>Primary Region</b>
<b>Tobacco</b> (Shade & Broadleaf)	June through September	North Central
<b>Fruit</b> (Apples, Peaches, Pears)	July through October	Central
<b>Nursery</b>	February through July	South Central
<b>Greenhouse</b>	March – June, and October - December	South Central

<b>Estimated MSFW Activity in Connecticut (Estimates from Connecticut’s Labor Market Information) PY 2015</b>
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<b><i>Crop</i></b>	<b><i>MSFWs Employed</i></b>	<b><i>Labor Shortage</i></b>
<b>Tobacco</b> (Shade & Broadleaf)	1000	Yes
<b>Fruit</b> (Apples, Peaches, Pears)	350	Yes
<b>Nursery</b>	550	Yes
<b>Greenhouse</b>	800	Yes
<b>Other</b>	760	Yes

**Statement of the consideration given to the State Monitor Advocate's (SMA) recommendation as set forth in the annual summary developed under §653.108(t).** Connecticut's MSFW staff continues to strive to improve performance. Based on the annual summary of services to MSFWs, an assessment of activities under these regulations is conducted. Any recommendations from the SMA, including any corrective actions, will be considered by the CTDOL.

**Assessment of available resources for outreach and whether State believes such resources are sufficient. If State believes resources are insufficient, provide description of what would help and what State would do with additional resources.** In Connecticut, one staff position, the SMA, will continue to be assigned to outreach activities, as Connecticut is not considered a significant MSFW state. CTDOL's PY 2015 goal is to reach 400 MSFWs. The majority of contacts with MSFWs will be conducted between June and October. The SMA will conduct visits to agricultural employers between November and May for recruiting assistance.

The level of Wagner-Peyser funding in Connecticut, specific to outreach activity, has not changed. CTDOL will continue to provide services and outreach to MSFWs at the same levels as previous years.

### **Outreach Activities**

**Describe State agency's proposed outreach activities including strategies on how to contact farm- workers who are not being reached by normal intake activities conducted by the employment service offices.** To augment CTDOL's outreach efforts, the SMA continues a cooperative agreement with the New England Farm Worker's Council (NEFWC), in an effort to integrate the employment and training services of both agencies and avoid the duplication of services to MSFWs. This partnership also enhances CTDOL's ability to achieve maximum penetration into the farm worker population by reaching seasonal as well as migrant workers. The SMA has also developed additional strategic partnerships with community based organizations to maximize resources and provide support services to MSFWs as well as agricultural employers. Some of the SMA's activities included the continuation of these efforts:

- Collaboration with local USDOL Wage and Hour staff and participation in the Winter Connecticut Nursery & Landscaping Association field day. The SMA presents information on MSPA and H-2A regulations to agricultural employers.
- Partnerships with community based organizations such as University of Connecticut School of Medicine, Connecticut River Valley Farmworker's Health Program (CRVFHP), Statewide Legal Services of CT, and Community Health Service providers.
- Distribution of informational brochures and posters on Pesticide Safety and Heat Stroke Prevention to all growers participating in the H-2A program.
- Partnered with NEFWC to provide other support services to local farm workers in need.

- Presentation to students at the University of Connecticut in a field trip for a class titled “Migrant Workers In Connecticut.” SMA provides information on his own job duties as well as the variety of employment and support services available to MSFWs through CTDOL’s programs.
- Participation in the University of Connecticut Migrant Farm Worker Clinic Symposium by presenting information about MSFWs to medical students who visit farms and conduct free medical screenings for farm workers.

**Plan for proposed outreach activities must include:**

**Goals for number of farmworkers who will be contacted each program year by W-P staff.**

CTDOL’s goal for PY 2015 is to contact 400 farmworkers through its outreach efforts.

**Number of farmworkers who will be contacted each program year by other agencies under cooperative arrangements. These numerical goals must be based on the number of farmworkers estimated to be in the State in the coming year, taking into account the varying concentration of farmworkers during the seasons in each geographic area, the range of services needed in each area and the number of W-P and/or cooperating agency staff who will conduct outreach.**

New England Farm Workers’ Council (NEFWC), CTDOL’s WIOA Title 1 Section 167 grantee, projects 300 farmworker contacts through its outreach efforts for PY 2015.

**State’s plans to conduct outreach to as many farmworkers as possible.** The SMA shall make written and oral presentations to MSFWs, in both Spanish and English, at their living quarters and in common gathering areas. The information presented will include the following:

- Agricultural and non-agricultural job openings
- Training options
- Support services (Statewide Legal Services of CT, Migrant Health programs)
- Vocational testing
- Career counseling
- Job development
- Information on the Job Service Complaint System
- Farm worker rights (Federal and State Law, employment related protections)
- Terms and conditions of employment
- Unemployment Compensation Insurance Information
- Services provided by the New England Farm Workers’ Council (NEFWC)

The SMA will also provide workers with wallet-sized cards that include his contact information as well as the names and phone numbers of other organizations offering support services, such as U.S. Wage & Hour, ConnectiCOSH (CT OSHA), NEFWC, Statewide Legal Services, and a number of Community Health Centers. Other outreach material that may be distributed to workers includes information on Migrant Clinics (administered by CT River Valley Farmworkers’ Health Program), pamphlets on a number of CTDOL’s own programs/services, Unemployment Compensation Filing, and the addresses and phone numbers of all American Job Centers throughout the state.

The SMA also provides MSFWs with information on seasonal or short-term non-agricultural job openings, as well as agricultural opportunities in other states, that they may transition to when their agricultural contract has ended.

**Number of outreach workers dedicated to outreach to farmworkers by services areas.**

Connecticut is currently not classified as a significant MSFW state and has its SMA conducting all outreach activities and efforts.

**State's strategy for:**

**Coordinating outreach with WIOA Title 1 section 167 grantees as well as with public and private community service agencies and MSFW groups.**

The SMA has established a very close working relationship with CTDOL's WIOA Title 1 Section 167 grantee, NEFWC, as well as the CRVFHP, during his tenure. The SMA shall continue to participate in cooperative outreach sessions, along with NEFWC representatives, at a number of farms during the working season. The SMA will also continue to attend a number of meetings held at NEFWC, mainly in the off-season, to extend CTDOL's outreach efforts.

**Explaining to farmworkers the services available at local One-Stop centers.** The SMA will continue to explain to farmworkers the services available to them at local one-stop centers through his farm visits, as well as his visits to meetings held at NEFWC.

**Marketing the employment service complaint system to farmworkers and other farmworker advocacy groups.** CTDOL will continue to rely on its SMA to distribute employment service complaint system material and information to farmworkers and advocacy groups through his farm visits and networking activities.

**Providing farmworkers with a basic summary of farmworker rights, including their rights with respect to the terms and conditions of employment.** The SMA also ensures that all farms in CTDOL's agricultural program are provided information on farmworker rights, which are to be physically visible to each farm's workers. The SMA also meets in person with any prospective worker that is interested in an outbound job order, so that the worker is clear on the terms and conditions of employment.

**Urging those farmworkers who have been reached through State's outreach efforts to go to local One-Stop center to obtain full range of employment and training services.** Due to the staffing limitations, as mentioned earlier, CTDOL relies on its SMA to urge those farm workers he reaches through his outreach efforts, at farms and the NEFWC, to visit an American Job Center to obtain the full range of employment and training services.

**Services provided to farmworkers and agricultural employers through One-Stop delivery system. Describe activities planned for full range or employment and training services to agricultural community, both farmworkers and agricultural employers, through One-Stop delivery system.** American Job Centers (AJCs) offer integrated and universally accessible employment services that effectively and efficiently meet the needs of all customers, including MSFWs.

Through existing partnerships in the AJCs, MSFWs and agricultural employers have access to the following services through a single delivery system which include: Wagner-Peyser labor exchange services such as recruitment assistance, career counseling, vocational testing, veterans employment and training services, resume writing, job search assistance, reemployment workshops, and job referrals. Other American Job Center Network programs, agencies and services include Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth activities under WIOA, Adult Education,

Apprenticeship Training, Vocational Rehabilitation Training under BRS (Bureau of Rehabilitation Services) and BESB (Board of Education and Services for the Blind), Unemployment Insurance, Jobs First Employment Services, and referrals to supportive services. This universal access to career services guarantees barrier-free admission to all seekers of employment and training services, including individuals with disabilities. Many of CTDOL's partners working under the American Job Center Network are co-located in the AJCs, for a seamless delivery of services to job seekers. Once registered into CTDOL's database, all information and referrals are maintained electronically.

Training programs available through the American Job Centers are comprehensive and flexible in meeting the diverse needs of Connecticut's population. This allows job seekers with varying levels of education and experience the opportunity to upgrade their skills in order to meet the competitive needs of employers.

Staff encourages non-English speaking customers to take advantage of the cost-free ESL classes offered through Adult Education or CTDOL's WIOA Section 167 Grantee. This is a critical component of promoting life-long learning as well as developing the basic skills needed to secure employment and pursue career growth.

Staff in the American Job Centers have been trained in the proper identification and coding of MSFWs and are well educated on the multiple barriers of employment this population may encounter. The SMA will continue on-site monitoring of the AJCs to ensure compliance with the Job Service regulations, and will offer technical assistance to staff as needed.

CTDOL is committed to achieving full compliance with the federally mandated minimum equity indicator requirements for service to MSFWs.

The SMA will continue to reinforce positive relationships with farm workers, farmers, and other non-profit organizations while conducting outreach activities. During the next year CTDOL plans to continue outreach to local workers as a means of informing them of the full range of services offered in the American Job Centers Network.

The SMA maintains frequent contact with growers in the H-2A program in an effort to respond quickly to their labor needs.

In PY 2015 CTDOL will offer the following services to agricultural employers and MSFWs:

- Assistance with the placement of local and interstate job orders
- Assistance in the recruitment of qualified workers
- Dissemination of information on, and referral to organizations that assist MSFWs including New England Farm Workers' Council, CT Migrant Health Network, CT River Valley Farm workers Health Program, ConnectiCOSH, University of Connecticut Medical School, Statewide Legal Services of CT, and Board of Education Migratory Program
- Mediation and Interpretation services
- Complaint assistance
- Technical assistance to ensure that housing requirements meet Federal standards
- As needed, assist in making appointments for individual MSFWs or members of their family with appropriate agencies
- Technical assistance on compliance with employment services regulations and all other Federal and State laws

**Other requirements**

**State Monitor Advocate. Plan must contain statement that indicates that State Monitor Advocate has been afforded opportunity to review and approve AOP.** The SMA has been afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the State Agricultural Outreach Plan.

**Review and Public Comment. Plan must provide information indicating that WIOA Section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees, other appropriate farmworker groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations, have been given an opportunity to comment on State AOP. Include list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.** The WIOA section 167 NFJP Grantee, the New England Farm Worker’s Council (NEFWC) has been afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the State Agricultural Outreach Plan. Any comments received after the submission date will be forwarded to the regional Monitor Advocate, under separate cover.

**Assessment of progress. Plan must include explanation of what was achieved based on previous AOP, what was not achieved and explanation as to why State believes goals were not achieved, and how State intends to remedy gap of achievement in coming year.**

**PY 2014 Plan versus PY 2014 Actual**

	<b>Comparison Chart – Program Year</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>+/-</b>
1	Number of MSFWs contacts by ES staff	400	512	+112
2	Number of MSFWs contacts by 167 grantee	216	411	+195
3	Number of MSFWs employers contacted for obtaining Job orders	65	36	-29
4	Number of job orders cleared	75	58	-17
5	Number of job orders on which field checks were conducted	28	25	-3
6	Total number of MSFW formal complaints received	0	0	0

In addition, CTDOL has recorded a 55% increase of MSFWs receiving career guidance, job development and staff assisted services from PY 2013 to PY 2014. Due to shifts in agricultural trends in Connecticut, we did not receive the amount of job orders we had anticipated. According to the annual Agricultural Wage Survey conducted in Connecticut, the Agricultural employers utilized more family workers instead of MSFWs in PY 2014.

**WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES**

**State Plan must include assurances that:**

<b>1</b>	The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time. (Sec 121(e)(3));
<b>2</b>	The State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111 (State agency staffing requirements) if the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers;
<b>3</b>	If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and
<b>4</b>	State agency merit-based public employees provide Wagner-Peyser Act-funded labor

	exchange activities in accordance with Department of Labor regulations.
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## ADULT EDUCATION LITERACY PROGRAMS

**State Plan must include description of following as it pertains to Adult Education and Literacy programs under Title II, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).**

**Aligning of Content Standards. Describe how the eligible agency will, by July 1, 2016, align its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).**

With adoption of the Common Core State Standards in Connecticut, the new GED test and the new web-based National External Diploma Program, CSDE recognized the need to support a set of standards relevant to adult learners. Connecticut adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education released by the United States Department of Education Office of Career and Technical and Adult Education. These content standards align closely with the Common Core State Standards in Connecticut.

Connecticut was selected in December 2014 for participation in the College and Career Readiness Standards-in-Action project. Beginning in the fall of 2015, state educators are receiving intensive, advanced-level College and Career Readiness for Adult Education standards implementation support. This technical assistance will enable the state to continue implementation of CCR standards and to reach all programs, adult education staff and students.

To prepare for total alignment by July 1, 2017, CSDE has conducted numerous professional development sessions. In 2011 CSDE partnered with the Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education (CAACE) to conduct an introductory session on the Common Core State Standards pertaining to adult education. The session included a presentation by Susan Pimentel, one of the lead writers of the national standards for English Language Arts and Literacy. State staff participated in the National Adult Education Professional Development Council's training on the standards in 2013. The state then developed a plan to build state trainers' capacity and adult education providers/educators "awareness" of the standards. More training continued in August 2013 with a two-day summer institute that gave participants the opportunity to discuss the standards and implications for local programming. Two programs were identified to pilot the implementation utilizing the Standards-In-Action process to unpack and create lessons. These programs and Connecticut training staff participated in a regional training coordinated by the New England Literacy Resource Center. While continuing to work closely with the pilot programs, trainers provided overview sessions across Connecticut to increase awareness and knowledge. The standards were incorporated into all workshops in math, reading, and writing.

Professional development in reading integrated the English Language Arts (ELA) Reading Standards into each session. Sessions incorporated the three advances (text complexity, evidence, and knowledge building) and identified standards relating to alphabetic,

fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Resources and strategies for skills instruction were shared and discussed. The importance of connecting reading and writing was emphasized. Writing professional development concentrated on the ELA Writing Standards. Sessions focused on understanding the writing standards and developing strategies and skills for instruction of adult learners.

Connecticut applied to OCTAE and was selected in December 2014 for participation in the College and Career Readiness Standards-in-Action project. Trainers participated in two workshops in Washington, DC, to be trained in the statewide implementation of standards. Beginning in the fall of 2015 state educators have received intensive advanced level College and Career Readiness for Adult Education standards implementation training. This training and technical assistance will enable the state to continue implementation of CCR standards and to reach all programs, adult education staff and students.

The Student Achievement in Reading (STAR) Federal initiative continued its successful implementation and support to Connecticut's current programs. On-site mentoring and coaching activities continued for STAR-trained educators. The two nationally certified STAR trainers successfully completed the STAR recertification process. They also provided sessions for the STAR teachers from each program to review the diagnostic assessments and the resources contained in the STAR Toolkit.

**Local Activities.** Describe how the State will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide adult education and literacy activities, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of local activities.

Through CSDE, the State of Connecticut will award two-year grants to eligible providers through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to enable providers to develop, implement and improve adult education and literacy activities. To ensure direct and equitable access for all eligible providers, CSDE will publish a *Notice of Availability* in all major Connecticut newspapers and post the notice on the CSDE's web page. The RFP will be mailed to: all local education agencies and higher education institutions; a master list of current and past providers including community-based organizations, regional education service centers, housing authorities, volunteer organizations, the Connecticut Department of Correction (DOC), other correctional facilities and institutions; and to all current providers and WDBs. A Bidders' Conferences will be publicly advertised with the *Notice of Availability* and will be held at a central location to provide answers to questions regarding appropriateness of proposed projects and application procedures.

The following agencies are eligible for funding through the Connecticut State Department of Education:

- a) A local educational agency;
- b) A community-based organization or faith-based organization;
- c) A volunteer literacy organization;
- d) An institution of higher education;
- e) A public or private nonprofit agency;
- f) A library;

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- g) A public housing authority;
- h) Other nonprofit institutions that have the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals;
- i) A consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above;
- j) A partnership between an employer and an entity described above.

Grants will be awarded to agencies to provide adult education and literacy activities to individuals who:

- a) Have attained 17 years of age;
- b) Are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under Connecticut state law; and
- c) Are basic skills deficient;
- d) Do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education; or
- e) Are English language learners.

Local grants will be distributed based on the ability to meet the requirements of AEFLA Purposes outlined in WIOA: (1) Assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency; (2) Assist adults who are parents or family members become a full partner in the education development of their children; (3) Assist adults in completing high school; (3) Promote transitions from adult education to postsecondary education and training through career pathways; (4) Assist immigrants and English language learners improve reading, writing, math, speaking, and comprehending the English language and acquire understanding of American government, individual freedom, and responsibilities of citizenship.

CSDE will make funding available to each of Connecticut's five designated local workforce areas. In conjunction with each WDB, CSDE will help to assess local area needs and WIB goals. Eligible providers will select the appropriate priority area when drafting and submitting their proposals to CSDE.

The RFP will establish a minimum six-week turnaround time between RFP distribution and proposal submission to CSDE. Proposals responding to the RFP will be evaluated by a review team comprising interagency staff and experts in each priority area. Interagency participants will include representatives of CSDE, the WDB and One-Stop partners. The review team will evaluate each proposal using a standardized evaluation form based on required Federal, State and regional criteria published in the RFP (including the considerations listed in Section 232).

CSDE staff will conduct an internal credit check to ensure compliance with the requirements of Title II of WIOA, all applicable laws, and RFP criteria.

CSDE will use following process to distribute funds to approved applicants:

- 1) Not less than 82.5% of the grant funds to award grants and contacts under section 231 and to carry out section 225, Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals, of which not more than 20% of such amount shall be available to carry out section 225;
- 2) Shall not use more than 12.5% of the grant funds to carry out State leadership activities under section 223; and

- 3) Shall use not more than 5% of the grant funds, or \$85,000, whichever is greater, for administrative expenses of the eligible agency.

All allowable costs for the federally funded Adult Basic Education program are defined in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-87. This document will be used to determine reasonableness, allowability and allocability of costs. All costs must be supported by source documentation.

Using the evaluation criteria published in the RFP, proposal reviews will involve a standardized evaluation process including the following items: the eligible provider's response to RFP requirements, the accuracy of the itemized budget in meeting line item limits and definitions, and the considerations listed in Section 232. The weight of each consideration in the evaluation process will be defined in the RFP. Evidence required supporting each consideration listed below has been defined and is printed in *Italics* with the corresponding consideration.

**Considerations:**

- (1) The degree to which the eligible provider would be responsive to:
  - (A) Regional needs as identified in the local plan under section 108 (*as evidenced by a description of regional needs and how the applicant will be responsive to those needs*); and
  - (B) Serving individuals in the community who were identified as most in need of adult education and literacy activities, including individual who have low levels of literacy skills or who are English language learners (*as evidenced by an objective statement of need accompanied by a recruitment and retention plan which targets these individuals*);
- (2) The ability of the eligible provider to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including eligible individuals with learning disabilities (*as evidenced by an objective statement of need accompanied by a recruitment and retention plan which targets these individuals*);
- (3) Past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State-adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance described in section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy (*as evidenced by meeting or exceeding performance measures based on documentation from the Connecticut Adult Reporting System and annual reviews for previously funded providers and as evidenced by comparable objective performance measures which demonstrate successful student outcomes for new eligible providers*);
- (4) The extent to which the eligible provider demonstrates alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan under section 108, as well as the activities and services of the one-stop partners (*as evidenced by description of proposed activities and strategies and goals and how the provider plans to align them*);
- (5) Whether the eligible provider's program is of sufficient intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains; and uses instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction (*as evidenced by a program design suitable to achieve applicable performance measures – appropriateness of program design may be demonstrated by past performance of successful outcomes or documentation of a similar program design and associated outcomes*);

(6) Whether the eligible provider's activities, including reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction delivered by the eligible provider, are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice *(as evidenced by program design and /or curriculum)*;

(7) Whether the eligible provider's activities effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and system lead to improved performance *(as evidenced by program design and/or curriculum and the accessibility of hardware and software applications as appropriate)*;

(8) Whether the eligible provider's activities provide learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship *(as evidenced by program design and/or curriculum which focus on skills needed for postsecondary education and training, the workplace, and citizenship)*;

(9) Whether the eligible provider's activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, and administrators who meet any minimum qualifications established by the State, where applicable, and who have access to high quality professional development, including through electronic means *(as evidenced by appropriate degrees, certifications, and trainings)*;

(10) Whether the eligible provider's activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local WDBs, One-Stop Centers, job training programs, social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways *(as evidenced by formal collaborations and the commitment of the provider to assess and address the literacy and non-literacy support services of participants)*;

(11) Whether the eligible provider's activities offer flexible schedules and coordination with Federal, State, and local support services (such as child care, transportation, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs *(as evidenced by program schedules and documentation of support services available)*;

(12) Whether the eligible provider maintains a high-quality information management system that has the capacity to report measurable participant outcomes (consistent with section 116) and to monitor program performance *(as evidenced by prior participation in or a commitment to participate in the eligible agency's Connecticut Competency System and Connecticut Adult Reporting System, and to submit comprehensive, timely, and accurate data)*; and

(13) Whether the local areas in which the eligible provider is located have a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs *(as evidenced by area demographic data)*.

**Adult Education and Literacy Activities (Section 203 of WIOA)**

CSDE will require eligible providers receiving grant funding to carry out corrections education or education for other institutionalized individuals and use the grant funds to operate the following adult education programs/activities:

**Adult Basic Education (ABE)**

ABE instruction is designed for adults seeking a high school diploma who function below the secondary school level and lack basic reading, writing and numeracy skills necessary to function effectively as workers, parents and citizens. Instruction can be individualized or offered in a classroom, or a learning lab. Persons completing ABE are prepared to benefit from secondary level instruction. ABE educational functioning levels are as follows:

- a. Beginning ABE Literacy (Grade Levels 0-1.9)
- b. Beginning Basic Education (Grade Levels 2.0-3.9)
- c. Low Intermediate Basic Education (Grade Levels 4.0-5.9)
- d. High Intermediate Basic Education (Grade Levels 6.0-8.9)

**Adult Secondary Education (ASE)**

Connecticut Adult Education offers three distinct pathways for adults to attain a high school diploma.

**(1) Adult High School Credit Diploma (AHSCD):**

The Adult High School Credit Diploma program is a prescribed plan, process and structure for earning a required number of academic and elective credits. The provider must be a local education agency (LEA) or Regional Education Service Center (RESC). Credits toward a local diploma must be obtained through a prescribed plan. Each provider/town can enhance the basic AHSCD program but must adhere to the minimum state requirements: 1) use certified teachers and counselors; 2) adhere to CSDE requirements regarding assessment, enrollment, accountability and reporting; 3) meet required credit standards; and 4) ensure that a one credit course offers a minimum of 48 instructional hours. An adult who successfully completes the required credits of the AHSCD program is awarded a high school diploma by the providing LEA or RESC.

**(2) General Educational Development (GED):**

Adults who have not completed high school must demonstrate, through an examination, the attainment of academic skills and concepts normally acquired through completion of a high school program. Applicants for this examination must be at least 17 years of age and officially withdrawn from school for at least six months. Individuals who pass the GED Tests are awarded a Connecticut State High School Diploma. GED instructional programs, provided throughout the state in local school districts and a variety of other instructional sites, help individuals to prepare for this rigorous examination.

**(3) National External Diploma Program (NEDP):**

This program provides a secondary school credential designed for adults who have gained skills through life experiences and demonstrated competence in a particular job, talent or academic area. The NEDP is a portfolio assessment program that offers no classroom instruction. An adult who successfully completes the portfolio assessment, as required, is awarded a high school diploma by the providing LEA or RESC.

Adult Secondary Education (ASE) programs must integrate functional life and employability skills into the curriculum, incorporate technology into the instructional process, and provide comprehensive counseling, transition and support services in collaboration with other community or human services organizations. ASE educational functioning levels are as follows:

- a. Low Adult Secondary Education (Grade Levels 9.0-10.9)
- b. High Adult Secondary Education (Grade Levels 11.0-12.9)

### **Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities**

#### **(1) Workforce Education Services**

Programs will provide workforce preparation skills including literacy instruction, employability skills, career exploration and development, and links to employment, employment services and other options in order to respond to the evolving workforce needs of business and promote individual self-sufficiency. Workforce readiness programs offer instruction to support transition to work, entry-level employment, and reentry into the workforce for unemployed individuals.

### **Family Literacy Activities**

Family literacy activities are services that make sustainable improvements in the economic prospects for a family and better enable parents or family members to support their children's learning needs. Activities include the following: parent or family adult education and literacy activities that lead to readiness for postsecondary education or training, career advancement, and economic self-sufficiency; interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children; training for parents or family members regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children; parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency; and, age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences. Family Literacy Services are intended to benefit the child, parent and community. Program services will focus on enabling parents to become full partners in the education of their children. Services will be of sufficient intensity and duration to make positive sustainable changes in the family.

### **English Language Acquisition Activities**

English language acquisition activities include programs of instruction designed to help eligible individuals who are English language learners achieve competence in reading, writing, speaking, and English language comprehension; and that lead to (1) the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; and (2) transition to postsecondary education and training; or employment.

#### **(1) Americanization/Citizenship**

Americanization/Citizenship programs include instruction designed for foreign-born adults who wish to become United States citizens. Persons completing this program are prepared to pursue citizenship through the prescribed process of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

#### **(2) English as a Second Language (ESL)**

English as a Second Language instruction is designed for adults who have limited proficiency in the English language or whose native language is not English. ESL programs assist individuals to improve their English skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing in order to find or maintain employment, attain citizenship, become more involved with their children's schooling and make greater use of community resources. Instruction is provided in English as a unifying means of serving the broad ethnic diversity of limited-English-speaking adults.

### **Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education**

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (EL/Civics) programs must contain the following:

- Contextualized instruction in literacy and English language acquisition, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation and U.S. history and government.
- Program design and goals that focus on preparing adults for employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency
- Curriculum focus on skills that will provide information and support in the skills necessary for the workplace
- Coordination with the local workforce system, and activities provided in combination with integrated education/training (IET) activities.
- Improvement of literacy skills including speaking, reading, writing and numeracy in order to provide learners with the skills to apply English and mathematics accurately and appropriately in a variety of home, community, workplace and academic settings.
- Opportunities for experiential learning in which participants are actively engaged in community pursuits are included in the program design.
- Utilization of research-based instructional models that have proven effective in teaching individuals to read, write and speak English effectively.
- Collaboration with community agencies that offer services to limited English proficient populations.
- Embedding of technology literacy into the core curriculum.

Additional program activities directly related to the use of these funds include:

- Participation in career pathways exploration and distance learning activities that impact competence in the workplace;
- Integration of various hand-held technologies into classroom work including tablets, smart phones and I Pads;
- Creation of video oral histories;
- Exposure to basic math vocabulary and interpretation of charts, tables and graphs;
- Knowledge of the American education system with special focus on addressing the needs of families new to the U.S. school system; and
- Cross cultural perspectives, civic responsibility, democracy topics and independent projects.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education also provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

#### **Workforce Preparation Activities or Integrated Education and Training**

CSDE will continue to assist the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) expand the development and implementation of the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) delivery model offering industry-recognized credentials. Adult Education programs will collaborate with WDBs in local workforce areas to provide I-BEST training to Jobs First Employment Service (JFES) clients who receive Temporary Family Assistance.

Programs must demonstrate a commitment to provide appropriate support services to students enrolled in the integrated pathway program. These services may include, but are not limited to

tutoring or other academic supports, college navigation support, career planning, transportation assistance, and/or childcare.

**Special Rule:** Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

**Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals.** Describe how the State will establish and operate programs under section 225 of WIOA for corrections education and education of other institutionalized individuals, including how it will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II subtitle C, any of the following academic programs for: Adult education and literacy activities; Special education, as determined by the eligible agency; Secondary school credit; Integrated education and training; Career pathways; Concurrent enrollment; Peer tutoring; and Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

**Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.**

CSDE will reserve no more than 20% of its Federal grant received under WIOA to provide programs for corrections education and education for other institutionalized individuals as described in Section 225 of the Act. Funding under Section 225 will include the following correctional institutionalized settings: prison, jail reformatory, work farm, detention center, halfway house, community based rehabilitation center or other similar institution designed for the confinement or rehabilitation of criminal offenders. CSDE shall also require that each eligible provider using grant funds under Section 225 to carry out a program for criminal offenders in a correctional institution shall give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

CSDE shall require that each eligible provider use the grant funds to operate education programs as follows:

1. Adult Basic Education (ABE)
2. English literacy acquisition (ELA)
3. Secondary-school completion (Adult High School Diploma)

**Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program.** Describe how the State will establish and operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs under Section 243 of WIOA, for English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries.

CSDE will establish and operate English Literacy and Civics Education programs as a part of its adult education program. Since the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires an intentional connection to the workplace, to careers and to the workforce system (employers, Workforce Investment Boards, Chambers of Commerce, etc.) for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs, CSDE will work with the Connecticut Department of Labor to expand its Integrated education and training delivery model (I-BEST) offering industry-recognized credentials to Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs. Adult Education programs will work with WDBs in local workforce areas to provide assistance to local programs. CSDE will hold meetings with grantees regarding the requirements of the program and provide mandatory professional development sessions for EL/Civics instructors and staff on integrating career awareness, workforce skills, and career pathways.

**Describe how the State will fund, in accordance with the requirements of Title II, subtitle C, an Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program and how the funds will be used for the program.**

CSDE will issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education. The RFP requires the following for funded programs: program design and goals that focus on preparing adults for employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency; curriculum focus on skills that will provide information and support in the skills necessary for the workplace; coordination with the local workforce system; and activities provided in combination with integrated education/training (IET) activities. Funds will be specifically allocated for teacher professional development. Funds will be used for instructional costs (instructional pay, curriculum materials, and software that connects to career pathways). Funds will be used to serve those individuals who are most in need of the program. Funds will be distributed on an as-needed basis for programs that request an ESL program.

**Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program will be delivered in combination with integrated education and training activities.**

CSDE will use its highly successful integrated education and training program, I-BEST, with English Literacy and Civics Education students.

**Describe how the program is designed to (1) prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency and (2) integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.**

CSDE will assist local adult education programs in working with WDBs in local workforce areas to determine in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency, and design I-BEST programs based on those industries and occupations. CSDE will also expand activities to coordinate needs-assessments and provide services through the Connecticut One-Stop system in order to address the needs of customers and employers and to link adult education to other employment and training services.

**State Leadership. Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out the required State Leadership activities under section 223 of WIOA.**

12.30.15

CSDE sent a survey via Survey Monkey to all local program directors as well as all WIA-funded providers on October 22, 2015, to obtain their input on the state plan. The survey listed 17 WIOA requirements for funding local programs and state leadership activities. Participants were asked to rate the areas according to need on the following scale:

1. We feel confident in this area.
2. Our program could use a little assistance in this.
3. Some components are in place, but our program needs more assistance.
4. This is one of our program's biggest needs.

A weighted average of 1-4 was given to all questions. Any question with a score of 2.00 or higher indicates that the programs need a little assistance to a lot of assistance in the area listed. Five areas received scores below 2.00; two areas scored 2.00; and ten areas received scores above 2.00.

The three most identified areas of need were: (1) meeting regional needs as identified in the local plan and demonstrating alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan as well as the activities and services of the one-stop partners, (2) assisting adults in the transition to postsecondary education and training, including through career pathways, and (3) providing activities for the integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skills training, including promoting linkages with employers. The three areas that were identified as being of the least concern were: (1) ensuring that activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, and administrators, (2) serving individuals who have low levels of literacy skills or who are English language learners or individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities, and (3) using instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction and using reading writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction that are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research.

Participant comments about each section were collected and analyzed to determine which state leadership activities are most needed. CSDE will use survey results to determine types of training and technical assistance to provide.

### **Description of Required Activities**

(1) CSDE will work with other core programs and One-Stop partners to ensure that adult education and literacy activities are in alignment and to help develop career pathways that provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities. CSDE will partner with CTDOL to assist local providers in partnering with One-Stops to develop career pathways and provide access to employment and training services. Professional development will be provided to local program staff, including orientation to adult education programs and services for One-Stop partners and other agencies.

Since the greatest need identified from the survey of local programs was meeting regional needs and demonstrating alignment between proposed activities and services with core partners, CSDE will ensure that training and technical assistance will address these two issues. It will also assist local programs in becoming familiar with the regional/state plan to determine how it

affects their programs. CSDE will also work with local programs to establish stronger linkages with partners such as local schools, WDBs, one stop centers, and job training programs.

(2) CSDE has instituted high quality professional development programs to improve instruction. Training will be provided related to the specific needs of adult learners and information about models and promising practices will be disseminated.

To enhance program quality and assure continued progress in meeting the Core and Additional Indicators of Performance, CSDE shall award grants to eligible providers to deliver state leadership activities, primarily professional development activities, with funds made available under this subtitle. In order to meet the various needs of our state, CSDE may enter into partnerships with other states and/or the federal government to collaboratively fund projects that will meet individual needs and accomplish common goals. CSDE shall not use more than 12.5% of the funds awarded under this subtitle for state leadership activities.

CSDE will deliver a majority of its state leadership and professional development services through the Adult Training and Development Network (ATDN). CSDE's professional development model supports the implementation of the goals of the Connecticut Unified State Plan and consists of professional development basics and activities related to the implementation of career pathways.

(3) CSDE will provide technical assistance to local grantees in:

- i. Development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on the most rigorous or scientifically valid research available and appropriate, in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition programs, distance education, and staff training;
- ii. Role of eligible providers as a One-Stop partner to provide access to employment, education, and training services;
- iii. Assistance in the use of technology, including for staff training, to eligible providers, especially the use of technology to improve system efficiencies.

Serving students with low literacy skills or who are English language learners or individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities, was not rated by most local programs as being one of their strongest needs. Providers did express that they need assistance with curriculum materials and teaching strategies/best practices for students who are non-literate in their native language and with developing a scope and sequence curriculum for low level literacy skills and individuals with disabilities.

Another area identified on the survey as a need is technical assistance in helping local programs identify instructional practices which will enable students to pass the new GED test. Most programs felt confident in teaching reading, writing, speaking and English language acquisition, but one program stated they need help in ways to improve the depth of math instruction. CSDE will also provide technical assistance in serving adults with special learning needs and disabilities including disability awareness sessions, resource and instructional materials, accommodation and instruction planning workshops, train-the-trainer sessions, referral information and telephone consultation concerning program issues.

(4) CSDE will conduct program monitoring and evaluation to ensure compliance with Federal and State funding requirements and to determine the effectiveness of programs in meeting the

needs of the adult population and will disseminate information about models and proven or promising practices within Connecticut.

CSDE has in place a data reporting system for each local provider – Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS) – that can measure performance outcomes. CSDE has developed a formalized follow-up and reporting process to report on the core indicators of obtaining or retaining employment and entering post-secondary education according to National Reporting System requirements. The follow-up and reporting process includes data sharing with other State agencies, including the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) wage information system. CSDE will participate in the statewide data system that will assist CSDE to work seamlessly with other partners while protecting the privacy rights of individuals.

To provide the core service of performance and cost information for WIOA section 231 providers to the One-Stop system, CSDE will develop a report that includes each program's success in meeting State-adjusted levels of performance. This data will assist potential clients to identify an appropriate adult education or literacy program in the local area.

**Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out permissible State Leadership Activities under section 223 of WIOA, if applicable.**

**Description of Permissible Activities**

- 1) CSDE will provide training and technical assistance to local programs in technology applications, translation technology, and distance education, including professional development to support the use of instructional technology. Training and technology assistance to local programs in technology applications was identified as a need, especially in the area of web-based communication (social media, phone apps, etc.). Assistance also needs to be provided in finding access to computers.
- 2) CSDE will develop and disseminate curricula including literacy curricula, which uses instructional practices such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency and reading comprehension that research has proven effective for adults.
- 3) CSDE will develop content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways. Connecticut Competency System (CCS) training sessions will be offered from both adult education and the workforce development community. CCS is an integral part of the CSDE's career pathways, standards-based framework utilizing the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) to connect curriculum assessment and instruction that is able to capture progress made by adult education learners.
- 4) CSDE will provide assistance to eligible providers in developing and implementing programs that achieve the objectives of this title including meeting the State adjusted levels of performance.
- 5) CSDE will provide technical assistance in implementing the Connecticut Competency System (CCS) for appraisal, instruction and assessment in a life-skills and an employability context, including new teacher training, CCS Facilitator training, and One-Stop partner staff training as well as the ordering and dissemination of CASAS curricula materials used in conjunction with the Connecticut Competency System.

The Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS) will collect student demographic, attendance, assessment and outcome information for *each* student in the adult education program. CARS generates statewide and local demographic and performance assessment reports used for program planning, management and accountability. Data from the system allows CSDE to assess the effectiveness of local programs by measuring performance outcomes.

- 6) CSDE will continue to partner with community colleges and other institutions of higher learning to assist adults to transition to postsecondary education and training. Training and technical assistance will be provided on effective methods of transitioning students.

Assisting adults in the transition to postsecondary education and training was the second greatest need expressed by local providers in the survey. CSDE will ensure that training and technical assistance will be provided, especially in areas such as employer engagement, the institution of career counselor positions, and enhanced job responsibilities for current staff emphasizing transitions. CSDE will also provide assistance in the implementation of training programs that assist adults in obtaining economic self-sufficiency.

- 7) CSDE will work with CTDOL to expand its Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) delivery model offering industry-recognized credentials to Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs. Training and technical assistance will be provided to local grantees for integration of literacy and English language instruction.

The third greatest need identified on the survey was providing activities for the integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skill training, including promoting linkages with employers. CSDE will assist local programs by sharing effective models, assisting local programs in engaging employers, and how to partner successfully with other agencies to place students in employment.

- 8) CSDE will provide technical assistance and training to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities by identifying curriculum frameworks and aligning rigorous content standards that specify what adult learners should know and be able to do in the areas of reading and language arts, mathematics, and English language acquisition, taking the following into consideration:
  - i. State adopted academic standards.
  - ii. Current adult skills and literacy assessments used in the State or outlying area.
  - iii. Primary indicators of performance described in section 116.
  - iv. Standards and academic requirements for enrollment in non-remedial, for-credit courses in postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education supported by the State or outlying area.

Connecticut training staff will continue to work closely with the pilot programs and will provide overview sessions throughout the state to increase awareness and knowledge. Also, CCRS were incorporated into all workshops in math, reading, and writing. Working with ELA students in the area of workplace training was identified on the survey as a need. Therefore CSDE will work with local programs to identify a variety of curricula for workplace training.

- 9) CSDE will develop and pilot strategies to improve teacher quality and retention. Training staff will provide sessions on learning styles and needs, facilitating adult learning, planning for instruction, and monitoring student progress.

CSDE will assist in developing and implementing programs and services to meet the needs of adult learners with learning disabilities or English language learners.

**Assessing Quality. Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II and take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA.**

### **Performance Accountability**

Performance Accountability assesses the effectiveness of grantees in achieving continuous improvement of adult education and literacy activities. The performance outcome measures shall consist of the following core indicators:

1. The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
2. The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program;
3. The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
4. The percentage of program participants who obtain either a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year of exit from program;
5. The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains towards such a credential or employment; and
6. The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers established pursuant to clause (iv).

### **Setting Targets**

Each fiscal year CSDE negotiates proposed target percentages for each of the core indicators of performance with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE). Each local eligible program is responsible for meeting or exceeding the negotiated performance targets. Each program shall analyze progress towards meeting the targets on an ongoing basis. Each program must utilize the approved standardized assessments that provide the framework needed to measure program effectiveness.

Central to the evaluation process is an assessment of Performance Measures established by CSDE to focus on continual progress, successful completion of the program area, and successful transition to a next step of employment, postsecondary education, or occupational training. For example, CSDE's performance measures for secondary completion programs focus on interim student progress by requiring providers to report on the number of students who pass one or more subsections of the GED practice test or earn one or more credits toward an adult high school diploma, and requiring them to report on number of students who earn a diploma or its recognized equivalent. Incorporating this performance measure into the evaluation process will ensure that the eligible agency and local provider assess each student's progress toward program completion and analyze significant changes indicated by this interim progress indicator.

CSDE has also developed five Additional Indicators of Program Performance that require providers to address all aspects of program operation: planning, recruitment, curriculum and instruction, support services and professional development. These additional indicators assure

that programs will focus on long-term planning for program development and community responsiveness rather than focusing solely on current year issues and achievements. These indicators also assure that adult education providers develop learner and community-responsive programs and curricula so they can become an integral part of the local education system as it works toward lifelong learning and self-sufficiency for all community members, especially those most in need of literacy services. Core and additional Indicators of Performance will become a focal point for annual and on-site monitoring reviews and the basis for formative evaluation.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

To improve the quality and effectiveness of adult education programs, CSDE will conduct two evaluation processes: an annual desk-audit for all providers, and an on-site monitoring evaluation for selected providers.

### **On-Site Monitoring**

An on-site monitoring evaluation will be conducted for a minimum of 25% of Federally funded adult education programs each year to determine the effectiveness of adult education and literacy programs and activities. All newly funded programs will be monitored, as will all programs that had non-compliance or RFP Requirement issues during previous year's monitoring. These evaluations shall, at a minimum, consist of assessing the following areas:

- a) Compliance with all applicable laws and RFP guidelines, including ADA 504 and Section 427 GEPA;
- b) Program management and operations including scheduling and locations as well as staff credentials;
- c) Outreach, recruitment and retention practices including individuals with multiple barriers to education;
- d) Curriculum and instruction and use of technology;
- e) Support services including counseling and transition services;
- f) Professional development opportunities;
- g) Student intake, assessment and documentation procedures;
- h) Documentation of the program's ability to assist adults in gaining employment, achieving self-sufficiency, and/or developing family literacy practices;
- i) Documentation of the program's progress in meeting the Performance Measures set for each applicable Core Indicator of Performance;
- j) Documentation of the program's ability to meet the Additional Indicators of Program Quality.

### **Desk Monitoring**

For the annual desk audit review, each provider will submit an assessment of Performance Measures and individual program goals as well as an annual expenditure report including all relevant fiscal records to facilitate an effective audit. Each program will also be required to submit data containing all program and student information stored in its Connecticut Adult Reporting System, including demographic, assessment and outcome data for each student enrolled. If a local program does not meet its outcome measures, it must complete a corrective action plan outlining how to make necessary improvements.

## **ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAMS CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES**

**State must provide written and signed certifications that:** [FROM CSDE]

<b>1</b>	The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;
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2	The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;
3	The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;
4	All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;
5	A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;
6	The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;
7	Agency submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and
8	The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;

**State Plan must include assurances that:** [FROM CSDE]

1	The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding supplement and not supplant provisions);
2	The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;
3	The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA; and
4	Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.

1. SF424B - Assurances – Non-Construction Programs  
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)
2. Grants.gov - Certification Regarding Lobbying  
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)
3. SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (required, only if applicable)  
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)

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## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan <sup>1</sup> must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA:

- (a) Input of State Rehabilitation Council. All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commission, must describe the following:
  - (1) Input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council’s report, the review and

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<sup>1</sup> Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(iii) of WIOA

analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as a part of the Council's functions;

- (2) The Designated State unit's response to the Council's input and recommendations; and
- (3) The designated State unit's explanations for rejecting any of the Council's input or recommendations.

### **Input of the State Rehabilitation Council.**

The mission of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is to provide assessment, advice and recommendations to the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS or the bureau) and others regarding coordination and effectiveness of programs and strategies that promote community-based competitive employment for persons with disabilities.

The SRC maintains an ongoing collaboration with BRS. The SRC is comprised of volunteers, many of whom are current or former vocational rehabilitation (VR) consumers or family members of VR consumers. They are appointed by the Governor to review and assess the effectiveness and delivery of vocational rehabilitation services provided for individuals with disabilities who are seeking employment. The SRC has participated in the following endeavors in FY2015:

1. development of the BRS 2017 State Plan;
2. Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) Annual Meeting;
3. National Council of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) Conferences in Bethesda, MD and Miami, FL and Teleconferences (six);
4. The Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Conferences in Bethesda, MD and Miami, FL;
5. SRC Meetings (six per year);
6. review of the 722 Report regarding Administrative Hearing Outcomes; and
7. updates of Corrective Action Plans resulting from the Rehabilitation Services Administration 2013 Monitoring.

### **WIOA**

In July, 2014, Congress passed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to unify the state programs that provide employment services. This bill established some significant changes to the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. At the May 2015 SRC meeting, Acting BRS Director, Amy Porter, reviewed the changes that will impact the VR program and plans the agency has undertaken to prepare to adapt to these new requirements and partner with new entities to provide cohesive employment and training programs for all of Connecticut's residents. These changes will be reported in the upcoming Unified State Plan due March 3, 2016. The SRC worked to better understand WIOA requirements and the desired outcomes that would improve employment services for people with disabilities. The SRC also began to assess how BRS could incorporate changes that would help the VR program successfully meet these new goals.

### **Agency Update**

David Doukas became the new Director for BRS on August 21, 2015. He will attend SRC meetings and provide members with information and updates about the VR

program. The SRC looks forward to working with Mr. Doukas to continue to improve the quality of services for people in the program.

### **BRS Public Meetings**

Due to WIOA, the deadline for the submission of the next State Plan was changed to March, 2016. As part of the focus for the public meeting is to review the State Plan, BRS and the SRC will host public meetings in January/February. Consumers, their families, and others interested in the VR program will be invited to review the draft of the 2017 Unified State Plan that features VR program specific information and employment information and goals among the state partners, as established by WIOA. Their feedback will inform the final version of the Unified State Plan.

### **Consumer Survey**

In response to the SRC's goal to assess the effectiveness and delivery of VR services provided by BRS, the SRC collaborated with BRS to commission the Center for Public Policy and Social Research (CPPSR) at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) to conduct a consumer satisfaction survey of VR recipients for fiscal year 2015. The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the job search services that consumers/participants received from the VR program at BRS.

Two-hundred and three consumer interviews were conducted from August 10<sup>th</sup> through September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The construction of the survey instrument was a collaborative effort between the SRC, BRS and CPPSR. The list of consumers from which this survey data is drawn was provided by BRS. That list of 600 individuals represents a small sampling of the 8,672 current and former VR consumers that BRS served in fiscal year 2015. Consumer names were pulled from all regions.

Of the 600 consumer names provided for the survey, 75 individuals chose not to respond to the survey and 88 individuals could not be reached due to an out-of-service number, an inaccurate number, or use of a privacy device. Three individuals were either deceased or incarcerated, while six others had language barriers. The remaining 225 consumers did not answer the phone following numerous attempts, throughout multiple days and evenings. CPPSR called each consumer a minimum of seven times, though in most cases, attempts reached upwards of ten calls.

Out of the respondents who CPPSR was able to reach, this survey has a 6% margin of error at the 95% confidence interval. This means that statistical differences outside of the +/- 6% margin of error will only exist approximately 5% of the time. CPPSR conducted the survey over the phone and recorded consumer answers exactly as stated. The CPPSR collected two forms of data:

- *Qualitative*: Participant comments, recorded and reported verbatim.
- *Quantitative*: Participant responses utilizing one of the provided answer options.

You may go to the BRS Website <http://www.ct.gov/brs/site/default.asp> to see the full report. Based on the SRC review of the consumer survey, the SRC recommends that BRS strengthen communication between counselors and consumers, especially when consumer cases are being transferred to another counselor. It also recommends that BRS increase engagement with businesses to increase hiring of VR consumers.

### **SRC Recommendations to BRS**

Several of these recommendations appeared last year, but the SRC believes they are ongoing issues that warrant continued attention this year.

#### **Recommendation 1 –**

We support BRS as it seeks new locations to better serve VR consumers. We applaud efforts to insure better visibility of BRS offices. We continue to recommend that signage to enable optimum visibility be a priority of all offices. The SRC is requesting that updates on signage and access to all buildings continue to be provided at SRC meetings.

#### **BRS Response:**

The bureau continues to be very active in its endeavor to improve the physical locations of our offices. We have completed two critical re-location projects in the first quarter of FFY 2016 and are planning additional moves within this year. We agree that both exterior and interior signage at our offices could be improved and have been systematically working toward addressing this. In many locations municipal building codes, landlord issues and physical space itself limits our signage options, but efforts to maximize our visibility are to be made wherever possible.

#### **Recommendation 2 –**

The accessible parking in the Waterbury office is on a grade that makes it difficult for consumers who use wheelchairs to transfer out of and into vehicles. The SRC recommends that when the parking lines are repainted, the accessible spaces be moved further right where the grade is not difficult to maneuver.

#### **BRS Response:**

The bureau has been and will continue to work closely with the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services and the lessor of our Waterbury office related to the re-grading and expansion of the parking lot. We will continue to pursue improvement at this location, insure no issues are present at newly established locations and also address any additional issue that are identified at other existing office locations.

#### **Recommendation 3 –**

Some consumers are still confused upon arrival at offices shared with DSS. It would be beneficial to consumers and families if BRS expands the website to include pictures of offices and perhaps a virtual tour of each office so consumers will know where to park and what to expect when entering into the building.

#### **BRS Response:**

BRS continually updates website content, including information related to BRS offices. We will look into providing pictures of the locations. We will also update the directions to include parking and building entrance instructions.

The state of Connecticut is implementing a new website portal that we hope will be functional in 2016. Once this website is implemented we plan to provide user friendly and accessible information for the general public, which will include BRS office information in detail.

In addition, we will continue to utilize social media to provide outreach to consumers and the public to increase awareness of office locations and services.

**Recommendation 4 –**

The SRC recommends BRS strengthen communication between counselors and consumers, especially when consumer cases are being transferred to another counselor. We would like to know what BRS expects of staff regarding response time to consumer telephone calls and emails. We would also like to have reports on how staff is meeting that expectation. Also, what is the procedure to ensure consumer contact is not lost when cases are transferred to new counselors?

**BRS Response:**

The VR Supervisors oversee case transfers and will continue working on a resolution to this concern. Going forward, consumers can expect that within two weeks of requesting a transfer to another counselor and/or office they will be contacted by the new counselor (or his/her designee) to schedule an appointment. In the case of case transfers happening due to a caseload vacancy, consumers receive a letter as soon as the vacancy occurs with contact information to be used until the position is filled. Mechanisms for formally tracking transfer cases and yielding metrics related to response times will be investigated and, to the extent possible, developed.

**Recommendation 5 –**

The SRC has a continued interest in all of the state agency collaborative projects including the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)/BRS Agency Collaborative regarding services and employment options for consumers with psychiatric issues, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS)/BRS agency collaborative and the Bureau of Education Services for the Blind (BESB) and BRS collaborative. Please provide updates at the SRC meetings about any achievements that have been attained, the strategies that have been developed to improve outcomes, the training that is available to staff, and any activity that will occur as a result of BRS' attendance at the CSAVR conference.

**BRS Response:**

BRS continues to maintain Memoranda of Understanding/Agreement and active, robust partnerships with various state agencies. We are committed to routinely sharing information about these collaborations and will continue to do so.

**Recommendation 6 –**

The Business Committee will continue efforts to make presentations about BRS to businesses and chambers of commerce to help publicize the VR program. The committee would like to work closely with BRS to develop a brochure to distribute on these occasions. The SRC requests regular updates regarding new projects and initiatives that will benefit the business community.

**BRS Response:**

BRS supports the SRC in their reaching out to businesses and chambers of commerce to market our services. We have a variety of materials developed that are geared toward highlighting the benefits of employers working with the VR program. We would be interested in presenting these materials to the SRC and developing any additional brochures that are determined necessary.

The bureau will also offer regular updates regarding initiatives and projects with the employment community at SRC meetings.

**Recommendation 7 –**

The SRC recommends that BRS increase engagement with businesses to increase hiring of VR consumers.

**BRS Response:**

BRS remains very committed to engaging with businesses. This is evident in BRS housing a business services unit, Connect-Ability Staffing, which is responsible for business outreach and development throughout Connecticut. BRS plans on expanding Connect-Ability Staffing's capacity for outreach in order to facilitate more connections with businesses and, ultimately, more employment opportunities for VR consumers.

- (a) **Request for Waiver of State-wideness.** When requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement, the designated State unit must identify the types of services to be provided by the program on a non-statewide basis. The waiver request must also include written assurances that:
- (1) A local public agency will provide the non-Federal share of costs associated with the services to be provided in accordance with the waiver request;
  - (2) The designated State unit will approve each proposed service before it is put into effect; and
  - (3) Requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the Services approved under the waiver.

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services is not requesting a Waiver of State-wideness.

- (b) **Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System.** Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system with respect to:
- (1) Federal, State, and local agencies and programs;
  - (2) State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;
  - (3) Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture;
  - (4) Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth; and
  - (5) State use contracting programs

BRS has Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) and Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the following entities:

- (1) Federal, State, and local agencies and programs:**
- a) Social Security Administration: Information Exchange Agreement to receive data regarding consumers' work history.
  - b) The Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs MOU enables collaboration of services for veterans.

- c) The Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium MOA enables BRS to create and host the Connect-Ability Distance Learning Initiative (DLI) which are free online e-learning modules for job seekers with disabilities, employers, Community Rehabilitation Providers, vocational rehabilitation staff and others. Modules are accessible and some are available in Spanish or American Sign Language. BRS also uses the DLI as a training registration platform for staff trainings.
- d) The Department of Social Services (DSS) MOA enables DORS/BRS to receive select administrative supports and access to information systems, applications and networks from DSS. It also formalizes the transfer of funding to conduct Learning Disability evaluation services related to the collaboration in serving potentially eligible consumers receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
- e) The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (MPTN) MOU enables collaboration and coordination of vocational rehabilitation services.
- f) Through the Secure Jobs Connecticut Pilot, a Letter of Agreement enables BRS and the Departments of Education (SDE), Housing (DOH), Labor (DOL), and Social Services (DSS) to collaborate with the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund, Fairfield County's Community Foundation, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the Liberty Bank Foundation, the Melville Charitable Trust, the Office of Early Childhood, the Partnership for Strong Communities, the United Way of Greater New Haven, and the United Way of CT to end homelessness by 2015 for Veterans, 2016 for those experiencing chronic homelessness, and by 2022 for families with children and youth.
- g) BRS also has agreements with Central Connecticut State University and the University of Maine, Farmington to train student interns.

**(2) State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998:**

The Connecticut Assistive Technology (AT) Act Program is housed within DORS along with BRS, therefore an MOA is not needed. The Program Director for the AT Act program serves in the role of AT Consultant to the VR program and a strong relationship has been established. The AT Act program operates an AT device lending service specifically for VR consumers. The Program Director provides AT demonstrations when needed and assists VR consumers in participating in reuse activities. Additionally, VR consumers are able to utilize the alternate financing program operated by the AT Act program to assist in paying for needed devices that the VR program may not be able to provide, such as vehicles, which can then be modified by the VR program.

The following are formal agreements that have been established to provide activities under section 4 of the AT Act:

- a) The State Education Resource Center (SERC) MOU enables SERC to expand newly established Assistive Technology (AT) Device Demonstration Center to primarily show educators and other school personnel about various AT devices.

- b) The Southern Connecticut State University MOA enables laptops and iPads with specific software to be loaned to CT K-12 schools for up to four months to allow students to try devices before they are purchased.

**(3) Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture:**

None.

**(4) Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth:**

None.

**(5) State use contracting programs:**

- a) The Office of the Attorney General MOA enables review and approval of Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) contracts and legal representation at Administrative Hearings for consumers.
- b) The Office of the State Comptroller MOU provides approval and processing of expenses for consumers and staff.

**(d) Coordination with Education Officials. Describe:**

- (1) The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of student with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.
- (2) Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to:
  - (A) consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;
  - (B) transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs;
  - (C) roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
  - (D) procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

With the passage of WIOA, the BRS Transition Committee has collaborated with the State Department of Education (SDE) and a number of entities to implement pre-employment transition services including the Connecticut Transition Community of Practice, the North East Transition Group, Regional Transition Committee, Transition Task Force, Collaboration Across the Life Span, Education Transition

Liaisons, Southern Connecticut State University Career Advisory Committee, CT-AHEAD/Higher Education Schools, the Department of Labor, and the WDBs.

Prior to initiation of pre-employment transition efforts, BRS had liaison counselors assigned to each high school to work directly with students and collaborate with education administrators to sign a referral protocol yearly. With implementation of WIOA, 10 VR counselors have been assigned to work exclusively with students with disabilities.

SDE and BRS have staff that serve on each other's advisory committees (Transition Task Force and BRS Transition Committee). Program staff attends common training regarding the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), secondary transition services and WIOA. SDE and BRS collaborated to develop a statewide CT Transition Community of Practice (COP) with a broad stakeholder base as a single portal for transition resource development, professional development, and interagency collaboration. SDE and BRS initiated statewide strategic planning with agencies, school districts, families and other stakeholders.

Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State Department of Education (SDE) includes the following:

- a) A Transition Coordinator position is co-funded to provide one-on-one meetings between students, VR counselors, secondary staff, and families. This coordinator also attends group meetings, transition fairs and trainings including Community of Practice (COP) and Education Transition Liaison meetings. She provides consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services.
- b) BRS and SDE jointly collaborate with school liaisons and secondary staff, students and families.
- c) The VR counselors assigned to provide pre-employment transition services will spend 100% of their time delivering these services; 100% of their salaries will be committed as well.
- d) Procedures for outreach will be identified and implemented through a comprehensive marketing and communication plan. The primary focus will be on marketing and promoting BRS pre-employment transition services to help implement WIOA changes in the VR program. This statewide approach will communicate a consistent VR message.

- (e) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations. Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers. BRS has partnership agreements with several CRPs; we procure CRP services through Purchase of Service (POS) contracts.

Through a POS contract with the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS), consumers who are 18 or older **and** are eligible for Social Security Benefits receive Individualized Financial Capability Coaching to improve their knowledge of finances.

(f) Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services.

Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

The bureau provides supported employment and extended services to consumers with significant disabilities, as appropriate. Bureau counselors work with each individual consumer to identify necessary services. In the process of developing an Individual Plan for Employment, the counselor and consumer make decisions about the need for supported employment or extended services. When the services are deemed necessary, the counselor and consumer identify a source of long-term funding and meet with a representative case manager, if appropriate. Once long-term supports are obtained, the plan can be executed. Supported employment and extended services are provided in partnership with our statewide network of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP). These arrangements are based on fee-for-service contracts. We use a series of strategies to accomplish the goals of supported or extended employment, including the following:

- The statewide Ongoing Employment Supports Committee is a resource for identifying supported employment funding opportunities on a case by case basis;
- Cooperative agreements with CRPs, One-Stop Centers and Independent Living Centers (ILCs) allow for additional employment supports through the Ticket to Work program; and
- The Interagency Employment Practice Improvement Collaborative for staff in BRS, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), and CRPs is designed to increase successful employment outcomes to an underserved target population.

(g) Coordination with Employers. Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:

- (1) VR Services; and
- (2) Transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for student and youth with disabilities.

VR Services: BRS employs a Business Services Unit, Connect-Ability (CA) Staffing Employment Consultants, which is responsible for employer outreach efforts across Connecticut. The CA Staffing Employment Consultants build relationships with employers to identify their workforce development needs. Through these mutually beneficial relationships, CA Staffing offers business services such as disability awareness trainings, candidate pre-screening, Working Interviews, On-the-Job

Trainings and Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs. In turn, the CA Staffing Employment Consultants obtain real-time labor market information that is shared with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and participants of the vocational rehabilitation program as part of their career path exploration and decision making process. This dual-customer approach allows BRS to prepare VR consumers for long-term, sustained employment in a constantly evolving labor market.

Transition Services: BRS will procure transition services for students with disabilities that include placement with employers to participate in work-based learning experiences and work place readiness training, as defined in WIOA. The scope of services will include social skill development, independent living, and instruction in self-advocacy, peer mentoring and assistive technology. Upon graduation, Youth will benefit from transition services to prepare for, seek and maintain employment and secure supports needed to be successful.

(h) Interagency Cooperation. Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:

- (1) The State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act;
- (2) The State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and
- (3) The State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and
- (4) The State agency responsible for providing mental health services.

The State Medicaid plan under Title XIX of the Social Security Act is a program operated by the Department of Social Services (DSS). For over 20 years until 2014, BRS functioned as a Designated State Unit with DSS serving as its Designated State Agency. As a result of this long-term relationship, BRS has a close working relationship with DSS programs such as TANF, the Medicaid Buy-In, and Money Follows the Person. We offer technical assistance through our Vocational Rehabilitation and Benefits Counseling programs. BRS intends to work with DSS to develop an agreement that formalizes these referral and service processes.

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) MOU enables coordinated vocational employment services for people with intellectual disabilities to minimize overlap of resources.

The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) MOU enables BRS to staff counselors at Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA) locations.

The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) MOA enables BRS to partially fund a shared position to improve service delivery and collaboration for consumers of both programs.

(i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development. Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

(1) Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

(A) Qualified Personnel Needs. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

(i) The number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;

(ii) The number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

(iii) projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

(B) Personnel Development. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

(i) A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;

(ii) The number of students enrolled at each of those institution, broken down by type of program; and

(iii) The number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

(2) Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel. Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

- (3) Personnel Standards. Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) and to ensure that designated state unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:
  - (A) Standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or –recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and
  - (B) The establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, to ensure that the personnel have a 21<sup>st</sup> century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.
- (4) Staff Development. Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section 101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:
  - (A) A system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and
  - (B) Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.
- (5) Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs. Describe how the designated State Unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking-ability.
- (6) Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

#### **Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development**

BRS maintains a computerized record system for personnel needs, resources, and training. In addition to this information, the bureau annually uses a caseload management program called System 7 and results of ongoing needs assessments to analyze personnel needs.

BRS assisted 8,672 consumers in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015. With 77 VR counselors, the ratio of VR counselors to all consumers is 1:113; the ratio of VR supervisors to

consumers is 1:964. The ratio of all staff to consumers is 1:65. Of the 8,672 total annual consumers, 3,002 developed an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Based on the same number of VR counselors, the ratio of staff to all consumers with an IPE is 1:39; VR supervisors to consumers with an IPE is 1:334; and all staff to consumers with an IPE is 1:22.

The current and future personnel needs by personnel category are noted in the following chart:

Personnel Category	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
Support (Administrative Assistant, Fiscal, Secretary)	34	2	6
Central Office Consultants	11	0	4
District Directors	3	1	1
Managers	3	0	0
VR Supervisors	9	0	2
VR Counselors	88	11	25

**(B) Personnel Development**

We analyze the graduate information from the regional Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE)- accredited universities to find schools that offer required courses or graduate degrees in rehabilitation counseling. We also check with local CORE schools for the availability of distance learning opportunities for the required CSPD courses.

In the state of Connecticut, there is one CORE-accredited institution of higher education that is preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals: Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). All rehabilitation counseling graduates from this college will be eligible to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) exam. Currently, there are 91 students enrolled in the CCSU program. There are 11 RSA scholars, with six expected to graduate. Last year, there were 25 graduates from the CCSU program.

**(2) Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel.**

BRS sends announcements for Counselor positions to all CORE-accredited institutions of higher education that train VR Counselors in the United States. We have initiated contacts with all CORE-accredited universities so that we can continue to find well-qualified staff for the vacancies we anticipate in the future. In addition to the Connecticut-based CORE institution listed above, we are in close contact with the regional institutions from which we have traditionally found Counselor applicants (Assumption and Springfield Colleges in MA, and Salve Regina in RI); we have staff that serve on advisory boards or teach at these institutions.

The bureau has recruited qualified staff representative of the population of Connecticut: the 32% diversity of our staff exceeds the 22% diversity of our state. We have recruited

11% of our staff from individuals that have disabilities. Our primary challenge has been finding Master's level counselors who are proficient with Spanish or American Sign Language (ASL). We will continue the following steps to ensure there is a sufficient pool of qualified counselors for future openings:

- increase our on-campus college recruitments;
- increase presentations to high school students. Inner-city high schools with increased percentages of minority students will be targeted to generate interest in rehabilitation counseling as a vocation;
- increase the number of consumers we help to go into the rehabilitation counseling profession; and
- increase recruitment, including media that serve diverse populations, and continue online nationwide recruitment.

In Connecticut, there are several factors that ensure retention of staff. The majority of staff leaves because of retirement or choosing to stay home with children rather than leaving for another position.

BRS attributes the reasons for retention success as follows:

- BRS recruits staff that is committed to the importance of VR work;
- in-service training is available to staff at all levels;
- staff may give input into decisions that affect the way they work; and
- staff can participate in ongoing committees: Staff Training, Regional Training, Community Rehabilitation Providers, Transition, Autism Spectrum, and the BRS Annual Meeting.

The committees ensure that staff have input into the work of the bureau. The committees also give staff opportunities for leadership experiences that will help them prepare for other positions in BRS.

BRS offers staff an opportunity to create Individual Staff Development Plans (ISDP) to identify areas of an employee's current job that need further development, areas that could be developed to prepare for a future job in the agency, and training needed for either. ISDPs encourage staff to pursue areas of their strength and interest. This activity helps to identify staff training needs and prepares staff for growth needed to meet future succession challenges.

### **(3) Personnel Standards.**

The current requirements for CSPD are based on the national standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. The national standard is determined by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC). BRS hires counselors that meet the following:

1. Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling from a CORE-accredited institution; or
2. Master's and current Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) certification; or
3. Master's in Counseling with one integrated or two separate graduate level courses with the primary focus on the Theories and Techniques of Counseling course (-s) as part of the required curriculum; or
4. Master's, Specialist, or Doctoral degree in one of 13 qualifying majors (as specified by CRCC) granted from a college or university accredited by a recognized regional accrediting body at the time the degree was conferred.

BRS will pay for and require the following graduate courses for new counselors in permanent positions with a Master's in Counseling as described in 3 or 4 above. The number of additional required courses will depend on the previous education of the new employee as well as total months of vocational rehabilitation counseling experience. The bureau's definition of education, course curriculum, and experience is based on current standards for the national Certified Rehabilitation Counselor certification:

- 60 months of vocational counseling experience accepted by the credentialing committee - no additional courses are required. CSPD requirements are met.
- Individuals with less than 60 months of vocational counseling experience will be required to take up to nine additional courses, based on a review of the graduate transcript. These specific required courses are determined by CRCC as Theories of Counseling, Techniques of Counseling, Foundations of Rehabilitation Counseling, Assessment, Occupational Information or Job Placement, Medical Aspects of Disability, Psychosocial Aspects of Disability, Multicultural Issues, and Case Management and Rehabilitation Services.

Even though BRS bases its educational standards for VR Counselors on the national standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, it does not require counselors to have CRC certification. However, applicants with a CORE-accredited rehabilitation Master's degree should be able to sit for the CRC exam.

BRS employees interested in CRC certification are encouraged to contact the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification at the following website: <http://www.crccertification.com/> for more specific information on their credentials and experience. BRS does not guarantee that the above criteria will entitle a counselor to sit for the CRC exam. The bureau provides training at no cost, and offers Continuing Education Units (CEU's), which will count toward the ongoing training requirements by CRC.

In addition to education requirements, BRS encourages staff to pursue certification in their field. The bureau embraces the CSPD process to ensure a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities; continuous organizational development, and, continuous improvement of the competencies of all staff.

BRS also seeks continuous improvements in service delivery, the continuation of a professional level VR staff that can consistently achieve quality employment outcomes as specified in the Rehabilitation Act and promised in the Americans with Disabilities Act. In addition, we continually seek ways to meet the needs of our consumers and deliver a complete array of services based on the goals of employment, community participation, and informed consumer choice. The bureau has hired a qualified, diverse, flexible and progressive rehabilitation staff to serve our current and future consumers. BRS strives toward the continuous development of desired consumer outcomes: sustained jobs, jobs with future growth, and jobs with sufficient earnings.

**(4) Staff Development.**

BRS systematically provides adequate and ongoing training to staff. In-service training addresses assessment, vocational counseling, and job placement. All staff development activities support the bureau's mission to increase the quality of services and the number and quality of employment outcomes for people with disabilities. In-service training is available to all staff.

The bureau bases its plan for staff development on a multi-faceted comprehensive needs survey. BRS uses all available information for ongoing analysis of training needs including the following:

- Public Meetings (most recent data);
- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment results;
- Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) 107 Review;
- Key training personnel collaboration with TACE (Technical Assistance and Continuing Education), Region 1 staff;
- Management reports; and
- Manager, district director, consultant, and supervisor feedback.

In addition to ensuring that staff meets CSPD requirements, BRS provides Foundations of CT VR, a year-long series of in-service training that is mandatory for new staff and available for staff that need refresher training. This includes a broad array of topics pertaining to VR such as: core BRS policies and practices, trainings on the specific populations, independent living, transition, and community rehabilitation services. A variety of training methods are utilized to assure that training activities are diverse enough to address individual learning styles.

Training is provided on assistive technology. BRS helped create and is a member of the NEAT (New England Assistive Technology) Center at Oak Hill. The Center is the largest assistive technology (AT) center in Connecticut where one can try AT devices for personal use, observe AT device demonstrations, donate or buy used equipment that is refurbished and recycled, obtain loans of AT devices and receive training on the latest adaptive equipment.

The Connecticut Tech Act Project director provides training and consultation for BRS staff. Other in-service trainings on specific disability populations contain information on technological solutions for consumers.

BRS continually analyzes all consumer data to identify areas where it needs to increase training or vary approaches. Acquired updated information and research is disseminated to all BRS staff by Central Office staff.

**(5) Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs.**

BRS addresses individual communication needs of applicants for, and recipients of, services through the services of others able to communicate in alternate languages, appropriate modes, or in native languages. Approximately 10% of the current staff is bilingual in English and Spanish. The bureau employs staff who speak other languages as well as staff who use both American Sign Language (ASL) and English. The BRS website

publishes all languages that staff speaks in all three regions. The list below indicates the languages spoken by current staff and the regions in which they work:

- American Sign Language (ASL) – Northern, Southern, Western
- French – Northern
- French Italian – Southern
- Polish – Northern
- Portuguese – Northern
- Spanish – Northern, Southern, Western

BRS can also hire interpreters in most languages and can access interpreter services over the phone for all languages.

Each district has Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD) on staff to work with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. These counselors are equipped with videophones. The bureau hires full-time Interpreter Assistants for its RCDs who are in need of this accommodation. BRS also contracts interpreter services through the DORS Interpreting Unit and LifeBridge Community Services.

The bureau does not serve many consumers who use Braille since there is a public Vocational Rehabilitation program through the Connecticut Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) that serves the majority of consumers who have visual disabilities. When needed, BRS can provide Braille materials for consumers or staff. The bureau's goal is to provide any communication support necessary for staff or consumers with disabilities.

**(6) Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.**

BRS co-funds an Education Consultant position with the Connecticut State Department of Education's Bureau of Special Education who has been active in the Department of Education's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Council. The bureau routinely plans training with input from the Consultant in the co-funded position. This Consultant provides annual training for all bureau professional staff on Transition and other provisions of the IDEA. The Consultant also meets with the management team of BRS semi-annually to review current collaborative training and other provisions of the IDEA. This collaboration allows for coordination of the bureau's human resource plan and personnel development under the IDEA.

**(j) Statewide Assessment.**

(1) Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the VR services needs of those:

- (A) with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- (B) who are minorities;
- (C) who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;

- (D) who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and
  - (E) who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services.
- (2) Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and
  - (3) Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

In 2013, BRS completed a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) that examined the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, who are minorities, who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program and who are served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system. The CSNA also assessed the need to improve community rehabilitation programs within the state. To complete the CSNA, community rehabilitation providers (CRPs), BRS counselors, consumers and key informants were surveyed. BRS also surveyed staff in 2013 to examine cultural competence as it relates to service delivery to minority consumers as an unserved/underserved population. In addition, relevant findings from the 2011 Medicaid Infrastructure Grant Needs Assessment including an employer survey were also reviewed.

The results of this review led to the following recommendations:

- Increase system efficiency and effectiveness;
- Increase communication and education about the nature and availability of vocational rehabilitation services;
- Focus attention on underserved consumers with hearing disabilities or autism;
- Improve cultural competency among BRS counselors and CRPs;
- Develop more effective relationships with employers; and
- Identify sources to overcome transportation barriers.

In 2015, the SRC and BRS collaborated to conduct a small survey to assess consumer satisfaction with job search services VR recipients had received during the year. As a result of this survey, the SRC recommends that BRS strengthen communication between counselors and consumers, especially when consumer cases are being transferred to another counselor. It also recommends that BRS increase engagement with businesses to increase hiring of VR consumers.

While BRS has accomplished great strides in delivering VR services effectively, the recommendations identified in these assessments offer additional goals that support the VR program as it continues helping individuals with disabilities achieve optimal employment outcomes.

There are several areas of need to improve CRP services:

- capacity to serve underserved populations;
- quality of CRP staff; and
- quality of service delivery.

BRS continually seeks CRP agencies that are able to meet the demand of serving the underserved populations, specifically Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Spanish speaking individuals. In the past, several attempts were made to encourage agencies to hire staff that is qualified to serve these individuals. The bureau created a rate differential and offered technical assistance to CRPs who wanted to expand services to these populations. Although a small number of agencies utilized these incentives, the attempt did not increase enough to meet the bureau's needs.

Additionally, the CRP agencies continue to be challenged with hiring and retaining experienced staff to perform the core services. The bureau has put substantial emphasis on training opportunities for CRPs to help them and to strengthen the relationship with the VR counselors and the CRP staff.

BRS is currently focusing on improving its ability to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for transition students within the 90-day deadline set by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). WIOA has established new requirements for transition services. BRS has assessed and determined the following needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services which include coordination with transition services under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):

- (1) Continue to focus on decreasing the time in which IPEs are developed for transition students.
- (2) Improve post-secondary school outcomes for students with disabilities ages 16-21.
- (3) Maintain a Memorandum of Agreement that enables joint funding for SDE/BRS consultant position to coordinate transition services as outlined under IDEA.
- (4) Design and implement a pre-employment transition service delivery model to meet the WIOA requirements.
- (5) Educate community rehabilitation providers and school systems regarding pre-employment transition services.
- (6) Strengthen partnerships with education stakeholders.
- (7) Improve outreach to students, their families and school systems.
- (8) Update and expand website resources and information.

(k) Annual Estimates.

Describe:

- (1) The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services.
- (2) The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under:
  - (A) The VR Program;
  - (B) The Supported Employment Program; and
  - (C) each priority category, if under an order of selection.

- (3) The number of individuals who are eligible for VR services, but are not receiving such services due to an order of selection; and
- (4) The cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.

According to the most recent US Census Bureau American Community Survey, Connecticut had 3,526,628 residents who were non-institutionalized in 2013. There were 2,226,234 persons between 18-64 years of age. 8.2% or 182,889 of these individuals had a disability (+/- 0.3 margin of error). Data from the 2013 Census also shows that Connecticut had 350,537 non-institutionalized persons with disabilities ages 16 and over, and of that number 24.5% were employed. The remaining 75.5% were unemployed.

These statistics indicate that a considerable number of persons with disabilities in the State of Connecticut are not working. A measurable number of these individuals may be transition-aged youth. In addition, a portion of 24.5% of persons with disabilities who are employed may be underemployed. Some of these individuals may also require services to attain or retain employment consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. BRS is not currently in an Order of Selection. Potentially, the vocational rehabilitation program would be available to all consumers with disabilities.

These statistics make it difficult, if not impossible, to accurately estimate the number of potentially eligible consumers of VR services. That number is many times more than BRS has historically served or has the resources to serve.

#### **State Estimate of the Number of Individuals to be Served Under this Plan**

For Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015, BRS has served 5,443 eligible consumers in Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act. This is a 12.6% increase from FFY 2014, when 4,834 consumers received services in IPEs under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

BRS has remained committed to the ongoing recruitment, retention, and development of its counseling staff with qualified professionals. In FFY 2013 and 2014, BRS experienced an unexpected increase of short-term vacancies that directly impacted its ability to serve consumers. In 2014 the total number of consumers served was down 3.1% from FFY 2013. During FFY 2015 BRS enjoyed a somewhat healthier staffing pattern despite some continued attrition and short-term leaves. This improvement in staffing along with the agency's focus on training and development has resulted in increased caseload sizes as well as an overall increased capacity to serve consumers in Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs).

BRS has also been engaged in a statewide effort to improve the timeliness of plan development for its transition-aged youth. This has included training, guidance, increased monitoring, as well as a quality assurance review process for transition cases. With these efforts, the bureau has realized improvements in the number of transition plans written as well as a reduction in the timeframes for plan development. For FFY 2015, BRS was able to write 70% of plans for transition-age youth in three months or less.

As BRS begins to implement new policies and procedures related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) legislation, it is anticipated that counseling staff will experience increased referrals of Pre-Employment Transition Service (PETS) consumers, transition-age youth, and consumers from our partner programs. Based on these projected increases, the bureau expects to serve 5,944 eligible consumers in Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act in FFY 2017; an increase of 9% above FFY 2015.

### **Supported Employment**

During FFY 2014, BRS purchased services for 142 consumers eligible for Supported Employment funding under Title VI-B of the Rehabilitation Act, utilizing \$301,706. It was projected that BRS would serve 84 consumers with Title VI-B funds with an estimated expenditure of \$204,980. The significant increase from projections was the result of the agency's continued focus on proper identification of supported employment cases and a commitment to properly expend funding.

In FFY 2015, BRS has purchased services for 136 individuals, expending \$278,551 in Title VI-B funds. These numbers are consistent with FFY 2014 performance. In combination with the 5,443 individuals who received services under Title I, BRS served a total of 5,579 individuals in FFY 2015.

For FFY 2017, the bureau anticipates that 150 individuals could potentially receive services funded under Title VI-B. In combination with the 5,944 individuals projected to receive services under Title I, the total number of individuals who could be served in IPE's during FFY 2017 is 6,094.

### **Costs of Services**

Total Title I purchase of services (POS) costs for all eligible consumers in FFY 2015 was \$14 million. This figure represents a \$2.2M increase over FFY 2014 expenditures. The bureau believes that two key contributing factors exist. First, BRS saw significant increases with the number of consumers applying for services, going into Individualized Employment Plans (IPEs), and receiving paid services in FFY 2015. Secondly, a significant number of transition-aged youth were funded to participate in a Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). The utilization of the SYEP was expanded to allow increased access with emphasis on Pre-Employment Transition (PET) consumers.

Upon examining expenditure trends in POS for non-Pre-Employment Transition consumers determined to be Priority 1 and Priority 2, as well as allowing for a potentially modest expansion of costs in providing services for individuals of Priority 3 status, BRS projects to expend approximately \$11.5 million in FFY 2017 on this group of consumers. In addition, BRS will expend a minimum of \$2.5 million purchasing Pre-Employment Transition Services. Thus the total POS projection for FFY 2017 is \$14M.

With respect to the 150 consumers projected to receive services under Title VI-B during FFY 2017, the bureau forecasts an expenditure of \$269,167 in Supported Employment funding.

Category	Title I or Title VI	Estimated Funds	Estimated Number to be Served	Average Cost of Services
All Eligible Consumers	Title I	\$14,000,000	5,944	\$2,355
Most Significant	Title VI	\$269,167	150	\$1,794
				—
				—
Totals		\$14,269,167	6,094	\$2,342

- (l) State Goals and Priorities. The designated State unit must:
- (1) Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.
  - (2) Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.
  - (3) Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:
    - (A) the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;
    - (B) the State’s performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and
    - (C) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

**Goals and Priorities**

The bureau, in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), conducted a comprehensive assessment of the rehabilitation needs of people with disabilities and identified four major goal areas. These goals and priorities will be used to carry out the Supported Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation programs. The SRC jointly agrees with BRS on these goals and priorities for the coming year.

Each of the goal areas contains a set of priority areas that the bureau could address in the coming year. We cannot address every issue identified as a need, but attempted to build goals broad enough to address the major themes. Four priority areas were chosen

based on their frequency of occurrence in the assessment. One additional goal was developed to address implementation of WIOA.

**Goal 1:** To implement the provisions of WIOA specific to the VR program.

*Priority areas:*

- pre-employment transition services
- employer services
- service delivery
- performance accountability measures
- subminimum wage

**Goal 2:** To improve the quality of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities.

*Priority areas:*

- customer service and provision of information
- ongoing skill development
- use of social media
- provision of information on resources, labor market information and training/education programs

**Goal 3:** To increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, particularly those individuals from unserved or underserved populations.

*Priority areas:*

- individuals from minority backgrounds
- young adults with disabilities
- individuals with psychiatric disability
- individuals with autism spectrum disorders

**Goal 4:** To increase access to services for all individuals with disabilities.

*Priority areas:*

- services for individuals who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- services for individuals whose primary language is Spanish
- cultural competencies for staff

**Goal 5:** To create effective partnerships designed to advance employment for Connecticut citizens with disabilities.

*Priority areas:*

- businesses
- Community Rehabilitation Providers
- state agencies with a specific emphasis on core WIOA partners

These broad goals are intended to be five-year goals, with the priority areas being flexible enough to change from year to year if necessary.

(m) Order of Selection. Describe:

- (1) The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services.
- (2) The justification for the order.
- (3) The service and outcome goals.
- (4) The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
- (5) How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and
- (6) If the designated State unit has elected to serve eligible individuals, regardless of any established order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

BRS is not currently in an Order of Selection.

(n) Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds.

- (1) Specify the State's goals and priorities for funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.

BRS will continue to use supported employment Title VI, Part B funds to allow maximum options in providing services to meet individual consumer needs. The bureau will target service to those persons who are presently not served or are underserved, and who:

- Are individuals with the most significant disabilities and who have previously been unable to maintain competitive employment due to the severity of their disabilities;
- Are in need of ongoing support for the duration of their employment; and
- Will have extended support services available beyond BRS time-limited services.

- (2) Describe the activities to be conducted, with funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities, including :
  - (A) the provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and
  - (B) how the State will leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.

BRS maintains that given the proper supports, the majority of persons with disabilities, including those individuals with the most significant disabilities, are capable of maintaining competitive employment. Supported employment services are available to individuals with the most significant disabilities who have been unable to maintain competitive employment because of the severity of their disabilities.

The goal is to assist these individuals to achieve employment in the most integrated setting possible. Services will be provided on an individual case basis with emphasis on methods that provide maximum integration and consumer-informed choice. Therefore, BRS will continue to focus on placing consumers in individual placements with maximum integration.

The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 Supported Employment definition emphasizes “competitive work in an integrated employment setting for persons with the most severe disabilities for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred or for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability and who, because of the severity of the disability, need intensive support services or extended services in order to perform such work, inclusive of transitional employment for persons with the most severe disabilities due to mental illness.”

The new WIOA changes the way Supported Employment and Extended services will be delivered:

#### Supported Employment

- Extension of SE services timeframe from 18 to 24 months
- The 50% of SE funds applies to all Youth, which includes Pre-employment Training Services (PETS).

#### Extended Services

- Services can be provided for a period of up to/but not to exceed four years to youth with the most significant disabilities expending supported employment Title VI funds.
- Prior to WIOA, these services not previously permitted for youth with disabilities under VR program or Supported Employment program.

For Supported Employment services, BRS will provide statewide training for all staff to support and empower counselors in making a shift towards more efficient plan development; in particular moving students with disabilities to plan (VR) while still exploring the potential need for Ongoing Supports.

- As the need for SE is established and funding identified for ongoing support, VR plans can be amended to Supported Employment Plans.
- Utilization of short term plans as a means towards assuring better opportunities for transitioning youth who are expected to be in our system for longer periods of time

For Transition to Extended Services, BRS will work with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and our other partners to transition consumers from Title VI, Part B funding to the identified provider of the ongoing, long-term support funding as soon as the

funding is available and transition is appropriate. Use of Title VI, Part B funds will vary, based on the needs of the individual consumer, but will generally not exceed 24 months in length.

#### Transition to Extended Services.

As with all bureau services, Supported Employment is designed and provided based on the individual needs of the consumer. BRS will work with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and our other partners to transition consumers from Title VI, Part B funding to the identified provider of the ongoing, long-term support funding as soon as the funding is available and transition is appropriate. Use of Title VI, Part B funds will vary, based on the needs of the individual consumer, but will generally not exceed 24 months in length.

#### Coordination and Collaboration

BRS oversees one of the three state-funded long-term supports programs. The bureau is engaged in facilitating systemic changes in how supported employment services are delivered in the community. The bureau works with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and other partners to transition consumers from the Title VI, Part B funding to an appropriate ongoing employment support program. These efforts have led to internal and external improvements in our state system and have built a foundation for a strong Supported Employment service program in this state.

(o) State's Strategies. Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)):

- (1) The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.

BRS will use the following objectives to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities:

- Work with WIOA core partners to ensure that individuals with disabilities are effectively supported in the newly designed state employment system.
- Implement its strategic plan for delivering pre-employment transition services.
- Focus on timely progress through each step of the case management process.
- Maintain a dedicated staff resource to manage the agency's training program and will maintain a separate training line within the agency budget that equals the level of funds available under WIA.
- Continue to use social media to connect job seekers with opportunities to pursue jobs with employers.

- Develop materials on resources, labor market information and training/education programs to post on the BRS and Connect-Ability websites to provide consumers consistent access to information.
- Continue to dedicate a specific unit of VR staff to support employers as dual customers to create more business partnerships and more employment opportunities through direct job placement, the use of On-the-Job (OJT) Trainings and Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs (ISTPPs).
- Participate in cross agency trainings through the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) to strengthen state agency partnerships.
- Continue to develop and disseminated Distance Learning Modules for staff and consumer use.

(2) How a broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process and on a statewide basis.

BRS makes Assistive Technology (AT) available to individuals with disabilities through collaboration with the Connecticut Tech Act Project (Connecticut's statewide assistive technology program) throughout the rehabilitation process across the state in the following ways:

- VR counselors may solicit the agency's Assistive Technology Consultant for guidance and assistance to ensure that AT devices and services are considered throughout the consumer's vocational rehabilitation process as appropriate.
- The AT consultant can conduct comprehensive AT evaluations with consumers and can provide training in the use of newly-acquired AT, as needed.
- Through the Assistive Technology Device Loan Program at BRS, VR consumers may borrow and try out devices to help them make informed decisions about whether the AT device is appropriate and if it will remove or reduce barriers, as expected. The inventory for this program includes a wide range of devices across the AT continuum from low to high tech, across disability categories (i.e.: hearing, vision, mobility, computer access, cognitive, communication, etc.), and across potential work environments.
- VR Counselors and the AT Consultant collaborate with other entities such as school systems, colleges/universities, employers, independent living centers, state Medicaid waiver programs, and insurance plans to facilitate the provision of AT devices and services.
- The AT consultant distributes an electronic newsletter and maintains a Tech Act website to provide information about AT trends for anyone interested in AT.
- The Connecticut Tech Act Project will host a biennial full day AT Conference with a focus on AT for employment, community living and education. The 2016 conference offers 12 to 15 sessions, hands on training with specific devices and up to 30 exhibitors.

- (3) The outreach procedures that will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities, as well as those who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.

BRS has targeted a number of ways to better serve minority and unserved/underserved consumers:

- Work with the bureau's Latino Committee to develop new approaches to working with consumers who are Latino. Members of the Latino Committee and representatives the Employment Consultants will attend each other's meetings for ongoing updates and dialogue.
- Produce all new publications in Spanish and pursue options to add required forms on the BRS Intranet for staff use.
- Implement pre-employment transition services.
- Translate distance learning modules into Spanish and American Sign Language.
- Continue to partner with Local Mental Health Authorities and the state Mental Health Department to increase the number of employment outcomes and amount of earnings for individuals with psychiatric disabilities.
- Hold three meetings of the Autism Spectrums Disorder (ASD) Committee to develop more responsive services for individual with autism spectrum disorders. Provide joint staff training for BRS and Department of Developmental Services (DDS) staff on Autism Services.
- Conduct targeted outreach to employers to increase employment outcomes for individuals who are deaf. BRS will continue to disseminate an Interview Preparedness Tip Sheet on Deaf Culture issues to stakeholders as needed.
- Provide opportunities to strengthen cultural competencies for staff.

- (4) The methods to be used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, postsecondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services).

BRS will use the following methods to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities:

- Align existing VR services with Pre-Employment Transition Services as defined in WIOA 2014.
- Serve students with disabilities ages 16-21 enrolled in high school by providing pre-employment transition services from existing community rehabilitation providers, companies, community agencies, education entities, colleges and universities statewide.
- Assign 10 vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors to school systems statewide to serve students enrolled in high school. Allocate 100% of their time and funding for serving students enrolled in high school.
- VR Counselors will improve partnerships with school systems to provide transition services to students.

- BRS will strengthen partnerships with State Department of Education, local school systems, community providers, higher education entities, other state agencies, and employers.
- Create and disseminate effective marketing and messaging to target school systems, students and their families to educate and inform them about the BRS shift in service delivery to students as outlined in WIOA regulations.
- BRS will continue to strengthen and broaden collaboration resources with employers, two and four year colleges and universities, WDBs/American Job Centers and DOL grant training programs for students, youth and young adults with disabilities.

(5) If applicable, plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the State.

BRS will develop the capacity of Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) to meet the needs of VR consumers in the following ways:

- Continue to conduct annual performance reviews on all CRPs to ensure quality service delivery.
- Meet quarterly with CRPs in each district.
- Provide opportunities for CRPs to meet statewide, both in targeted committee meetings and at an annual forum.
- Participate in the Job Development Leadership Network.
- Continue to disseminate Distance Learning Modules focused on service delivery and fiscal process for CRPs to interact with BRS.
- Increase the number of providers who will serve underserved populations, including Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Monolingual Spanish.
- Explore procurement opportunities for specialized services.

(6) Strategies to improve the performance of the State with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.

BRS will work with the larger workforce investment system to set thresholds for the new WIOA performance accountability measures.

(7) Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

BRS is actively engaged in the implementation of WIOA in Connecticut with representatives on all planning committees. BRS assigned staff to participate on the four distinct planning committees to fully understand the changes WIOA would make and how VR services would be integrated:

- a. Administration/Governance – development and maintenance of the MOU among state partner agencies and a regional MOU template.
- b. Technology, Data, Outcomes – development of a strategy to use existing I.T. systems to obtain aggregate data on common customers and program outcomes.

- c. Service Design and Delivery – development of strategies and models for the coordinated delivery of effective workforce system services.
- d. Employer Engagement – development of a strategic plan to promote employer engagement in effective industry partnerships.

BRS will review the adequacy of existing Memoranda of Understandings with workforce boards and partners, and continue to attend workforce board meetings. BRS will also continue to seek a representative from the workforce board to serve as a member of the State Rehabilitation Council.

- (8) How the agency's strategies will be used to:
- (A) achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;
  - (B) support innovation and expansion activities; and
  - (C) overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State VR Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.

Along with the strategies mentioned above to address goals and ways to overcome barriers to equitable access to VR services, BRS also anticipates using innovation and expansion (I&E) funds in FFY 2017 to support the State Rehabilitation Council, the State Independent Living Council, and to continue Individualized Financial Capability Coaching, a project to increase financial literacy and capability for people with disabilities. Other proposals will be assessed upon submission and considered based on the alignment with the state's goals and priorities

(p) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals.

Describe:

- (1) An evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals described in the approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan for the most recently completed program year were achieved. The evaluation must:
- (A) Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
  - (B) Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

**Goal 1:** To improve the quality of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities.

*Priority areas:*

1. Customer Service and Provision of Information
  - Both the BRS and Connect-Ability websites provide information related to VR services that are updated, as needed. Staff

responsible for maintaining these websites anticipates the state of Connecticut will implement a new portal platform scheduled for 2016.

- Response to Consumer Requests – During FFY 2015, BRS responded to more than 600 inquiries for information through the BRS e-mail submissions.

## 2. Ongoing Skill Development

The bureau was awarded two five-year, in-service training grants covering October 1, 2010 – September 30, 2015. The In-Service Training Project identified two major goals:

- Goal I: To improve the skills of all BRS staff by providing training and development in vocational rehabilitation service provision, responsiveness to consumers, bureau mission and programs, awareness of state and community resources.
- Goal II: To improve recruitment and retention of BRS staff by providing career development and succession planning activities to assist counselors in defining appropriate career paths and to assist the bureau to maximize its resources, while continuing to meet CSPD requirements.

BRS provided Foundations of CT VR, a year-long series of in-service training that was mandatory for new staff and available for staff that desired refresher training. This included a broad array of topics pertaining to VR such as: Foundations of CT VR Training, trainings on specific populations, independent living, transition, and community rehabilitation services. A variety of training methods were utilized to assure that training activities were diverse enough to address individual learning styles.

The bureau developed an integrated program of training, education, and development activities for staff to gain the necessary skills, knowledge, and experiences to improve the quality of services and the number and quality of employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Our training project enhanced counselor knowledge of current VR practices and BRS policy.

Effective October 1, 2015, the bureau maintains the above practices, and will continue them as long as funding is available. BRS will also maintain a dedicated staff resource to manage the agency's training program and will maintain a separate training line within the agency budget that equals the level of funds available under WIA.

## 3. Social Media

Job seekers, employers, advocates and providers use social media to communicate and network. In order to keep pace with technological advancements, BRS added the use of Social Media as a form of communication to help consumers gain access and become familiar with online job information. BRS formed a Social Media Committee that

continues to meet regularly to oversee the agency's social media activities. The committee developed social media policy and guidance that was the basis for staff training. BRS has a presence on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Staff is encouraged to have a presence on these platforms for work-related activity only. Staff may assist consumers in developing a presence on these platforms to access information from BRS and employment information and opportunities. Consumers may be referred to the Department of Labor for LinkedIn training as well.

For federal fiscal year 2015, BRS social media activity reports the following:

- a) Facebook Analytics reports we have 21 followers; this number is not enough to report residual posts from our original posts.
- b) LinkedIn Analytics reports we have 193 "Connections." BRS also used LinkedIn to post job announcements that garnered 389 views and 50 applicants.
- c) Twitter Analytics reports that we have 133 followers that have enabled BRS to reach 43,992 Twitter users via tweets about the VR program and services, job openings and disability related information.

**Goal 2:** To increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, particularly those individuals from unserved or underserved populations.

*Priority areas:*

1. Individuals from Minority Backgrounds

BRS initiated a Request for Applications from qualified Community Rehabilitation Providers to procure Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) services in an effort to give youth in high school and young adults out of school an opportunity to have summer work experiences. Particular emphasis in the procurement application was placed on serving young adults who are in the priority areas of underserved populations, including Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Monolingual Spanish speaking, Individuals with Autism and young adults with psychiatric disabilities. The procurements were awarded to agencies that would be able to serve specific geographical areas and took into account the underserved populations in those areas. The results of the procurement produced a small set of CRPs who were able to serve the capacity.

The SYEP provided work experiences to a significant number of young adults, both in school and out of school. These young adults were given the opportunity to be better prepared to gain employment, giving them work related experiences for resume building.

Training: BRS provided the following training to improve employment outcomes for unserved or underserved populations:

- Deaf Culture – different communication methods of persons who are deaf;

- Understanding Team and a Diversified Workforce – communicating appropriately with and about different groups of people;
- Ethics and Multicultural Counseling Competency – cultural issues in counseling; and
- Using the Myers-Briggs and Strong Inventories in VR – using these inventories in career counseling.
- BRS also offered World of Work Inventory that provides tools for staff to use to accommodate consumers who have different levels of English, consumers with hearing loss, consumers who are visually impaired and Spanish-speaking consumers.

As a result of these efforts BRS assisted 565 Individuals from Minority Backgrounds achieve successful employment outcomes. This represents a 66% increase over FFY 2014.

## 2. Young Adults with Disabilities

BRS has met quarterly with SDE and representatives from the Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) to continue providing current transition information. This group now includes the Department of Developmental Services Education Liaisons and Transition Consultants.

BRS, SDE and the CT Transition Community of Practice (CT COP) have now partnered with the IDEA National Transition Community of Practice. This partnership established a Connecticut presence on the SharedWork website. It also established a core team of stakeholders and initial practice groups that include the BRS Transition Committee and the SDE Transition Task Force. BRS continues to work with the website committee on transition resources for all stakeholders. The CT COP has adopted the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD) Guideposts for Success as a framework for secondary transition activities and information. This is the same framework BRS has used for Transition since 2010.

As a result of these efforts BRS assisted 311 Young Adults with Disabilities achieve successful employment outcomes. This represents a 3% increase over FFY 2014.

## 3. Individuals with Psychiatric Disability

BRS continues to partner with Local Mental Health Authorities and the state Mental Health agency to increase the number of employment outcomes and amount of earnings for individuals with psychiatric disabilities.

As a result of these efforts BRS assisted 310 Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities achieve successful employment outcomes. This represents a 23% increase over FFY 2014.

4. Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders

BRS held 10 meetings of the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Committee in order to develop more responsive services for individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

As a result of these efforts BRS assisted 100 Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders achieve successful employment outcomes. This represents a 15% increase over FFY 2014.

**Goal 3:** To increase access to services for all individuals with disabilities.

*Priority areas:*

1. Services for Individuals who are Deaf

- BRS created additional services, Hearing Assistive Technology Services (HATS) and HATS Evaluation services, for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. HATS products may be approved for purchase when required for a consumer to maintain employment, comparable devices of lesser cost have been explored, and the products are not available as a reasonable accommodation through their employer. Examples include T Coil Loops and Silhouettes, FM Systems, Amplified or Bluetooth Stethoscopes, Pocket Remotes, Bluetooth accessory adapters, and HATS products produced by hearing aid manufacturers that only work with one's personal hearing aids.
- BRS has translated five of 14 distance-learning modules into American Sign Language (ASL), the remaining nine are scheduled for translation over the next two years.

2. Services for individuals whose primary language is Spanish

- BRS has translated five of 14 distance learning modules into Spanish, the remaining nine are scheduled for translation over the next two years.

3. Cultural Competencies for Staff

BRS is committed to assisting individuals with the most significant disabilities to achieve competitive employment outcomes. Efforts have been initiated and specialized training on how to work with underserved target groups (mental health disorder, substance abuse, learning disabilities, Deafness, Autism Spectrum) has been provided, or is scheduled to be provided. Trainings are comprised of both in-person and online modules.

**Goal 4:** To create effective partnerships designed to advance employment for Connecticut citizens with disabilities.

*Priority areas:*

1. Businesses

In FFY 2015, BRS negotiated 160 On-the-Job Training (OJTs). BRS also contracted with the following eight Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs (ISTPPs):

- Southeastern Employment Services/Lowes Distribution Center
- Community Enterprises/Mohegan Sun
- Community Enterprises/Walgreens Retail Stores
- Ability Beyond/Walgreens Retail Stores
- Ability Beyond/Crowne Plaza
- Community Enterprises/Mystic Aquarium
- Community Enterprises/Homegoods Distribution Center
- Kennedy Center/CVS Retail.

From these ISTPP partnerships, 117 individuals participated in training; 66 individuals were hired permanently upon successful completion of the training.

2. Community Rehabilitation Providers

- BRS completed the CRP Distance Learning Modules created for staff in CRP agencies to understand the core services that BRS contracts with providers. The first module is a CRP overview, which is also available to the public in the Connect-Ability Website. The following modules are only available to CRP agencies: Assessment Services, Job Placement Services, On-the-Job Training, Job Coaching Services, Interview Preparedness Services and Fiscal Services. These modules are effective ways to increase knowledge about BRS services for the CRPs who traditionally have high staff turnover and lack the capacity to train new employees in a timely manner. BRS has the capability of monitoring agency participation of staff that enrolls in the training. These tools were developed in conjunction with the CRP agencies through the BRS CRP Committee.
- As part of the Annual Review Process, each CRP agency reports to BRS on the staff that have taken the DL modules as well as staff who have participated in one of three BRS CRP trainings that are offered throughout the year.
- Four new CRPs were developed during this fiscal year.

3. State Agencies

- With the implementation of WIOA, BRS has collaborated with the core partners to unify the job services available for consumers seeking employment opportunities.

(2) An evaluation of the extent to which the Supported Employment program goals described in the Supported Employment Supplement for the most recent program year were achieved. The evaluation must:

- (A) Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
- (B) Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

#### Supported Employment Strategies

Supported Employment goals were achieved using the following strategies:

- VR Supported Employment Foundations Training was expanded to two days for new VR Counselors. Senior VR counselors are also invited to the training to get a refresher on the current SE environment as well as provide technical assistance to the training.
- In addition, a BRS and DMHAS protocol document was developed by both agencies to provide technical assistance on Supported Employment Policy and Procedures for both agencies. Both agencies participated in a combined training for VR staff, mental health staff, CRP staff on an ongoing basis.
- Collaborative meetings were held quarterly with partners.

#### Impeding Factors for Achieving Goals and Priorities

- Consistent policies and practices in and between agencies administering Supported Employment programs continue to be a challenge for all stakeholders, including providers.
- Staff turnover is frequent and coordinating collaborative trainings and providing technical assistance is difficult. While this has been a challenging effort, training is still a priority for VR and partner agencies and providers.

- (3) The VR program's performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA.

BRS awaits the publishing of the performance accountability thresholds that will be required.

- (4) How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized.

I&E funds were used in the following three areas:

**1. Individualized Financial Capability Coaching** is available to BRS consumers at age 18 who receive Social Security Benefits. Participants receive Benefits Counseling to understand the impact of earnings on benefits and an opportunity to plan for the future using the following topics and tools:

- One-on-one Financial Coaching;
- Personal Financial Education Sessions;
- Work vs Benefits Discussion;
- Goal-Setting Support;
- Help to Create a Working Budget;
- Debt Reduction Tools; and
- How to Make Tax Credits Work.

BRS funds this pilot specifically tailored to meet the needs of individuals receiving Social Security benefits through an award to the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS), a private non-profit agency.

Measures of success will be based on a consumer's improved financial literacy and his/her ability to budget a household, create realistic goals, understand credit scores (and demonstrate actions to maintain or improve them), increase self-sufficiency, obtain employment/increase wages, and go off of SSDI and/or SSI benefits. The number of new checking, savings or equivalent accounts that are opened will also be counted.

## **2. State Independent Living Council**

During fiscal year 2015, the State Independent Living Council (SILC) received \$103,000 in Innovation and Expansion (I & E) funds to support the general operation of the Council. This included salaries for two full-time staff, office rent, supplies, phone and computer services, and SILC meeting expenses such as transportation, interpreter services, CART, and other accessibility costs. In addition to the administration and operation of the federally mandated SILC, staff is responsible for developing, implementing, and evaluating the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). The I & E funds also supported the development of the Standards of Performance for the CILs and the development of SPIL Goal 2 to expand the capacity and build sustainability for the five CILs.

Much of 2015 was spent in developing the Standards of Performance, with approval and implementation. The overarching aim of Goal 2 is to provide capacity-building and sustainability support to the CILs in order to improve the provision of IL services, pre-employment/employment opportunities for consumers, and services to unserved and underserved consumers and geographic areas. BRS has continued to support the SILC Resource Plan with I & E funding, of \$103,000 in the current SPIL for FFY 2015.

## **3. State Rehabilitation Council**

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) received \$24,350 to support efforts to assist BRS in assessing programs and services provided to vocational rehabilitation consumers. The SRC incurs travel expenses to in-state meetings and sign-language interpreters, when needed. The SRC sends a delegate to attend out-of-state conferences for the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) and the Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). The SRC is an organizational member the NEAT Marketplace, a Connecticut facility that provides training and support with assistive technology devices. It also supports the Connecticut Youth Leadership Project by providing funds to support its summer advocacy training program for youth with disabilities and a scholarship towards post-secondary education for a former participant. In 2015, the SRC also collaborated with BRS to engage the Center for Public Policy and Social Research at the Central Connecticut State University to conduct a consumer satisfaction survey of current and former BRS consumers.

(q) Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services. Include the following:

- (1) The quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.
- (2) The timing of transition to extended services.

Program Status

BRS is allocated \$255,000 annually for the Title VI, Part B Funds and expects to expend all of its allocation. The bureau continues to focus on the quality services delivered through collaborations with our state and local community rehabilitation service partners for the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015.

WIOA changes the way Supported Employment and Extended services will be delivered. Supported Employment services:

- extension of SE services timeframe from 18 to 24 months; and
- 50% of SE funds apply to all youth, which includes PETS.

Extended Services:

- services can be provided for a period of up to/but not to exceed 4 years to youth with the most significant disabilities expending supported employment Title VI funds; and
- Prior to WIOA, these services not previously permitted for youth with disabilities under VR program or Supported Employment program.

For Supported Employment services, BRS will provide statewide training for all staff to support and empower counselors in making a shift towards more efficient plan development; in particular moving students with disabilities to plan (VR) while still exploring the potential need for Ongoing Supports.

- As the need for SE is established and funding identified for ongoing support, VR plans can be amended to Supported Employment Plans.
- Utilization of short term plans as a means towards assuring better opportunities for transitioning youth who are expected to be in our system for longer periods of time

For Transition to Extended Services, BRS will work with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and our other partners to transition consumers from Title VI, Part B funding to the identified provider of the ongoing, long-term support funding as soon as the funding is available and transition is appropriate. Use of Title VI, Part B funds will vary, based on the needs of the individual consumer, but will generally not exceed 24 months in length.

Coordination and Collaboration

BRS is engaged in facilitating systemic changes in how supported employment services are delivered in the community. The bureau works with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and other partners to transition consumers from the Title VI, Part B funding to an appropriate ongoing employment support program. The bureau oversees one of the three state-funded long-term supports programs and in SFY2012 spent approximately \$1 million in serving VR consumers after VR services were

completed. These efforts have led to internal and external improvements in our state system and have built a foundation for a strong Supported Employment service program in this state.

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## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

### VR CERTIFICATIONS

[NOTE: DRAFT CERTIFICATIONS HAVE BEEN PRODUCED/PROVIDED IN STATE PLAN FOR BESB VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND STATE PLAN SUPPLEMENT FOR STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM.]

**State must provide written and signed certifications that:** [FROM DORS]

<b>1</b>	The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA, and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act;
<b>2</b>	As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures established by Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for provision of VR services and administration of the VR services portion of Unified or Combined State Plan;
<b>3</b>	As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;
<b>4</b>	The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement;
<b>5</b>	The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement.
<b>6</b>	All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.
<b>7</b>	The (enter title of State officer below) has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement;
<b>8</b>	The Director, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;
<b>9</b>	The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

### VR ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement,

through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

**State Plan must provide assurances that:** [FROM DORS]

<b>1</b>	<b>Public Comment on Policies and Procedures:</b> The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
<b>2</b>	<b>Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement:</b> The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan:</b> The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(b) The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (Option A or B must be selected): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) Is an independent State commission.</li> <li>(B) Has established a State Rehabilitation Council</li> </ul> </li> <li>(c) Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act. The non-Federal share, as described in 34 CFR 361.60.</li> <li>(d) The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds, (Yes/No)</li> <li>(e) The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs, (Yes/No)</li> <li>(f) State-wideness and waivers of state-wideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency is requesting or maintaining a waiver of state-wideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified State Plan.</li> <li>(g) The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11), (24)(B), and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(h) All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> <li>(i) The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set</li> </ul>

	<p>forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(j) The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(k) The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities.</p> <p>(l) The submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p>
<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>Administration of the Provision of VR Services:</b> The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:</p> <p>(a) Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(b) Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of Rehabilitation Act</p> <p>(c) Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No)</p> <p>(d) Comply with all required available comparable services and benefits, determined to be available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act and</p> <p>(e) Comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(f) Comply with requirements regarding provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(g) Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(h) Comply with requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual review, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(i) Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs</p>
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:</b></p> <p>(a) The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(b) The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.</p>
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p>(a) <b>Financial Administration:</b> The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal</p>

	<p>contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(b) The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.</p>
<b>7</b>	<p>(a) <b>Provision of Supported Employment Services:</b> The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(b) The designated State agency assures that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act</li> <li>ii. An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIXES

### APPENDIX 1: Performance Goals for Core Programs – INSERT TABLE

#### PRA BURDENS TABLE

OMB Control Number	Topic	Estimated Total Burden	Citation for Requirement to Respond
<b>Common Form Elements</b>			
1205-ONEW	Common Requirements and Program-Specific requirements for: The Adult Program, the Dislocated Worker Program, the Youth Program, the Wagner-Peyser Act Program, the Adult Education and Literacy Program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Program	3,268 hours	WIOA sec. 102 and 103

1205-ONEW	Two Special Combined State Plan Questions: Section I of document “WIOA State Plan Type” and Section IV of document “Coordination.”	10 hours	WIOA sec. 102(b)(2)(C)(viii)
<b>Supplemental Collections for Combined Plan Partners’ Program-Specific Elements</b>			
1830-0029	Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-270) State Plan Guide	2,240 hours	Sections 122(a)(1) and 201(c) of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Act), 20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq. as amended by P.L. 109-270, and WIOA sec. 103
0970-0145	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) State Plan Guidance	594 hours	42 U.S.C. 602, and WIOA sec. 103
0584-0083	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Operating Guidelines, Forms, and Waivers, Program and Budget Summary Statement	1431 hours <sup>2</sup>	7 CFR 271-274.1, and WIOA sec. 103
1205-ONEW	Trade Adjustment Assistance	50 hours	WIOA sec. 103
1225-0086	Grant Application Requirements for the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program	1620 hours	38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c), and WIOA sec. 103.
1205-0132	Unemployment Insurance State Quality Service Plan Planning and Reporting Guidelines	1530 hours	29 CFR 97.40  ET Handbook No. 336 18 <sup>th</sup> Edition, and WIOA sec. 103.
1205-0040	Senior Community Service Employment Program Performance Measurement System	406 hours	20 CFR Part 641, and WIOA sec. 103
1205-ONEW	HUD Employment and Training Activities	tbd <sup>3</sup>	, and WIOA sec. 103
0970-	Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)	112	Section 676(b) of the

<sup>2</sup> This number represents estimated average burden for the portion of the SNAP plan that covers programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) and section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 only.

<sup>3</sup> This number represents estimated average burden for the portion of HUD program plans that cover employment and training activities only.

0382	Model Plan Applications	hours <sup>4</sup>	Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9908(b)), and WIOA sec. 103.
1205-ONEW	Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program	40 hours	WIOA sec. 103

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<sup>4</sup> This number represents estimated average burden for the portion of the CSBG plan that covers employment and training activities only.