

Connecticut Department of Labor

At a Glance

DANTÉ BARTOLOMEO, Commissioner

Daryle Dudzinski, Deputy Commissioner

Mark Polzella, Deputy Commissioner

Established - 1873

Statutory Authority - C.G.S. Sec. 31-1 to 31-403 (excluding chapter 568)

Central Office - 200 Folly Brook Blvd., Wethersfield, CT 06109-1114

Average number of full-time employees – 520 Permanent FTEs

Recurring operating expenses SFY 23: Federal - \$106,158,023; State - \$89,098,913

Capital Outlay: Federal - \$8,004; State \$8,177,425; CEPF - \$386,495; P&I - \$10,417

Website: www.ct.gov/dol

Mission Statement

The mission of the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) is to protect Connecticut's workers from labor law violations and promote global economic competitiveness through strengthening the state's workforce. CTDOL collaborates with business and industry leaders on Registered Apprenticeship programs and other workforce pipeline initiatives, and conducts U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics research including collecting, analyzing, and disseminating workforce data.

Mission

The mission of the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) is to protect and promote the interests of Connecticut's workers and assist workers and employers to be competitive in the global economy. The Department accomplishes its mission by providing a variety of services that benefit the workplace. Informational and enforcement responsibilities that serve both workers and employers are assigned to the Department by statute. Services include, but are not limited to: income support that assists workers between jobs and stimulates the local economy (Unemployment Insurance); protection on the job for employees (through education and enforcement of statutes addressing wages, working conditions, and on-site health and safety consultations); work-related training programs; Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAP) and other workforce pipeline initiatives; job search and recruitment; tax credit incentives; protection of youth employment standards; and maintenance of the collective bargaining relationship. Also, as the Connecticut arm of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Department collects, analyzes,

and disseminates workforce data to inform businesses, the general public, educational institutions, and government planners and policymakers about employment issues and trends.

Statutory Responsibility

The Connecticut Department of Labor administers: the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program which provides income support for workers who are between jobs; the federal Wagner-Peyser Labor Exchange (WP) program which provides employment search assistance and job training; the federal Workplace Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program which helps adult, dislocated, and youth job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services; ensures wage and workplace standards protections and fair treatment while on the job for adults and regulates the employment of minors; trains the next generation workforce through our Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP); in collaboration with the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics collects, analyzes, and disseminates data on the economy, wages, and the workplace; provides guidance, consultations and enforcement of public employers' and employees' occupational safety and health practices through the State's Occupational Safety and Health Act program (CONN-OSHA); and administers the CT Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) which provides eligible employees with job-protected leave. CTDOL also houses two quasi-judicial boards: the State Board of Labor Relations (SBLR) which helps resolve differences and craft agreements, safeguards employees' rights to organize, and compels employers to abide by collective bargaining agreements and the State Board of Mediation and Arbitration (SBMA) which provides mediation services to resolve disputes involving collective bargaining agreements, as well as administering grievance and binding interest arbitrations.

Departments and Units

The Office of Apprenticeship Training (OAT)

The Office of Apprenticeship Training administers Connecticut's Registered Apprenticeship system, which is supported by the state's general fund, federal funding, and industry registration fees. Registered apprenticeship is a proven solution for training and retaining talent, and offers individuals the opportunity to earn while they learn valuable skills.

OAT provides registration, monitoring, technical assistance, and consulting services for the administration of apprenticeship agreements. Registered apprenticeship provides a structured learning strategy that combines on-the-job training with related classroom instruction. The office also qualifies employers for tax credits; works in collaboration with the Department of Education, Department of Consumer Protection, and other state agencies; and performs outreach to veterans, employer groups, unions, schools, and community-based organizations to promote Registered Apprenticeship and Registered Pre-Apprenticeship programs. There are approximately 6400 apprentices registered with approximately 1700 employers on average at any given time throughout Connecticut.

Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative (ACI): In July of 2018, Connecticut Public Act No. 18-178 was signed into law, pursuant to Conn. Gen. Statute Sec. 31-11r authorizing up to \$50 million dollars in the establishment of the Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative (ACI) to develop workforce pipeline programs to train qualified entry-level workers for job placement with manufacturers and employers in other industry sectors in the state experiencing sustained workforce shortages. To date, \$15 million dollars have been allocated by the Bond Commission to CTDOL for this effort. With the support of the General Assembly and the Bond Commission, five regional partnerships have implemented training programs administered by CTDOL under the ACI.

Program proposals from the state's five Workforce Development Board Regional Partnerships were submitted to and accepted by CTDOL as follows:

- The Capital Workforce Partnership - Manufacturing, Healthcare, Construction & Transportation
- Eastern Workforce Investment Board Partnership - Healthcare & Manufacturing
- Workplace Inc. Partnership - Healthcare & Manufacturing
- Northwest WIB Partnership - Manufacturing focused on plastics manufacturers
- Workforce Alliance Partnership – Hospitality

Certified pre-apprenticeship training programs were developed in consultation with employers or modeled after the Eastern CT Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative in consultation with industry partners.

State Apprenticeship Expansion, Equity, and Innovation (SAEEI): The U.S. Department of Labor awarded a 4-year, \$10 million *State Apprenticeship Expansion, Equity, and Innovation (SAEEI)* grant to the Connecticut Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship Training. The SAEEI Grant is effective from July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2025. The purpose of the grant funding is: 1) support the development of new, innovative apprenticeship program(s) in industries severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and 2) provide career opportunities to individuals who were impacted by the pandemic with a particular focus on unemployed, under-served, and under-represented populations.

Yale New Haven Health System (YNHHS) was selected by CTDOL as its partner for this grant to fund a new Patient Care Associate/Patient Care Technician (PCA/PCT) Registered Apprenticeship Program. This program is providing classroom learning and on-the-job training to a minimum of 1,250 individuals over the 4-year life of the grant. These individuals will receive full-time pay and benefits as well as earn a nationally recognized certificate of completion. The program will produce highly skilled PCAs/PCTs which will reduce employee turnover rates. YNHHS Connecticut-based hospitals hire approximately 400 PCAs/PCTs annually. YNHHS and CTDOL partnered with the CT NAACP to encourage members to participate in these programs. Many candidates are also from the communities surrounding the hospitals. Currently, there are 506 Apprentices in the program.

Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA)

In SFY 23, CTDOL received **\$34,312,089** in federal WIOA formula funding, with which the agency provided workforce services and helped state workforce partners increase the availability of employment and training assistance. CTDOL and the Workforce Development Boards created new employment and training initiatives to promote employment opportunities that show the best potential for job growth and funded projects that strengthen Connecticut's businesses and workforce.

Rapid Response (RR) and National Emergency Grants Program: The state Rapid Response (RR) Unit, in conjunction with local Workforce Development Boards and other One-Stop partners, is responsible under WIOA Title I (20 CFR, Part 682, Subpart C) for carrying out rapid response activities statewide. Headed by the Connecticut Department of Labor, the RR Unit reaches out to employers contemplating or experiencing layoffs and plant closings. Employers, affected workers, and their unions are provided information on layoff aversion, mass layoff/plant closing, unemployment insurance, WIOA, One-Stop employment services, and various labor laws. The RR Unit also makes referrals to, and coordinates services with, CTDOL units, other agencies, and programs for special intervention or supportive services applicable to dislocated workers and struggling businesses.

During the period of July 2022 to June 2023, the RR Unit made 159 initial outreach calls regarding potential layoffs and responded to 16 WARN (Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification) notices, affecting 2,106 workers. Additionally, RR staff made 62 presentations to 1,355 impacted workers. The presentations included seven WIOA information workshops and 24 webinars for workers from companies that did not avail themselves of Rapid Response services prior to executing layoffs.

Additionally, 350 webinar invitations were sent to workers whose employers either declined pre-layoff presentations or who were identified by the Connecticut Department of Labor after layoff as being part of a mass reduction in force. RR Unit staff also resolved 1,022 unemployment-related issues that were holding up dislocated workers' initial payments.

RR Unit staff continued its outreach initiative to target unemployed workers who were not part of a mass layoff but met the definition of a dislocated worker, that is, have been laid off or terminated; determined eligible for unemployment benefits; and unsuccessful in seeking employment for a minimum of four weeks. A total of 1,525 WIOA outreach letters were sent to workers who met that definition. Forty-three workers who were sent the WIOA outreach letter attended a WIOA information webinar and 26 of those attendees were referred to WIOA program operators for enrollment.

The Trade Act Programs & Services Coordinator, in concert with Rapid Response, submitted seven TAA (Trade Adjustment Assistance) petitions on behalf of workers whose jobs were believed to be affected by increased imports, foreign competition, or a shift in production to a foreign country. All submitted petitions are in pending status

since the termination provision under Section 285(a) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended, took effect July 1, 2022.

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program: The Trade Act of 1974 established Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) to provide assistance to workers whose employers are hurt by foreign trade. The TAA program offers a variety of benefits and services to eligible workers including job training, income support, job search and relocation allowances, in addition to a wage supplement to certain reemployed trade-affected workers 50 years of age and older. These benefits are provided at no expense to employers.

On July 1, 2022, the Trade program expired and is currently awaiting reauthorization from Congress. Although petitions were accepted by the U.S. Department of Labor since the expiration, no new certification can be made until reauthorized. In SFY 23, Connecticut filed 10 petitions on behalf of workers whose separations were potentially impacted by foreign competition. Eleven individual applications were filed with all 11 becoming enrolled. There were 157 active participants with 83 exited cases and \$416,763 in training payments made.

Income support payments made in the form Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA):

- \$744,028 in total was provided for 1,368 weekly TRA claims including 562 weeks of basic TRA;
- 751 weeks of additional TRA; and 55 weeks of completion TRA.
- Workers who satisfy applicable program requirements may receive one or more types of TRA income support: up to 26 weeks of basic TRA; up to 65 weeks of additional TRA; and up to 13 weeks of completion TRA.

Job Corps Vocational Training: Administered by the US Department of Labor, this program served approximately 300 students at the Hartford and New Haven locations. Low-income youths ages 16 to 24 receive intensive wraparound services including life and social skills training; career and mental health counseling; basic health care; residential housing; a bi-weekly living allowance; an annual clothing allowance; driver education; on-the-job training; high school diploma and high school equivalency attainment; academic and career technical training; employability training; job placement and retention; and support services after graduation. CTDOL has an assigned staff member providing support to the Hartford Job Corps and New Haven Job Corps Centers. Job Corps success in Connecticut is largely due to the collaborative efforts of CTDOL, the Workforce Development Boards, state and local agencies and organizations, and Job Corps program operators.

National Health Emergency – Rapid Response Peer Recovery Navigator/Employer Recovery Friendly Initiative: As a follow up to the Connecticut National Health Emergency (NHE) Dislocated Worker Grant (DWG) which concluded in 2022, the Connecticut Department of Labor continues to fund the placement of Recovery Friendly

Peer Navigators in all of its comprehensive American Job Centers through the use of Rapid Response Funding. Having lived experience, the navigators work with individuals who face barriers to employment due to substance use. In addition, they work with the state's Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations funded by the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to oversee the state's Employer Recovery Friendly Initiative. A Recovery Friendly toolkit to assist employers with this process was developed sharing resources available from CTDOL as well as from our partners, the CT Department of Public Health and the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Through this unique collaboration, Connecticut has officially recognized 23 employers as Recovery Friendly. Interested employers can find out more about these services through the link <https://www.recoveryworksct.org>.

Jobs First Employment Services (JFES)

The JFES Program serves recipients of Temporary Family Assistance (TFA), Connecticut's cash assistance program for low-income families. The program is administered by CTDOL in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) and Connecticut's five Workforce Development Boards (WDBs): Capital Workforce Partners, Workforce Alliance, the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board, The Workplace, Inc., and the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board. The goal of the program is to help people who are receiving TFA find work so they can become independent of cash assistance, move out of poverty, and provide a better life for themselves and their families.

The JFES program served a total of 2,455 clients during SFY 23. CTDOL worked closely with the five WDBs to implement a Family Centered Coaching approach to serving clients in which the whole family unit is taken into consideration, with the client in the "driver's seat," determining their own career goals.

Employment Services Operations (ES)

Employment Services (ES) Operations is responsible for administering the following federally funded programs: Wagner-Peyser Labor Exchange (WP), Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (UI RESEA), Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG), and Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). ES is responsible for the development, project management, testing and implementation of automation initiatives across multiple systems, managing virtual service delivery platforms, technical assistance, workshop curriculum development and delivery, American Job Center (AJC) staff training for applicable programs, service delivery, performance reporting, monitoring, and data validation for assigned programs. The WP, UI RESEA, and JVSG program services are provided throughout the AJCs. These programs provide high quality, integrated labor exchange services to Unemployment Insurance claimants, job seekers, workers, veterans, and employers.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC): The WOTC is a federal tax credit available to employers. WOTC reduces a business's tax liability and is an incentive to hire

individuals from demographics which face multiple barriers to employment. The U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) and U.S. Department of Treasury, through the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), jointly administer the implementation of the WOTC program. USDOL, through the Employment and Training Administration, provides grant funding and policy guidance to the Connecticut Department of Labor and other State Workforce Agencies to administer the certification process, while IRS administers all tax-related provisions and requirements. WOTC is one of several workforce development programs that promote diversity in the workplace and access to jobs. During program year 2022, CTDOL processed a total of 58,653 WOTC applications from employers, of which 20,344 resulted in certification.

Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG): The Jobs for Veterans program helps Connecticut veterans through its team of Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs), located at the American Job Centers (AJCs). DVOPs provide individualized career services to eligible veterans who have significant barriers to employment, as well as other populations that include certain eligible spouses and transitioning service members; members of the Armed Forces who are wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in a military treatment facility or warrior transition unit; and the spouse or other family caregiver of such Armed Forces members. A "family caregiver" is someone who provides personal care services as a parent, spouse, child, step or extended family member, or as an individual who lives with, but is not a family member of, the veteran. The program emphasizes meeting the employment needs of economically or educationally disadvantaged veterans. LVERs conduct outreach to employers to promote the hiring of veterans and facilitate utilization of the veteran employment, training, and placement services provided by the AJCs. In partnership with the Department of Defense and the Connecticut Military Department, JVSG staff assist service members and their families, including those returning from the CT National Guard and US Armed Forces Reserves, by participating in Yellow Ribbon events and Soldier Readiness Program briefings that inform members and their families about the services available to them.

Reemployment Programs for Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claimants (RESEA): The agency provides a variety of federally funded reemployment services to UI claimants through the Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (UI RESEA) program which serves claimants who are either profiled as most likely to exhaust benefits or those receiving Unemployment Compensation for Ex-service members (UCX). The goal of this program is to provide UI claimants early access to services provided by the American Job Centers that will help get them back into the workforce faster. The UI RESEA program also serves as a prevention/detection program for improper UI payments. As of August 2023, CT's RESEA program was offline while working with our consortium partners and UI Information Technology Support Center (ITSC) to address technology barriers. CTDOL has developed robust business requirements for a new enhanced RESEA module within the ReEmployCT system that is designed to meet both the current and future needs of the program to better serve UI claimants. While new RESEA is under development, an interim solution is targeted to begin in September 2023.

Performance & Accountability

The Performance & Accountability Unit has a variety of functions within the Department of Labor's Employment Services Division. Primarily, the unit administers the case management system used for federally funded employment and training programs and is responsible for meeting federal reporting requirements for those programs. The unit is responsible for the Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers Program which provides outreach to farm workers and growers to ensure compliance with federal regulations and to assist when issues arise, as well as the Foreign Labor Certification Program which permits employers to hire foreign workers on a temporary basis to fill jobs essential to the U.S. economy.

Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers Program: The Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW) Program provides agricultural employers recruitment, mediation, and interpretation assistance, along with technical guidance on compliance with MSFW related regulations. In SFY 23, a total of 1,457 outreach contacts were made, providing workers with information on available workforce services and labor protections. The program also provides assistance with Unemployment Insurance related issues, referrals to the National Farmworker Jobs Program partner agency and other supportive services as well as resolution to complaints and apparent violations.

Foreign Labor Certification Program (previously called Alien Labor Certification Program): The Foreign Labor Certification Program ensures that employers have exhausted all efforts to hire workers in the United States prior to receiving certification and hiring foreign workers. Acting as an agent for USDOL, staff processed 117 H-2A job order certifications for approximately 1,437 temporary foreign agricultural worker positions and conducted 145 pre-occupancy housing inspections in connection with agricultural certifications for the 2023 growing season. In addition, more than 10 job orders were processed for H-2B temporary foreign non-agricultural worker positions.

Office of Diversity and Equity Programs

The Office of Diversity and Equity Programs' (ODEP) makes recommendations to the Labor Commissioner regarding compliance with federal, state, and other applicable civil rights laws, regulations, and best practices. Offering a civil rights compliance perspective, ODEP staff collaborates with CTDOL leadership in the formation, implementation, and preservation of its internal civil rights policies, procedures, and best practices.

The ODEP develops, implements, and monitors the agency's Affirmative Action Plan (AAP), which is submitted annually to the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) for review and approval. CTDOL's Affirmative Action Plan documents the department's good-faith efforts to achieve compliance with civil rights laws, regulations, and best practices to further equal employment and advancement opportunity in its hiring, promotions, training, and other employment-related opportunities. During the plan period of May 1, 2020, through April 30, 2021, the agency achieved 37% of its hiring goals, 42% of its promotional goals, and 100% of its program goals. Details can be found in the agency's

Affirmative Action Plan, which was approved on November 10, 2021 by CHRO. Finally, ODEP is in the process of forming CTDOL's first employee advisory and diversity committee called the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Council.

American Job Center Services

Governor Lamont's workforce vision and policies are coordinated through the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC) and the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS). Workforce training and development programs are supported by state and federal funding that is allocated to each of the State's five Regional Workforce Development Boards (WDBs). The WDBs, their contracted providers, and partners including, but not limited to, CTDOL, CT State Department of Education's (CSDE) - Adult Education, Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) assist individuals and employers at the statewide American Job Centers (AJCs).

CTDOL's AJC services include virtual and in-person assistance with career choices and job searches; employment referrals; placement assistance for job seekers; employment services for claimants receiving Unemployment Insurance; job posting and employer recruitment services to businesses with job openings; workshops on résumé writing, interviewing, and career exploration; and providing access to computers, copiers, and fax machines.

During SFY 23 a total of 9,141 Wagner-Peyser program participants received services (staff-assisted or self-service) through AJC offices, in person or virtually, with 19,865 staff-assisted services provided statewide.

State Board of Labor Relations (SBLR)

The State Board of Labor Relations defines and protects the statutory rights of employees, including the right of public employees to form, join, or assist labor organizations. The SBLR also encourages and protects the right of employees and employers to bargain collectively and remedy certain practices that are detrimental to the collective bargaining process and general public. More than 80% of filed cases are resolved prior to a Board hearing, largely due to the successful mediation efforts of Agents. A total of 318 case were filed with the SBLR in SFY 23.

The State Board of Mediation and Arbitration (SBMA)

The State Board of Mediation and Arbitration provides mediation and arbitration panels to resolve impasses in contract negotiations and to address grievance disputes. Mediators also provide outreach and educational programs on the art of dispute settlement. The SBMA's arbitrators resolve disputes over the application or interpretation of the terms of collective bargaining agreements. In SFY 23, SBMA provided mediation services for 145 arbitration matters and municipal contracts and received over 220 grievance arbitration disputes. Settlements were achieved in most instances, saving significant tax dollars for towns and cities. Approximately 300 contracts expired in SFY 23, many of which required mediation services,

while a number necessitated the imposition of binding arbitration. The SBMA arbitration panels issued 55 awards in grievance and interest arbitrations in SFY 23.

Employment Security Appeals Division

An autonomous, quasi-judicial agency housed in the CTDOL but statutorily independent, the Employment Security Appeals Division's primary function is to hear appeals and affirm or reverse decisions rendered by the CTDOL as the Administrator of the Unemployment Insurance Program. During SFY 23, the lower authority (Referee Section) decided 27,926 appeals and the higher authority (Board of Review) decided 897 appeals.

Connecticut Occupational Safety and Health Division (CONN-OSHA)

Connecticut's Occupational Safety and Health Division (CONN-OSHA) enforces safety and health standards in public sector workplaces by conducting compliance inspections, responding to complaints or requests, and investigating fatalities and serious accidents. Citations are issued where violations are discovered. Training, education, and onsite safety and health consultations are provided to both private and public sector employers upon request, and the division offers no-cost technical assistance and information on workplace hazards. In SFY 2023, CONN-OSHA provided training, education, and outreach to 12,849 attendees at 127 activities. CONN-OSHA's monthly Employer Roundtable Discussion series features guest speakers, panel discussions, and an overview of safety and health regulations in the workplace. Participation in the monthly roundtables averaged 52 attendees per event in SFY 23, and the division also publishes a newsletter on a quarterly basis which it distributes via email to over 3,100 subscribers.

CONN-OSHA also conducted compliance inspections at 197 public sector work sites in SFY 23. Violations were documented in 164 of those inspections, the remaining 33 were considered "in compliance". Citations issued in SFY 23 resulted in a total of 1,366 violations identified as follows: 1,188 "serious" violations; five "willful" violations; six "repeat" violations; 163 "other than serious" violations; and four "regulatory" violations. The division also provided safety and health consultations to 303 private sector businesses that collectively employ 14,494 workers, wherein 1,538 hazards were identified, as well as conducted 135 consultations at public sector workplaces with a total of 5,859 employees where 430 hazards were identified.

Wage and Workplace Standards Division (WWSD)

The Wage and Workplace Standards Division (WWSD) recovered more than \$1.9 million in owed wages for Connecticut workers in this fiscal year. WWSD enforces more than 160 general statutes and administrative regulations which includes those regarding minimum wage, overtime wage payments, prevailing wage, standard wage, employment of minors, misclassification of workers as independent contractors, and working conditions. Despite the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, WWSD conducted 25 inspections at construction project sites, reviewed contractor records, and issued 17 Stop Work Orders, which require cited employers to show proof of

appropriate coverage (such as worker's compensation) before worksites could be re-opened and work resumed.

WWSD and the UI Tax Division work together to ensure workers are not misclassified to prevent independent contractors from experiencing the loss of many due protections such as UI benefits eligibility, workers' compensation coverage, overtime pay, pay below minimum wage, and health benefits. A total of 508 cases were assigned to the workplace standards team during this fiscal year. Violations were cited in drug testing, personnel files; electronic monitoring not posted; limited permitted work for 15 year old's; meal period; more than 6/8 hours per day mercantile; night work or other prohibited hazardous employment of minors; retaliatory personnel action; working papers/certification of age; working papers not available at place of business; and working papers not on file. The UI Tax Division conducted approximately 20,000 individual wage investigations, resulting in the reclassification of approximately 4,100 workers.

Communications Unit

During SFY 23, the CTDOL Communications Unit continued to prioritize digital services with a primary focus on the multi-year agency website migration to the newest Sitecore platform. In 2021, the unit worked with the DAS web services teams to undertake a full-site content audit, design changes, and create a knowledge base that provides content for CT.Gov. In SFY 23, Communications built and launched 106 new webpages and finished moving all of the agency primary pages to Sitecore. The new pages significantly improve accessibility to CTDOL information through mobile readiness, expanded screen reader and language translator capture, and content readability. CTDOL had more than 1 million unique website visitors, with approximately 60,000 of them going to the most visited section of the site, the Consumer Contact Center information page, which houses Unemployment Insurance filing details and assistance.

Communications led the agency effort to modernize connectivity with CTDOL customers through the use of Jotform. The new platform features an online fillable form that allows users to provide information directly to specific units in their area of need. Communications built 10 unique Jotforms that have been accessed more than 70,000 times and provide detailed analytics to CTDOL units.

Communications was actively involved in major CTDOL initiatives including the launch of ReEmployCT, the state's new unemployment and tax system, expiration of the public health emergency, a new banking partner for unemployment filers, educator hiring initiatives with the State Dept. of Education, and the federal Equity Grant.

Between July 2022 and July 2023, Communications drafted and sent out 28 press releases and created 2,000 social media posts across 15 platforms.

Office of Research

In cooperation with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Education and Training Administration (ETA), the Office of Research collects, analyzes, and delivers information on the state's labor market. Information is collected and disseminated about employment levels, unemployment rates, wages and earnings, estimates of available labor, employment projections, business staffing patterns, and career planning information. A survey of workplace injuries and illnesses and a census of work-related fatalities is conducted annually.

In addition, the Office of Research completes special state, local, and regional studies and economic analysis to provide information for economic transition, workforce development initiatives, education program analysis and development, and responses to major layoffs or disasters. Strategies for addressing issues such as labor gaps and for positioning the state's educational and workforce systems to respond quickly to critical areas of workforce need are a fundamental part of Connecticut's workforce and economic development efforts. Employers, career counselors, educators, economic developers, training program planners, policy makers, economists, and the general public utilize the information gathered and interpreted by this unit.

The Office of Research produces the Labor Situation report and, in partnership with the Department of Economic and Community Development, creates the Connecticut Economic Digest which provides data and articles on the state's workforce and economy. The Labor Situation provides a monthly and over-the-year snapshot of the state's industry sectors and unemployment rate.

The Office of Research is both a participating agency and the Data Integration Hub for P20-WIN, Connecticut's State Longitudinal Data System which links individual student records across education institutions and in the workforce to permit the building of safe, de-identifiable databases to evaluate education programs and their impact on workforce outcomes. Examples of recent data requests include those from researchers at Yale University who are studying the effects of access to pre-school and researchers at the Boston Consulting Group who are preparing a report on dislocated youth. P20-WIN has expanded to include other agencies and the Office of Research acts as the Hub for all P20-WIN data requests.

In response to continued demand for information regarding job openings, the Office of Research publishes weekly updates of job postings from Help Wanted Online in addition to a comprehensive monthly report of job postings by industry, occupation, and employers for each of the state's workforce areas.

Unemployment Insurance Program

The Unemployment Insurance (UI) Benefit Program is a program designed to provide temporary income to workers who lost their job or whose hours were reduced through no fault of their own – for example, due to a layoff, plant closure, or lack of available work. Benefits are not available to all workers. Our state UI program is funded through taxes paid by employers, not employees.

Consumer Contact Center (CCC): Since July 2020, the Consumer Contact Center (CCC) has been a cornerstone of CTDOL's UI customer service delivery system, which relies on technology to provide a convenient and efficient system for filing and inquiring about an unemployment claim.

The CCC agents access phone and electronic inquiries and respond to questions related to the UI program in general or to a claimant's particular benefit account questions. Services include: claim status inquiries and issues, identification verification, and assistance navigating the system. During SFY 23, the CCC team handled more than 806,000 customer calls and cases which represents a weekly average of more than 15,500 customer connections.

The CCC agents also provide virtual UI claim services for customers visiting the comprehensive AJCs to use the Career Center computers. During SFY 23, CCC agents served more than 19,000 customers who visited the state's American Job Centers, which is an increase of 12,000 over the previous program year.

Unemployment Insurance Tax Division: The UI Tax Division administers a program that protects both workers and employers through fair enforcement of the UI law. CTDOL administered nearly \$467 million in state unemployment benefits in SFY 2023. Of that amount, nearly \$440 million was paid to claimants formerly employed by employers paying quarterly UI taxes under the regular UI benefits program, and about \$27 million was provided to claimants formerly employed by non-taxable employers. Total taxes paid by more than 128,000 employers whose employees were covered by UI totaled \$622 million.

Shared Work: The Shared Work program helps businesses experiencing a downturn prevent layoffs by allowing the qualifying businesses to reduce overhead through temporarily cutting employee hours and using partial unemployment benefits to help replace some of the lost wages. This helps ensure employers may preserve their labor force and avoid expensive future recruitment, hiring, and training when business improves. Employees retain their positions and benefits while working a reduced schedule. During SFY 23, Shared Work staff assisted nearly 330 companies and more than 3,300 participating employees.

SIDES: Developed through a strategic partnership between the US Department of Labor and state UI agencies, the State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES) and SIDES E-Response offer employers and Third-Party Administrators - free of charge - a secure, electronic and nationally standardized format in which they can easily respond to UI information requests, attach documentation when needed and receive a date-stamped confirmation of receipt. SIDES is also an important fraud detection tool. Employers are able to quickly respond to notices and identify potential fraudulent UI claims. This partnership with employers is a first line defense against fraud and helps CTDOL to quickly stop payment on fraudulent claims and prevent overpayments.

The Office of the Unemployed Workers' Advocate

The Unemployed Workers' Advocate (UWA) assists individuals understand the UI system and legal communications, supports folks navigating the appeals process, and works to reduce barriers for unemployed individuals as they apply for benefits or utilize our employment services. No member of the UWA processes nor makes decisions on claims nor appeals.

The unit also tracks reported issues to support the department in improving client communications and recommend policy changes. Since opening to the public in August 2022, UWA has handled over 1,600 cases. Approximately half of these cases are the result of referrals from public officials; the others are self-referrals by claimants contacting the office directly by phone or via the CTDOL website.

Occupational Analysis Products and Publications

The Office of Research Website: The Office of Research's website contains an exhaustive collection of data and tools useful for workforce development planning and understanding CT's labor market, including population and population density, labor force, employment and wages by industry sector, commuting patterns, and new housing permits.

Connecticut Career Paths: Developed for high school students and others making career choices, Connecticut Career Paths is a guide that profiles nearly 500 occupations, along with their relevant employment levels, growth potential, expected earnings, skills requirements, and educational tracks. Connecticut Career Paths is distributed to schools, colleges, libraries, and job centers throughout the state.

Education and Training Connection (ETC): The Education and Training Connection site merges information from the state's Office of Higher Education (OHE) with the WIOA Eligible Providers Training List (ETPL) to provide contact information for educational and training programs within the state.

Employer Database: A tool for job seekers, the Employer Database provides contact information compiled from publicly available sources of businesses in the state.

Economic Indicator Scorecards: Monthly updated economic indicators that present an overall picture of the current conditions in the Connecticut labor market, business climate, and consumer sector are published on the Economic Indicator Scorecards. These include charts, trends, year-to-year changes, and data for 24 economic indicators.

Agency Improvements and Efficiencies

Contracts Unit

In July 2022, CTDOL created the Contracts Unit to centralize and streamline contract processes, increase efficiency, and consolidate administrative tasks. Responsibilities include risk management, compliance, and legal adherence. The creation of the unit has allowed for a standardized approach to contracting which helps promote transparency, accountability, and cost-efficiency. This standardized approach is leading to improved performance and better agency-contractor relationships. Through communication and collaboration within CTDOL, the Contracts Unit can analyze processes for workflow improvement, task management, secure access, and compliance oversight to deliver the best possible product.

Business Engagement Unit

The CTDOL Business Engagement Unit (BEU) was created in the summer of 2022 to centralize employer outreach and provide a targeted approach to business services. The BEU ensures that employers are aware of free labor exchange services provided to CT businesses through Connecticut Helping Individuals and Employers Reach Employment Success (CTHires), the state's comprehensive workforce development website. Key responsibilities of BEU staff include assisting businesses meet hiring needs and connecting job seekers to employment opportunities. The unit handles customized recruitment events, promotion of such events through CTDOL's vast network of workforce and community-based partnerships, access and assistance with CTHires for job postings and resume screening, and layoff aversion and downsizing support through Shared Work and Rapid Response programs.

During SFY 23, BEU staff processed a total of 954 business registrations into CTHires, held 272 recruitment events with one or more employers represented, assisted over 5,312 employers by providing over 7,153 services such as business consultation, referrals to additional support programs, and candidate referrals to job postings. During this same period, employers posted 65,734 new CT job orders and 239,866 job orders were indexed from corporate websites. Additionally, the unit partnered with local chambers of commerce, educational institutions and non-profit organizations by assisting them with statewide job fairs.