



CONNECTICUT SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL

The 2025 Council Market Outlook Working Group

Marketplace Non-Cannabis Subcommittee Phase 2- First Working Session

Thursday, March 5, 2026, at 10:00 am via Zoom

Marketplace Non-Cannabis Chair:

Chris DiPentima **Connecticut Business & Industry Association**

NOTES:

The meeting focused on aligning a statewide reinvestment strategy with emerging micro-grant and community-based workforce initiatives, particularly those serving reentry populations. Leadership emphasized the need for a clear roadmap, defined goals, and measurable outcomes to guide investment decisions. As one participant noted, “what are our goals, how do we measure success”, underscoring the current ambiguity around impact metrics.

Organizations working directly with reentry populations highlighted that trust, consistency, and trauma-responsive support are foundational to successful engagement. Long-term relationships, credible messengers, and follow-through were repeatedly cited as essential. Wraparound supports—housing, transportation, mental health care, and employer coaching—were identified as critical but chronically underfunded components of workforce success.

Employer engagement strategies center on providing vetted candidates with strong soft skills and ongoing support, reducing hiring risk and building durable partnerships. Both small and large organizations expressed challenges around data capacity, marketing, and internal infrastructure, which limit their ability to scale or demonstrate impact.

When asked to envision an ideal statewide micro-grant program, participants emphasized funding for:

- Wraparound services that remove barriers to employment
- Innovation and beta-testing of new approaches
- Capacity building (data systems, communications, staff development)
- Extended paid internships/externships, which significantly improve outcomes

Participants agreed that micro-grants could fill a critical gap by supporting the “unfunded essentials” that drive long-term success but rarely attract traditional funding.

The session concluded with commitments to refine internal strategy, explore data partnerships, and continue cross-organizational collaboration to strengthen statewide reentry and workforce pathways.

