

GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic upended every aspect of life as we know it – from school and work to health and safety. The economy fell from record highs to record lows over the course of two months. In 2020, more than 100,000 jobs were lost. While Connecticut was far ahead of other states in managing the COVID crisis, the disproportionately negative impacts on historically underserved communities, people of color and women, was devastating and alarming.

1. The state economy has bounced back.

- 3.6% unemployment rate (November 2023) remains below the national average
- Private Sector is 101.9% recovered (5,000 jobs above February 2020).
- Total jobs are 100.5% recovered (1,400 above February 2020).
- Average job growth in 2023 (so far) has exceeded the 2022 pace.
- The Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) remains steady at 64.1% compared to the national average of 62.8%.

Even as our economy rebounds, we know nothing will ever return to the way that it was. The road ahead is one of constant change and uncertainty. But change also opens the way for opportunity, to ensure that as we continue to build back post-COVID, we do so with renewed purpose, acting with intention to address deep inequities within our economy and society. We have a responsibility to pave the way for a more equitable and inclusive future for us all.

2. Connecticut has more open jobs than we have skilled job seekers to fill them.

As of X, the state has X number of open jobs. Although our labor participation rate is comparable to other states, averaging 64%, labor participation for underserved populations remains weak, with approximately 200,000 workers disengaged from the workplace for a variety of reasons. According to a recent report from Opportunity at Work, there are approximately 168,000 underemployed workers in the state, many coming from underserved populations.

Connecticut has the talent to fill open positions; however, we need to provide opportunities for all the state's residents to participate successfully in the world of work. Integrating diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA) into all aspects of workforce development is essential for economic competitiveness, vitality and innovation.

3. While Connecticut has a robust economy, the state also has the second highest income disparity in the United States, as measured by a 2019 survey from the US Census Bureau.

We must bring forth a new social covenant. Creating a more inclusive economy means ensuring that every individual – regardless of where they are on their personal journeys – has a seamless and supported pathway from education and training to a good job that enables them to contribute to the economic and civic life of the state.

4. The rapid development of advanced technologies, including the integration of AI in almost every aspect of our daily lives, is revolutionizing the need for continuous learning and an education system that responds to changing skill needs.

While experts disagree on whether AI will create more jobs than it replaces, what they do agree upon is that all jobs will change as a result of advanced technologies. Continuous learning will be key for individuals to continue to hone their skills and remain competitive for jobs.

Advanced technologies also are adding pressure to our K-12 and higher education systems to focus not only on content knowledge but also on essential cognitive skills, including lifelong learning, self-regulation, critical thinking, situational awareness, creative problem solving, and communication, that will remain evergreen even as jobs change. We must adapt our traditional education system to prepare students for the jobs of the future.

DRAFT

OUR APPROACH: WORKFORCE SYSTEMS ALIGNMENT

- There is no single entity that can solve workforce challenges on its own. Revitalizing our economy and uplifting our communities will take all of us working together.
- Over the last two years, we have built a thriving ecosystem of public, nonprofit and private leaders who are working collaboratively toward a shared purpose. We believe that everyone must participate in order to drive our economy forward.
- Together we are creating a coordinated, cohesive, coherent workforce development system that challenges all stakeholders to advance their individual goals while also benefitting the collective good. In such a system, programs are linked and build on one another, amplifying impact and deepening our knowledge of what works for specific industries, populations and the system as a whole.
- By bringing together different stakeholders and perspectives, we are creating shared ownership, not only around a set of programs, but also around a way of solving workforce development challenges that will outlive any specific program and enable us to react quickly and flexibly, drawing on a deep set of knowledge and relationships to react quickly to changing circumstances. Only by working together, can we effectively align resources and expertise, measure outcomes, assess what works and scale those practices that enable all residents of Connecticut to experience the dignity of work.
- We know that doing this work benefits us all. Employers are able to fill in-demand jobs and build more diverse workforces that fuel innovation and growth and bring the diversity of thought and experience needed to solve problems that employers will confront in the next decade and beyond. Our schools have a clearer understanding of current and future skills needs and can better provide the instruction and supports necessary for all students to successfully progress from early childhood education to K-12 to college and/or career. Our government can create a more robust, resilient and equitable economy that makes our state a dynamic and vibrant haven for its citizens and a model for the nation.

Insert Strategic Blueprint – Key Graphic

Foundational to our workforce development strategy are Data and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access.

- **DATA AND ACCOUNTABILITY:** we are committed to outcomes above all else, ensuring that every investment we make into the state's workforce system is benefitting employers and workers.
- **DEI&A:** We are committed to creating a more inclusive economy that ensures that every individual – regardless of where they are on their personal journeys – has a seamless and supported pathway from education and training to a good career that enables them to contribute to the economic and civic life of the state.

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Our blueprint has three strategic pillars that are integrated and intentionally ordered from left to right: Career Pathways, Sector Training and Business Leadership.

- Education and Career Pathways
- Sector-Based Training
- Business Leadership

Ultimately the strategic pillars, undergirded by data and DEIA, ladder up to the Workforce Development System.

FOUNDATIONAL PILLAR: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESS

- A vibrant state economy is diverse, inclusive and equitable where different perspectives, experiences and skills meld together to foster global competitiveness, innovation, entrepreneurship, civic action and widespread prosperity.
- We are committed to building a Connecticut where every individual has the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the economic, social and civic life of the state. We know that Connecticut offers boundless possibilities for some, but for others, those possibilities are out of reach.
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access is not a stand-alone value or hope, but it is an intentional action that is integrated into every aspect of our workforce development efforts.
- To fill jobs and continue to strengthen our state's economy, we must expand the labor pool. One powerful way to do this is through a laser-like focus on equity. Equity includes asking businesses to rethink their job requirements and focus on skills, not pedigree. It also means ensuring that underserved populations with lower workforce participation rates get the training and supports they need to attain jobs and contribute meaningfully to the social and economic vitality of the state. This upfront investment will bring long-term gain.

Key Focus Populations

Returning Citizens: Returning citizens face significant challenges in re-entering the workforce, including stigma, lack of access to job training programs, and legal barriers that limit employment. These barriers contribute to high rates of recidivism and underemployment among this group. *The 2024 CRI report highlights that over 60% of returning citizens in CT face significant employment barriers within the first year of reentry, with a notable 40% struggling to secure stable employment even two years post-release.*

Opportunity Youth: According to the Dalio report on Opportunity Youth, young people aged 16-26 who are neither in school nor working represent a critical yet untapped resource for the labor market. Barriers such as lack of access to quality education, training programs, and mentorship opportunities prevent these youths from participating in the workforce. *According to the Dalio foundation, 119,000, or 19%, of Connecticut's 14- to 26-year-olds were either at-risk or disconnected in 2021–2022. Of these, 63,000 were deemed "disconnected." This group is of particular concern, as their limited connection to education and employment systems impedes their ability to achieve economic self-sufficiency.*

Women: Women, particularly in CT, face challenges such as wage gaps, underrepresentation in leadership roles, and inadequate support for work-life balance. These issues are compounded for women of color and those with caregiving responsibilities.

Veterans: Veterans often encounter obstacles in translating their military skills to the civilian job market, facing underemployment or difficulties in finding employment that fully utilizes their skills and experiences.

Individuals with Disabilities: This group frequently faces accessibility issues, discrimination, and a lack of tailored support services, leading to lower employment rates and limited career advancement opportunities.

Black and Hispanic Males: Data indicates that Black and Hispanic males in CT experience disproportionately high unemployment and incarceration rates, reflecting systemic barriers to employment and economic participation.

Who Is Unemployed?

Race and Gender	Unemployment Rate	
	Age 16+	Age 20+
Total	4.0	3.6
White Male	4.2	3.7
White Female	3.0	2.9
Black Male	8.3	7.4
Black Female	4.3	4.4
Hispanic Male	6.8	5.3
Hispanic Female	5.8	5.7

Unemployment rate for 12-month period ending April 2023*

- 48% of people with disabilities and a significant portion of veterans are struggling to transition into gainful employment
 - At the same time, reentry individuals and youth of color still encounter substantial educational and vocational barriers. **Need more data on this and overall**
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Future State

A workforce that reflects the diversity of its population, meets the needs of its economy, and provides equitable access to high-quality jobs.

Work to Date

DEI&A Committee

The DEIA Committee, established in October 2021, guides the GWC/OWS on advancing workforce diversity and inclusivity in Connecticut, with a focus on:

BIPOC:

- Addressing the systemic barriers faced by Black and Hispanic males through community engagement and targeted employment programs. **Add data**
- Encouraging diversity hiring initiatives and bias training for employers to reduce discrimination and increase employment opportunities for Black and Hispanic males to increase their labor market participation.

Veterans:

- Providing transition support for veterans and facilitating skill translation for those active in the Reserve or Guard, enhancing talent sourcing for Connecticut's in-demand sectors.

- Creating veteran transition programs that offer career counseling, recognition of military skills in civilian certifications, and connections with veteran-friendly employers.
- Veterans Sub-Committee: **Add high level focus of the committee.**

Returning Citizens: The CRI report notes a 25% increase in employment rates among returning citizens who participated in skill development and vocational training programs, compared to those who did not.

- Implementing job training and education programs tailored to the specific needs of returning citizens, including skills development and legal assistance to navigate employment barriers.
- Vocational Village: a pioneer program model after the Michigan department of Corrections designed to prepared returning citizens for the trades. CT has successfully launched a partnership with Pursuit aerospace. The program aims to collaborate with businesses to ensure it meets the market needs.
- Employer toolkit: Connecticut Second Chance Business Coalition members, including CBIA, CT SHRM, and a growing list of industry groups in manufacturing, transportation, construction, hospitality, developed a resource guide providing employer education to counter persistent unfounded fears and uncertainty about hiring re-entry individuals

Youth:

- Developing partnerships with local organizations and businesses to create mentorship and internship opportunities for Opportunity Youth, as per insights from the Dalio report.
- Campaign for Working Connecticut Report: Connecticut’s Pathway to the Future – Investing in Opportunity Youth to invigorate Our workforce call for robust longitudinal investments.

Women:

- Launching initiatives to support women in the workforce, including leadership development programs, equal pay policies, and flexible work arrangements to accommodate caregiving responsibilities.
- CT Council for Women and Girls: **add**
- Women Return to Work Economic Plan: **add**

PWD (Persons with Disabilities):

- Enhancing accessibility and support for individuals with disabilities, including workplace accommodations, adaptive technologies, and inclusive hiring practices.
- Windmill training offered by Bureau of Rehabilitation services offered to employer to reduces discrimination, unconscious bias and increase understanding of individuals with disabilities leading to inclusive hiring.
- Accessible and adaptive technologies across all **AJC’s** (verify)
- Persons with Disabilities Workforce Plan

Immigrants and refugees:

- Developing training and employment pathways that enable effective integration of immigrants and refugees into the workforce, including addressing specific barriers such as language learning, credentials recognition, and support for legal pathways for undocumented immigrants.

Connecticut Blue Ribbon Panel on Child Care

Access to high-quality childcare is essential for a woman's ability to participate and advance in the workforce. When women have reliable childcare arrangements, they can focus on their careers without worrying about their children's well-being. The Connecticut Blue Ribbon Panel on Child Care, which was established by Governor Lamont through an Executive Order in 2023, was tasked with developing a 5-year strategic plan for a child care system that benefits families, providers, and Connecticut's economy. The final report, submitted to the Governor's office on December 8, 2023, incorporated extensive feedback from workgroups, experts, panel members, providers, parents, businesses, and advocates. It provides a vision for Connecticut's child care infrastructure that will improve access to high-quality care for tens of thousands of families through efforts aimed at affordability, stabilizing and expanding child care businesses, and improving the quality of programs that support family needs and optimal child development in the early years.

Benefit Cliffs

2Gen's Family Economic Mobility Workgroup is increasing the adoption and implementation of Benefits Cliff tools to organizations that work with low-income families. The CLIFF Tools help working families make decisions about training, education, and careers and ultimately achieve economic mobility and prosperity. Families work with CLIFF-trained partners at local service-providing agencies to anticipate the loss of government benefits due to wage increases (also known as benefits cliffs) and customize their career journey and supports to maximize economic stability. The CLIFF Tools are regularly updated by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta with local data on all major industries.

One of 2Gen's greatest strengths is the value placed on sustaining parent engagement and building the capacity of our Parent Leaders. 2Gen Parent Leaders participate on Connecticut's 2Gen Advisory Board and many other leadership opportunities to inform the work of the 2Gen Initiative. These parents, who have raised families while receiving government benefits and working low-wage jobs, are compensated at a rate of \$30 per hour to provide expert input on 2Gen work. 2Gen ensures that Parent Leaders on the Advisory Board have access and opportunity to engage in the initiative, as well as receive training in areas they have identified as useful to their personal and professional development and skills useful to their upward economic mobility.

2Gen and the Office of Workforce Strategy have been working with Social Finance to develop policy recommendations for helping individuals and families overcome Benefits Cliffs.

Benefits Cliffs is a barrier that limits economic mobility for many individuals and families, especially those from marginalized backgrounds. Benefits Cliffs occur when career advancement puts a family above the income-eligibility threshold for public assistance programs. Due to the gradual or sudden loss of these social benefits – which could include childcare, housing and other income supplements, career advancement may result in a family being financially worse off (*a benefits cliff*) or no better off (*a benefits plateau*) than before the wage increase.

Transportation

Access to reliable, affordable transportation is out of reach for many underserved populations. The cost of obtaining a driver's license, insurance, and a reliable vehicle prohibits many people from engaging in educational and skills training programs and / or employment. This issue is acute in more rural areas of the state where public transportation is limited. However, even in regions with public transportation, additional barriers such as schedules and destinations prohibit the use of public transportation.

(Case study in a break out box of the gentleman we highlighted from the Reentry population that rides a bus to work that takes him 2 hours and 54 stops to go the same distance as a 30 minute car ride.)

OWS, working with the Department of Transportation, 2Gen and the Department of Labor, is conducting a research project on transportation, including a landscape analysis of existing transportation demand, capacities, and gaps; analysis of state-funded options to be scaled; creation of 4-5 car-based options with costs, efficiencies, potential for scale, achievable outcomes; and financial analysis of options, including potential financing sources and risk analysis.

Adult Basic Education

Twenty percent (20%) of adults with a high school diploma or equivalency require remedial education but do not have access to free adult basic education programs, leaving those who are financially vulnerable unable to acquire the basic skills that are foundational to participation in many training programs that lead to meaningful jobs.

In 2024, with support from OWS, Capital Workforce Partners and Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board are conducting Basic Skills Remediation Pilot Programs for adults with have a high school diploma or equivalent and are in need of access to no-cost basic skills remediation in order to pursue occupational training programs in manufacturing, green jobs, IT and CDL. The pilots will uncover best practice models and approaches to basic skills remediation that can be replicated to benefit more individuals throughout the state.

Career Accelerator

Many low-income populations who are interested in participating in high-quality training programs as a means to attaining gainful employment do not have the financial means to do so. This need is most acute for individuals who are not qualified to receive free training through Title IV instruments, such as Workforce Pell grants, or federal funding covered through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

In Connecticut, legislation (Public Act 22-118 and Public Act 23-75, codified into General Statutes §§ 4-124mm and 4-124nn) has been passed requiring the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS) to research and develop a Career Accelerator program. OWS is working with Social Finance to design a zero-interest, state-sponsored "Pay-it-Forward" or "Career Accelerator" program that will allow individuals, who face financial barriers to training, to participate in training in high-demand fields in Connecticut with financial assistance. Through Income Share Agreements, individuals would receive no-cost loans for training, along with supports such as childcare and transportation. Upon earning a job, participants pay back the cost of the training at zero interest, with pay-back terms contingent upon their salary.

Jobs.ct.gov: As part of the state's journey toward an all-digital state government, the state launched a new jobs portal to assist Connecticut residents – and those seeking to become Connecticut residents – in their job search. Through jobs.ct.gov, jobseekers can access powerful job search tools, tips and

resources to help land a job, free and low-cost training and certification opportunities, and employers have access to resources to help hire, train and retain diverse talent.

Insert: Web site screen short and/or quote from press release?

Moving Forward

By 2028

Moving forward, we are focused on fostering cross-calibration across sub-committees to enhance DEIA efforts, encouraging collaboration and leveraging diverse strengths and insights.

- Do we want data by demographic on unemployment improvements?
- We will continue to research and highlight strategies for action, beginning with a DEIA strategic plan and framework for advancing those who have been historically marginalized, and also including:
 - Employer Toolkit for Returning Citizens, in collaboration with Central Connecticut State University, CBIA, the Department of Corrections the GWC DEIA reentry committee, and industry experts, to guide employers in integrating returning citizens into the workforce.
 - A survey for jobseekers conducted by the sub-committee for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to gather information on the challenges faced by talent pipeline.
 - Plan to address the complex needs of Opportunity Youth, with a focus on strengthening pathways from disconnection to employment.
- In partnership with the Chief Manufacturing Officer, launch DEIA initiatives in the manufacturing sector to attract and nurture diverse talent, emphasizing career development and advancement opportunities Implement data-driven strategies to measure the impact of DEIA initiatives, ensuring continuous adaptation and refinement for maximum effectiveness.
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FOUNDATIONAL PILLAR: DATA AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Context

- Data – qualitative and quantitative, formative and summative, is core to effective investments in workforce development. Data provides the impetus for programs and policy and informs their planning and development. Data also informs implementation, enabling course corrections that enable greater impact. Ultimately, data critical to understanding overall outcomes, providing policy makers with the evidence necessary to make informed decisions about what programs and strategies to replicate and scale.
- Like most states, workforce development is a highly dispersed function within Connecticut, with dollars spread across multiple agencies to fulfill a number of workforce goals. The data systems tracking these investments are also dispersed.
- To be most effective, data must be managed, organized and maintained centrally to enable analysis of state and federal investments and outcomes as a whole; provide comparisons across programs, strategies, regions, and demographic groups; ensure that efforts are effective in addressing equity goals; and give key stakeholders information on programs or strategies that should be brought to scale.

Future State

Develop a single system for data collection across all workforce development programs that enables analysis of the impact of all workforce development investments.

Work to Date

- **Programmatic Outcomes:** We have published annual program outcomes for major workforce development programs receiving state or federal funding, disaggregating by specific subpopulations and ensure that data serves as the basis for further workforce development programming. **Example of Career ConneCT – but this also will be under Sector Training.**
- **Jobs.ct.gov:** As part of the state’s journey toward an all-digital state government, the state launched a new jobs portal to assist Connecticut residents – and those seeking to become Connecticut residents – in their job search. Through jobs.ct.gov, jobseekers can access powerful job search tools, tips and resources to help land a job, free and low-cost training and certification opportunities, and employers have access to resources to help hire, train and retain talent.

Insert: Web site screen short and/or quote from press release?

- **P20 Win:** P20 WIN is an integrated data system providing a cross-agency data platform to support analyses on the return on investment for workforce training programs. We are now engaging in a research project to better understand the performance of the state’s workforce system by examining:
 - The wage and employment outcomes of participants in cataloged workforce training programs
 - The outcomes and relationships between workforce training programs and higher education: The transitions and movement between workforce training programs and higher

education, such as individuals that complete an adult education program, continue into a workforce training program, then enroll in a two-year degree program.

- Demographic data to understand outcomes across different groups by age, race/ethnicity, sex, geography and more.

Using this data, OWS will address the following research questions:

1. What are the wage and employment outcomes of Connecticut workforce training programs?
2. What are the wage and employment outcomes of Connecticut postsecondary, adult education, and technical education programs?
3. What are the common career pathways within Connecticut?
4. What are the employment and wage outcomes by career pathway?
5. Which career pathways lead to the strongest wage growth?

Moving Forward

Through funding from The Connecticut Project (TCP), the state is working with Jobs for the Future (JFF) to develop a plan for a strategic framework for data for all workforce development programming. The framework will build off of and incorporate existing data systems with an eye toward creating a dashboard that will enable the state to analyze all current workforce development investments, including their efficacy in helping Connecticut residents secure quality jobs. With this information, the state will be able to strengthen and scale proven programs and strategies, share best practices and ensure equity within our efforts.

STRATEGIC PILLAR: EDUCATION AND CAREER PATHWAYS

Context

- Over 70% of jobs require some postsecondary certification, industry-recognized credential, or associate degree.
- 44% of students are college-ready as measured by EdSight; for Black students 23.2%; for Hispanic students 25.7%; for students with disabilities 8.8% -- more
- Although equitable access to higher education continues to be a priority, not every student needs, or is able to pursue, a traditional higher education pathway that leads to a four-year degree.
- The increasingly fast pace of technology advancement, including AI, has increased emphasis on preparing our students to develop life-long learning and career readiness skills.
- With approximately 95,000 open jobs and approximately 48,000 high school and college graduates that stay in CT, there are significant opportunities for CT graduates to fill these positions.

Future State

- All students have access to career pathways aligned to their interests and the needs of industry, regardless of their postsecondary education plans.
- Every student envisions themselves in a future career and has a roadmap for getting there
- Learning experiences are real-world and include opportunities for mentorship, internships, and pre-apprenticeships
- Industry are active partners with educators to inform curriculum development and provide career-oriented professional learning
- All school districts have access to a career pathway toolkit, providing a roadmap and curriculum for multiple industry-led credentials of value for in-demand occupations
- Regional Sector Partnerships provide industry and school districts with the opportunity to continuously improve programs that reflect the changing needs of industry. Programs lead to stackable credentials that provide students with post-secondary credit, credit-bearing certificates or degrees within a career path, credit-bearing industry recognized credentials, and or pre-apprenticeship credentials.

Career Pathways

A **career pathway** is a coordinated program of rigorous, high-quality education and work-related training that aligns with industry needs and advances students in their career of choice.

Dual enrollment courses are taught by college faculty online or on the college campus, and allow students to earn credit for college while meeting high school graduation requirements.

Concurrent enrollment courses are taught by college-approved high school teachers in a secondary environment and allow students to earn credit for college while meeting high school graduation requirements.

Connecticut's 12 broad **Career Clusters** represent career pathways that help learners discover their interests and passions and empower them to choose the educational pathway that can lead to high school, college, and career success, while best meeting the workforce needs of the state.

- **Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources**
- **Architecture and Construction**
- **Business Management and Administration**
- **Education and Training**
- **Finance**
- **Health Science**
- **Hospitality and Tourism**
- **Information Technology**
- **Manufacturing**
- **Marketing**
- **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics**
- **Transportation, Distribution and Logistics**

Work to Date

Dual credit coursework is an evidence-based strategy with documented positive impacts on high school and college outcomes. Evidence shows dual credit programs have positive effects on students' college degree attainment, college access and enrollment, and college credit accumulation. Connecticut is investing \$3.8 million in 89 school districts across the state to help students receive college credits for courses they are taking in high school. Through these grants, districts are creating new partnerships with public and private institutions to offer innovative course offerings.

To encourage high-quality dual enrollment, the State Department of Education has engaged the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) to enable any district with a higher education institution the opportunity to achieve NACEP accreditation for dual enrollment. NACEP works to ensure that college courses offered by high school teachers are as rigorous as courses offered on the sponsoring college campus, helping these programs adhere to the highest standards so students experience a seamless transition to college and teachers benefit from meaningful, ongoing professional development.

Insert: Case study or example partnerships

Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative

Manufacturing companies in Connecticut have a large and growing demand for jobs, especially given that many workers in this field are reaching retirement age. To respond to this need, in 2018 the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB) created the Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (YMPI), which provides foundational manufacturing skills training for comprehensive high school students who are interested in careers in manufacturing upon graduation. The YMPI, based on the nationally recognized [Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative \(MPI\)](#) curriculum, is a collaboration between EWIB and the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance Regional Sector Partnership (EAMA RSP), CT State Community College (Three Rivers and Quinebaug Valley campuses), and the 12 participating high schools. The YMPI provides a high school 'on ramp' to further manufacturing training or education and employment and offers a career pathway for non-college bound students. Students receive a YMPI certificate, college credits, pre-apprenticeship hours, OSHA 10 certification, and job development and employment services. EWIB now contracts with ReadyCT to expand career readiness and work-based learning for YMPI students. The program has placed more than 100 students in jobs immediately after graduation.

Youth Health Care Pipeline Initiative

Building off the success of YMPI, EWIB is expanding its Youth Healthcare Pipeline Initiative (YHPI) and has partnered with regional high schools to offer healthcare trainings for high school seniors that lead to recognized credentials required for entry level healthcare careers such as CNA and EMT. YHPI training responds to significant employer demand for entry level healthcare positions by providing an opportunity for a high school graduate to gain immediate employment on a high demand healthcare career pathway. The YHPI program currently operates in six Eastern Connecticut comprehensive high schools.

Seamless Pathways to Higher Education: Connecticut Automatic Admissions Program and FAFSA

Many high school seniors may feel that college is financially out of reach. In the 2022-23 school year, the Connecticut Automatic Admissions Program (CAAP) was launched to eliminate barriers to higher

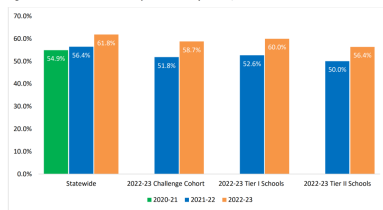
education and ease the pathway to college. Seniors ranked academically in the top 30% of their class, as identified by their individual high school counselors, were automatically admitted to the four state universities of the Connecticut State Colleges & Universities (CSCU), as well as Mitchell College, the University of Bridgeport, University of New Haven, University of St. Joseph, and Goodwin University. In the 2024 school year, CAAP was strengthened further through a partnership with Common App so that Connecticut students only need to fill out one application for the auto-admit program. Connecticut is the first state to enter into a state agreement with Common App, a non-profit membership organization that allows applicants to apply to multiple colleges and universities with one application, for auto admission, which provides a familiar platform for students to apply.

A key barrier to higher education is cost. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) can unlock tens of thousands of dollars in public and private sources of financial aid, paving the way for students who meet specific income requirements to attend school at a significantly reduced cost than otherwise possible. Because of its benefits, Connecticut made FAFSA completion a requirement for all students starting with the graduating class of 2024-25.

Insert: Stats As of January 2024, there were 4636 acceptances through CAAP, a 287% increase from the 2023-2024 school year. **FAFSA stats needed.**

[2022-23-FAFSA-Report.pdf \(ct.gov\)](#) Here's the essential chart on page 5 of the report. Our completion rate last year was 61.8%. Challenge schools are showing greater improvements than the state as a whole.

Figure 1: Connecticut FAFSA Completion Rate by Cohort, 2022-2023



CT Health Horizons: The state launched CT Health Horizons, with the goal of increasing the nursing and social work pipeline, with a focus on diversifying the workforce. Connecticut State Colleges & Universities (CSCU) is the fiscal sponsor and program manager, working with UConn and The Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC); OWS is providing strategic oversight and capacity support. Grants are under way:

- Tuition Support: to incentivize low-income and minority students to enter accelerated and cost-effective nursing and social work programs.
- Faculty Support: to expand seat capacity and train an influx of nursing and social work students.
- Innovative Programs: to promote employer-driven programs to support entrance into careers in nursing and social work

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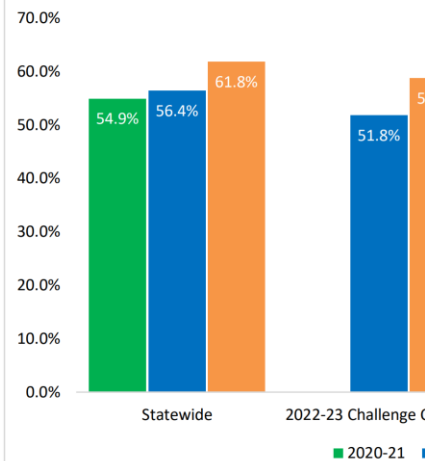
Status - Year 1 (launched September 2023)

- 591 scholarships (131% of goal), with 34% of scholarships issued to Pell eligible students
- Faculty expansion 38 (or 90% of goal)
- 8 innovative programs partnering higher education with business and industry, including Eastern Connecticut's State Universities Nursing program in partnership with Hartford Healthcare and expansion of master's level social work program into Eastern Connecticut

Commented [AG1]: [2022-23-FAFSA-Report.pdf \(ct.gov\)](#)

Here's the essential chart on page 5 of the report. Our completion rate last year was 61.8%. Challenge schools are showing greater improvements than the state as a whole.

Figure 1: Connecticut FAFSA Completion Rate



Moving Forward

By 2028

- 60% of 11th and 12th grade students will receive at least 3 dual credits, pass at least one AP or IB exam, or attain an industry recognized credential
- 70% of students from low-income families will enroll in postsecondary programs – including certificate, industry-recognized credential, associates, bachelors program – one year after high school graduation
- X% of students are college and/or career-ready as measured by XX; for Black students XX; students with disabilities 4-5% (EDSIGHT)
- X% districts will have workforce-aligned career pathways, through robust industry partnerships built through Connecticut’s Regional Sector Partnerships (See Business Leadership)
- The state will build a comprehensive repository of Industry Recognized Credentials linked to curriculum where possible for all schools

Insert graphic of a career pathway from K12 to postsecondary that includes the full range of opportunities and off-ramps: WBL (career awareness, mentoring, internships), skills mapping, pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, postsecondary, jobs

STRATEGIC PILLAR: SECTOR-BASED TRAINING

Context

According to the Lumina Foundation, non-degree credential-holders are more likely to be employed than are those who lack a credential. Across all data sets, earning a non-degree credential of any kind was associated with a 5%-to-15% increase in the likelihood of being employed.

Future State

- All individuals have access to stackable credential pathways in high-growth industries
- Sustainable training models across all high-growth industries

Work to Date

Career ConneCT

[Career ConneCT](#), a \$70M grant program funded through state ARPA dollars and focused on providing short-term, industry-aligned certificates to individuals who are unemployed or underemployed. Launched in late 2021, this program is training 6,000 individuals for quality jobs in growing industries, including healthcare, IT and advanced manufacturing. OWS awarded grants to Workforce Development Boards and community-based organizations responsible for providing individuals with the training and supports, such as transportation, housing, and childcare, needed to attain meaningful employment. As part of this effort, OWS has developed the [Career ConneCT portal](#) as a single entry point for broad recruitment, data collection, and reporting. The portal includes a "skills inventory" (assessment), a connection to a career coach, training opportunities, and jobs. To ensure we reach individuals in all areas of the state, we have implemented a YOU media

INSERT:

1. Career ConneCT statistics
2. YOU campaign example
3. Case Study

campaign in English and Spanish.

Sector-Based Training

Sector-based training is a short-term training model aligned to industry needs.

Individuals earn industry-recognized credentials that lead directly to jobs and are "stackable," meaning that credentials build upon one another, with the potential to lead to an associates or bachelors degree or more.

Especially for those individuals who do not have a college degree, this training is the entree into a family-sustaining career path.

The most effective sector-based training: (1) provides technical skills training and professional skills training (workplace etiquette, communication, teamwork, adaptability, etc.) and hands-on work experiences, such as internships and pre-apprenticeships. This comprehensive training prepares individuals for specific jobs and provides the evergreen skills that are needed in all jobs and industries, giving individuals a permanent foothold in the economy and (2) helps individuals overcome barriers to training by offering supports, which could include childcare, transportation, access to technology, or stipends. For example, an individual may be in a catch-22 between holding a low-wage job to support their family and participating in a training program that will lead to a good job; stipends or childcare assistance can offer the financial support that enables that individual to learn new skills that lead to a family-sustaining career.

Good Jobs Challenge

Through the federal [Economic Development Authority Good Jobs Challenge](#), Connecticut received a \$23.9 million grant – the largest award in the nation – to build collaborative skills training systems and programs, prioritizing efforts to reach historically underserved populations. Our project supports 10 Regional Sector Partnerships (RSPs). RSPs are coalitions of employers who define and champion a common agenda, including developing talent pipelines with support from a coordinated team of public partners in education, workforce development, and economic development to advance the industries' competitiveness collaboratively. Through the RSPs, we are training and placing over 2,000 people in quality, in-demand jobs in healthcare, manufacturing, and information technology.

INSERT:

1. Good Jobs Challenge statistics
2. Case study

Tech Talent Accelerator

Tech Talent Accelerator is a \$2 million investment of DECD state-bonded, Tech Talent Funds to help close the "skills gap" by expanding education for emerging and in-demand fields such as cybersecurity, virtual modeling, software development, and digital analytics. The Business Higher Education Forum (BHEF) and the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) are managing the initiative by aligning community college public, and private university coursework with the skills demands needed. The partnerships are:

- Developing and/or implementing short-term (6-12 week) postsecondary credential and certificate programs providing in-demand skills that are aligned with entry-level, technology-enabled jobs.
- Embedding high-demand Industry Recognized Credentials developed by global technology leaders (e.g., Google, Amazon) and industry-validated KSAs into existing postsecondary credential or degree programs to support graduates' work readiness.

Insert:

Status:

(7) Round-1 grants: University of Bridgeport, University of New Haven; University of St. Joseph; University of Hartford; Mitchell College; Quinnipiac University; Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU)

Results – Fall 2022-Spring 2023: 22 industry partners; 8 credential pathways developed; 38 learners; 22 industry recognized credentials completed; 5 internships/offers/promotion

(7) Round-2 grants: UConn-Stamford; Fairfield University; Connecticut College; Southern CT State University; Charter Oak State College; Albertus Magnus; *Booster Grants*: University of Bridgeport, University of New Haven, University of St. Joseph, University of Hartford, Mitchell College, Quinnipiac University

First quarter results (Fall 2023): 26 industry partners; 15 credential pathways under development; 79 learner; 16 industry recognized credential completed; 8 internships/offers/promotion

Registered Apprenticeships

Connecticut's Registered Apprenticeship programs enable thousands of individuals to “earn while they learn” mastering a trade through a combination of on-the-job training and classroom instruction. Thousands of companies across Connecticut have benefited from a customized Registered Apprenticeship training program. These programs increase workforce recruitment and proficiency, help employers transfer occupational skills to a new generation of workers, and ensure succession planning.

INSERT:

3. Registered Apprenticeship statistics
4. Case study

Moving Forward

By 2028

- Train and place 6,000 individuals through Career ConneCT (end of 2026)
- Train and place 2,000 individuals through Good Jobs Challenge (end of 2027)
- Build X documented credential pathways in key in-demand industries, including healthcare, IT, advanced manufacturing
- Develop a plan for sustainable funding models like Pay-It-Forward, a revolving loan fund, in which individuals receive free training and supports, and upon earning a job, pay back the cost of their training at zero-interest and on a set schedule aligned to their salary. Repayments are re-invested into the loan, creating a self-sustaining training system.
- Expand registered apprenticeships to state agencies to promote learn and work models for both new and incumbent workers.

STRATEGIC PILLAR: INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP

Context

The [2023 Survey of Connecticut Businesses](#), produced by CBIA and the accounting and business advisory firm Marcum LLP, found that 81% of employers experienced difficulty finding and retaining workers—essentially unchanged from last year.

Future State

- Every job is a good job
- All companies hire for skills, not just degrees
- K-12, higher education, and employers are working in lock-step to prepare future talent

Our Work to Date

Over the last two years, we have built 14 RSPs, which include 300+ employers, in healthcare, IT, bioscience, and manufacturing that are collaboratively addressing local employers' and job seekers' needs. Two more will soon launch, including one in Infrastructure/Clean Energy and one in Transportation Distribution Logistics.

- Regional Sector Partnerships are coalitions of employers that define and champion a common agenda to collaboratively advance an industries' competitiveness, with support from a coordinated team of partners in education, workforce development, and economic development. A primary focus of each RSP is workforce.
- Activities include working with K12, higher education and training providers to: define workforce skill needs and develop regional programming to meet those needs, including internships and registered apprenticeships and other models of work-based learning, as well as social needs like transportation, childcare and healthcare.

INSERT:

- Map
- Case Study

What Is a Good Job?

Not every job is a high-quality job. We are focused on putting all people on pathways to good jobs that share a set of characteristics. According to Jobs for the Future, these include:

Compensation: the financial rewards people receive for the jobs they perform, including a living wage, access to quality health insurance, retirement benefits, and paid leave that includes sick leave and family leave.

Agency and culture: the extent to which people are able to exercise choice in their individual work, have a voice in organizational decision-making, and feel they belong to a workplace that fosters diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Structure: the ways a job is arranged to ensure stability, safety, and predictability, including fair, consistent, and transparent scheduling—this includes following all laws regarding workplace health, safety, discrimination, and harassment.

Advancement: the mechanisms by which people advance to jobs with greater compensation, autonomy, and authority, including defined career ladders for all roles and access to professional development with labor market value.

Moving Forward

By 2028

1. Increase by 25% the number of companies participating in Regional Sector Partnerships
2. 100% of employers participating in Regional Sector Partnerships report that they have overhauled their hiring practices to focus on skills, not just degrees
3. 100% of employers report that at least 80% of their jobs meet the definition of “good jobs”
4. 100% of employers participating in Regional Sector Partnerships:
 - Have articulated their current and future academic, technical, and professional skills needs;
 - Reviewed postsecondary curricula with at least two higher education institutions to ensure that it is addressing skill needs;
 - Are providing work-based learning experiences to help develop in-demand skills in future workforce through participating in career awareness days in early grades to build interest; providing career mentors to students in middle and high school; offering hands-on work experiences, including paid internships and pre-apprenticeships to high school and college students and individuals in training programs.
5. 100% of employers participating in Regional Sector Partnership report that their employees have access to incumbent worker training
6. Increase by X% the number of Registered Apprenticeships

Skills-Based Hiring

Inclusion is not just a byproduct of growth. In today's economy, inclusion helps drive growth.

Companies must work with intention to expand their hiring pools by embracing skills-first hiring practices that eliminate degree requirements that are unnecessary for a significant number of jobs. By focusing on skills, more individuals from diverse backgrounds are given the opportunity to compete for jobs by showcasing skills that they have learned through training programs, related work experiences and life.

Companies need to review their open jobs now and into the future, understanding the skills required to be successful and then hiring based upon those skill requirements. This enables companies to more effectively hire individuals who are right for the job, while building a work culture that values inclusion, not assimilation.

Skills-based hiring begins with changing job descriptions, but also includes revamping the full human resources experience, including how resumes are screened, the job interview process, and onboarding.