

Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD)

Alexandra Daum, Commissioner

Paul Robertson, Deputy Commissioner

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Established - 1995

Statutory Authority - Conn. Gen. Statutes Chapters 127b and 184b, Public Act 22-1

Central Office- 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 5

Hartford, CT 06103

Number of Employees - 119

Recurring Operating Expenses - \$29,771,987

Organizational Structure - Office of the Commissioner, Office of Business Development, Office of Financial Review & Compliance, Office of Finance and Administration, Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development, Office of Capital Projects, Community Investment Fund 2030, Office of the Arts, State Historic Preservation Office, Office of Tourism, Social Equity Council (for administrative purposes only)

Mission

DECD develops and implements strategies to increase the state's economic competitiveness.

Statutory Responsibility

Under the provisions of Conn. Gen. Statutes Chapters 127b and 184b DECD administers programs and policies to promote business, community development, brownfield redevelopment, arts, culture and tourism and is the state agency responsible for promoting economic growth.

On June 22, 2021, Governor Ned Lamont signed legislation that legalizes and regulates the adult-use of cannabis in Connecticut. The legislation made comprehensive changes to create a novel and substantial regulatory and economic development apparatus within government to operationalize the equitable and responsible legalization of adult-use cannabis. The law specifies numerous equity programs that are overseen by the Social Equity Council (SEC).

Public Service

DECD is dedicated to fostering economic growth within the state and offers a variety of services and initiatives to support businesses, nonprofits and communities. The Office of Business Development staff provide both technical and financial assistance to Connecticut companies looking to expand into global markets and work in collaboration with AdvanceCT to attract foreign direct investment to the state. DECD's Office of Film, Television, and Digital Media serves as a one-stop-shop for these industries, offering services such as location scouting, permit acquisition, workforce development programs, tax incentives, and more.

DECD also provides planning, engineering, architectural and construction management services to oversee state-sponsored real estate development, including urban and downtown revitalization, industrial site development and brownfield redevelopment. DECD provides municipalities and nonprofits with financial and technical assistance for community development activities. In addition,

DECD assists customers with permitting and regulatory compliance with state or federal programs to allow for an expedited development process and manages the state Dry Cleaning Remediation Fund.

The mission of SEC is to promote and encourage full participation in the cannabis industry by people disproportionately harmed by cannabis prohibition and enforcement, and to support broad-based economic development in those communities.

DECD works to position the state as a prime location to live, work, and play. The department's marketing efforts, which target both in-state and out-of-state audiences, are focused on increasing the number of state residents, increasing the number of high propensity businesses and changing perceptions about Connecticut in order to grow Connecticut's economy. The department is currently in the process of a state rebranding initiative including a new Connecticut state logo and State brand identity campaign in alignment to achieve these goals. In addition, the department is actively working on attracting and retaining young talent, entrepreneurs and professionals by promoting the opportunities to live, work and play in Connecticut. DECD showcases these efforts on www.CTforMe.com and accompanying social media channels.

DECD works to make tourism a leading economic contributor and to position the state as a prime destination for leisure and business travelers. DECD collaborates with the Connecticut business community and tourism business across the state to present a unified positive image of the state and inspire greater visitation to every corner. Through its Office of Tourism (COT), DECD offers a broad range of services, including marketing, research, hospitality services, direct sales, industry education and business marketing assistance. COT operates the state's official tourism website www.CTvisit.com and popular social media channels.

Through the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), DECD administers a broad range of federal and state programs that identify, register, and protect the buildings, sites, structures, districts, and objects that comprise Connecticut's cultural heritage. SHPO is the regulatory authority for the review of both federally and state funded projects to assist agencies with avoiding or minimizing the effects of their actions on historic resources. DECD currently administers six grant programs for historic preservation, two state tax credit programs for the rehabilitation of historic structures, the federal historic rehabilitation tax credit program, and manages the Connecticut Freedom Trail and Washington-Rochambeau Trail programs. In addition, DECD owns and operates four state-owned museums: Henry Whitfield State Museum, Old New-Gate Prison and Copper Mine, Prudence Crandall Museum and the Eric Sloane Museum.

Economic and community vitality is a cornerstone of DECD's work and is evident throughout the grant programs and services administered by DECD's Office of the Arts (COA). DECD values the arts as a core asset of vibrant communities and views the arts as essential in attracting and retaining talent by offering a diverse palette of quality-of-life experiences. Connecticut communities are stronger and more resilient when artists and creative thinkers help to envision solutions to the types of challenges that face our state right now. To accomplish these goals, DECD invests in Connecticut artists, arts organizations and municipalities through the work of the Office of the Arts and encourages public participation in the arts and in creative endeavors.

Improvements / Achievements for Fiscal Year 2022-2023

DECD's investments, programs and services, and policy initiatives have made a significant impact on the economy of Connecticut and the quality of life of its citizens. What follows are some highlights from **FY 2022-2023**.

- The Connecticut Small Business Boost Fund launched in FY 2023. Boost gives small business owners access to flexible funding for capital expenditures and working capital and connects them with support services. It's a personal, equitable approach to lending, because business owners are more than just numbers on a spreadsheet. As of June 30, 2023 Boost assisted approximately 300 businesses with over \$37,500,000.
- Eleven companies signed Letters of Intent committing to create full-time jobs. Seven of these companies will earn a grant-in-arrears and four of these companies will earn JobsCT tax rebates. The JobsCT tax rebate program became effective July 1, 2022.
- The Connecticut Office of Film, Television & Digital Media (OFTDM) focuses on digital media sector growth and production in Connecticut and capitalizes on the state's strength as a major media center for television, animation, digital content and sports-related programming. The OFTDM is a full-service office which serves as liaison between production companies, state agencies, municipalities, production facilities, local crew and vendors.
 - The Office assisted 130 production companies producing various content on stages and locations across the state.
 - \$112.5 million in Digital Media & Film Production tax credits were issued to 33 production company applicants with cumulative qualified Connecticut expenditures of \$378.5 million.
- DECD's Strategic Development Programs unit supports the department's strategic initiatives, partnerships and federal grants. It supports job creation by funding innovation, technical assistance/training, regional partnerships and new technological developments.
 - The Manufacturing Innovation Fund was created to support the growth, innovation, and progress of Connecticut's advanced manufacturing sector. The MIF is capitalized with \$95 million in funding offering manufacturing focused programs and initiatives in the areas of workforce and training; innovation; operational improvements; and capital access. Grants for machinery, building upgrades and cost-saving energy-efficiency improvements have been provided to numerous companies. MIF programs have also helped train and update the skills of workers and launch careers of apprentices and pre-apprentices.
- The CT Communities Challenge Program is a competitive grant application process to fund projects that improve livability, vibrancy, convenience and equity of communities throughout the state. It is DECD's goal to allocate up to 50% of the funds to eligible and competitive projects in distressed municipalities.
 - To date, 27 projects have been awarded a total of \$99,997,167 in state funding – over 63% of which has been granted to distressed communities. Every dollar invested in the CT Communities Challenge has leveraged \$3.15 of non-DECD funds. Twelve Transit-Oriented Development, 17 Mixed-Use Development, and 13 Public Space Improvement projects have been funded. Over 2,300 residential units will be constructed (at least 20% of which will be deeded affordable for 30 years), and 1,886 jobs are expected to be created.
- The Community Investment Fund 2030 (CIF) will foster economic development in historically underserved communities across the state. CIF will provide a total of up to \$875 million over five years to eligible municipalities as well as not-for-profit organizations and community development corporations that operate within them. Grants are available for:
 - Capital improvement programs, such as brownfield remediation, affordable housing, infrastructure, clean energy development, and home or public facility rehabilitation

- Small business capital programs, including revolving or micro loan programs, gap financing, and start-up funds to establish small businesses

The CIF Board of Directors, comprised of members of the executive and legislative branches, will review applications and make recommendations to the Governor and State Bond Commission. CIF will award up to \$175 million each fiscal year across two or more application periods per year. CIF launched its first application round in FY 2021-22. CIF awarded grants for Round 1 and Round 2 during 2022-23 totaling \$175 million.

- From FY 2014-2023, the Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development (OBRD) has invested over \$250 million in approximately 270 brownfield development projects in cities and towns across the state. This investment has impacted approximately 3,500 acres of brownfield properties in the state. Also, every dollar invested in this ten-year period has been able to leverage approximately \$12.6 of non-DECD funds. The OBRD continues to be a dedicated single point of contact for brownfield remediation and development in the state, collaborating effectively with other state agencies, especially the CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection.
- In this past fiscal year, OBRD conducted two competitive funding rounds under the Brownfield Municipal Grant Program (C.G.S. Sec. 32-763) and the Targeted Brownfield Loan Program (C.G.S. Sec. 32-765). OBRD announced approximately \$24.6 million and \$23.8 million on December 12, 2022 (Round 16) and June 22, 2023 (Round 17), respectively, for grant and loan funding to a total of 41 projects across several municipalities in the state. This assessment and cleanup funding will help remediate and redevelop brownfield sites so that they can be put back to productive use. Many of the remediation grant awards are for public-private partnerships that are also leveraging significant private investment in the state.
- The Small Business and Community Development Unit (Office of Capital Projects and Small Business/Community Development Office) manages large capital, infrastructure as well as smaller community development projects funded under the Urban Act (UA) Grant Program, Small-Town Economic Assistance (STEAP) Program, and Special Acts. Forty-six projects totaling approximately \$72.8M were approved in FY 2023 and added to the active project portfolio. A variety of projects are funded under these grant programs including, but not limited to, manufacturing facilities, educational facilities, health facilities, roads, sidewalks, utility, theaters, and museums that further promote Connecticut's economy and enhance citizens' quality of life.
- The SEC was created in 2021, by PA 21-1. SEC is responsible for overseeing the verification of social equity applicants, as defined in law, creating new programs to support both cannabis businesses and businesses in other industries, and managing the more general community investments derived from cannabis tax revenue. SEC works closely with multiple state agencies, including DECD and DCP, to carry out its duties.
- During fiscal year 2022-2023, the SEC focused on standing up the adult-use cannabis industry in Connecticut. During fiscal years 2023-2024, the SEC will focus on investing in communities hardest hit by the war on drugs. As part of a pilot reinvestment program the SEC received proposals from 3rd party grant managers to administer reinvestment funds derived from Connecticut's adult-use cannabis industry. The purpose of the grants is to: provide immediate financial assistance to create and enhance programs and services for communities disproportionately harmed by cannabis prohibition and enforcement; support broad-based economic development in DIA communities; and increase the quality of life, vibrancy, accessibility, and equity in communities disproportionately harmed by cannabis prohibition and enforcement. In addition, the SEC will be hosting "community conversations" that will lead to

the collection of data and information that will be used to create a comprehensive strategic reinvestment plan for how the council will fulfill its legislative requirements to reinvest in and support broad-based economic development in communities hardest hit by the war on drugs.

- The Connecticut Tourism Office housed under DECD works to position the state as a world class, vibrant, diverse, and inclusive tourism destination, inviting visitors and our local communities to explore everything we have to offer. The primary function of Tourism Office is to drive awareness and visitation to tourist assets and experiences and drive economic growth for all relevant industry sectors. The tourism office leverages participation in key travel industry shows, conducts sales missions in drive markets, national, international territories and encourages staycations. It focuses on key disciplines including global travel, drive market, groups/meetings, sports, cultural tourism, multicultural tourism, heritage tourism, and LGBTQ+ tourism. In addition, the Tourism office uses PR, media & social media to drive awareness with as much reach as possible. The Tourism Office manages CTVisit.com, oversees and the state welcome centers, and continues to collaborate with the business community, builds partnerships, and works closely with regional districts.

In FY 2023 DECD’s Marketing and Branding efforts included the following:

CT Summer at the Museum – Arts/Tourism & Branding July-Sept 2023

- To support the Office of the Arts, CT Summer at the Museum program, which provides Connecticut children free admission at more than 130 museums across Connecticut.
- Results generated: CT visit traffic: 366,312 views: 86,290 referring clicks to museums sites: Average time on site 1:35 minutes.

“Find Your Vibe” – In FY23, the successful Find Your Vibe campaign ran continuously from July 1, 2022- February 28, 2023, and then resumed in April through the end of the fiscal year.

- Find Your Vibe aimed to create a more current, dynamic perception of Connecticut — one that is vibrant, diverse, youthful, and full of surprising experiences. The campaign included is dominated by TV/Video placements that allow the more exciting energy of the campaign to break through, with quick cuts of a wide variety of surprising things to do in the state. Placements included huge out of home video takeover placements in Penn Station’s Moynihan Hall, videos on Metro North, JetBlue and Uber/Lyft seatbacks, linear and OTT TV, digital video, and content marketing via search, social media and native content platforms.
- The FY 23 \$5.5 million in media investments unlocked a delivery of new markets and audiences, and delivered a 31% increase in impressions over the prior year. It also helped CTvisit.com earn 7.1 million visits in one year, which places Connecticut in the top 5 most visited state websites in the nation, sharing the top tier with Florida and Hawaii. The site also drove 3.6 million referrals to tourism businesses in 2022. Arrivalist, and organization that uses GPS technology to track actual visitors to all states, reported that in 2022 Connecticut saw the highest rate of growth since the pandemic of any state in the nation.

Support for the Aer Lingus flight between Hartford and Dublin, including:

- A launch event in Dublin at the end of March celebrating the new route and bringing Connecticut to the media and trade via an immersive experience that surrounded the audience with vibrant, video imagery of a huge range of things to do in Connecticut.
- A \$300,000 media campaign in Dublin and connecting European cities including digital video and video out of home displays.

- The efforts resulted in a 1300% increase in site traffic on CTvisit.com from Ireland.

A campaign to help attract corporate meetings and events:

- This \$200,000 campaign featured print, digital and advertorial placement for messaging promoting Connecticut as a great place to host meetings and events.
- Lead volume for CTmeetings greatly increased.

Increased emphasis on measurement, including the following studies:

- Ongoing data from STR, showing that in 2022, occupancy was up to a very near the pre-pandemic high water mark and lodging revenues exceeded all prior years.
- New data from AllTheRooms, providing data on short term rentals including occupancy, room nights, and over \$100 Million in revenues.
- A new study from Tourism Economics that showed Connecticut welcomed 66.6 million visitors in 2022, more than any prior year, and that the tourism industry in our state now exceeds \$17Billion in economic impact from that visitation.
- The Annual Brand Attributes and Awareness Study for 2022 showed the marketing efforts and the Find Your Vibe campaign created a tremendous impact on attitudes and behaviors. Comparing those who saw the campaign vs. a control sample that did not, the campaign created:
 - 100% lift in interest in visiting Connecticut in the next 2 years
 - 94% lift in intent to visit Connecticut in the next 12 months
 - 149% lift in finding Connecticut “Vibrant and Exciting”
 - 90% lift in believing Connecticut “has lots to do”
 - 120% lift in believing Connecticut is “dynamic and innovative”

CTforMe - (www.CTForMe.com) and Instagram account (@CTForMe)

CTforMe is Connecticut’s content hub for all things live, work, and play, CTforMe.com features Connecticut businesses and organizations representing in-demand industries, top employers, entrepreneurs, young talent groups, and local favorites. It also contains short interviews, engaging stories, and authentic resident experiences about choosing Connecticut. It’s where young professionals learn about the state — and why they should launch a career here.

- *CTforMe* features over 320 Connecticut businesses and organizations through engaging content including first-hand accounts and recommendations, resident/business owner stories, and resource content.
 - In FY23, marketing efforts included search, native, and social marketing. The strategy prioritized driving awareness & engagement with CTforMe.com among key influencer categories – HR and Real Estate Professionals, Associations, etc. Facebook and Instagram strategies were employed to drive engagement with *CTforMe* social content among In-State and regional Young Talent.
 - The marketing efforts delivered an estimated 6,185,761 impressions and 28,160 social engagements boosting brand awareness and recognition. Additionally, the media campaign drove an estimated 75,108 clicks to the website for consumers to dive deeper into the motivations behind living and working in Connecticut.
- SHPO reviewed or provided guidance on nearly 3,000 projects throughout the state to avoid or reduce development impacts on our state’s most important historic resources.

- Thirty-four new projects were accepted into the State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program and \$31,700,000 in tax credits were reserved for 14 projects. The estimated total project costs for the 14 projects is over \$142,300,000, which leverages the state's investment by an over 4:1 ratio.
- 142 Historic Homes Rehabilitation Tax Credit program vouchers were sold to Eversource for \$4,316,042.92, leveraging a \$14,386,809.70 investment in the state through local trades, materials, housing stock, and quality of life. This direct assistance enhances stewardship of historic properties and pride in home ownership.
- As a testament to SHPO's strong belief in partnerships, last year SHPO awarded \$274,000 in Partners in Preservation grants.
- Historic Preservation is important to Connecticut's communities. In support of local initiatives, SHPO awarded \$640,500 to 29 communities for survey and planning projects, \$148,000 to municipalities in the Certified Local Government program, and \$2,543,706.78 for 23 specific restoration, rehabilitation, and stabilization projects. The Stewardship Relief Grant program, which offered grants of \$1,000 each to assist non-profits facing economic difficulties as a result of the Corona Virus pandemic, came to an end in SFY 2022. During SFY 2023, SHPO instituted a new survey program for the purpose of using remote sensing techniques to identify unmarked or unidentified burials that are more than 100 years old. 3 grants of \$5,000 each totaling \$15,000 were awarded in SFY 2023.
- To recognize the important places in our state's history, SHPO assisted with the listing of 5 new resources to the State Register of Historic Places, including one new historic district. One site was also designated as the newest State Archaeological Preserve. There were 7 new resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places in FY2023. This included one individual property and six new historic districts. SHPO, in partnership with Preservation Connecticut, also surveyed 139 historic landscapes through the Olmsted in Connecticut Landscape Documentation Project.
- SHPO launched the state's first geospatial system for cultural resources, which involved scanning 70 years of paper records and creating nearly 97,000 data points, linked to associated PDF files.
- SHPO added ten new sites to the Connecticut Freedom Trail, including sites in Hartford, Waterbury, New Haven, New London, Avon, and East Granby. The Connecticut Freedom Trail documents and designates sites that embody the struggle for freedom and human dignity, and celebrates African American communities.
- CT Office of the Arts and the State Historic Preservation Office, in conjunction with Connecticut Humanities awarded Good to Great grants to 34 cultural organizations across the state totaling over \$7 million to enhance audience experiences. Sixteen awards were made to cultural nonprofits located in Distressed Municipalities for a total expenditure of 3,333,144.61. Eighteen additional awards were made totaling \$3,732,788.32.
- Through a combination of federal funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and state funding, COA provides various grant programs and partnerships to support the arts sector across the state. COA supports a range of institutions, artists, and activities using the lenses of Relevance, Equity, Access, Diversity, and Inclusion (READI) to guide programmatic and investment decisions.

- In FY23, COA awarded 853 grants totaling \$64,762,138. These funds represent funds awarded to the Connecticut Arts Commission (COA), funds received from the National Endowment for the Arts, funds received from the state legislature through Direct Line funding, from both regular budget and special Carry Forward awards, and funding through the American Rescue Plan to both arts and non-arts organizations.
- COA partnered with Connecticut Humanities to award \$10,000,000 in state funds to support Connecticut's cultural infrastructure through the Cultural Fund Operating Support grants and partnerships.
- COA recognized 69 artists for their creative excellence by investing \$209,000 in artist support and an additional \$9,100 to four Mahaffey Fellows to support professional development for mid-career arts administrators.
- To support arts in education, COA awarded grants totaling \$117,000 to support teaching and learning for K-12 students and educators in, about, and through the arts with a focus on social-emotional learning, developing culturally responsive curriculum and practices, and closing the opportunity gap for Connecticut students. Planning was done for the launch of a FY 24 grant to underwrite the cost of field trips to arts experiences.
- COA planned and administered the National Poetry Out Loud / Poetry Ourselves program as a partner with the National Endowment for the Arts with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.
- COA released a new Strategic Vision and Plan, 2022-2027 with a mission to embrace an accessible and inclusive view of art and the artistic process that amplifies authentic artistic voice, vision, and proficiency from a multitude of perspectives. The plan centers people at the heart of the arts, supports equity in action, nurtures creative communities, shares our stories and builds wrap-around services for artists and arts organizations to support a solid cultural infrastructure.
- Weekly spotlights through CT Creative futures, a partnership with FOX61 CT, the CT Department of Education, and the Governor's Prevention Partnership, highlight career pathways in the creative industry and provide engagement opportunities for parents and students. This year's partnership included the support of FOX61 Student News. Metrics are collected to measure the impact of this program on communities.