

Equity and Access Committee

Chair: Cindi Bigelow, Bigelow Tea, CEO

Vice Chair: Dr. Monette Ferguson, Alliance for Community Empowerment, Executive Director

Chief Administrative Officer: Social Finance, Inc.

Objective:

The Equity and Access committee seeks to address persistent barriers that undermine access to sustainable work and training arrangements. The foremost barriers facing Connecticut's lower-paid workforce include child care, transportation, benefits cliffs, and access to behavioral health services.

Initiatives:

There are **5 initiatives** that compose the work of the Equity and Access committee.

- 3.1 Early Childhood Education Reform
- 3.2 Reducing Transportation Barriers
- 3.3 Supportive Employment Services Expansion
- 3.4 Benefits Cliffs Reform
- 3.5 Cross Barrier Solutions

By December 2021, the Committee aims to make progress on the following initiatives:

- 3.1 Early Childhood Education Reform
 - Contribute to and advocate for the Office of Early Childhood's (OEC) **Early Childhood Education (ECE) System Redesign work** (e.g., creating more unified funding streams, addressing the infant & toddler slot shortage, etc.) to make the system produce better outcomes for families, providers, and employers – some component pieces of this work include but are not limited to:
 - Studying the true cost of providing child care to inform child care subsidy payments to reduce the burden that ECE providers face.
 - Developing a compensation schedule for ECE providers alongside the OEC to ensure that increases in credentials are commensurate with wages.
 - Developing a plan for ongoing employer engagement in the ECE space.
 - Develop an implementation plan to further leverage **Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)** funding.
- 3.2 Reducing Transportation Barriers
 - Coordinate with the Department of Transportation (DOT) to support the expansion of affordable transportation to student, job seekers, and other residents in CT.
- 3.3 Supportive Employment Services Expansion
 - Develop an implementation plan to leverage the Ticket to Work Program to **Expand Supportive Employment Services** across the state.
- 3.4 Benefits Cliffs Reform
 - Coordinate with and support the 2Gen **Benefits Cliffs** Working group in implementing the Atlanta Federal Reserve Benefits Cliffs Dashboard as a tool to support benefits counseling and to identify policy solution to benefits cliffs.
- 3.5 Cross Barrier Solutions
 - Coordinate with the Regional Sector Partnerships initiative to integrate that **Employer Resource Networks (ERNs)** are integrated into the partnerships.
 - Support expansion of the **SNAP E&T** program.
 - Improve and expand utilization of the **United Way of Connecticut's 2-1-1 Navigator** tool.

Responsibilities:

- Oversee the progress and direction of the subcommittee working groups
- Engage as an advisor and thought partner on the subcommittee work as necessary
- Ensure connections are made between subcommittees as necessary
- Approve measurable key performance indicators and milestones for each initiative

Meeting Cadence:

- Bi-Monthly (with additional meetings as necessary)
- Monthly meeting of Committee Chair, Vice-Chair, representative from Social Venture Partners, and representatives from Social Finance
- Quarterly GWC meetings set for 2:30pm-5:00pm on January 28, April 15, July 15, and Oct 7, 2021

GWC Equity & Access Council Members:

- **Rochelle Palache**, CT District Director, SEIU
- **Rep. Toni Walker**, CT House District 93
- **Erika Smith**, ReNetx, CEO

GWC Equity & Access Ex-Officio Members:

- **Susan Bysiewicz**, Lieutenant Governor
- **Beth Bye**, Department of Early Childhood, Commissioner
- **Vannessa Dorantes**, Department of Children and Families, Commissioner
- **Deidre Gifford**, Department of Social Services, Commissioner
- **Melissa McCaw**, Office of Policy and Management, Secretary
- **Angel Quiros**, Department of Corrections, Commissioner
- **Amy Porter**, Department of Aging and Disability Services, Commissioner
- **Jordan Scheff**, Department of Developmental Services, Commissioner
- **Miriam Delphin-Rittmon**, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Commissioner

GWC Equity & Access Partner Committee Members:

- **Joseph Carbone**, The WorkPlace, President & CEO
- **Social Venture Partners**
 - Jen Gerber
- **Social Finance (CAO)**
 - Jake Edwards
 - Nic Miragliuolo
 - John Pion

3.1 Early Childhood Education Reform

The Early Childhood Education Reform subcommittee lies within the broader Equity and Access committee

3.1 **Early Childhood Education Reform**

- 3.2 Reduce Transportation Barriers
- 3.3 Supportive Employment Services Expansion
- 3.4 Benefits Cliffs Reform
- 3.5 Cross Barrier Solutions

Objective:

To address issues of accessibility, affordability, and quality in the state's child care system, the GWC seeks to focus on and advocate for child care system reform to ensure better outcomes for families, providers, and employers in collaboration with the Office of Early Childhood (OEC).

Outcomes:

- Advancement of the OEC's vision for system reforms that (1) expand access & equity, (2) raise quality, and (3) support the Early Childhood Education (ECE) workforce. This working group will collaborate with the OEC and other stakeholders to identify additional actions that can be taken to advance the system reform work – the outcomes listed below are just some of the components that will advance this vision:
 - Conduct the underlying analysis to inform a multi-year approach to align provider reimbursement rates to the true cost of providing care.
 - A compensation schedule for ECE providers that ensures increases in credentials are commensurate with wages to adequately support and compensate the ECE workforce.
 - A call to action **for employers to reduce child care barriers** their employees may face with a particular focus on **forming a commission of private sector leaders who will focus on ECE issues**.
- Engagement of more colleges and universities in CT through the CSCU System office to pursue additional U.S. Dept. of Education Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) funding in 2021.

Intermediary Steps:

- Develop measurable performance indicators to evaluate progress against objectives and outcomes.
- Collaborate with other states to understand the strategic tensions in selecting the most optimal method to collect information on child care prices and costs to inform child care subsidy payment rates.
- Meet in a regular cadence with OEC stakeholders to ensure all analysis informs broader system reform work.
- Convene private sector leaders around the state to disseminate a call to action surrounding ECE and to gauge interest in a commission focused on child care.
- Collaborate with Connecticut State Colleges & Universities (CSCU) Systems Office and the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC) to socialize, pursue and implement the CCAMPIS opportunity to their respective post-secondary institutions.

Meeting Cadence:

- Bi-Monthly subcommittee meetings or more frequently as needed or requested
- Quarterly GWC meetings set for 2:30pm to 5:00pm January 28, April 15, July 15, and Oct 7, 2021

Subcommittee Members:

- CT Office of Early Childhood: Elena Trueworthy, Harriet Feldlaufer, Julie Bisi
- CT Office of the Lieutenant Governor: Cherie Phoenix-Sharpe
- Social Venture Partners CT: Jen Gerber
- Social Finance: Jake Edwards, John Pion, Nic Miragliuolo, Natalie Larkin

ECE System Redesign Visual:

Initiatives exist under each one of these strategic pillars at the OEC.



3.2 Transportation Subcommittee

The **Transportation Subcommittee** lies within the broader Equity and Access committee

- 3.1 Early Childhood Education Reform
- 3.2 Reducing Transportation Barriers**
- 3.3 Supportive Employment Services Expansion
- 3.4 Benefits Cliffs Reform
- 3.5 Cross Barrier Solutions

Objective:

Increase access to affordable public transit passes for individuals participating in workforce training programs through both expanding existing transportation programs that currently only service students in the UCONN and CSCU systems, and developing additional programs that focus on increasing affordable transportation access across CT.

Outcomes:

- Expanded scope of existing transportation programs to include any training institution, educational institution, employer, local or state agency, or public or non-profit social service provider in the state of Connecticut.
- Net-new training programs that are focused on offering affordable transportation options to students, job seekers, and other individuals who currently face barriers to accessible transit to and from school or work.

Intermediary Steps:

- Identify what pieces of information (e.g., baseline public transportation utilization of constituents, proposed price point, etc.) are needed from workforce and adult education training providers to consider including them in an expansion of existing bulk-transit programs.
- Gather data and support prospective partner needs in developing additional program proposals that will provide increased access to affordable transportation options across the state.

Meeting Cadence:

- TBD
- Quarterly GWC meetings set for 2:30pm to 5:00pm January 28, April 15, July 15, and Oct 7, 2021

Subcommittee Members:

- CT Dept. of Disability & Developmental Services: Amber Burke
- CT Dept. of Transportation: Richard Andreski, Garrett Eucalitto
- CT Health & Educational Facilities Authority: Betty Sugerman Weintraub
- CT Office of the Governor: Mohit Agrawal
- CT Office of Workforce Strategy: Niall Dammando
- Social Finance: Jake Edwards, John Pion, Nic Miragliuolo
- Social Venture Partners CT: Jen Gerber

3.3 Supportive Employment Services Expansion Subcommittee

The Supportive Services Expansion Services subcommittee lies within the broader Equity and Access committee

- 3.1 Early Childhood Education Reform
- 3.2 Reducing Transportation Barriers
- 3.3 *Supportive Employment Services Expansion***
- 3.4 Benefits Cliffs Reform
- 3.5 Cross Barrier Solutions

Objective:

By 2023, increase the number of Supportive Employment Service (SES) slots in Connecticut by 2,000. This approach will require additional state resources to build infrastructure and capacity, which, in turn, will leverage federal reimbursements to expand SES programming without drawing down additional state resources.

Outcomes:

- An initial implementation plan, by the end of 2021, that outlines the key activities and resources needed for Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), Aging and Disability Services (ADS), and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to implement Ticket to Work and expand Supportive Employment Services over the next 3-5 years.
- A supportive employment services pilot in CT that includes increasing administrative capacity within appropriate state agencies, developing key partnerships, building data-sharing capacity, and achieving operational efficiency to scale the program.
- A more robust implementation plan will be developed based off initial findings of pilot initiative by assembling partners such as Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs), State Vocational Rehab, Employment Networks, regional workforce development boards, employers, and other community partners.
- Expansion of Supportive Employment Services programming during 2022 and 2023 with Agency partners.

Intermediate Steps:

- Develop measurable performance indicators to evaluate progress against objectives and outcomes.
- Identify best practices for Ticket to Work implementation across the country and assess their applicability in Connecticut.
- Assess the feasibility of leveraging Ticket to Work to expand Supportive Employment Services
- Identify other sources of funding or related opportunities that can be leveraged to expand Supportive Employment Services

Meeting Cadence:

- Bi-Weekly subcommittee working sessions (45 minutes each)
- Bi-Monthly meeting of Committee Members and Subcommittee Leads
- Quarterly GWC meetings set for 2:30pm to 5:00pm January 28, April 15, July 15, and Oct 7, 2021

Subcommittee Members:

- CT Center for Advanced Technologies: Lynn Raicik
- CT Department of Aging & Disability Services: Amy Porter
- CT Department of Developmental Services: Jordan Scheff, Amber Burke
- CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services: Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, Harry Gerowe
- CT Health & Educational Facilities Authority: Betty Sugerman Weintraub
- CT State College & University System: Tom Coley
- Mitchell College: Tracy Espy
- Okay Industries: Jason Howey
- Social Finance: Jake Edwards, John Pion, Nic Miragliuolo
- Social Venture Partners CT: Jen Gerber

3.4 Benefits Cliffs Reform Subcommittee

The Benefits Cliffs Reform subcommittee lies within the broader Equity and Access committee

- 3.1 Early Childhood Education Reform
- 3.2 Bulk Transit Purchasing
- 3.3 Supportive Employment Services Expansion
- 3.4 Benefits Cliffs Reform**
- 3.5 Cross Barrier Solutions

Objective:

To recommend individual supports and policy solutions that remove the adverse effects of benefits cliffs that will increase workforce participation rates, economic stability for low-income residents, and prospects for career pathway advancement.

Outcomes:

- Identify key policy solutions to reduce the impact of benefits cliffs and provide recommendations to the legislature and the Office of the Governor.
- Develop a blueprint to implement benefit cliff case management and calculator tools at scale across the state based on pilot learnings.
- Launch the Atlanta Federal Reserve CLIFFS personal calculator statewide as a key tool in benefits counseling.

Intermediary Steps:

- **Phase 1A: Cliffs Counseling**
 - Design and implement a pilot of the Atlanta Federal Reserve Benefits Cliffs Dashboard (CLIFF Dashboard) to test the impact of its usage during benefits counseling.
 - Publish a policy brief on the results of the CLIFF Dashboard Study and develop a plan for statewide implementation of the dashboard in career/benefits counseling sessions.
- **Phase 1B: Policy Solutions**
 - Develop a set of policy recommendations to reduce the impact of benefits cliffs based on the input of the 2Gen Benefits Cliffs Working Group, the Equity and Access Committee, and the CLIFFS Dashboard policy analysis tools.
- **Phase 2: Policy Pilot**
 - Based on the results of phase 1, this working group may choose to design a Policy pilot to be launched in late 2021 or early 2022 that would provide cash benefit to mitigate benefits cliffs identified during Phase 1B.
 - Based on the results of the policy pilot, provide recommendations to the legislature as to which policy changes would best mitigate the impact of benefits cliffs, and eliminate barriers to advancement along key career pathways.

Meeting Cadence:

- Bi-Weekly subcommittee working sessions (45 minutes each)
- Bi-Monthly meeting of Committee Members and Subcommittee Leads
- Quarterly GWC meetings set for 2:30pm to 5:00pm January 28, April 16, July 15, and Oct 7, 2021

Subcommittee Members:

- 2Gen Benefits Cliffs Working Group: Rosa Rada, Manisha Srivastava, Amy Pelletier, and Sarah Griffen
- CT Center for Advanced Technologies: Lynn Raicik
- CT General Assembly: Tammy Nuccio
- CT State College & University System: Rob Steinmetz
- East Hartford Public Schools: Amy Peltier
- Social Finance: Jake Edwards, John Pion, Nic Miragliuolo
- Social Venture Partners CT: Jen Gerber

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3.5 Cross Barrier Solutions Subcommittee

The Benefits Cliffs Reform subcommittee lies within the broader Equity and Access committee

- 3.1 Early Childhood Education Reform
- 3.2 Reducing Transportation Barriers
- 3.3 Supportive Employment Services Expansion
- 3.4 Benefits Cliffs Reform
- 3.5 *Cross Barrier Solutions***

Objective:

This subcommittee captures several solutions to reduce barriers that Connecticut residents face in accessing upskilling, reskilling, and employment opportunities. These solutions collectively aim to reduce information gaps, increase training opportunities, expand the set of supportive services that workforce training participants and employees receive, and leverage federal and philanthropic funds.

Outcomes:

- **2-1-1 Navigator:** Increased utilization and expansion of resources included in the United Way of CT's 2-1-1 Navigator.
- **SNAP Employment & Training (E&T) Expansion:** Bolstered and expanded Connecticut's SNAP E&T program, including increased supportive services provided to participants.
- **Employer Provided Supportive Services:** Leverage Regional Next Gen Sector Partnerships to encourage employers to develop employer resource networks to provide job retention and supportive services for workers in a cost-effective manner.

Intermediate Steps:

- Develop measurable performance indicators to evaluate progress against objectives and outcomes.
- **2-1-1 Navigator:**
 - Revamp 2-1-1 content, to include key workforce training resources (e.g., SNAP E&T, SkillUp CT).
 - Enhance distribution channels by disseminating marketing materials and plan to relevant state agencies, workforce development boards, community-based organizations, and employers.
 - Develop ongoing data sharing processes so state agencies can acutely understand local challenges and deploy resources accordingly.
- **SNAP E&T Expansion**
 - Increase marketing and referral partners to increase awareness and enrollment.
 - Identify additional funding and funding sources (e.g., philanthropy, employers), leveraging a 50% Federal reimbursement.
 - Increase funding for program administration to oversee the program expansion to include more community-based organizations and high-quality workforce programs.
- **Employer Provided Supportive Services**
 - Collaborate with the regional sector partnerships team to better understand the partnerships needs and how an emphasis on providing supportive services to workers can be incorporated.

Meeting Cadence:

- Subcommittee working sessions as needed
- Bi-Monthly meeting of Committee Members and Subcommittee Leads
- Quarterly GWC meetings set for 2:30pm to 5:00pm January 28, April 16, July 15, and Oct 7, 2021

Subcommittee Members:

- Central Connecticut State University: Zulma Toro
- CT Center for Advanced Technologies: Lynn Raicik
- CT Cradle to Career: David Radcliff
- CT DECD: Glendowlyn Thames
- CT Department of Developmental Services: Amber Burke
- CT Dept. of Social Services: Peter Hadler, Daniel Giacomi, Jana Engle, Bill Seedman
- CT Office of Early Childhood: Rosa Rada
- CT Office of Workforce Strategy: Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Niall Dammando
- CT State College & University System: Thomas Coley, Karen Woscyna-Birch, Rob Steinmetz
- CT United Way of CT: Tanya Barrett
- Mitchell College: Tracy Espy
- Okay Industries: Jason Howey
- Social Finance: Jake Edwards, John Pion, Nic Miragliuolo
- Social Venture Partners CT: Jen Gerber, Marilyn Wiles-Kettenmann