Connecticut Equity Study Report

January 2024

Connecticut Equity Final Report

I. Executive Summary

Background

In 2021, the President of the United States signed Federal Executive Order #13985: Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, with the goal of pursuing a comprehensive approach to advancing equity across the Federal Government. This executive order laid a potential path for states to follow to advance equity in state government. In alignment with the Biden Administration's efforts, Connecticut passed its own legislation to systematically advance equity in June of 2021, initiating this study. The primary goal of Connecticut's Equity Study was to provide a comprehensive report evaluating key state programs and policies across 23 state executive branch agencies– including at least one program of focus at each agency – to identify any patterns of discrimination, inequality, or disparities in outcomes for underserved communities and make recommendations for improvement. "Underserved communities," as defined by the public act, describes populations that have been systematically and historically denied opportunities, such as "Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons; Asian Americans and Pacific Islander and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality."

Equity Study Authors and Methodology

This study was led by Faulkner Consulting Group (FCG), in partnership with McClain Consulting Associates for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion expertise and N1 Health or data analytics and data visualization support. The study was overseen by Connecticut's Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO), in consultation with the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and the Office of Policy and Management (OPM). The methodology included multiple components, as shown in Exhibit 1.

Work on the Connecticut Equity Study began in January 2023. Over the next 9 months, we:

- Performed a landscape review, inclusive of a key performance indicator (KPI) assessment,
- Conducted interviews with 23 state agencies (1-2 interviews with each agency) and 5 state commissions/councils,
- Facilitated 10 Focus Groups with community-based organizations (CBOs), involving 62 CBO representatives,
- Facilitated 4 Focus Groups with 18 residents participating (including 2 Spanish language sessions),
- Conducted a public survey, posted on the CHRO's website, with 66 survey responses, and
- Collected and analyzed program data for a priority program identified by each state agency, ultimately conducting analyses for 21 of the 23 state agencies included in the study.

Exhibit 1: Equity Study Components

The executive branch agencies included in this study are:

Exhibit 2: Included Executive Branch Agencies

Executive Branch Agencies

Career and Technical Education System	Department of Insurance
Department of Administrative Services	Department of Labor
Department of Agriculture	Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Department of Banking	Department of Motor Vehicles
Department of Children and Families	Department of Revenue Services
Department of Consumer Protection	Department of Public Health
Department of Correction	Department of Social Services
Department of Developmental Services	Department of Transportation
Department of Economic and Community Development	Department of Veterans Affairs
Department of Education	Office of Higher Education
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	Office of Policy and Management
Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection	

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

As part of the initial landscape analysis for the equity study, we identified several key performance indicators (KPIs) that show Connecticut's starting point on equity and that the state could use to track progress on equity over time. In summary, the analysis of these ten indicators suggests:

- There appears to be substantive racial and ethnic disparities across virtually every measure we reviewed in economic opportunity, education, housing, and healthcare & public health.

- These racial and ethnic disparities appear to be persistent over the past three to five years. Although some measures suggest modest improvements in KPI performance over time among Black and Hispanic populations, the improvements are generally small relative to the underlying performance gaps.

- Available data is mostly limited to race/ethnicity – there is limited data available to support disparity measurement across other underserved communities in Connecticut.

In our interviews, Connecticut state agency leaders expressed commitment to addressing disparities for underserved populations and acknowledged the barriers to equity and the work ahead. The study findings identified challenges for most state agencies in the following areas: data collection and analysis, leadership and workforce, training, communication, and community engagement. This report also makes recommendations to advance equity throughout the 23 state executive branch agencies and across Connecticut's executive branch. These findings and recommendations are summarized below.

Exhibit 3: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Findings	Recommendations
Leadership and Workforce	

Findings	Recommendations

• Agencies varied in how leaders organized their teams to be accountable for advancing equity.
• Agencies varied in how their mission, strategic plan, and/or key initiatives connected to equity.
• Connecticut has an opportunity to increase representation among people of color in leadership roles.
• Despite investments in hiring and human resources, state agency workforce challenges remain.
	Create a shared vision for equity in the state:
	  o All executive branch agencies take concrete and deliberate action to actualize the state's commitment and promise to ensure equity, dignity, and respect for all.
	  o Ensure that all agencies have a similar definition of "equity" and "underserved communities".
	Develop and maintain equity action plans for each agency:
	  o Establish a requirement for an equity action plan from each agency that is embedded into the state's planning and budgeting processes.
	  o Engagement with stakeholders is a critical requirement in developing priorities and strategies for equity action plans.
	  o Expand the use of equity impact assessments for new or changing policies and programs.
	Grow a state workforce and organizational capacity to advance equity:
	  o Identify an Equity Team at each agency.
	  o Conduct a statewide review of human resources and HR practices to identify improvements to support building a diverse and representative workforce.
	  o Communicate the state's commitment to opening pathways to state employment and ensuring criteria for state government positions/classifications do not include unnecessary degree requirements that might pose barriers to underserved populations (e.g., high school diploma, college degree).
	  o Increase participation in professional organizations in fields with a lack of diversity to expand applicant pools.

Findings	Recommendations
Training	

Findings	Recommendations

• Every agency has engaged in equity-related training initiatives.
• Training made available for state agencies could be improved to continuously address all aspects of equity.
	Build on existing efforts to expand training to advance equity:
	  o Enhance equity-related training, creating standardized training options that could be enhanced for each agency's area of focus.
	  o Ensure agencies get feedback from participants on the training provided.
	  o Consider opportunities to jointly provide training to both state agency employers and community partners and other entities that work with state government.

Findings	Recommendations
Data Collection and Analysis	

Findings	Recommendations

• Agencies are generally aware of the importance of race, ethnicity, and language (REL) data capture.
• REL data collection requirements are not standardized across state agencies.
• When agencies collect REL data, agencies do not necessarily use that REL data in their program planning and operations.
	Improve the use of data to advance equity:
	  o Create a shared understanding of the key indicators of equity in Connecticut to track and report across state agencies.
	  o Implement standards for REL and SOGI data that are consistent across agencies.
	  o Create guardrails for the ethical use of data and include them as part of training on REL and SOGI data for data owners and data users across state agencies.

- Public availability and usability of existing REL data are mixed.
- Data collection of underserved population demographics other than race, ethnicity, and language is uncommon among agencies.

o Expand publication of demographic data when agencies publish policy and program data.
o Track and publish demographic data on the executive branch workforce for internal and external users, building on the workforce data currently provided on the Connecticut Open Data Portal.
o Develop mechanisms to collect and analyze applicant data from the job application database to identify opportunities to improve recruiting and hiring practices and advance equity.

Communication

- Currently, communication or coordination of equity initiatives across agencies does not consistently occur.
- Stronger interagency communication – both within state government and between state government and local governments – could enhance equity initiatives.
- Community members described challenges in knowing who and how to contact within Connecticut, both for general government functions, as well as to report equity-related concerns.
- Community members describe customer service challenges that contribute to inequities.
- Study participants describe Connecticut's website as difficult to navigate, which can contribute to persisting inequities.
- State communications and application forms are not consistently translated, available in a community member's primary language, and at an accessible reading level.

Establish consistent expectations for interagency and public communications:

o Establish a formal committee of representatives from all agency DEI teams and state leaders to review key performance indicators and coordinate agency activities and statewide initiatives.
o Develop a mechanism for centralized translation services in the Executive Branch for all languages and needs.
o Invest in a consumer-focused digital government strategy to streamline public communications.
o Ensure consistent use of social media across agencies to communicate with the public.
o Continue efforts to improve internet access and access to devices to support rural residents' access to digital government.
o Recognize that some residents are not comfortable relying on the internet or web-based communication.

Community Engagement

- Agencies and community members reported wide variation in agency engagement of stakeholders as it relates to advancing equity.
- Community engagement by state agencies remains hard to access for many individuals within underserved communities.
- Community members do not trust that agencies will take feedback and act upon it when community members do engage with agencies.

Strengthen community engagement to reach underserved communities.

o Establish consistent expectations across executive branch agencies regarding regular community and stakeholder engagement.
o Develop a centralized database of community organizations and media contacts in the state for outreach.
o Provide funding for designated staff who are responsible for community engagement at each agency.
o Invest in compensation for resident engagement in stakeholder input sessions.
o Create a pathway on the state website for residents to report equity-related concerns.

Improve agency grant processes to provide greater access to funding for underserved populations.

o Review grant application materials and processes and simplify the terms and language to make them more accessible.
o Update grant requirements and scoring criteria to prioritize organizations that work with underserved populations or in underserved areas.
o Provide more technical assistance to organizations for grant application development and program administration and reporting.
o Implement a single grants management system software tool for all state agencies where all grant opportunities would be posted, and organizations would submit funding applications.

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Agency-Specific Findings and Recommendations

Appendix III of the report provides individual agency analyses for all 23 Executive Branch agencies. Each agency analysis includes:

- A brief overview of the agency, including leadership, number of staff, budget, background/mission.
- Summary of agency equity activities reported by agency leadership during the interview process.
- Overview of the program selected by agency leadership for review as part of the Equity Study.
- Analysis of the selected program, reviewing program participation and/or program outcomes and highlighting equity insights. 21 of the 23 agencies provided program data for review or shared information about publicly available data for the program.
- Summary of recommendations, including specific recommendations for the selected program and overall recommendations for the agency as a whole. Overall agency recommendations are informed by the agency interviews and the study focus groups

Community Feedback

Through our focus groups and online public survey, the public provided substantive input on equity challenges and opportunities that inform the findings and recommendations included in this report. To elevate community voices in this study, we summarized key community themes in section IV: Findings, and provided more detailed feedback in Appendix IV, organized by the following populations:

- Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons; Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color
- Non-native English speakers
- Persons with disabilities
- LGBTQ+
- Age (youth, seniors)
- Persons affected by persistent poverty

Implementation Roadmap

Section VI of this report provides an Implementation Roadmap, outlining the next steps for the following components:

Exhibit 4: Implementation Roadmap Components

Organize for Action: Identify a Champion

Prioritize: Review Recommended Actions and Set Priorities

Operationalize: Assess Readiness and Create Action Plan

Monitor: Review Progress and Seek Opportunities to Improve

Engage stakeholders at each step of process

Ground the work in a leading equity framework
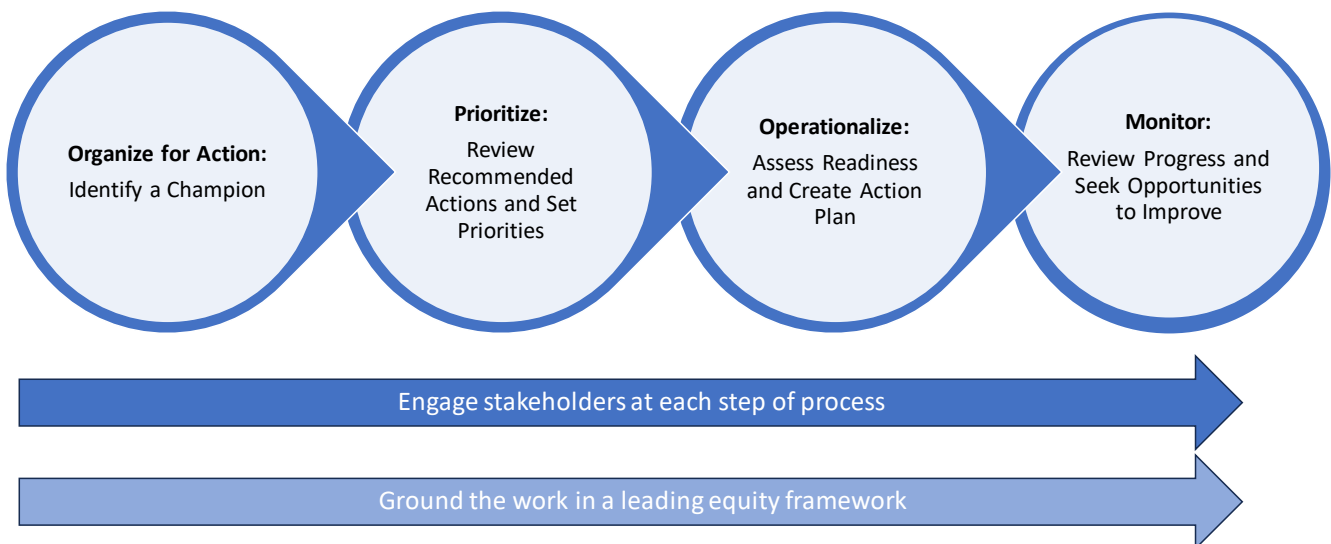
II. Background

On January 1, 2021, the President of the United States signed Federal Executive Order #13985: Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government[1] , with the goal of pursuing a comprehensive approach to advancing equity across the Federal Government. In addition to acknowledging the need for a systematic approach to advance equity, the Biden Administration ordered several next steps be taken under the order:

- Identify methods to assess equity
- Conduct an equity assessment in federal agencies
- Allocate federal resources to advance fairness and opportunity
- Promote equitable delivery of government benefits and equitable opportunities
- Engage with members of underserved communities
- Establish an Equitable Data Working Group

This executive order laid a potential path for states to follow to advance equity in state government. In alignment with the Biden Administration's efforts, Connecticut passed its own legislation to systematically advance equity in Section 81 of Public Act 21-2 of the June Special Session[2]. Connecticut's legislation ordered the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) to oversee a study of equity. The Department of Administrative Services (DAS) in consultation with the CHRO and the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) issued a request for proposals, and subsequently contracted with Faulkner Consulting Group (FCG), in partnership with McClain Consulting Associates and N1 Health, to conduct this study.

As defined by Public Act No. 21-2, the primary goal of Connecticut's Equity Study is to provide the DAS, OPM, and the CHRO with a comprehensive report evaluating key state programs and policies – including at least one program of focus selected by each included executive branch agency – to identify any patterns of discrimination, inequality, or disparities in outcomes for underserved communities, and to make recommendations to remedy identified disparities. Executive branch agencies listed in Exhibit 5 are included within the scope of this study.

Exhibit 5: Table of Included Executive Branch Agencies

Executive Branch Agencies	
Career and Technical Education System	Department of Insurance
Department of Administrative Services	Department of Labor
Department of Agriculture	Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Department of Banking	Department of Motor Vehicles
Department of Children and Families	Department of Revenue Services
Department of Consumer Protection	Department of Public Health
Department of Correction	Department of Social Services
Department of Developmental Services	Department of Transportation
Department of Economic and Community Development	Department of Veterans Affairs
Department of Education	Office of Higher Education
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	Office of Policy and Management
Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection	

"Underserved communities," as defined by the public act, describes populations that have been systematically and historically denied opportunities, such as "Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons; Asian Americans and Pacific Islander and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality." This definition of underserved populations captures a large subset of Connecticut's current population:

- 24.3% of the Connecticut population identifies as non-white;
- 7% identify as belonging to a non-Christian faith;
- 12.0% have a disability;
- 3.9% identify as LGBTQ+;
- 2.9% live in a rural area;
- and 10.1% are categorized below the poverty line.[3]

In addition to the categories defined as underserved in the legislation, this report also captured qualitative data about equity for Connecticut's population who speaks a language other than English at home (22.8%), and age-related equity challenges (20.2% of Connecticut's population is under the age of 18; 18.0% is over the age of 65). The diversity present in Connecticut's population underscores the need for a tailored approach to address equity for underserved communities.

After Connecticut's Equity Study was underway, in February 2023, the Biden Administration built on Federal Executive Order #13985 with the release of Federal Executive Order #14091[4]. Executive Order #14091 furthered the work of Executive Order #13985, laying out additional concrete next steps and actions required of federal agencies to advance equity. Recommendations included in this report consider opportunities for Connecticut to align the actions of its executive branch agencies with the federal requirements, as applicable.

III. Summary of the Methodology

The Connecticut Equity Study was conducted over a 9-month period, from January 2023 through September 2023. The study included multiple components, as shown in Exhibit 6. The study considered the historical context and the current landscape in Connecticut by reviewing publicly available data and reports on baseline inequities, the history of equity work in Connecticut, and current executive branch agency equity initiatives. We then collected both quantitative and qualitative inputs through agency interviews, program data analysis, focus groups, and resident surveys. The approach aimed to incorporate both the input of state leaders and employees, as well as the voices of community organizations and residents who engage with state programs and services. We have provided a summary of each of the components here; more detail can be found in Appendix II.

Exhibit 6: Equity Study Components

- **Landscape Review.** We identified current equity initiatives in the state as well as reviewed publicly available data on a range of key performance indicators related to equity. A summary of the baseline data on key performance indicators is provided in Appendix II.
- **Agency Interviews.** We conducted 1-2 interviews with key contacts at each of the 23 state agencies included in the scope of the Equity Study (see section II: Background for the list of agencies). During these interviews, we collected qualitative information about existing equity initiatives, key agency programs, organizational culture, data adequacy, and stakeholder engagement. We also met with leaders from the following commissions, councils, and organizations: The Governor's Council on Women and Girls; the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity; the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health; the Social Equity Council; and the Connecticut Racial Profiling Project.
- **Program Data Analysis.** 21 of 23 of the state agencies included in the study provided data for analysis of an agency program. We reviewed and summarized data regarding the individuals or communities served by the program, including factors such as geography, race/ethnicity, age, and income. When possible, we identified potential gaps and opportunities to improve equity. The resulting agency program analysis summaries are provided by agency in Appendix III.
- **Information Sessions, Focus Groups, and Public Survey.** We conducted 3 public information sessions, 10 focus groups with 62 representatives of community-based organizations (CBOs), and 4 focus groups with 18 Connecticut residents. The information sessions focused on educating the public about this study and ways to participate. The focus groups collected qualitative feedback on any barriers to accessing state programs and services, effective strategies to address equity, and communication and engagement with state agencies. The public survey on equity was available electronically throughout the duration of the study and had 66 respondents. Qualitative input from the focus groups and surveys is summarized in section IV: Findings.

The study methodology and the qualitative and quantitative tools for each component were informed by a review of promising practices and tools in equity assessment. These practices and tools are described in Appendix I.

Study Limitations

Findings and recommendations of this study reflect the implementation of promising practices and the culmination of data gathering from community engagement, agency engagement, and historical context. However, it is important to note that:

- The scope of this report is limited to the executive branch of Connecticut's state government and specifically the 23 executive branch agencies named in Section 81 of Public Act No. 21-2.
- State contracting and procurement were not in the scope of this study. A separate disparity study will examine whether Connecticut's procurement program achieves the State's goal of identifying and hiring small contractors and minority business enterprises and will be completed in 2024[5].
- Data collection for this study was as robust as feasible within the scope and timeframe of this engagement (approximately 9 months). Findings and recommendations are based on 1-2 interviews with each agency, 14 focus groups with community organizations and Connecticut residents, and responses received via a survey available online and open to the public for 8 months.
  - o Research was both qualitative (collecting data from interviews, surveys, focus groups) and quantitative (analyzing agency program data and key performance indicators/metrics). For our qualitative input from the community, it is important to also note that public participation in focus groups was limited to 62 CBO representatives and 18 non-CBO affiliated residents and 66 survey responses. This is not a large enough sample to be considered representative of the entire Connecticut population and may be biased based on those who chose to participate in focus groups and the survey and those who did not participate.
  - o Not all public participants were able to differentiate between municipal, state, and federal agencies and programs, and many individuals provided input on topics that are outside of the control of the state of Connecticut executive branch and outside of the focus of this study.
  - o We were not able to verify the accuracy of any statements presented by the public, and there may be errors and omissions in their comments.

IV. Findings

Connecticut is Committed to Equity and Acknowledges the Challenges and Work Ahead

By moving quickly to undertake an equity study to align with President Biden's Federal Executive Order #13985, Connecticut's state leadership demonstrated its commitment to advancing equity for all residents of the state. The twin events of the COVID-19 pandemic and the demands for racial justice after the murder of George Floyd were catalyzing for the General Assembly and the Governor. For example, in 2021, the Connecticut Senate and House of Representatives enacted Public Act No. 21-35 to equalize access to mental, behavioral, and physical healthcare in response to the COVID pandemic, declared racism a public health crisis, and implemented standardized race, ethnicity, and language (REL) data collection for hospitals and health care providers. Public Act 21-35 led to the establishment of The Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health, which is tasked with making policy and systems change recommendations to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities and inequities across sectors. As part of the Governor's biennial budget request for FY 2024-2025, Governor Ned Lamont reaffirmed his commitment that "Connecticut's government work to ensure all residents and businesses are treated with respect and dignity, while actively working to address past and ongoing inequities." In accordance with Public Act 22-118, the budget narrative of the Governor's budget request includes a description of how the proposed budget will "further the Governor's efforts to ensure equity in the state."[6]

During this study, we observed widespread interest in and commitment to equity initiatives on the part of state agencies. While acknowledging that there is much more to be done, agency leaders and staff emphasized their commitment to equity and belief that equity is a responsibility of every department and function. In one example, an agency required that every leader within the agency have a change initiative aligned with its priority to address disproportionality in the populations referred to that agency. We also heard a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), with many agencies acknowledging the benefits of ensuring staffing that is more reflective of the population served. They also articulated some challenges (perceived lack of diverse applicants in particular fields, burdensome application processes, low unemployment rate) to achieving this desired state and described their efforts to promote diversity, including participating in external professional organizations focused on gender and racial diversity, and increasing outreach channels to attract underrepresented populations.

Inequities in Connecticut are Persistent and Well-Documented

Achieving Connecticut's equity goals will require an ongoing substantive focus on actions to address equity across all agencies. As summarized in Exhibit 7 and described in more detail in Appendix II, Connecticut has wide disparities in areas including economic opportunity, education, housing, healthcare, and public health.

Exhibit 7: Equity Key Performance Indicators

Dimension of Inequity	Metric	Connecticut Disparities
Economic Opportunity	KPI #1: Poverty rate[7]	Black individuals are **twice as likely to experience poverty** when compared to white individuals; Hispanic individuals are **nearly three times as likely**
	KPI #2: Children living in high-poverty areas[8]	**18% of Black children** and **17% of Hispanic children** live in high-poverty areas; only 1% of white children do
	KPI #3: Earnings per dollar relative to white workers[9]	**Black workers earn $0.70** and **Hispanic workers earn $0.63** when compared to a white worker earning $1.00
	KPI #4: Unemployment rate[10]	Black and Hispanic individuals **experience unemployment 60% more than** white individuals
Education	KPI #5: High school students not graduating on time[11]	Black and Hispanic students are **nearly three times as likely to not graduate on time** when compared to white students
	KPI #6: Young adults ages 18 – 24 who are enrolled in or have completed college[12]	Black and Hispanic young adults are **25% less likely to be enrolled in or have completed college** when compared to white young adults
Housing	KPI #7: Number of Homeowners per 100k population[13]	Black individuals are **half as likely to be homeowners** when compared to white individuals; Hispanic individuals are **one-third as likely**
Healthcare & Public Health	KPI #8: Infant mortality per 1,000 live births[14]	Black infants are **nearly three times as likely to die before their first birthday** compared to white infants; Hispanic infants are twice as likely to die before their first birthday
	KPI #9: Adults who report fair or poor health status[15]	Black and Hispanic individuals **report fair or poor health status around one and a half times more** than white individuals
	KPI #10: Adults who report not having a personal doctor/healthcare provider[16]	Black individuals are **nearly twice as likely to not have a personal doctor** when compared to white individuals; Hispanic individuals are **nearly four times as likely to not have a personal doctor**

Findings Applicable to Most Connecticut Executive Branch Agencies

Many findings from our data collection are not agency-specific, but rather applicable to most—if not all—agencies included in this study. These findings inform broad opportunities for Connecticut to improve state infrastructure and business processes to advance equity. Findings are organized below into the following areas: leadership and workforce; data; training; communication; and community engagement. Recommendations for how to act on these findings are detailed in section VI: Implementation Roadmap in this report.

Leadership and Workforce

1. **Agencies varied in how leaders organized their teams to be accountable for advancing equity.** We saw significant variation in agency leadership for equity initiatives – a handful of agencies identified a designated employee responsible for DEI for the agency. It was often difficult to identify a point person at each agency to interview for the Equity Study. We were often directed towards Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) staff, but their role is typically EEO compliance and not a strategic role for identifying opportunities to improve equity in agency operations and agency programs and services. Very few agencies described having a team structure or support for the individual identified as responsible for DEI for the agency. Several agencies emphasized that promoting equity is a shared responsibility among all state of CT employees.

2. **Agencies varied in how their mission, strategic plan, and/or key initiatives connected to equity.** While a few agencies interviewed provided examples of how they establish an equity plan as part of their strategic planning, most agencies did not appear to consider equity holistically as part of establishing their agency's priorities. Both DPH and DCF are agencies that could serve as a model for others in how they center equity across their agency scope. DPH has an active office of health equity and the guiding principle of that office when founded was: "Equal enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is a human right and a priority of the state," and that guiding principle has been incorporated into the mission statement of the agency. DCF requires that all the agency's leaders identify an equity initiative aligned with the agency's goal to address a long-standing disparity.

3. **Connecticut has an opportunity to increase representation among people of color in leadership roles.** We consistently heard from study participants about the need to elevate people of color into visible leadership roles in state agencies, ranging from executive branch leadership to educators and front-line workers. Study participants also noted insufficient representation of people of color on boards and commissions. The 2021 report of Gender and Racial Composition of Connecticut State Boards and Commissions showed that women, Black, and Hispanic/Latino appointees were underrepresented on state boards and commissions. 44.9% of appointees were women, compared to 51.2% of the state population. Only 4.7% of appointees were Hispanic, compared to 16.9% of the population, and 10.9% of appointees were Black, compared to 12.2% of the population.[17]

4. **Despite investments in hiring and human resources, state agency workforce challenges remain.**

    A few agencies described challenges in hiring diverse workers in certain positions. For example, one agency explained that its frontline workforce was largely white male. They acknowledged that they were not doing well on their affirmative action plan and began tracking applicants to get better insights into who made it through to the interview process. Another agency stated that they are actively working to advance diversity among divisions that are historically disproportionately represented by white males, including finance, law enforcement, and technology. A few agencies participated in external industry groups specific to women and racial diversity to broaden their networks. Only one agency specifically mentioned outreach to LGBTQ+ organizations. Lastly, an agency pointed to the challenging application process that applicants face saying, *"it's like a dissertation."*

Data

1. **Agencies are generally aware of the importance of race, ethnicity, and language (REL) data capture.** Representatives from nearly every agency interviewed for this study demonstrated an understanding of the importance of capturing REL data to enable the agency to measure equity. One agency participant acknowledged the lack of available REL data directly collected by the agency, and stated, *"I have to generate my own demographics often, and I use the American Community Survey because I figure that's the most up-to-date Census information."*

    State agencies also reported that the affirmative action plan process is time-consuming and paper-intensive. Affirmative Action Plans are created using paper copies and binders. Staff must manually count the workforce (how many individuals are in each job title and examine by race and gender) and compare numbers to the available job market. Agencies reported that there is no system to calculate and report those numbers – who are in the workforce, who has left, and who has been hired – therefore staff must manually count each year. Also, the data set used to assess parity for the agency workforce was not current until recent updates and may not have been reflective of the changing population in the state.

2. **REL data collection requirements are not standardized across state agencies.** Some agencies reported collecting REL data for a subset of programs, but not collecting or tracking REL data across all divisions or all consumer-facing functions. Agencies also reported variability in how they collect REL data. For example, agencies may have different categories to select from for race, ethnicity, and language when residents or community organizations are populating forms. This lack of standardization can be perceived as administratively burdensome by community organizations engaging with executive branch agencies. As one individual from a local non-profit described: *"We all . . . receive funding from braided sources, and [the funding sources] all require us to collect data in different ways, from the intake, to the reassessment, to the client surveys that we have to collect – which all have valid purposes, but they are all different. So, we end up spending more of our time doing administration than we end up providing services."*

3. **When agencies collect REL data, agencies do not necessarily use that REL data in their program planning and operations.** Agencies often described programmatic data collection of REL data for reporting purposes: However, among agencies that do collect REL data, most did not demonstrate that they have key quantitative metrics for overall agency performance, nor systematically apply that REL data to key measures of performance in a way that would center equity in setting agency priorities and identifying improvement opportunities.

4. **Public availability and usability of existing REL data are mixed.** Some agencies are much further along than others with REL data collection and corresponding public sharing of the data collected. When agencies collect REL data and share it in a format that the public can use and independently analyze, it generally appears on the State of Connecticut Open Data Portal[18] or the nonprofit data ecosystem, Connecticut Data Collaborative[19]. Focus group participants noted that some data sets lagged two to three years and reported that more real-time data would be helpful.

   Community members expressed that community organizations need more support translating state REL data into action. The CT Data Collaborative was noted as an example of an organization using REL data: They are *"trying to collect data across the state for all the towns and have that data accessible – not only by state agencies, but also by the public – and they are making progress."* That positive example was balanced by another participant's view that "you almost need a Ph.D." to access state data repositories, and another noted that the central data repository is necessary but insufficient – that Connecticut also needs *"someone to help [community organizations] interpret what that means and the impact of the data."*

   Community members raised concern that a lack of consistent, publicly available data about people of color as well as people with disabilities puts Connecticut at a disadvantage relative to other states when applying for federal grants or other community investments. A focus group participant stated that *"we can't be as responsive as we should be, or put in as competitive applications as we should, because we just don't have as readily available data."*
   Participants also described that coordination beyond state agencies, including municipalities, could have an impact on more effectively advancing equity initiatives.

5. **Data collection of underserved population demographics other than race, ethnicity, and language is uncommon among agencies.** Only a few agencies reported collecting sexual orientation data in limited circumstances, and a few agencies confirmed they allow for non-binary gender identity data collection. However, OPM reported that there has been a statewide effort to include a non-binary option on all state forms.

Training

1. **Every agency has engaged in equity-related training initiatives.** DEI trainings were mentioned by state agency participants in nearly every interview. Agencies described how these trainings are mandated, available through LinkedIn Learning, and provide basic information on DEI. Some agencies have much more in-depth training protocols for their employees than others. For example, one agency put into place a cohort program for their staff and community members that meets two days per month for 10 months to go deeper into various diversity equity and inclusion issues than the day-long DEI training required for all staff. Participants have described the cohort program as "transformative." Another agency provides full day-long interactive cultural competency training to all managers and supervisors.

2. **Training made available for state agencies is insufficient to continuously address all aspects of equity.** Across our interviews with state agencies, participants demonstrated wide variation in their understanding of what equity is, why it is important, and how they could advance equity for Connecticut residents from their respective positions within state government. Notably, some agencies that do not regularly engage with the public did not demonstrate an understanding of how their regulatory functions impact equity.

   Community participants in this study also highlighted areas where their interactions with state agencies could be improved through additional training for state agency employees. One example is state agency staff blind spots as it relates to the transgender population and its needs. One participant described, *"There's a lack of education of trans issues, we've had to do the education for them – especially with vulnerable populations. That's a big piece to trickle down, to inform policies and programs."*

Communication

1. **Currently, communication or coordination of equity initiatives across agencies does not consistently occur.** Several agencies described informal communication with DEI coordinators and contacts from other agencies, including noting that OPM convenes an interagency group for DEI that has optional/ as-needed participation by agencies. Several agencies requested state leadership and a more formal forum to disseminate best practices and collaborate on DEI initiatives across agencies. One agency participant stated that agencies struggle to collaborate even though *"one of the things that COVID did was give us the immediacy of having to communicate."* They elaborated that, *"State government is really . . . tribal, nobody wants to share what they do best, everyone's very cautious about working together."*

2. **Stronger interagency communication – both within state government and between state government and local governments – could enhance equity initiatives.** Participants also described that coordination beyond state agencies, to include municipalities, could have an impact on more effectively advancing equity initiatives. One study participant commented, *"it would be great if there was more communication around data between municipalities and the state, because there just isn't. And the municipalities are going to have more immediate data than the state does, and that would be a wonderful thing."* Another described the challenge that *"the state feels very siloed from local initiatives that are happening to tackle the same issues [which] leads to reinventing the wheel."* One participant cited coordination between the agencies that work on housing and agencies that work on land use as an example of how *"better communication between agencies would go a long way to having more impact and reaching more people."* Community participants also described opportunities where state agency coordination would benefit the community. For example, *"if agency programs were in better alignment with each other so that it's not siloed . . . I think that's something that right now the state doesn't do nearly enough of, which is have the agencies communicate with each other and coordinate programs to maximize the benefit of the funding and the impact."*

3. **Community members described challenges in knowing who and how to contact within Connecticut, both for general government functions, as well as to report equity-related concerns.** Study participants offered examples such as describing that it is *"hard to find the right person and a contact for state staff - sometimes it is just a matter of accessibility."* A leader of a community organization commented, *"At times, we have trouble contacting anyone and/or the right person at state agencies. It must be infinitely harder for the average citizen."*

4. **Community members describe customer service challenges that contribute to inequities.** Several study participants provided examples of this, such as *"state phone numbers often have long waiting times and then lousy service"* once reached, or *"difficulty hearing back"* when follow-up is needed, emphasizing that this impacts people experiencing persistent poverty as *"folks need to take a day off to deal with certain agencies, long phone calls."* Study participants also provided feedback about the importance of physical access as an alternative to engaging with state agencies online, which does not work well for many people. But some participants noted that service centers are not necessarily open during all regular business hours (e.g., DSS was described as *"completely closed on Wednesdays"* to the public) and that it can be a challenge to coordinate public transportation, childcare, and other logistics to engage with state agencies.

5. **Study participants describe Connecticut's website as difficult to navigate, which can contribute to persisting inequities.** Study participants described the impact of website design on non-native English speakers and immigrant populations, noting that they have *"trouble connecting with immigrant populations to help them get services - e.g., I helped someone access [the state's] website, they didn't know there was a dropdown option for languages."*

   Community members describe challenges with the usability of state websites when searching for REL data. As one study participant described, *"I confess, I wouldn't know – like, the state websites – ugh – are not great and not very navigable. They're not modern. They're not well laid out. They're not user-friendly. They don't follow modern web conventions . . . I think it would be great to have [REL data] access online, readily available, through an easy-to-navigate portal. That's a challenge for governments at all levels to do that work."*

6. **State communications and application forms are not consistently translated, available in a community member's primary language, and at an accessible reading level.**
   Several study participants described inequities for non-native English speakers including challenges in understanding content and interpreting translations. One participant reported that it is *"hard to understand information given via letters, both due to lack of good translation and also due to complicated information."* Another stated*, "As an educated person, I've received letters from the state, and I can't even figure out what they're saying!"* Others described this challenge more broadly for any public communications – websites, application forms, etc. – requesting that state agencies consistently review all materials for reading level accessibility as well as quality of translation.

   State agencies and community organizations reported challenges to coordinate the timely translation of written materials. Examples study participants provided include the availability of translation across all communication modalities (e.g., "Zoom meetings are often not translated"); procurement processes (e.g., "to provide materials other than Spanish, we have to go to procurement which costs money and time") and resources (e.g., "finding ways to compensate for translation services").

Community Engagement

1. **Agencies and community members reported wide variation in agency engagement of stakeholders as it relates to advancing equity.** Some agencies maintained robust stakeholder lists and reported establishing public meetings where stakeholders were invited to engage on equity-related agenda items. Other agencies reported that they did not maintain a centralized or updated list of interested community organizations and contacts that could be used for this purpose.

   Only a few agencies had a designated staff person responsible for community outreach. One agency representative commented that the responsibility typically falls on folks who already have a full plate – and they do not have the additional capacity to organize efforts to reach the underserved.

   Some study participants provided positive feedback about state agencies' engagement with the communities they serve. Participants described how some agencies compensate consumers for their time to engage with the state. For example, *"The agency, or maybe the legislature, does pay for Medicaid consumers to attend the bi-monthly meetings of the Behavior Health Oversight Council's Coordination of Care Committee, resulting in significant representation of actual Medicaid consumers, allowing for meaningful feedback."* And while the Department of Housing is not in scope for the Program Review portion of this study, community members cited the Department of Housing as a model example of community engagement in state decisions. One study participant noted, *"The Department of Housing has been good at having focus groups to allow people with lived experiences to help shape programs and policies, especially those in the LGBTQ community."*

   Other study participants expressed concern about their perception of insufficient community engagement by state agencies in quantity, quality, and process. Challenges participants described include that engagement may not happen at all, and when it does, it may not be with the most impacted community members, e.g., **"***It seems like people with lived experience haven't been consulted before policies and programs are created. We need to bring the people living the challenges' experiences to the table.***";** and when engagement does happen, it may not be meaningful, e.g., **"***discussions with state where citizens are invited are too high-level – feel disingenuous"* and the **"***state makes decisions and then asks for input, after the decision has already been made."* Participants also described opportunities for process improvements including concerns about notice periods, deadlines for written feedback, and sufficient time for the community to meaningfully engage.

2. **Community engagement by state agencies remains hard to access for many individuals within underserved communities.** For example, one participant recommended that agencies *"support the disenfranchised voices that can't access [public] meetings. E.g., arrange child-care. Contact employers about paid-leave to attend. Get creative here. These systems that hinder the access of people to a better future are supported by the state's policies, laws, and agencies. Remove those barriers. Interrupt the racism, please. It's the only moral option."*

3. **Community members do not necessarily trust that agencies will take feedback and act upon it when community members do take the time to engage with agencies.** Examples of participants raising this concern include, *"State agencies stick to contract languages and aren't open to hearing innovative ways to use these dollars. The state expects us to run it the same way we did 30 years ago."* And "[Our community] *sees officials from all agencies ask as responses as a one-off, not a long-term partnership. Hard to build engagement that's more than surface level. There's gatekeeping within the community – you can talk to leadership, but they may not reach out to everyone on the ground. No long-term engagement beyond crisis mode.*"

Agency-Specific Program Analyses

As described in section III: Summary of the Methodology, we conducted 1-2 interviews with key contacts at each of the 23 state agencies included in the scope of the Equity Study. During the interview process, state agency leaders provided examples of equity initiatives in their agencies to highlight for the Equity Study. Each agency also identified a single program for a program-specific equity analysis. Most agencies also sent a dataset for that program or shared information about publicly available data for the program. We then reviewed data for these programs and provided detailed analyses regarding program participation and/or program outcomes. Exhibit 8 shows a list of the agencies that were included in the legislation for this study and the programs they selected for review. The full summaries of the agency equity initiatives, the program analyses, and agency-specific recommendations are provided by agency in Appendix III.

Exhibit 8: List of State Agencies and Selected Programs

State Agency (in alphabetical order)	Program Selected for Equity Study Program Analysis
Career and Technical Education System	Student Career and Technical Education Credentials
Department of Administrative Services	School Construction Grant Program
Department of Agriculture	Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement
Department of Banking	Complaint Center
Department of Children and Families	DCF Investigation/Mandated Reporter Program
Department of Consumer Protection	Complaint Center
Department of Correction	Hepatitis C Screening Program
Department of Developmental Services	Assistive Technology Program
Department of Economic and Community Development	Small Business Boost Program
Department of Education	Apex/Defined Learning Programs
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program (OSWA)
Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection	Emergency Management Performance Grant Program (EMPG)
Department of Insurance	*Unable to Participate in Program Analysis*
Department of Labor	Connecticut Youth Employment Program (CYEP)
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services	Young Adult Services (YAS)

Department of Motor Vehicles	Expired IDs and Licenses and Mobile Outreach Targeting
Department of Public Health	Associate of Public Health (APH) Community College Program/ Workforce Development
Department of Revenue Services	Earned Income Tax Credit Program (EITC)
Department of Social Services	CHESS Supportive Housing Program
Department of Transportation	Internship/Career Exploration Programs
Department of Veterans Affairs	Veteran Residential Services Program and the Sgt. John L. Levitow (JLL) Healthcare Center Admissions
Office of Higher Education	*Unable to Participate in Program Analysis*
Office of Policy and Management	Senior Center American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant Program

Community Perspectives on Equity in Connecticut

The Equity Study collected feedback from the community through focus groups with community-based organizations, focus groups with the general public, and an online public survey. The community provided substantive feedback on equity challenges and opportunities that inform the findings and recommendations included in this report. We have included detailed feedback in Appendix IV, organized by the following populations:

- Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons; Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color
- Non-native English speakers
- Persons with disabilities
- LGBTQ+
- Age (youth, seniors)
- Persons affected by persistent poverty

Note that the limitations described in section III: Summary of the Methodology apply; we would emphasize here:

- Public participation was limited to 14 focus groups (consisting of 62 CBO representatives and 18 non-CBO affiliated residents) and 66 survey responses. This is not a large enough sample to be considered representative of the entire Connecticut population and may be biased based on those who chose to participate in focus groups and the survey and those who did not participate.

- Not all public participants were able to differentiate between municipal, state, and federal agencies and programs, and many individuals provided input on topics that are outside of the control of the state of Connecticut executive branch and outside of the focus of this study.

- We were not able to verify the accuracy of any statements presented by the public, and there may be errors and omissions in their comments.

Despite these limitations, sharing these perspectives, using quotes whenever possible, elevates the voices of community members, particularly members of underserved populations. While some input may not be related to programs and services under the state's control, the feedback still can help the state understand the experiences and perspectives of members of underserved populations and the challenges, inequities, and discrimination they may face in their daily lives in Connecticut. As noted in section V: Recommendations, we highlight the importance of all agencies conducting meaningful stakeholder engagement, particularly with underserved populations. This feedback from community members is only a starting point for Connecticut's engagement of the public, elevating community voices on equity-related issues across the state.

Detailed feedback and quotes are included in Appendix IV; Exhibit 9 provides a summary.

Exhibit 9: Summary of Community Feedback

Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons; Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color

- Community members described racism as a persistent and ongoing challenge in their lives
- Community members expressed concerns about education funding and lack of teachers of color
- Community members identified barriers for those seeking to become homeowners, inequities in home sales and access to affordable housing
- Community members identified an opportunity to enhance sensitivity trainings to address racial bias and discrimination

Non-native English speakers

- Community members identified challenges accessing language supports, challenges faced by non-native English speakers who cannot read in their native language, and challenges accessing behavioral healthcare

Persons with Disabilities

- Community members described difficulties accessing supports for deaf and hard of hearing community
- Community members reported concerns with equity in special education funding
- Community members raised concerns related to stigma among communities of color when accessing special education

LGBTQ+

- Community members expressed desire for more explicit inclusion and representation in state decision-making
- Community members expressed concern about how state agencies respect gender identity
- Community members emphasized difficulty in accessing behavioral health services
- Community members described experiencing microaggressions when asserting gender identity in healthcare settings

Age

- Community members expressed concerns about youth transitioning into adult services
- Community members expressed concerns about young adults transitioning into the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as older adults who transitioned back into the workforce during and after the pandemic
- Community members described a need for more education about career paths for youth that do not require a college education

Persons affected by persistent poverty

- Community members expressed concern about "benefit cliffs" and lack of economic mobility
- Community members described barriers for those seeking to become homeowners
- Community members emphasized challenges accessing affordable housing
- Community members described challenges accessing healthcare, especially behavioral health
- Community members expressed concern about challenges those without internet face to access state forms and communications primarily available online

V. Summary of Recommendations

Based on the findings in section IV: Findings, our agency-by-agency review, and relevant community input we identified the following recommendations to advance equity for Connecticut residents. Overall recommendations for the State of Connecticut include:

A. Create a shared vision for equity in Connecticut.
B. Develop and maintain equity action plans for each agency.
C. Grow a state workforce and capacity to advance equity
D. Build on existing efforts to expand training to advance equity.
E. Improve the use of data to advance equity.
F. Establish consistent expectations for interagency and public communications.
G. Strengthen community engagement to reach underserved communities.
H. Improve agency grant processes to provide greater access to funding for underserved populations.

More detail on each recommendation is provided below. Prior to publishing this report, all participating agencies had the opportunity to review the draft report and provide feedback. Feedback received from agencies relative to their progress implementing this report's recommendations can be found in Appendix V.

A. Create a Shared Vision for Equity in Connecticut

1. **All executive branch agencies should take concrete and deliberate action to actualize the state's commitment and promise to ensure equity**, **dignity, and respect for all.** Agencies can do this by acknowledging past inequities within their agencies and actively working to address ongoing inequities.

2. **Ensure that all agencies have a similar definition of "equity" and "underserved communities."** Agencies' focus on equity should include historically marginalized racial and ethnic populations, persons who are LGBTQ+, non-native English speakers, people with disabilities, older adults, members of religious minorities, and residents of rural areas.

B. Develop and Maintain Equity Action Plans for Each Agency

1. **Establish a requirement for an *equity action plan* from each agency that is embedded into the state's planning and budgeting processes.** Connecticut has begun communicating state agency equity initiatives in the budget proposal, but this work should be expanded to ensure agencies take a holistic review of all departments, programs, and data. OPM could have a role in developing a template for the agency action plans to ensure consistency and clarity across all agencies. Lastly, the plan should be updated at least annually.

   • Equity Action Plans were a key requirement of Federal Executive Order #13985, "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government." Individual federal executive branch agency action plans will likely impact federally funded state programs, and they can also serve as models for state agency action plans. These action plans can be found at https://www.performance.gov/equity[20].

   • An example of an equity action plan in Connecticut is the Department of Agriculture's agency-wide effort to engage farmers and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in the industry on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Information about their stakeholder-driven process and action plan can be found at Diversity Equity and Inclusion Working Group (ct.gov)[21].

   • The Department of Children and Families (DCF) can also serve as an example of an agency that has been a leader in equity and racial justice in the state. Every leader in every division of the department leads a "change initiative" to address disproportionality – reviewing why certain groups are overrepresented in certain decisions/practices/programs and creating strategies to address the issues. They have worked with OPM to make sure change initiatives are aligned and have become a "go-to" agency to provide presentations/support to other agencies.

2. **Engagement with stakeholders is a critical requirement in developing priorities and strategies for equity action plans.** The Connecticut Department of Education's 2016-2021 strategic plan, "Ensuring Equity and Excellence for All Connecticut Students," was focused on equity. The newly released draft comprehensive plan for 2023-2028, based on months of stakeholder engagement and input from CSDE staff and leadership, continues to have as its central priority "ensuring equitable access to education."[22]

3. **Expand the use of equity impact assessments for new or changing policies and programs.** As part of establishing and resourcing each agency's equity action plan, agency leaders should ensure that equity impact assessments are integrated into their teams' workflows for policy and program development and operation. Multiple agencies reported using equity impact assessments. Agencies that do not do this work currently could use other agency tools as a starting point, working with the DEI leads to develop a tool, training on using the tool, and communications to agency staff.

   - One example of this tool in Connecticut is in the Department of Social Services (DSS). DSS created a "Health Equity Yardstick," grounded in best practice research, to help make equity a driving force in the design and implementation of new programs[23]. The Maternity Bundled Payment project was the first opportunity to use this tool for program design and stakeholder engagement. The tool ensures the agency explicitly considers and documents the equity impact in each phase of project or program development, including initiation, program design, implementation, and evaluation. The tool helps state leaders consider components such as the overall program and equity goals, intended populations for impact and their community context, mechanisms for community engagement and documentation/incorporation of community feedback, and data availability/data analysis.
   - The Department of Public Health also conducts equity impact analyses, through the Office of Health Equity.

C. Grow a State Workforce and Organizational Capacity to Advance Equity

1. **Identify an Equity Team at each agency.** Each agency needs to have at least one staff member, or preferably a team, who is the primary internal and external contact person for equity-related issues and initiatives. The Equity team would be responsible for facilitating conversations about equity in data, programs, and services; providing technical assistance and support to other departments and program staff, and developing internal capacity for change. This team would specifically help program staff with program planning and evaluation and ensuring equity concerns and potential impacts are considered at each step.

   - The Department of Public Health Office of Health Equity[24] is an example of this type of agency team in practice. The Office of Health Equity is working to evolve how it interacts with all DPH programs and is reframing its role as technical assistance for other departments. When the agency is developing a new policy, planning new programs or changes, and conducting program evaluations, the Office of Health Equity can help map out equity considerations.

2. **Conduct a statewide review of human resources and HR practices to identify improvements to support building a diverse and representative workforce.** Review affirmative action regulations to assess whether current regulations, standards, and processes are helping to diversify the state workforce, to address the concerns from multiple agencies that the current structure creates more barriers than opportunities. The state should also identify opportunities to streamline and automate the process for agencies to collect affirmative action data and create affirmative action plans.

3. **Communicate the state's commitment to opening pathways to state employment and ensuring criteria for state government positions/classifications do not include unnecessary degree requirements that might pose barriers to underserved populations (e.g., high school diploma, college degree).** In response to Special Act 23-19, the Department of Administrative Services studied the hiring practices of state agencies and found that approximately 92% of the job classes do not require a degree. Those positions that do are typically where a license is required to perform the work.[25] In the rollout of the final report for Special Act 23-19, the state should broadly publicize their work to remove barriers to hiring and communicate with relevant stakeholder groups. The state should also review the Connecticut Executive Branch Online Employment Center and revise the user interface, as needed, to highlight that most jobs do not require a college degree and allow job seekers to easily search for jobs based on level of education attained.[26]

4. **Increase participation in professional organizations in fields with perceived lack of diversity to expand applicant pools.** Examples of relevant professional organizations include National Association of Black Accountants[27], Association of Latino Professionals For America[28], National Black Contractors Association[29], National Hispanic Contractors Association[30].

D. Build on Existing Efforts to Expand Training to Advance Equity

1. **Enhance equity-related training, creating standardized training options that could be enhanced for each agency's area of focus.** Additional specific training opportunities identified for the workforce include cultural awareness, inclusive work environments, implicit bias, and microaggressions. Expand training to include a focus on LGBTQ+ populations in addition to race and ethnicity, as well as other demographic dimensions included in the definition of underserved communities.

2. **Ensure agencies get feedback from participants on the training provided.** Use feedback to improve training programs. Create a mechanism for agencies to connect about what training works well and does not work well and how it could be improved cross-agency.

   - Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services reported that they provide extensive LGBTQIA+ training and awareness events for its staff and community partners, including a conference for 300 participants on intersectionality and the gender continuum, webinars for its online learning management system, a training series, and lunch and learn events. They also purchased an LGBTQIA+ curriculum for state-operated Local Mental Health Authorities.

3. **Consider opportunities to jointly provide training to both state agency employers and community partners and other entities that work with state government.** For example, Connecticut could offer a monthly online diversity workshop series for both state employees and partners. Training could include guidance on both creating welcoming and respectful workplaces and ensuring inclusive and culturally responsive service delivery for diverse communities. Suggested topics: microaggressions, micro-inequities, and micro-invalidations; LGBTQ+ community inclusion, transgender and gender non-confirming inclusion, neurodiversity in the workplace, disability inclusion, multigenerational work environments, and overcoming language barriers.

E. Improve the Use of Data to Advance Equity

1. **Create a shared understanding of the key indicators of equity in Connecticut to track and report across state agencies.** Ensure measures can assess disparities across all underserved communities, not just racial and ethnic minorities. Develop processes to collect and report the data to track performance on those indicators, and publish the data in a central, publicly available site. Set population-specific goals and performance targets related to each category of outcomes and use data insights to inform policy focus and outreach efforts.

   - As part of this study, we identified key performance indicators (KPIs) for equity that have publicly available data that can be tracked over time and, based on initial analysis, they demonstrate disparities that are potentially indicative of inequities. The selected measures, shown in Appendix II, were modeled after other efforts by states and municipalities, and could be considered for a future Connecticut equity dashboard.
   - The State of Indiana has an equity dashboard through the Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity, which can be found at Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity: Equity Portal – Health Dashboard[31].
   - The State of Connecticut has a useful starting point in this work, with the recent publication of the Understanding Racial Inequities through Data Report by the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health in the Connecticut General Assembly[32]. The Commission has members from multiple executive branch agencies (Economic Development, Social Services, Energy and Environmental Protection, Education, Children and Families, Office of Policy and Management, Public Health, and Correction), community-based organizations, academia, and the General Assembly. Together, they developed a broad list of indicators for economic security, health, education, and criminal justice involvement, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, to evaluate disparities. The Commission plans to update these metrics periodically – but this data could be elevated and shared more broadly to identify needs, inform state programs and policies, and communicate progress with the public.

2. **Implement standards for REL and SOGI data that are consistent across agencies,** in accordance with emerging federal guidance. Gather input from agencies on the resources required to make these changes across applicable programs/forms/documents and provide training and support for agencies.
   - As one agency leader remarked in an interview, *"We should all be collecting data the same way – race, ethnicity – the same way."*
   - In Connecticut, Section 11 of Public Act 21-35 (An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Healthcare in Response to the Pandemic)[33] provides the policy basis for consistency in the collection and reporting of REL data for a subset of health and human services agencies, and the Office of Health Strategy (OHS) has developed reporting standards and implementation guidelines for REL data for health and human services. This work could be expanded to other agencies to ensure some consistency across all state agencies.
   - Ensure agency program managers collect and analyze data on programs to disaggregate data on program participation and program outcomes. Provide training for agencies on how to evaluate programs and show impacts across populations.
   - For programs that are federally funded, program managers often need to follow the federal guidelines and definitions for data collection and reporting, and different federal agencies and programs have different definitions. The Federal government is also working to create standards on equity in data through the Equity Data Working Group[34].

3. **Create guardrails for the ethical use of data and include them as part of training on REL and SOGI data for data owners and data users across state agencies.**
   - The state has begun this work, and OPM will be participating in the first Cohort of the University of Pennsylvania's Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP) Equity in Practice Learning Community. Connecticut will be centering racial equity in the governance and use of the P20 Win data system and other cross-agency data sets, working with the Department of Social Services and the Office of Health Strategy.[35]
   - The federal government has developed recommendations on the best practices for the collection of sexual orientation and gender identity data.[36] The federal key principles for data collection include: (1) ensure relevant data are collected and privacy protections are properly applied (2) prevent adverse adjudication (3) make responses voluntary (4) rely on self-attestation (5) be consistent and intentional. This guidance is detailed in the Federal Evidence Agenda on LGBTQI+ Equity, found at Federal Evidence Agenda on LGBTQI Equity[37].

4. **Expand publication of demographic data when agencies publish policy and program data.** Currently, agencies can share program data through OPM's Open Data Portal[38]. However, this site can be difficult to navigate to and navigate through for public users and does not consistently include demographic data in ways that equity analyses can be conducted by end users of these databases.

5. **Track and publish demographic data on the executive branch workforce for internal and external users.** This could build on the State of Connecticut Executive Branch Workforce dashboard on the Open Data Portal, accessed via Connecticut State Workforce | Connecticut Data[39]. Currently, the portal workforce page only includes state agencies where human resources responsibilities are managed by the Department of Administrative Services and the data does not include any demographic information. The state could develop a mechanism to streamline reporting of agency workforce data for affirmative action reports to this data dashboard, to simplify that effort for agencies and DAS.
   - An example of a state that provides this data publicly is the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which reports the overall composition of the executive branch workforce by gender, race, age group, veteran status, and disability status. Data includes employees, hires, promotions, and separations, and can be found at State Employee Diversity Dashboard | Mass.gov[40].
   - The Department of Education has created an Educator Diversity Dashboard to show the percentage of educators of color in each public school district and statewide, as well as a comparison of educator and student diversity, with trends over time. That data can be found via the Educator Diversity Dashboard [41].

6. **Develop mechanisms to collect and analyze applicant data from the job application database to identify opportunities to improve recruiting and hiring practices to advance equity.** The data systems should be set up so that the state can review and disaggregate data for applicants at each stage of the recruitment process (e.g., who applies, who interviews, who is offered positions, who declines).

   - Ensure job sites allow job seekers to enter data about where they learned about the job opportunities to assess how marketing/outreach strategies are translating into job applications and how strategies should be adapted to reach underserved populations about Connecticut executive branch jobs.
   - Create processes and safeguards to minimize errors in how REL data is collected on state applications so that the applicants are flagged accurately for state positions.
   - The Federal government has created an Equity Action Plan around Applicant Flow Data – the demographic information voluntarily provided when applicants apply for Federal Job opportunities. This action plan provides guidelines for how that data can be used to analyze and interpret applicant outcomes[42].

F. Establish Consistent Expectations for Interagency and Public Communications

1. **Establish a formal committee of representatives from all agency DEI teams and state leaders to review key performance indicators and coordinate agency activities and statewide initiatives.** This will help ensure a statewide perspective and an efficient interagency approach to equity.

2. **Develop a mechanism for centralized translation services in the Executive Branch for all languages and needs** – including those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Implement statewide best practices around translation for all executive branch agencies and provide training on using online tools for translation. Look for opportunities to provide assistance for translation services for nonprofits that provide programs and services on behalf of the state.

   - Department of Consumer Protection conducted and shared an analysis of the most common languages spoken in each Connecticut county. That analysis could be used to identify language translation needs for Connecticut residents.

3. **Invest in a consumer-focused digital government strategy to streamline public communications.** In the upcoming planned redesign of the state website, make it easier for the public to find the information they need and sign up for programs and services. Engage the public in the redesign of the website and use accessibility-based audits to determine potential improvements for accessibility for individuals with disabilities and individuals who speak languages other than English.

   - Connecticut's portal for business is a good example of a user-friendly website that helps private companies and business owners find information and complete applications necessary to start a new business in Connecticut, promote a business, prepare business tax filings, or apply for funding. The portal can be found at All Your Business Needs in One Place (business.ct.gov)[43] . This design of this website could be used as a model in creating user-friendly content for residents accessing other state programs and services.
   - The Commonwealth of Virginia has a good example of a consumer-focused website that helps residents find any information or applications/forms they need across state agencies; the website is located at Home | Virginia.gov.[44]

4. **Ensure consistent use of social media across agencies to communicate with the public.** This includes translating social media posts into multiple languages as applicable. Encourage cross-posting of social media across agencies – so that key Executive Branch messages reach more Connecticut residents.

5. **Continue efforts to improve internet access and access to devices to support rural residents' access to digital government.**

   - Department of Developmental Services had an example of providing lockers for their assistive technology program that enabled persons with disabilities and their families to "check out" Wi-Fi hotspots and devices for access to health care, developmental services, education and training, and work.

6. **Recognize that some residents are not comfortable relying on the internet or web-based communication.** Continue investment in telephone, mail, and in-person communication channels and resources to maximize accessibility for underserved communities.

G. Strengthen Community Engagement to Reach Underserved Communities

1. **Establish consistent expectations across executive branch agencies regarding regular community and stakeholder engagement**. As one focus group participant stated, **"***Nothing about us without us. If you're going to change a policy that's going to affect a group of people, maybe reach out to that group before you implement the change instead of after. We want to help the state do better.***"**

2. **Develop a centralized database of community organizations and media contacts in the state for outreach** that can be sorted by geographic location, policy area of focus, communities served, etc. Include diverse media contacts that can be effective in outreach for people of color and other groups. Focus on identifying community contacts for all underserved populations, including outreach to LGBTQ+ communities and community-based organizations.

3. **Provide funding for designated staff who are responsible for community engagement at each agency.** This role would have the responsibility of proactively connecting with communities and the public on agency policies and programs. They would develop relationships with influencers, community organizers, and community organizations who could serve as trusted messengers and provide outreach to residents on behalf of state agencies.

4. **Invest in compensation for resident engagement in stakeholder input sessions.** Stipends help reduce barriers for members of underserved populations and ensure that residents who have financial need can participate in stakeholder sessions. Fair compensation also indicates to residents that their input is valued by the agency representatives. The state may need to establish requirements for enhanced stakeholder engagement, create a funding source for the associated costs of stakeholder engagement (stipends, translation, facilitation), and set corresponding guardrails for agencies.

5. **Create a pathway on the state website for residents to report equity-related concerns,** either to the DEI contact at the agency level or to a statewide role/team.

H. Improve Agency Grant Processes to Provide Greater Access to Funding for Underserved Populations

1. **Review grant application materials and processes and simplify the terms and language to make them more accessible.** Where possible, draft applications in plain language and remove "insider" terms that make grant applications difficult to understand for new applicants. Involve community stakeholders in the grant development process to ensure the application is clear and accessible to all organizations, particularly organizations working with underserved communities that may not have professional grant writers on staff or grant writing experience.

2. **Update grant requirements and scoring criteria to prioritize organizations that work with underserved populations or in underserved areas.** Review data on grant program participation and outcomes before changes in requirements/scoring criteria and after to determine the impact of the change and help inform future changes.

3. **Provide more technical assistance to organizations for grant application development and program administration and reporting.** Consider opportunities to contract with nonprofit organizations and regional associations that could provide grants training and technical assistance for community-based organizations on behalf of state agencies.

4. **Consider a single grants management system software tool for all state agencies where all grant opportunities would be posted, and organizations would submit funding applications.** This would simplify the grant application process for applicants by standardizing the processes and forms across all agencies. This would improve awareness of all potential opportunities that could help fund organizations that work with underserved populations. For example, organizations that work on housing may also be interested in land conservation grants through the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) or urban community garden grants through the Department of Agriculture.
   - The Department of Education currently uses an eGMS system for grants management.
   - In the short term, the state, through OPM, could develop a comprehensive list of all state grant opportunities by agency with links to how to apply. North Carolina provides this service on its website: Grant Opportunities | nc.gov[45]

VI. Implementation Roadmap

To act on the findings and recommendations in this report, the State of Connecticut will need to assign roles and responsibilities for the next phase of equity work and develop a plan for setting priorities and taking action. The following graphic shows the key elements of an implementation road map, and more details are provided below.

Exhibit 10: Implementation Roadmap Components

Organize for Action: Identify a Champion

Prioritize: Review Recommended Actions and Set Priorities

Operationalize: Assess Readiness and Create Action Plan

Monitor: Review Progress and Seek Opportunities to Improve

Engage stakeholders at each step of process

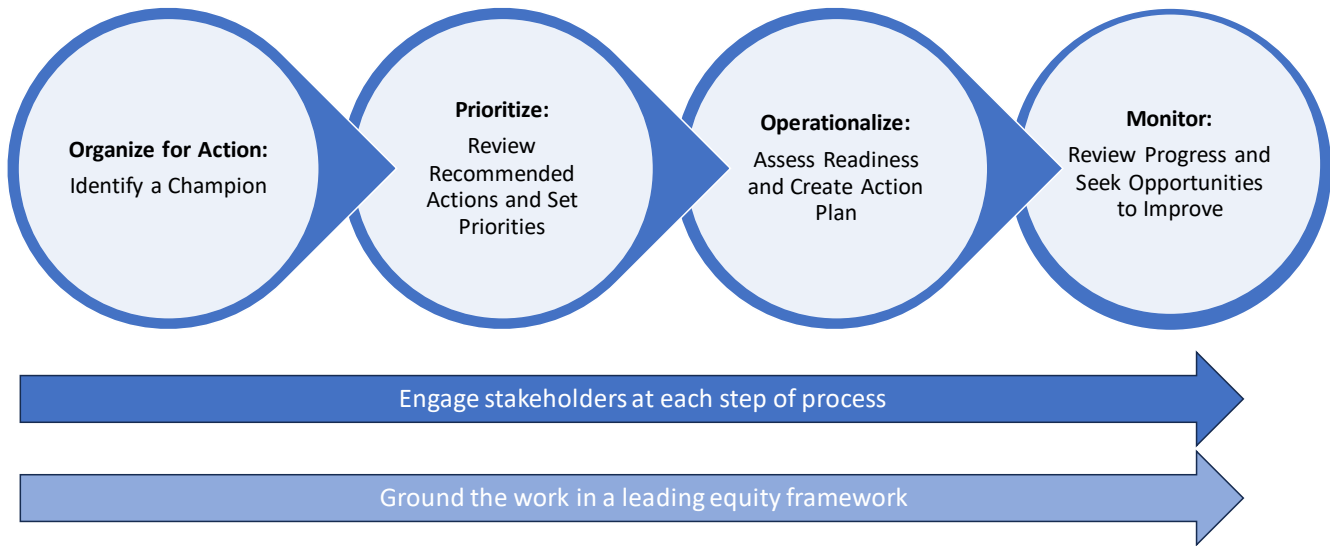Ground the work in a leading equity framework

Exhibit 11: Implementation Tasks

Road Map Component	Related Tasks
1. Organize for Action: Identify a champion for the next phase of the equity work for the state.	• Identify an agency and a person responsible for leading equity work across all executive branch agencies. • Create an interagency task force to support the champion and share in project planning and execution across all executive branch agencies. In building this team, consider state agency leaders who have been active in leading agency equity initiatives. • Request agencies identify a primary contact person and an equity team to formally coordinate equity work within each agency. It is critical that each state agency assign an agency equity team at a sufficiently high level of authority to make agency-wide changes and provide sufficient time and resources for success. • Identify a process to engage internal and external stakeholders at each step and ensure stakeholder buy in. Focus on engaging members of underserved communities and help reduce barriers for participation by providing resources to support participation (stipends, translation, facilitation). • Ensure task force regularly connects with other commissions and councils engaged in equity so that it can build on other statewide equity-related projects. • To ensure an equity lens in all planning and implementation activities, identify an equity framework and equity tools that can help center equity in planning and decision making (see Appendix I: Connecticut Equity Study Detailed Methodology for options).
2. Prioritize: Review equity work to date, and prioritize next steps	• Review statewide findings and recommendations from the Equity Study and identify short-term, intermediate and long-term priorities for the state. Consider potential alignment with federal equity requirements, such as https://www.performance.gov/equity. • Ensure the leadership of individual agencies review the Equity Study report and agency-specific program analyses and recommendations. • Consider models to develop and maintain agency-specific Equity Action Plans and determine how the state will ensure interagency consistency. • Identify opportunities to leverage existing work by the state agencies and organizations outside of Connecticut. • Establish goals and objectives for the next phase of the work based on the shared vision. • Identify the key performance indicators that the state will use to track progress.
3. Operationalize: Assess readiness for implementation and create action plans	• For chosen priorities, identify potential barriers to action - resources, organizational culture and climate, agency business processes, stakeholder buy-in. • Request agency to identify resources which may be needed to plan, implement, and maintain the agency Equity Plan, such as seeking internal and external stakeholder input, changing program design and operations, changing consumer communication and access channels, and changing data collection and reporting practices. • Conduct a fiscal impact analysis and determine if additional fiscal resources are needed or new federal/state authorities. • Create action plans with milestones, deliverables, deadlines, and accountable agencies/leads staff. • Determine if contractor support is needed to support the effort statewide or in individual agencies.
4. Monitor: Review Progress and Seek Opportunities to Adapt and Improve.	• Track progress on statewide action plan and track agency progress on agency equity plans. • Use data to assess progress on key performance indicators (KPIs).

Appendix I. Connecticut Equity Study Detailed Methodology

The Equity Study included multiple components as outlined in Exhibit 12, and the methodology for each of these components is described in detail below.

Landscape Review

At the start of the project, we conducted a landscape analysis that included:

- Identification of existing equity initiatives in the state
- Review of publicly available data, identification of potential key performance indicators (KPIs), and documentation of any baseline inequities in the state
- Research on best practices in equity assessment

Exhibit 12: Equity Study Methodology

Existing equity initiatives were identified via agency interviews with each of the state's 23 executive branch agencies. CHRO, OPM, and DAS also provided a list of ongoing equity initiatives.

For the documentation of baseline inequities, we developed a list of potential key performance indicators (KPIs) that are publicly available, can be tracked over time, were not related to specific subpopulations, and demonstrated disparities that can be indicative of inequities. We then compared these metrics across populations for Connecticut (see Appendix II).

For the best practices research, we reviewed the federal Office of Management and Budget's July 2021 report on equity assessment tools, evaluated additional equity assessment tools, and developed a list of promising practices to build a Connecticut framework. As shown in Exhibit 13 below, each of the tools we considered measured different broad elements of equity: framework, historical context, qualitative measurement, landscape assessment, and impact measurement. A few also assessed promising practices for solution development. MITRE provided the most comprehensive assessment, including all elements, but did not focus on solution development.

Exhibit 13: Promising Practices in Equity Assessment

	Source/Framework	Framework	Historical Context	Qualitative Measurement	Stakeholder Engagement	Landscape Assessment	Predictive Modeling®	Promising Practices for Solution Development
OMB Report	MITRE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Race Forward				✓		✓	✓
	GARE	✓	✓			✓	✓	
	Opportunity Atlas					✓	✓	
	Portland Budge Assessment Tool					✓		
	Sludge Audit				✓	✓		
	Brandeis Policy Assessment							✓
	Health Impart Assessments							✓

We considered learnings from these assessment tools in the development of both our qualitative assessment tools (including agency interview guides, focus group guides and survey tools) and our quantitative approaches (agency program analyses and KPI review).

Agency Interviews

We developed an interview guide, reviewed and approved by the CHRO, which included questions regarding:

- Current equity initiatives at the agency
- The impact of federal-level or statewide equity initiatives on the work of the agency
- Specific strategies to address equity within the organization and among the staff (hiring, recruitment, training)
- Potential programs for review for the Equity Study, and how they currently work and could be improved
- Performance metrics used to gauge the success of programs/key initiatives and the adequacy of data collection, data analysis, and reporting
- Existing strategies for communications and outreach to Connecticut residents and underserved populations
- Recommendations for actions the state and/or the agency could take to improve equity

The CHRO identified lead contacts at each agency for the Equity Study and requested assistance from the lead contacts in determining appropriate interviewees for each agency and scheduling interview sessions. We scheduled and conducted 1-2 interviews per agency – connecting with a total of 66 Executive branch agency staff members from March through May of 2023. We documented interview notes and incorporated agency staff input into both the agency-specific sections of the report and state-level findings and recommendations.

Program Analysis

During the interview process, we asked agency staff to identify a single program for analysis for the Equity Study. While the program selection was at the discretion of the agency, we provided the following suggested criteria for choosing a program:

- o The program with the largest number of people served
- o A program with a significant impact on the lives of those served
- o A program specifically designed to achieve equity
- o A program with known disparities in outcomes or barriers to access

Agencies then identified a program and provided program data to FCG and/or N1, FCG's analytic partner for the Equity Study and an approved subcontractor by the State of Connecticut. N1 then analyzed the program data – looking at the data for the individuals or communities served by the program, including factors such as geography, race/ethnicity, age, and income. Of the 23 state agencies that were part of the study, 21 agencies sent data sets, links to publicly available data, or other follow-up information about the selected programs for analysis.

Community-Based Organization Focus Groups

We worked with the CHRO to develop a list of community-based organizations (CBOs) to invite to a series of focus groups for the Equity Study. The list was based on a comprehensive outreach list from the Chief of Education and Outreach for the Department of Consumer Protection, input from state agency staff during the interview process, and additional FCG/CHRO research. The CHRO invited CBOs to register for any of the 9 focus groups, although we tried to encourage registration based on specific topic areas to facilitate deeper conversations. While focus groups were organized by topic area, all topics were welcome at all focus groups. At the request of the Department of Labor, we also conducted one focus group with regional workforce development board representatives. We created a standard list of questions for the CBO focus groups. The following is a list of all the CBO focus groups, topics, the number of registrations, and the final attendance count.

Exhibit 14: CBO Focus Groups and Topic Areas

Date	Time	Topic Area	Registration	Attendance
6-Jun	3-4 pm	Environmental & Transportation	10	6
8-Jun	10-11 am	Education, Youth, and Literacy	6	4
13-Jun	10:30-11:30 am	Education, Youth, and Literacy	12	8
13-Jun	2:30-3:30 pm	Social Justice & Justice System	4	3
14-Jun	11:30-12:30 pm	Social Justice & Justice System	9	5
15-Jun	10:30-11:30 am	Social Services, Public Health, Mental Health	13	8
15-Jun	1:30-2:30 pm	Social Services, Public Health, Mental Health	14	7
20-Jun	10:30-11:30 am	Labor, Economic Empowerment & Community Development	15	5
20-Jun	3-4 pm	Labor, Economic Empowerment & Community Development	15	9
29-Jun	11-12 pm	Department of Labor	7	7
Total			**105**	**62**

Resident Information Sessions and Focus Groups

In February and March 2023, we conducted three Public Information meetings for the Equity Study – to introduce the project goals, the approach, and opportunities for public engagement. In June and July 2023, we also offered four focus group opportunities for Connecticut residents, including two focus groups that included a Spanish interpreter. Potential participants could also request ASL interpretation when they registered, but no residents requested ASL interpretation.

The CHRO promoted the focus groups on social media, on the state website, and through the CBO outreach list. There was no compensation for participation, which potential participants voiced as a constraint.

Exhibit 15: Resident Focus Group Information

Date	Time	Language	Attendance
27-Jun	1-2 pm	English	8
27-Jun	6-7 pm	English	1
11-Jul	6:30-7:30 pm	Bilingual (English/Spanish)	7
20-July	2-3 pm	Bilingual (English/Spanish)	2
Total			**18**

Resident Survey

Working with the CHRO, we developed an online survey for Connecticut residents. The survey remained open on the Equity Study website for the duration of the study. The online survey was available in both English and Spanish. As of August 23, 2023, 66 residents had responded to the English survey and 5 residents had responded to the Spanish survey. The English survey had a 39% completion rate – meaning respondents completed on average 39% of the questions. The Spanish survey had an 80% completion rate. The survey was available as a paper survey through libraries, town halls, community centers, senior centers and through the CHRO Outreach Coordinator. We received one paper copy response.

Study limitations

Findings and recommendations of this study reflect the implementation of promising practices and are the culmination of data gathering from community engagement, agency engagement, and historical context. However, it is important to note that:

- The scope of this report is limited to the executive branch of Connecticut's state government and specifically the 23 executive branch agencies named in Section 81 of Public Act No. 21-2.
- State contracting and procurement were not in the scope of this study. A separate disparity study will examine whether Connecticut's procurement program achieves the State's goal of identifying and hiring small contractors and minority business enterprises and will be completed in 2024.
- Data collection for this study was as robust as feasible within the scope of this engagement (approximately 9 months). Findings and recommendations are based on 1-2 interviews with each agency, 14 focus groups with community organizations and Connecticut residents, and responses received via a survey available online and open to the public for 8 months.
- The research was both qualitative (collecting data from interviews, surveys, focus groups) and quantitative (analyzing agency program data and key performance indicators/metrics). For our qualitative input from the community it is important to also note that:
  - Public participation in focus groups was limited to 62 CBO representatives and 18 non-CBO affiliated residents and 66 survey responses. This is not a large enough sample to be considered representative of the entire Connecticut population and may be biased based on those who chose to participate in focus groups and the survey and those who did not participate.
  - Not all public participants were able to differentiate between municipal, state, and federal agencies and programs, and many individuals provided input on topics that are outside of the control of the state of Connecticut executive branch and outside of the focus of this study.
  - We were not able to verify the accuracy of any statements presented by the public, and there may be errors and omissions in their comments.

Appendix II: Connecticut's Starting Point: Key Indicators of Advancing Equity

As part of the initial landscape analysis for the equity study, we identified several key performance indicators (KPIs) that show Connecticut's starting point on equity and that the state could use to track progress on equity over time. These KPIs all come from publicly available data sets, are not narrowly related to a specific subpopulation, and based on initial analysis, demonstrate disparities that are potentially indicative of inequities. Additionally, each identified measure has been employed by another state or a municipality to assess equity. For example, the City of Dallas has used similar indicators to track improvement in equity in several areas impacted by the government and posts the data on a dashboard on the city website. In our recommendations, we propose that the State of Connecticut determine KPIs to track for equity, measure progress over time, and post data on the selected metrics on a public dashboard. The KPIs provided in this section offer a starting point for that discussion.

Exhibit 16 provides a summary of the ten KPIs we reviewed to assess Connecticut's starting point on equity. The "Connecticut Disparities" summarized in Exhibit 16 are each addressed in detail for each KPI below the table. In summary these indicators suggest:

- There appears to be substantive racial and ethnic disparities across virtually every available measure in economic opportunity, education, housing, and healthcare & public health.
- These racial and ethnic disparities appear to be persistent over the past three to five years. Although some measures suggest modest improvements in KPI performance over time among Black and Hispanic populations, the improvements are generally small relative to the underlying performance gaps.
- Available data is mostly limited to race/ethnicity –there is limited data available to support disparity measurement across other underserved communities in Connecticut.

Exhibit 16: Connecticut Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Advancing Equity

Dimension of Inequity	Metric	Connecticut Disparities
Economic Opportunity	KPI #1: Poverty rate	Black individuals are **twice as likely to experience poverty** when compared to white individuals; Hispanic individuals are **nearly three times as likely**[49]
	KPI #2: Children living in high-poverty areas	**18% of Black children** and **17% of Hispanic children** live in high-poverty areas; only 1% of white children do[50]
	KPI #3: Earnings per dollar relative to white workers	**Black workers earn $0.70** and **Hispanic workers earn $0.63** when compared to a white worker earning $1.00[51]
	KPI #4: Unemployment rate	Black and Hispanic individuals **experience unemployment 60% more than** white individuals[52]
Education	KPI #5: High school students not graduating on time	Black and Hispanic students are **nearly three times as likely to not graduate on time** when compared to white students[53]
	KPI #6: Young adults ages 18 – 24 who are enrolled in or have completed college	Black and Hispanic young adults are **25% less likely to be enrolled in or have completed college** when compared to white young adults[54]

Housing	KPI #7: Number of Homeowners per 100k population	Black individuals are **half as likely to be homeowners** when compared to white individuals; Hispanic individuals are **one-third as likely**[55]
Healthcare & Public Health	KPI #8: Infant mortality per 1,000 live births	Black infants are **nearly three times as likely to die before their first birthday** compared to white infants; Hispanic infants are twice as likely to die before their first birthday[56]
	KPI #9: Adults who report fair or poor health status	Black and Hispanic individuals **report fair or poor health status around one and a half times more** than white individuals[57]
	KPI #10: Adults who report not having a personal doctor/healthcare provider	Black individuals are **nearly twice as likely to not have a personal doctor** when compared to white individuals; Hispanic individuals are **nearly four times as likely to not have a personal doctor**[58]

User Guide to Data Graphics and Tables

The following data graphics and tables provide additional information for each of the 10 KPIs above. Note that the Race, Ethnicity, and Language (REL) categories shown for the key indicators come directly from the data sources associated with each metric and are not consistent across metrics.

The following acronyms and terms are used in the data tables.

- *Annual Growth:* In this appendix, we have used the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) as annual growth to analyze trends in data. CAGR describes the rate at which a value would change over each interval of time from the starting value to the ending value if it were steady. For example, a CAGR value of 1% over 5 years shows an average change of 1% each year.
- *AAPI:* Asian-American and Pacific Islander
- *AANHPI:* Asian-American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander
- *AI/AN:* American Indian/Alaska Native
- *Multiple:* Defined by the data source itself and not calculated by our analyses. Individual sources can be examined for more in-depth definitions and methodology.

Dimension of Inequity: Economic Opportunity

Currently, several gaps exist between the white population and other populations in key indicators of economic opportunity. Key takeaways include:
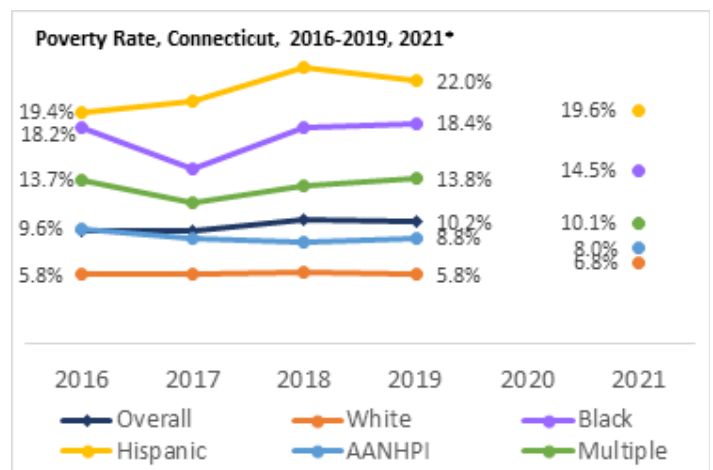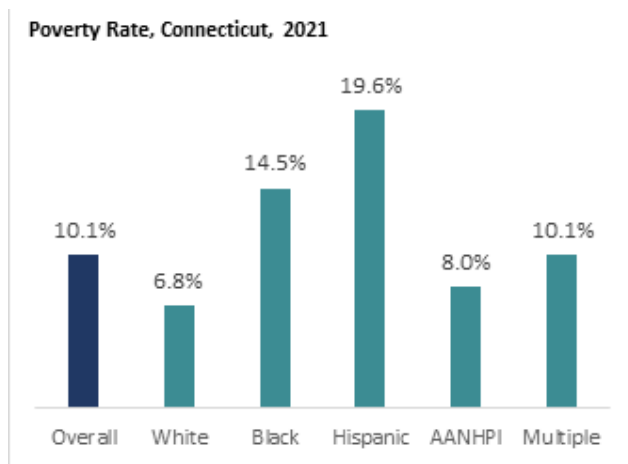
KPI #1: Poverty Rate: The poverty rate for Black (14.5%) and Hispanic (19.6%) groups is higher than both the poverty rate for the white population and the overall population. Black individuals are twice as likely to experience poverty when compared to white individuals; Hispanic individuals are nearly three times as likely[59] .

KPI #2: Children Living in High-Poverty Areas: 18% of Black children and 17% of Hispanic children live in high-poverty areas compared to only 1% of white children, from 2016-2020[60].

KPI #3: Earnings: Black and Hispanic residents earned less compared to white residents on a per dollar basis and yearly basis. Black and Hispanic residents made 0.70 cents and 0.63 cents per dollar relative to white workers in 2017-2019[61]. The median yearly wages of inhabitants who identify as Hispanic or Black were lower than those of all other racial/ethnic groupings, at 57% and 64%, respectively, of those of white non-Hispanic people.[62]

KPI #4: Employment: Overall, Black and Hispanic residents experience unemployment 60% more than white residents in Connecticut. Black men were less likely than men from all other ethnic groups to be employed full-time, but Black women were more likely than women from other racial/ethnic groups to be employed full-time.[63]

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KPI #1: Poverty Rate[64]

Poverty Rate, Connecticut, 2021

Poverty Rate, Connecticut, 2016-2019, 2021*

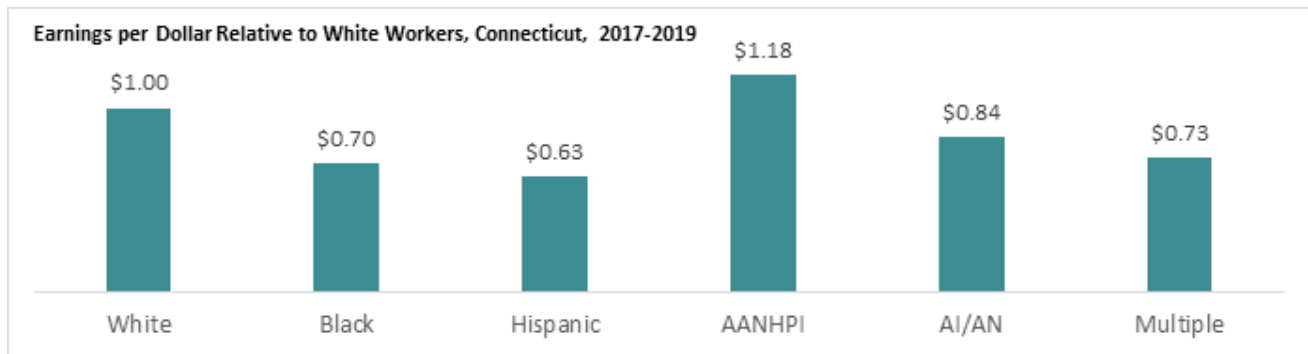|	Overall	White	Black	Hispanic	AANHPI	Multiple
Growth Rate 2016-2021	1%	3%	-4%	0%	-4%	-6%

*No data available for 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic.

**KPI #2:** Children Living in High Poverty Areas, Five-Year Estimates[65]

Children Living in High Poverty Areas, Connecticut, 2017-2021

Children Living in High Poverty Areas, Connecticut, 2014-2021
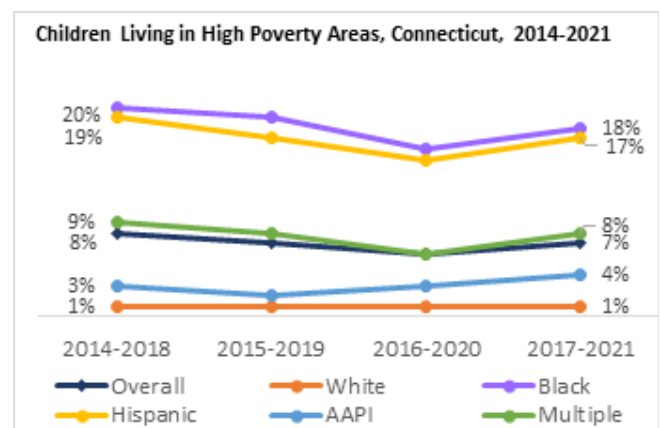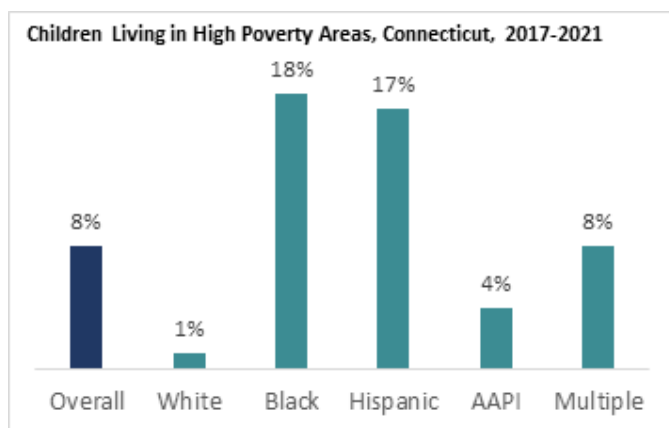
	Overall	White	Black	Hispanic	AAPI	Multiple
Growth Rate 2014-2021	-4%	0%	-3%	-4%	10%	-4%

KPI #3: Earnings per Dollar Relative to White Workers, Three-Year Estimate [66]

Earnings per Dollar Relative to White Workers, Connecticut, 2017-2019

White	Black	Hispanic	AANHPI	AI/AN	Multiple
$1.00	$0.70	$0.63	$1.18	$0.84	$0.73

Note: Trend data was not available on the data source website for Key Performance Indicator #3, but Internet Archive was used to confirm trend stability.

KPI #4: Unemployment Rate, Connecticut [67]

Unemployment Rate, Connecticut, 2022 Q2

Overall	White	Black	Hispanic	AAPI
4.2%	3.8%	6.1%	6.1%	3.8%
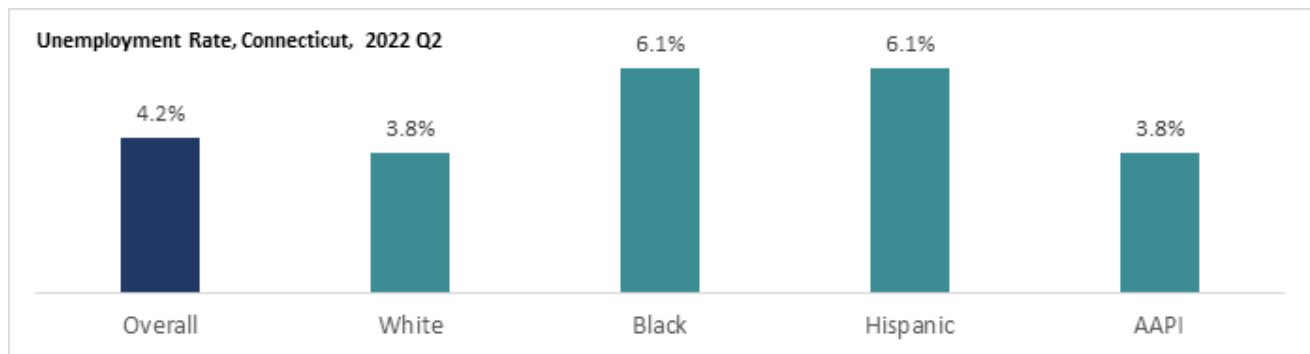
	Overall	White	Black	Hispanic	AAPI
Percentage Point Change From 2020 Q1 -2022 Q2	+0.8	+0.7	+0.6	+2.0	+1.1

*Note: Trend data was not available on the source website to inform CAGR calculation, but the change in percentage point from 2020 Q1 to 2022 Q2 was available.
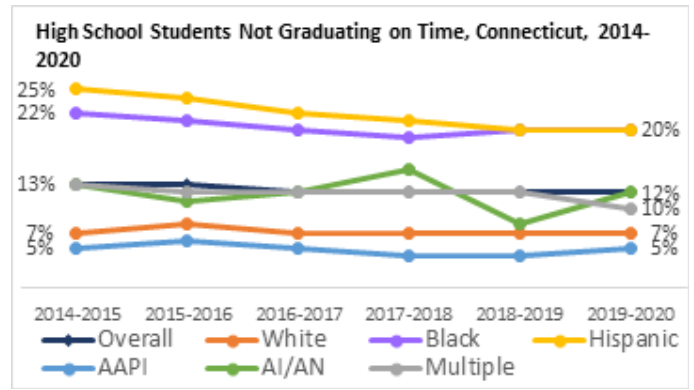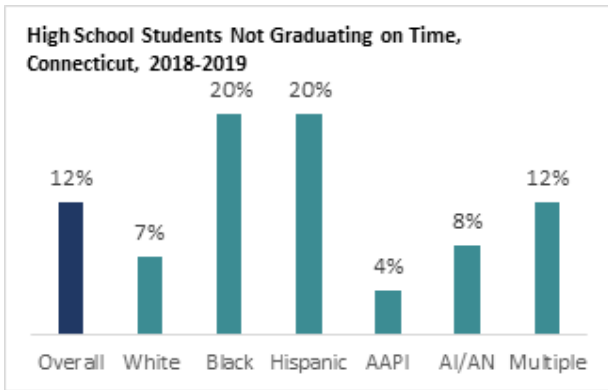
Dimension of Inequity: Education

Equity gaps also exist in Connecticut's educational landscape.

KPI #5: On-time graduation: One in five Black and Hispanic students do not graduate high school on time compared to 7% of white students.

KPI #6: College completion: Asian residents were more likely to have graduated high school than any other racial/ethnic group. In contrast to white non-Hispanic and Asian people, Hispanic or Black residents had the lowest rates of obtaining at least a high school diploma and the lowest rates of obtaining a bachelor's degree: Black and Hispanic young adults are 25% less likely to be enrolled in or have completed college when compared to white young adults.[68]

KPI #5: High School Students Not Graduating on Time, Two-Year Estimate[69]

High School Students Not Graduating on Time, Connecticut, 2018-2019

High School Students Not Graduating on Time, Connecticut, 2014-2020

	Overall	White	Black	Hispanic	AAPI	Ai/AN	Multiple
Growth Rate 2014-2020	-2%	0%	-2%	-4%	0%	-2%	-5%

**KPI #6:** Young Adults Ages 18 - 24 Who Are Enrolled in or Have Completed College[70]

Young Adults Ages 18-24 Who Are Enrolled in or Have Completed College, Connecticut, 2019

Young Adults Ages 18-24 Who Are Enrolled in or Have Completed College, Connecticut, 2014-2019
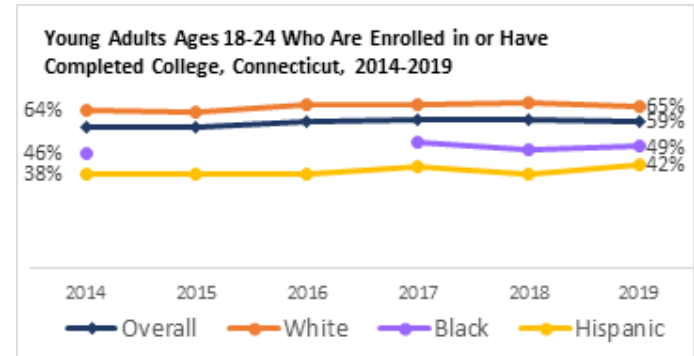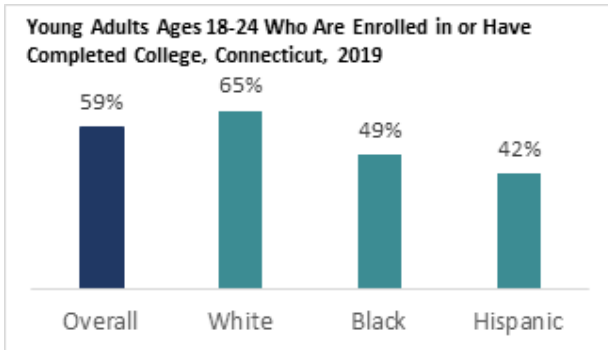
	Overall	White	Black	Hispanic
Growth Rate 2014-2019	1%	0%	1%	2%

Dimension of Inequity: Housing

There are also notable disparities in homeownership.

Equity KPI #7: Homeowners: In Connecticut, white residents are more likely to be homeowners than residents of other races/ethnicities. Black individuals are half as likely to be homeowners when compared to white individuals; Hispanic individuals are one-third as likely.[71]

KPI #7: Number of Homeowners per 100k Population, Five-Year Estimate[72]

Number of Homeowners per 100k Population, Connecticut, 2015-2019

Number of Homeowners per 100k Population, Connecticut, 2013-2019
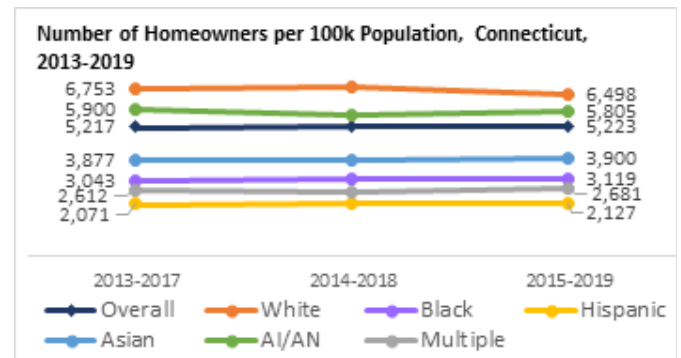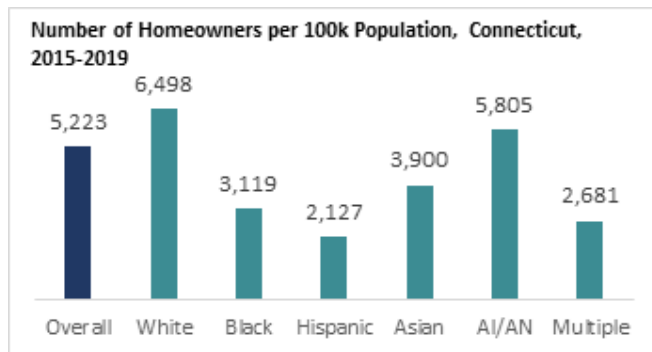
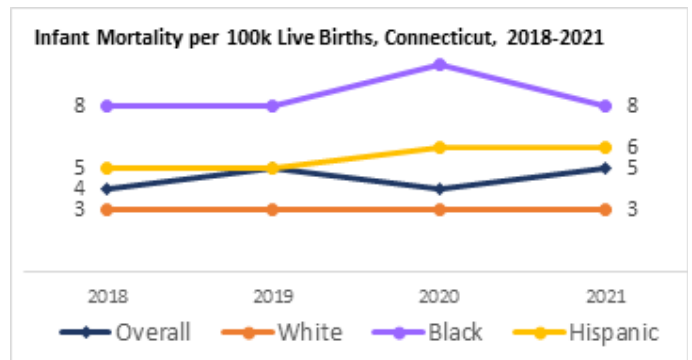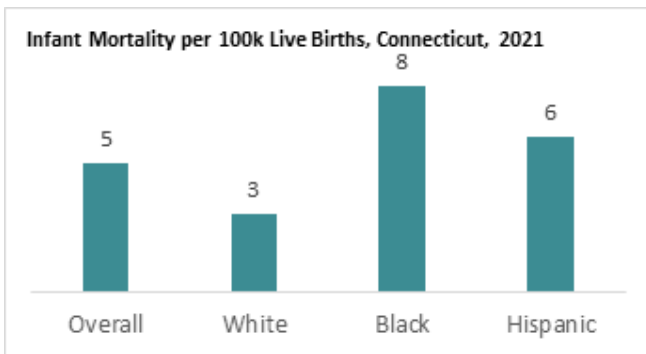|	Overall	White	Black	Hispanic	AAPI	Ai/AN	Multiple
Growth Rate 2013-2019	0%	-2%	1%	1%	0%	-1%	1%

Dimension of Inequity: Health

Connecticut has well-documented health-related disparities, and there are two recent reports that provide additional data on health indicators – an August 2023 Data Haven report on "Health Equity in Connecticut 2023" and the July 2023 Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health report to the Connecticut General Assembly. The Data Haven report states "Across Connecticut, in issues ranging from food insecurity to discrimination, risks from asthma to depression, and poor birth outcomes to premature and elevated mortality, Black populations fare measurably worse than white populations. Low-income, Latino, and urban populations also experience significant disadvantages compared to white populations in the state, at different magnitudes."[73] While many of these health-related measures could be considered by Connecticut to measure equity, the following KPIs included focus on health access and health outcomes:

Equity KPI #8: Fetal and infant mortality: Fetal mortality is more than twice as high—and infant mortality three times as high—for Black babies when compared to white babies in Connecticut. Not included in the exhibit below, but important to note, the overall maternal mortality rate is 24.9 per 100,000 live births and has risen in the past several years. Latino and Black people are more than two and three times more likely, respectively, to suffer a pregnancy-associated death.[74]

Equity KPI #9: Self-reported health status: A higher proportion of Black (17%) and Hispanic (18%) residents reported fair or poor health status than white residents (11%).

Equity KPI #10: Adults with a healthcare provider: Black individuals are nearly twice as likely to not have a personal doctor when compared to white individuals; Hispanic individuals are nearly four times as likely to not have a personal doctor. Almost one-quarter of Hispanic residents reported not having a primary care physician or healthcare provider, a higher proportion than any other race or ethnicity. White residents least frequently reported not having a healthcare provider or doctor.[75]

KPI #8: Infant Mortality per 1,000 Live Births[76]

Infant Mortality per 100k Live Births, Connecticut, 2021

Infant Mortality per 100k Live Births, Connecticut, 2018-2021

	Overall	White	Black	Hispanic
Growth Rate 2018-2021	8%	0%	0%	6%

KPI #9: Adults Who Report Fair or Poor Health Status[77]

Adults Who Report Fair or Poor Health Status, Connecticut, 2021

Adults Who Report Fair or Poor Health Status, Connecticut, 2016-2021*
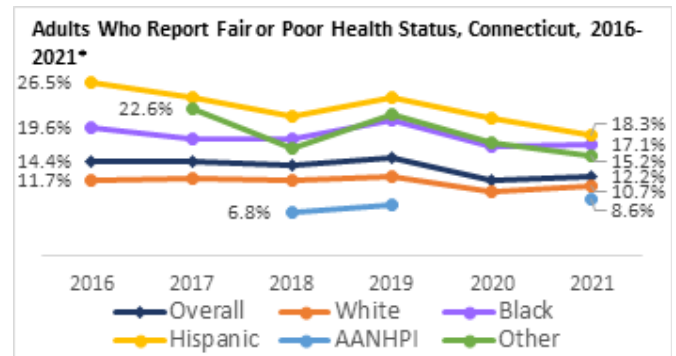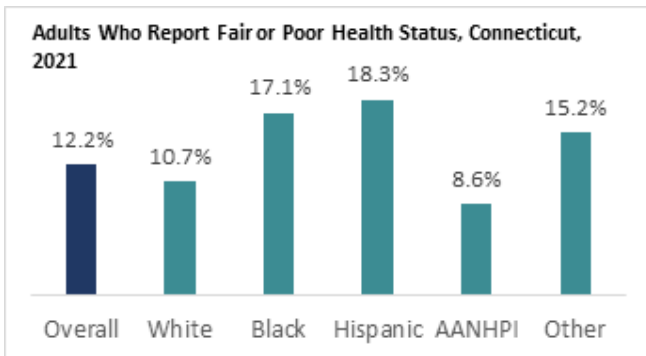
	Overall	White	Black	Hispanic	AANHPI	Other
Growth Rate 2016-2021	-3%	-2%	-3%	-7%	8%	-9%

*Note: Missing data years due to lack of sufficient categorical data. Because of lack of 2016/2017 data for AANHPI and Other categories, those growth rate values do not represent a full 5 year window.

KPI #10: Adults Who Report Not Having a Personal Doctor/Healthcare Provider[78]

Adults Who Report Not Having a Personal Doctor / Healthcare Provider, Connecticut, 2021

Adults Who Report Not Having a Personal Doctor / Healthcare Provider, Connecticut, 2016-2021*

Growth Rate 2016-2021	Overall	White	Black	Hispanic	AANHPI	Other
	-8%	-9%	-3%	-6%	-12%	-29%

*Note: Missing data years due to lack of sufficient categorical data. Because of lack of data for AANHPI and Other categories, those growth rate values do not represent a full 5 year window.

In addition to the health access and outcomes measures included above, the Data Haven report documented that people of color in Connecticut experience higher levels of chronic diseases, depression, mortality due to COVID-19, fatal overdoses, and gun violence compared to the white population. For example:

- Heart disease and cancer are two of the leading causes of death statewide and nationwide. Black adults ages 50 to 64 are twice as likely to report having hypertension compared to white adults in the same age range. Black people have elevated mortality rates due to heart disease and cancer compared to white people, as do people in urban areas compared to the state average. These are often attributed to preventable risks related to smoking and low levels of physical activity; prior cardiovascular, respiratory, or other medical complications; and limited access to healthcare or health resources.[79]

- Statewide, low-income adults report feeling chronically depressed at five times the rate of high-income adults; Black and Latino adults report chronic depressive symptoms at more than 1.3 times the rate of white adults; and adults under 35 at twice the rate of adults 65 and older.[80]

- Mortality due to COVID-19 was more than twice as high for Black residents of Connecticut compared to white residents, and about twice as high for residents of urban areas compared to suburban areas. Within urban areas of Connecticut, even white residents had worse COVID-related mortality than the statewide white population.[81]

- Although fatal overdoses happen in every town in Connecticut, many are concentrated in urban areas, with overdose mortality rates about 2.5 times higher in Hartford and Waterbury compared to the state average, and nearly 7 times higher than the average in Stamford. [82]

- In 2022, 15 percent of adults in Connecticut reported being afraid of gun violence, but these values ranged from 5 percent in suburban areas to 42 percent in the state's large cities.[83]

Appendix III: Individual Agency Analyses

This appendix documents findings and recommendations for each of the 23 state agencies that were part of the Equity Study. Each agency analysis has a similar format:

- A brief overview of the agency, including leadership, number of staff, budget, and background/mission.
- Summary of agency equity activities reported by the agency during the interview process.
- Overview of the program selected by agency leadership for review as part of the Equity Study.
- Analysis of the selected program, reviewing program participation and/or program outcomes and highlighting equity insights. 21 of the 23 agencies provided program data for review or shared information about publicly available data for the program.
- Summary of recommendations, including specific recommendations for the selected program and overall recommendations for the agency as a whole. Overall agency recommendations are informed by the agency interviews and the study focus groups.

Connecticut Technical Education and Career System

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Executive Director: Dr. Ellen Solek

Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 2,080[1]

FY23 Appropriation Budget:
$170,077,833[2]

Background: Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) prepares trade-bound students to meet the skilled workforce needs in Connecticut through trade and academic programming. CTECS was originally part of the Connecticut Department of Education but became an independent school district in 2022 so that it could function more like a local education authority (LEA) for the 11,200 full-time high school students in the state's 17 career and technical education high schools, and over 3,000 adult education students in aviation and apprenticeship programs.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- CTECS is partnering with the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), the Hartford-based regional education service center that provides training and assistance to public school systems, to assess recruitment and hiring practices and develop strategies to increase the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of teachers and staff. They plan to update the language of public documents (e.g., job postings, mission statement, etc.) to reflect their focus on hiring and retaining diverse staff that is reflective of students. They are also developing strategies for recruiting from Puerto Rico and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).
- CTECS is working with Partners for Education Leadership (PEL), a nonprofit organization that helps schools promote equity and address achievement gaps. PEL (formerly the Center for School Change) will continue to provide training on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) for central office staff, school administrators, and teaching staff in all high schools. In the 2023-24 school year, CTECS plans to expand the partnership to include a student leadership component: 25 students from each high school will meet off-site to discuss equity-related issues in their schools.
- CTECS has engaged Dr. Derrick Gay, a strategic consultant, to conduct a book study and training on "Finding Your Blind Spot," to help all central office staff and building leadership understand bias and how bias can impact student programming and student achievement.
- CTECS is planning to release an RFP to conduct an Equity Audit across all schools.

Program Selected for this Study

All CTECS students must meet the same comprehensive academic competencies required for all Connecticut high school students and will earn a high school diploma. CTECS students must also complete a rigorous trade technology course of study and earn a Career and Technical Education (CTE) credential in their field, such as a state occupational licensure or other industry-recognized credential. The CTECS career technical education programs include Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources; Architecture and Construction; Arts, AV Technology, and Communications; Health Technology; Hospitality and Tourism; Human Services; Information Technology; Law, Public Safety, Corrections, and Security; Manufacturing; Marketing, Sales, and Services; Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics.

CTECS reports data on student outcomes and student demographic data to Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), and CTECS data is posted on the EdSight data portal like other Connecticut public high schools and public school districts. EdSight provides data on CTECS graduation rates, performance on state summative assessments, college entrance, and persistence – disaggregated by gender, race/ethnicity, multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and free/reduced lunch eligibility. However, CTECS does not report data on the important CTE credentials earned by students. For this study, CTECS selected reviewing credential data across the same student subpopulations as its program of focus.

Program Analysis

CTECS Exhibit 1 shows the breakdown of the student populations at each CTECS high school by race. Most schools are majority white or Hispanic. Four schools, circled in red, have more than 200 Black students (A.I. Prince Bullard Havens, Eli Whitney, and W.F. Kaynor).

CTECS Exhibit 1: CTECS Schools Breakdown by Race [5]
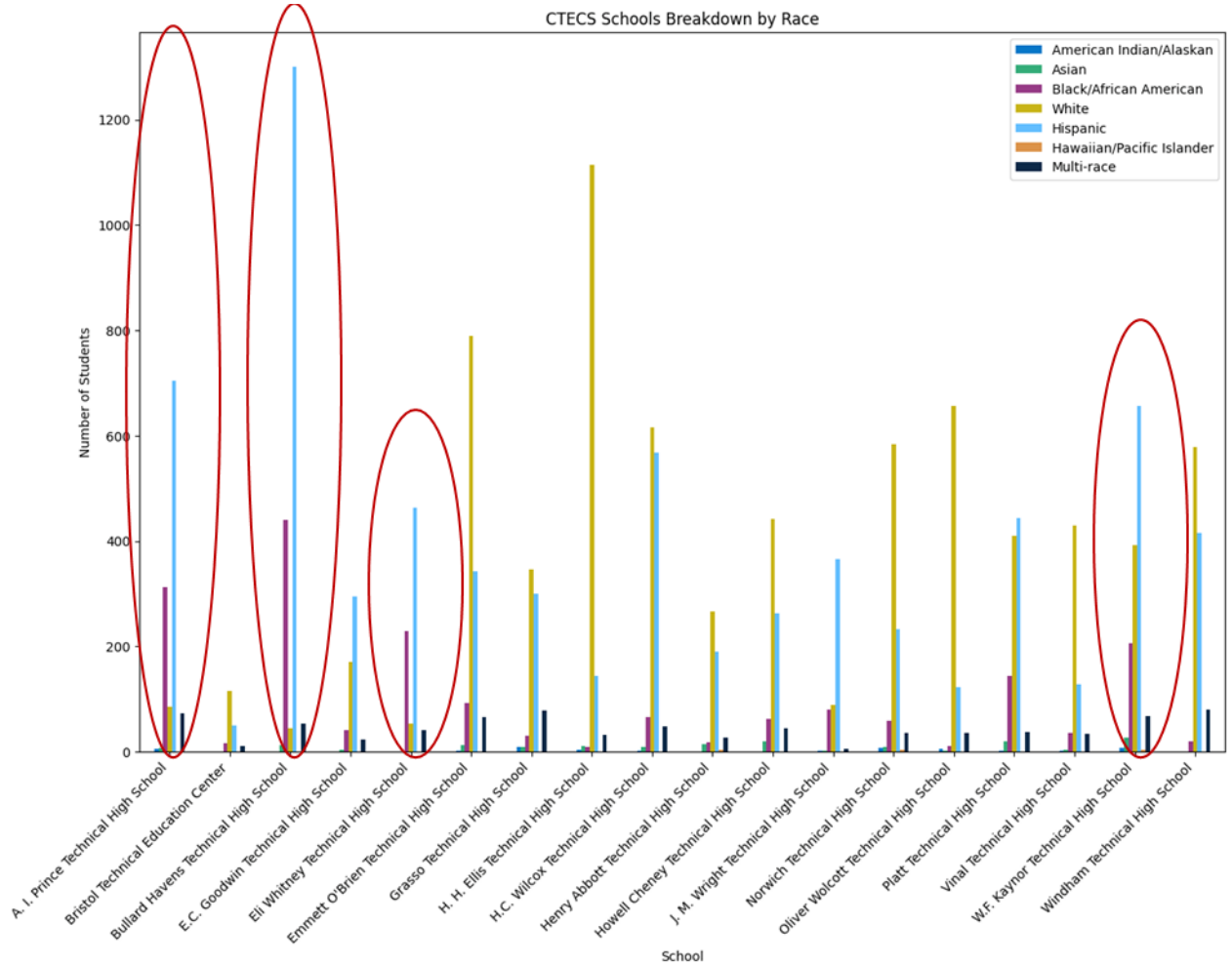
Across the entire CTECS district, the number of credentials earned has been steadily increasing over the last five years for all groups, but the majority of credentials are earned by white students and Hispanic students, as shown in CTECS Exhibit 2.

CTECS Exhibit 2: CTECS Credentials Earned Breakdown by Race Over Time [5]
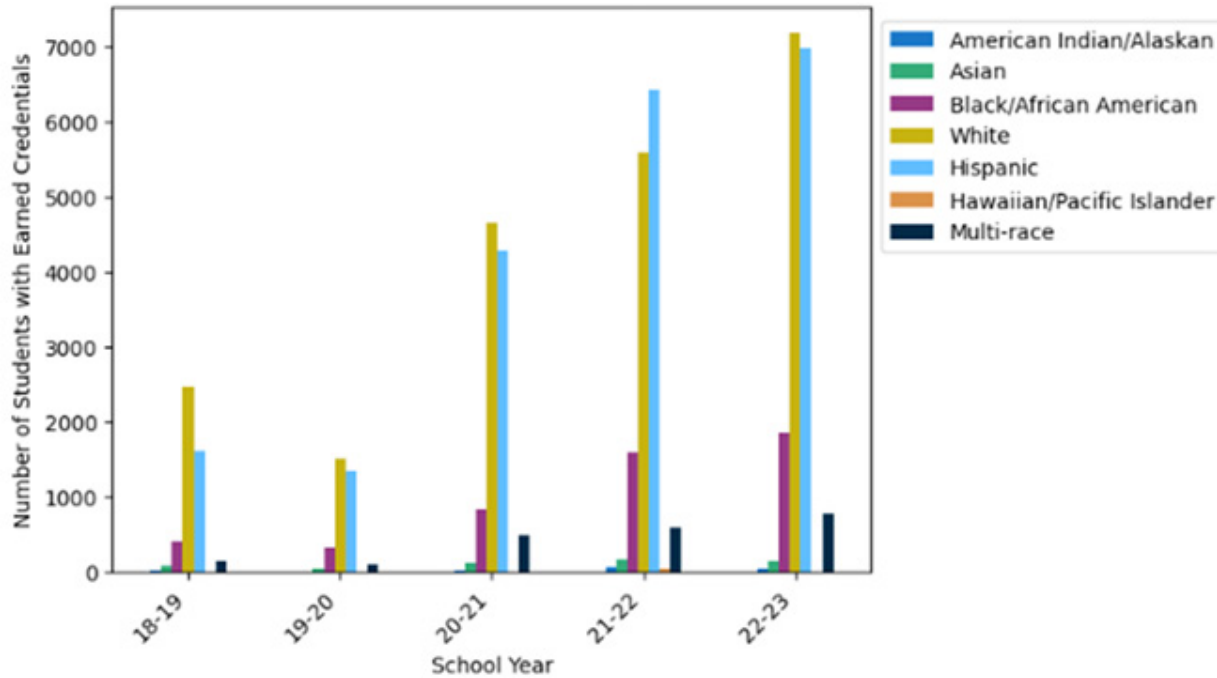
The analysis also focused on a few key credentials that have high participation and are associated with higher skill, in-demand, higher wage job positions in Connecticut: Automotive Service Excellence (ASE), Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), and National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS).

CTECS Exhibit 3 shows the ASE credentials earned over time, with male and white students being the most represented populations receiving ASE credentials.

CTECS Exhibit 3: ASE Student Certification Credentials Breakdown by Gender and Race Over Time [5]
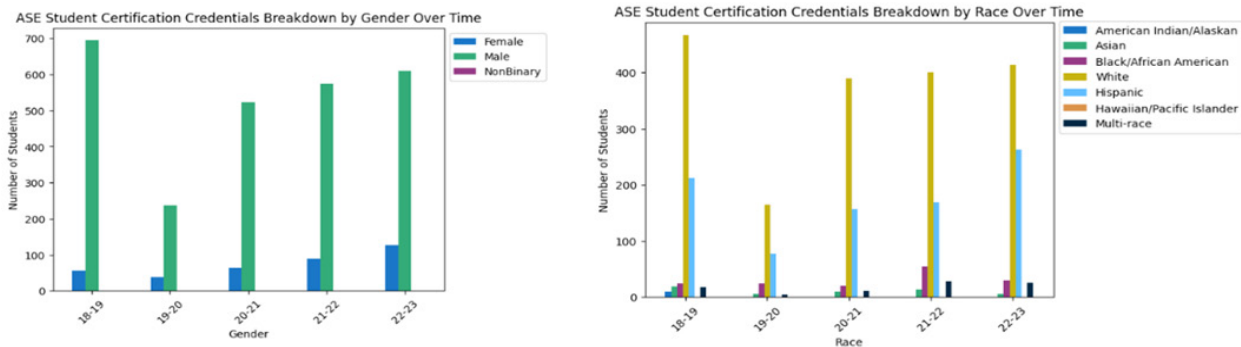
CTECS Exhibit 4 shows CNA gender and race distribution over time, with female students being significantly higher than male and non-binary students. White and Hispanic students had a similar rate of participation, but the 21-22 school year showed a significant increase in the number of students receiving their CNAs, specifically Hispanic students.

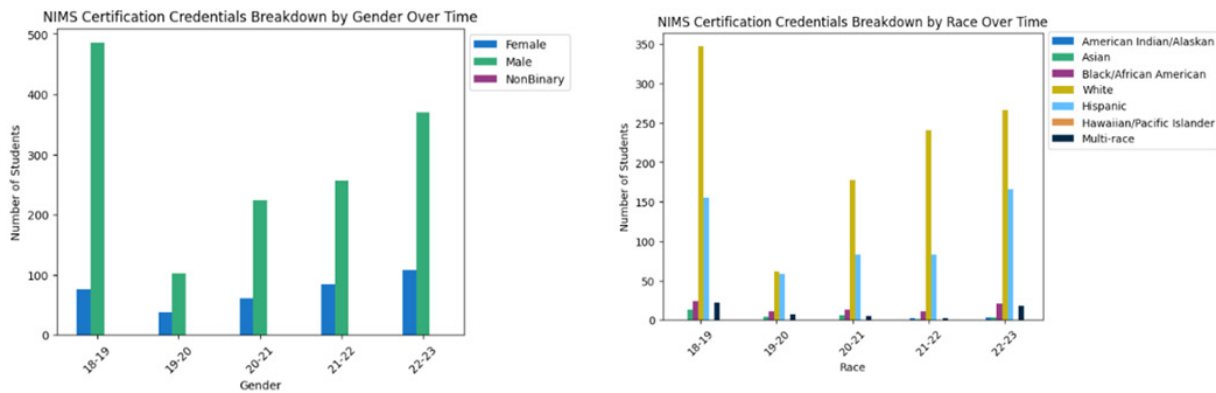**CTECS Exhibit 4:** Certified Nursing Assistant Credentials Breakdown by Gender and Race Over Time [5]
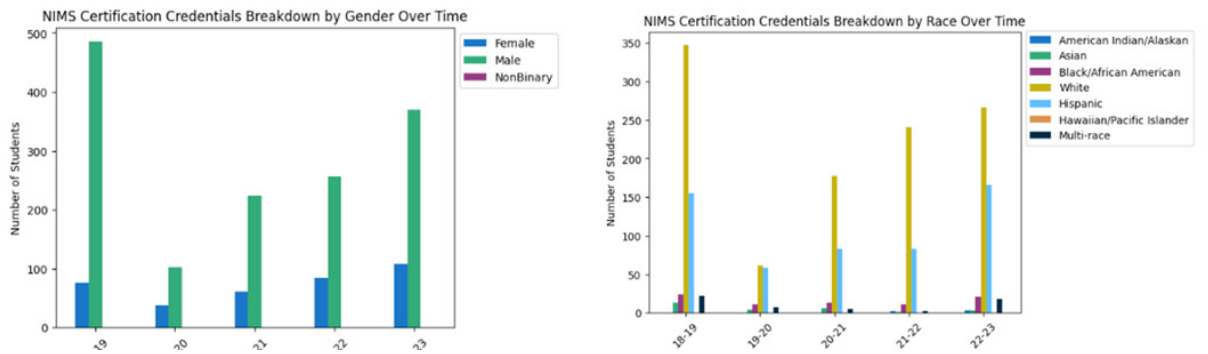
CTECS Exhibit 5 shows NIMS credentials earned by gender and race over time, with male and white students being the primary students earning NIMS credentials over the years.

CTECS Exhibit 5: NIMS Certification Credentials Breakdown by Gender and Race Over Time [5]

Recommendations

Student Credentials Program Recommendations

- **Report and Review Student Credential Data.** The Equity Study provided a profile of the students who earned a few of the top career and technical education credentials. Credentials are a key component of the CTECS high school education, and the state should summarize the credentials earned by students each year and show disaggregation by race and gender for each school and the district as a whole. CTECS should ensure they use this analysis in program planning, recruitment, outreach, and other aspects of program management to inform their equity action plan.
- **Communicating the Value of Credentials.** CTECS should also communicate the value of the credentials on the district website and show students and families how specific credentials can lead to in-demand, higher-skill, higher-wage jobs.
- **Track Student Outcomes Post-Graduation.** The state tracks college entrance and persistence on the state education website, but there should also be a process to track students who enter the workforce immediately after graduation and see how CTECS training and credentials impact employability. This information, qualitative and quantitative, can be provided back to educators, students, and families.

Overall Agency Recommendations

- **Representative Educator Workforce.** Students benefit from having teachers, staff members, and administrators with whom they can identify and share cultural backgrounds. The state should consider the following key components of diversifying the CTECS educator workforce:

  o *Training:* The state will need to prepare hiring managers and administrators who are involved in the hiring process and make sure they can identify internal biases and reduce barriers.

  o *Data:* The state should move the application process for all positions to a centralized job application information system. Job Aps (the State of Connecticut executive branch online employment center) currently only includes school and central office administrators, and therefore CTECS cannot track the applicants who are selected for interviews and the applicants who are hired, and CTECS cannot disaggregate by race, gender, or language. The district has data on the workforce after staff members are hired, but not during the application process.

  o *Outreach:* With better data, the state could modify strategies for how to reach the right communities and diversify the workforce. CTECS should include questions on the online application questionnaire to understand where applicants first learn about an opportunity and what drives them to apply. This could help identify what outreach efforts are successful.

- **Training.** Standardized DEI training should be provided at all schools but allow schools to customize modules to meet the needs of the different populations and unique cultures of each school. Training should incorporate student perspectives and experiences and elevate student voices to ensure DEI efforts have a meaningful impact on student experiences and student outcomes.

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[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Element. & Secondary Education. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230221_Elementary%20and%20Secondary%20Education%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Technical Education and Career System, "About", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://www.cttech.org/about/

[4] FCG Interview with CTECS leadership, May 3 2023 and May 4 2023.

[5] CTECS Credential data provided August 2023.

Department of Administrative Services

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Executive Director: Michelle Halloran Gilman

Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 1,053[1]

FY22 All Funds Budget: $163,537,006[2]

Background: The Department of Administrative Services (DAS) consists of several distinct programs related to state contracting and procurement, information technology, facilities management construction services, and services to support state job applicants and state employees. DAS has a Small Agency Resource Team (SmART) that consolidates all human resources and payroll services for small state agencies, such as the Departments of Agriculture, Education, Banking, Consumer Protection, Economic and Community Development, and Insurance.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- The DAS Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Unit provides support for 26 state agencies to ensure agencies comply with federal, state, and local affirmative action and equal opportunity laws, as well as non-discrimination and anti-harassment policies. State employees report complaints of discrimination to DAS. The EEO Unit also investigates complaints of discrimination and recommends measures to mitigate discriminatory conduct that may be found to exist.

- DAS provides the mandatory 3-hour diversity awareness training as well as training on sexual harassment prevention and domestic violence awareness. Most training sessions are delivered via online modules, but DAS does provide some training in-person, as requested.

- DAS maintains Connecticut's Executive Branch Online Employment Center for job applicants and actively seeks diverse candidates for state positions. DAS has developed relationships with community colleges, technical colleges, institutions of higher education, trade schools, nonprofit organizations, and professional organizations to recruit diverse talent from across the state and New England region. Employees within DAS and client agencies receive consistent, updated notices affirming the commitment to diversity and EEO.

- DAS EEO and Talent Solutions attend career fairs, review resumes, and conduct mock interviews to provide pathways into state employment and career progression opportunities. These institutions and organizations include Albertus Magnus College, Central Connecticut State University, Columbia University, Connecticut Fire Academy, Connecticut General Assembly, Eastern Connecticut State University, Fairfield University, Goodwin University, Housatonic Community College, National Association of Social Workers, Naugatuck Valley Community College, Post University, Quinnipiac University, Southern Connecticut State University, Tunxis Community College, University of Hartford, University of New Haven, University of Saint Joseph, Urban League of Greater Hartford, Western New England University, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Yale University, and the University of Connecticut, as well as many high schools, public libraries, and professional organizations.

- DAS has removed college degree requirements for specific jobs and will focus on relevant work experience, training/certifications, and/or skills for those positions. The state believes this will open opportunities to more workers and increase the diversity of the applicant pool.

- DAS is responsible for state procurement standards and procedures and the small or minority-owned business program (S/MBE program). DAS is collaborating with CHRO and OPM on a Disparity Study to analyze any institutional, procedural, or financial barriers to state contracting by S/MBEs.[5] The state anticipates a draft Disparity Study report in early 2024.

Program Selected for this Study

DAS selected the School Construction Grant program, which reimburses municipalities and school districts for eligible school construction and renovation projects. Reimbursement rates are between 10-70% for new construction or replacement of a school building. Reimbursement rates for renovations, extensions, and major alterations are between 20-80%. Rates are based on the relative wealth of the municipality, with wealthier

municipalities receiving a lower reimbursement from the state, and bonus reimbursement rates for certain priority projects. For larger projects, such as renovations, extensions, major alterations, new construction or replacement of a school building, municipalities and school districts apply to DAS for funding in June; DAS submits a Priority List to the Governor, the OPM Director, and the legislative Education Committee by December 15th; and the Education Committee submits an approved or modified Priority List to the full legislature by February 1st. While the law generally prohibits the legislature from adding additional projects after February 1st, the legislature often does by adopting "notwithstanding" language that modifies projects and makes new projects eligible for reimbursement under the program.[6] For smaller projects, such as code violations and roof replacements, districts may apply on a monthly basis for the Nonpriority List.

Program Analysis

This analysis examined school construction grant program data from DAS from 1997-2023. We calculated a per student grant funding by using the total grant funding per district over the years, divided by the enrollment of the district in the 2020-21 school year. This analysis then considered the demographics of the school district to compare majority white vs. majority non-white districts. This analysis also considered the percentage eligible for free lunch in each school district and compared the relative incomes of school districts to the amount of grant funding per student.

DAS Exhibit 1 shows that more majority white districts receive funding in the lower ranges (under $30,000 per student), and more non-white majority districts receive funding greater than $30,000 per student. This seems consistent given the higher reimbursement rates and higher state funding for lower income municipalities, where there are greater Black and Hispanic student populations.

DAS Exhibit 1: Grant Funding Breakdown by Non-White & White Majority Districts
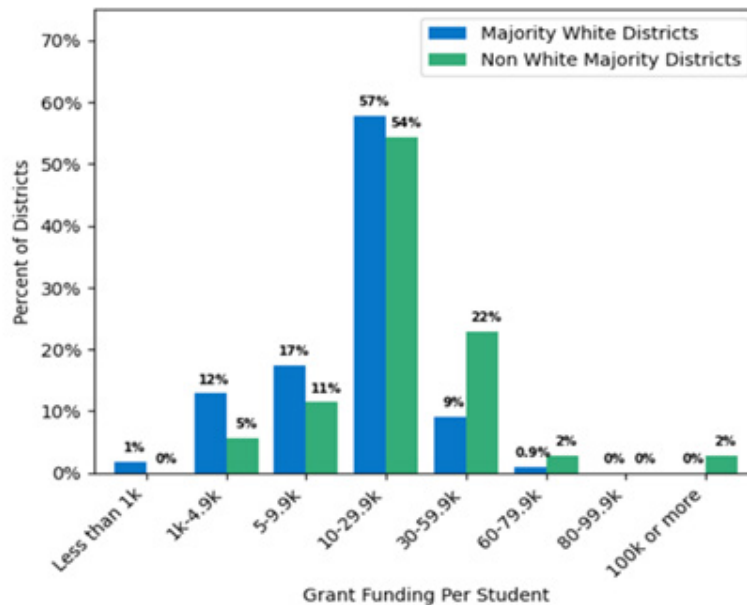
The scatterplot in DAS Exhibit 2 shows a positive correlation between the percentage of students eligible for free lunch and per student grant funding. However, there were instances where areas with a high percentage of free lunch eligibility received little school construction grant funding. In addition, these districts with high free lunch eligibility and low construction grant funding were also typically majority non-white.

DAS Exhibit 2: District Free Lunch Eligibility vs. Grant Funding per Student
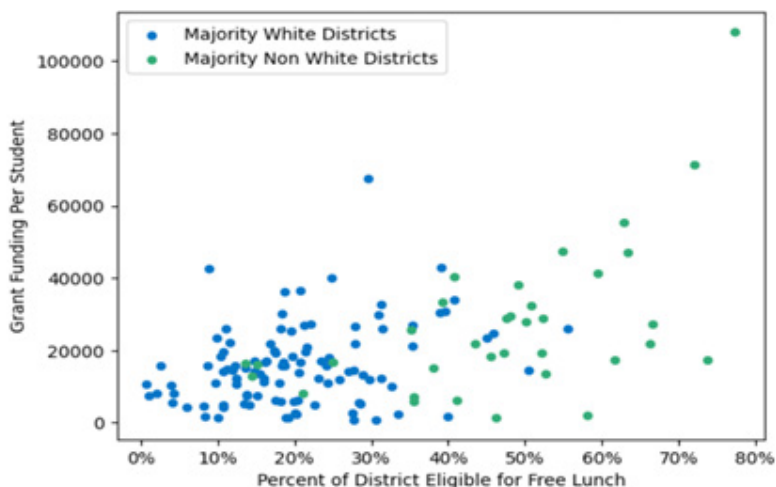
In DAS Exhibit 3, the first map shows the distribution of low-income population in the state, with darker areas indicating a higher percentage of low-income people (making under $10,000). The second map shows the relat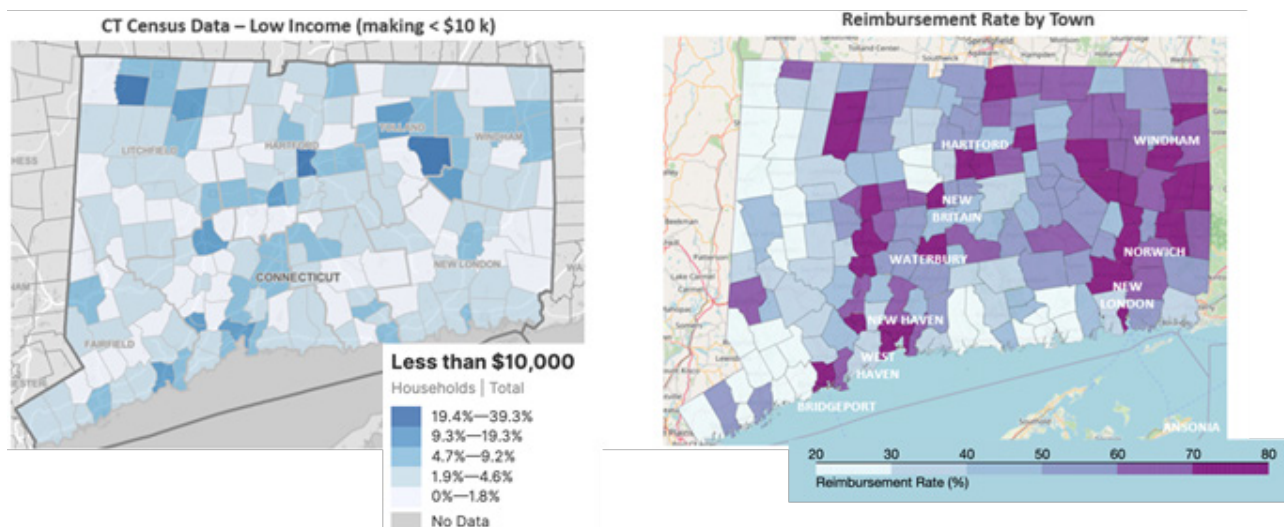ive reimbursement rates for the school construction grant program by town, with darker areas indicating higher reimbursement rates.

DAS Exhibit 3: Low Income Population Distribution from Census and Reimbursement Rate by Town[7][8]

In general, reimbursement rates in the Eastern part of the state are higher, following the general pattern of low income areas in the state.

Recommendations

School Construction Grant Program Recommendations

- **Limiting Projects Added After Priority List Development.** The legislature could prohibit or limit the projects added through the "notwithstanding" language to ensure projects are vetted and go through the review process. This would likely reduce costs, reduce the potential use of funds for unallowable costs, ensure proper reimbursement rate, and target funds for municipalities with higher financial need.

[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. General Government B. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230214_General%20Government%20B%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services, 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DAS

[4] FCG interview with DAS leadership, April 18 2023.

[5] State of Connecticut, "Building Business Equality in Connecticut", CHRO Disparity Study. 2023. Accessed October 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/disparitystudy/

[6] Sullivan, Marybeth. Office of Legislative Research. "School Construction Grant Process". March 2, 2022. https://www.cga.ct.gov/2022/rpt/pdf/2022-R-0007.pdf

[7] United States Census Bureau, 2021 Census data. Accessed September 2023. https://data.census.gov/

[8] Connecticut Open Data, "School Construction Grants - Reimbursement Rates". Accessed September 2023. https://data.ct.gov/Education/School-Construction-Grants-Reimbursement-Rates/4shz-hqb5

Department of Agriculture

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Commissioner: Bryan P. Hurlburt

Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 56[1]

FY22 All Funds Budget: $7,526,586[2]

Background: The Department of Agriculture (DoAg) aims to foster a healthy economic, environmental, and social climate for agriculture by organizing proactive programs that address the issues of the changing face of agriculture.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- **DEI Working Group** DoAg formed a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Working Group in 2021 to identify agency and industry opportunities to engage and support agricultural producers who identify as Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC). Key areas of focus include market access, secure land tenure, education and training, and resource access and capital. Working Group participants and leaders are from communities that are historically underserved. DoAg requested nominations for participants; of 43 individuals selected, 35 identified as BIPOC.
- **DEI in Agriculture Report.** DoAg released a final report from the Working Group in June 2023, and the report is available on the DoAg website in English and Spanish.[5]
- **Supporting BIPOC producers.** DoAg reports that they have already begun taking action on some recommendations from this report, including:
  - Initiating apprenticeship program for BIPOC producers
  - Improving outreach with BIPOC producers to show diverse producers, markets, and crops on their website, CT Grown[6]
  - Creating a multilingual information hub that the community can participate in and share resources
  - Working with the Connecticut Land Conservation Council to develop land accessibility models and build relationships between producers and land trusts
  - Developing microgrants to target new and beginning farmers

Program Selected for this Study

DoAg selected its Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA) for analysis for this study, which is a statewide grant program supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that connects historically underserved communities to healthy, local food and promote economic opportunities for Connecticut food producers. Released in 2022, DoAg awarded $6,434,854 in funds in competitive grants to eligible organizations such as pantries, food hubs and aggregators, community health centers, municipalities, farmers markets, and social service centers for the LFPA program.

Analysis

DoAg Exhibit 1 shows the expansion in food distribution in the state from Quarter 1 to Quarter 4 of the first year of the LFPA program (2022), as DoAg brought on producers and distribution sites. From Q1 to Q4, the distribution of food expanded significantly to all regions of the state as shown in DoAG Exhibit 1, but there were still some significant gaps in the outer regions of the state, including rural areas.

DoAG Exhibit 1: Food Distribution Value by Quarter

Q1 Jan-Mar

Q4 Oct-Dec

Value of Distributed Food ($)
117   4,312   8,507   12,702   16,896   21,091   25,286

Value of Distributed Food ($)
4   9,872   19,739   29,606   39,474   49,341   59,208

■ = Greater value of food distributed

■ = Less value of food distributed
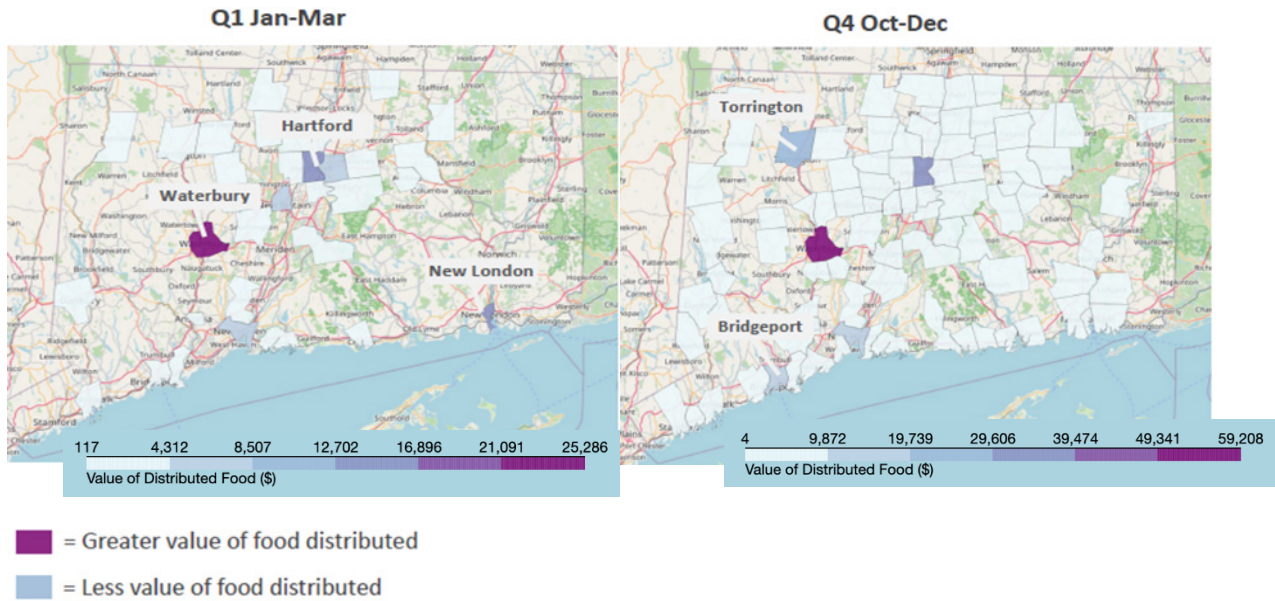
Note: Scale is based on the relative minimum and maximum dollar value of food distributed in each of the quarters. Q1 ranges from $0 to $25,286 of food distributed; Q4 from $0 to $59,208 of food distributed.

DoAG Exhibit 2 shows the Top 10 towns with the most LFPA distribution sites and the demographic profile of those communities. In general, the top towns with the most distribution sites have significant Hispanic and Black populations. Only Middletown has a smaller combined percentage of Black and Hispanic populations than the state average.

DoAG Exhibit 2: Race | Top 10 Towns with the Most LFPA Distribution Sites[7][8]

	Hartford	New Haven	Bridgeport	Waterbury	New Britain	New London	East Hartford	Hamden	Danbury	Middletown	State of CT
White	15%	29%	18%	39%	38%	45%	32%	51%	51%	66%	65%
Hispanic	45%	30%	42%	37%	43%	34%	37%	13%	30%	11%	17%
Black	34%	32%	32%	18%	12%	13%	24%	26%	8%	13%	10%
Asia	3%	5%	4%	2%	3%	3%	3%	5%	6%	6%	5%

The analysis also reviewed data on food-insecure individuals in Connecticut and areas of low food access in the state and mapped the LFPA distribution sites across those needs as shown in DoAG Exhibit 3. In general, areas with the highest concentration of distribution sites are also areas where there is a large surrounding food need. However, there are also large areas of food-insecure individuals with little or no access to distribution sites, including Norwich, Groton, Southbury, Sharon, Moosup, and Ashford.

DoAG Exhibit 3: LFPA Distribution Sites & Low Food Access Individuals

LFPA Distribution Sites & Low Food Access Individuals

Towns with a large number of food insecure individuals & low number of distribution sites

- Norwich
- Groton
- Southbury
- Sharon
- Moosup
- Ashford

■ = Greater LFPA Distribution Sites ■ = Less LFPA Distribution Sites ● = Individual w/ Low Food Access
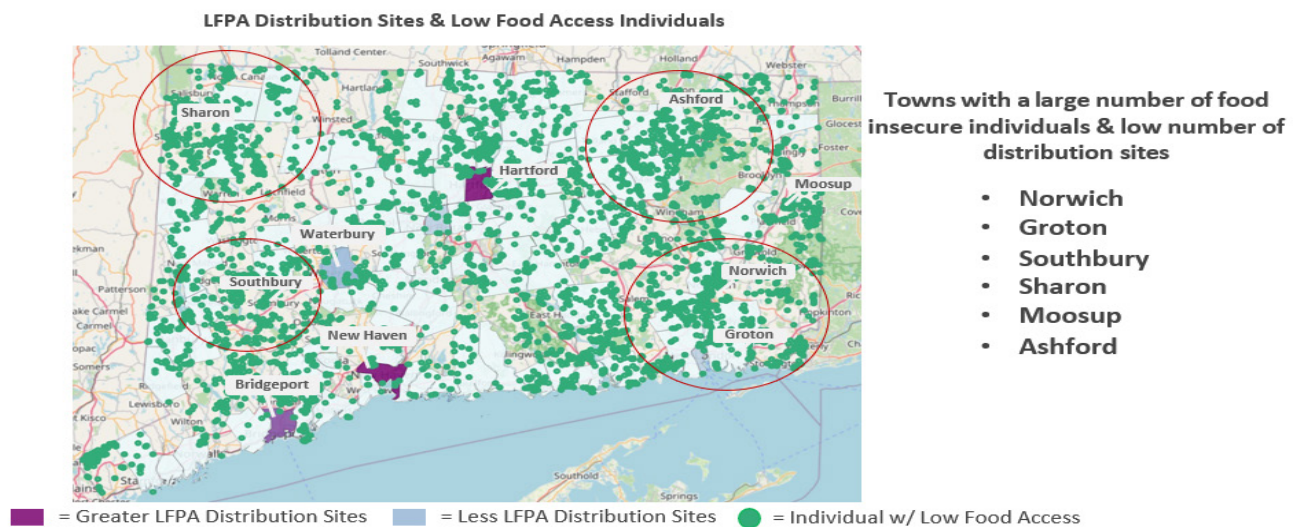
Note: The individuals with low food access were based on an N1 model that considers both a social risk index based on household size, income, and other factors as well as food access based on the travel distance to food retailers.

The analysis also reviewed data regarding producers who participate in the LFPA program. DoAG Exhibit 4 shows summary statistics regarding the participation of socially disadvantaged producers as the program grew in its first year. For the LFPA program, the USDA defines a "socially disadvantaged producer" as a farmer or rancher who is a member of a group that has been "subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program." Producers are asked to self-identify as socially disadvantaged.[9]

As the program grew to serve more areas in 2022, the number of socially disadvantaged producers participating in LFPA doubled from 9 to 18, but they comprised a slightly smaller percentage of the overall number of producers by Q4. Yet, as the total dollar value of the product distributed increased from $78,930 in Q1 to $350,561 in Q4, the percentage of the total value of the product sold by socially disadvantaged producers remained steady at around 31%.

DoAG Exhibit 4: # of LFPA Producers by $ Value and Quarter

LEPA Producers	Q1 **# of Producers**	Q2 **$ Value Purchased Product**	Q3 **# of Producers**	Q4 **$ Value of Product**
Socially Disadvantaged Producers	9 (30%)	$24,337 (31.6%)	18 (29%)	$106,418 (31.2%)
Non Socially Disadvantaged	21 (70%)	$52,593 (68.4%)	48 (71%)	$234,143 (68.8%)
Total	30 (100%)	$76,930 (100%)	66 (100%)	$340,561 (100%)

Recommendations

LFPA Program Recommendations

- **Addition of Distribution Sites to Areas with High Need.** As the program grows, the state should seek to add distribution sites to the areas with the highest need, i.e., areas that have a large number of food-insecure individuals, low food access, and little or no current access to LFPA distribution sites, as shown in DoAg Exhibit 3.
- **Participation of Socially Disadvantaged Producers.** As the program grows, the state should track the data on producers and ensure the program increases, or at least maintains, the number of socially disadvantaged producers and the dollar value of product distributed by socially disadvantaged producers.

Overall Agency Recommendations

- **Data and Evaluation.** The state should ensure it collects data on the number of BIPOC producers served for all programs that it operates and develop consistent definitions to support data collection and disaggregation.
- **Workforce Development.** In addition to the continued engagement with the University of Connecticut's College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources, and Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapters at the agriscience schools throughout Connecticut, DoAg should enhance partnerships with Connecticut high schools, colleges, and universities to inform BIPOC students about career pathways in agriculture.
- **Expanding Land Access.** The state could improve accessibility to land for agricultural production by BIPOC producers by exploring models for cooperative land trusts and cooperative land ownership in urban/suburban areas.

[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Conservation and Development. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230222_Conservation%20and%20Development%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%202024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Agriculture, "About the Department", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DOAG/Commissioner/Commissioner/About-the-Department

[4] FCG Interview with DoAg leadership, May 4 2023.

[5] Connecticut Department of Agriculture. "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Connecticut Agriculture". https://portal.ct.gov/DOAG/Boards/Boards/Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion-Working-Group

[6] Connecticut Grown, 2023. Accessed October 2023. https://ctgrown.org/

[7] CT DoAg LFPA data and AdvanceCT 2023 Town Profiles, https://www.advancect.org/site-selection/town-profiles

[8] KFF, Population Distribution by Race/Ethnicity, 2021. KFF estimates based on the 2021 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates. Rounded to the nearest whole number. Accessed December 2023. https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/distribution-by-raceethnicity

[9] Connecticut Department of Agriculture. LFPA FY 2022 Grant Application Guidelines. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DOAG/ADaRC/LFPA/2022/LFPA-Guidance-Final-42222.pdf

Department of Banking

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Commissioner: Jorge Perez
Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 103[1]
FY22 All Funds Budget: $23,949,544[2]

Background: The Department of Banking (DOB) is the primary state regulator for state-chartered banks and credit unions, securities, and consumer credit. Its mission is to protect users of financial services from unlawful or improper practices by ensuring regulated entities and individuals adhere to state banking, consumer credit, and securities laws.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- The DOB reported putting significant thought into how to make their consumer protection resources available to the public. Their Government Relations, Communications, and Consumer Affairs division serves as a virtual front door for residents. It responds to resident inquiries and directs residents to the most appropriate resources in the department.

- The Government Relations, Communications, and Consumer Affairs team also conducts outreach to educate the public about ways to protect themselves from becoming the victim of financial fraud. They outreach to a variety of populations in the state, typically at senior centers, housing authorities, and public libraries. One example of a program that has been popular is Financial Fraud Bingo. During the COVID-19 pandemic, DOB pivoted from in-person outreach engagements to virtual events and presentations and is currently ramping back up its in-person engagements.

- The DOB was instrumental in developing a national program, Senior$afe, to protect seniors from financial exploitation. The program, developed in conjunction with the National Association of State Securities Administrators and other states, is designed to educate bank and credit union personnel to identify red flags for senior financial exploitation. Banks and credit unions contact the DOB which then sets up training for bank/credit union staff.

- The DOB operates a complaint resolution center, where members of the public can seek help with issues regarding any of the entities that the Department of Banking regulates. The DOB keeps data on the nature of complaints as well as complaint resolution. During the 2009-2012 mortgage crisis, they helped thousands of people navigate the mortgage servicing process during a difficult time.

- The DOB has participated in the Connecticut Bankers Association's (CBA) Meet the Bankers events to help minority-owned business build relationships with bankers and community lenders.

Program Selected for this Study

The Department of Banking provided data from its Payday Loan Complaints program for analysis. Payday lending is prohibited in Connecticut, and the program allows consumers to submit complaints for small loan lenders not registered with the DOB. DOB provided data for the years 2012-2020.

Analysis

Between 2012 and 2020, 260 payday loan complaints were filed with the DOB. As shown in DOB Exhibit 1, the number of payday loan complaints filed per year has declined steadily – with 73 complaints filed in 2012 and only four complaints filed in 2020. DOB credits this decline with the work of the Consumer Credit division during that time period. The orange lines on the graph represent payday loan enforcement actions by DOB. The green line represents passage of the Small Loan License law in 2016. The data suggests that enforcement actions and changes in law have contributed to a significant decline in payday loan complaints from Connecticut residents.

DOB Exhibit 1: CT DOB Payday Loan Complaints[5]

CT DOB Payday Loan Complaints
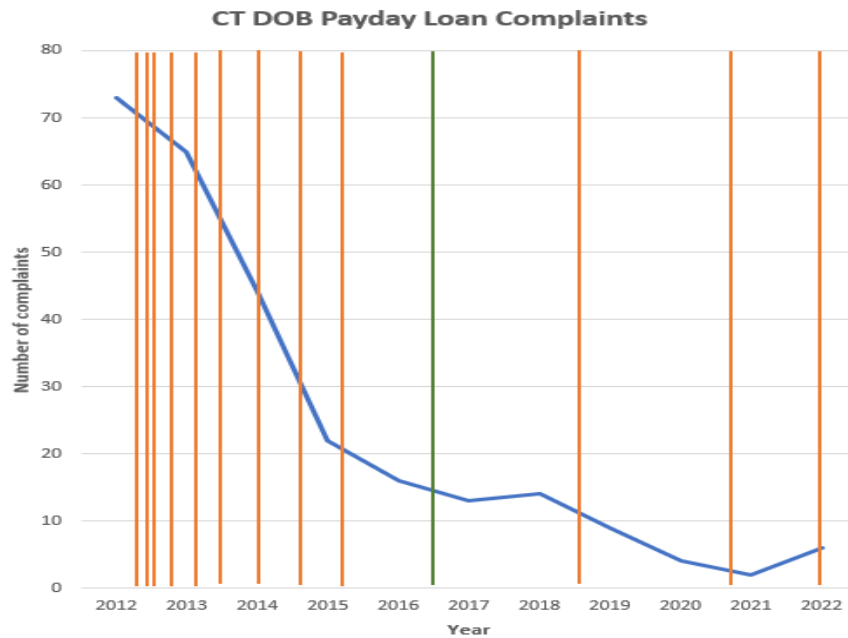
Note: The blue line represents payday loan complaints over time. The orange bars represent dates of enforcement actions. The green line is the June 2016 passage of the Small Loan License law.

DOB Exhibit 2 shows the distribution of payday loan complaints throughout the state for the 2012-2020 period, and for comparison, a map of the distribution of the low-income population in Connecticut (people making <$10,000 per year). Complaints tended to be filed in urban, highly populated areas, including Hartford, Waterbury, New Haven, and Bridgeport.

DOB Exhibit 2: Low Income Population Distribution and Payday Loan Complaints, 2012-2020[5][6]
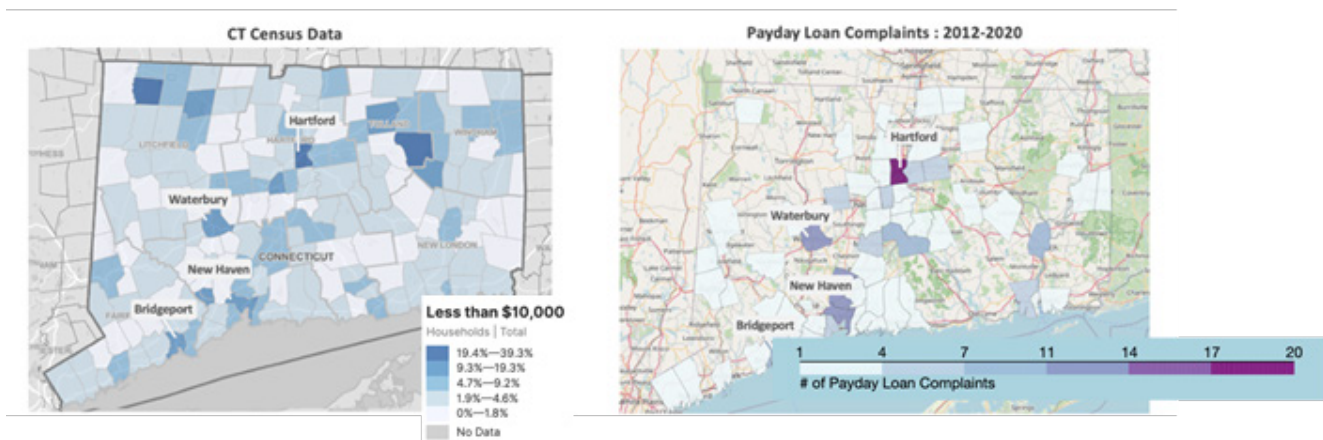
Recommendations

Overall Recommendations

- **Contact Center Best Practices.** The state should develop guidance on best practices for consumer affairs units/complaint centers/contact centers, and in particular, how to respond to the needs of underserved populations (e.g. data collection for race/ethnicity, translation/language assistance, policies and protocols to advance equity). Banking, Consumer Protection, and Insurance all have contact centers using similar systems that could benefit from this guidance.

[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Regulation and Protection. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230215_Regulation%20and%20Protection%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Banking, "Mission Statement", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DOB/About-DOB/About-DOB/DOB-Mission-Statement

[4] FCG Interview with DOB leadership, May 17 2023.

[5] Connecticut Department of Banking, Pay Day Loan Complaints Data, 2012-2020.

[6] United States Census Bureau, 2021 Census Data. https://data.census.gov/

Department of Children and Families

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Commissioner: Vannessa L. Dorantes, LMSW
Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 2,785[1]
FY22 All Funds Budget: $756,823,507[2]

Background: The Department of Children and Families (DCF) works together with families and communities to improve child safety, ensure that more children have permanent families, and advance the overall well-being of children. As one of the nation's few agencies to offer child protection, behavioral health, juvenile justice, and prevention services, DCF runs four facilities and supports in-home and community-based services through contracts with service providers.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

During our interviews, DCF highlighted its focus on racial equity and disproportionality. The department has been engaged in race equity work for 13 years. In the early years, their focus was on common definitions and preparation/readiness of their culture for a shift in their work. They found collecting and analyzing data useful in changing policies and practices that lead to culture change. The work continues to evolve and now every leader in the department is required to have a change initiative that focuses on disproportionality. While acknowledging there is more to be done, DCF sees itself as the "go-to" agency to provide presentations on equity implementation and racial justice.
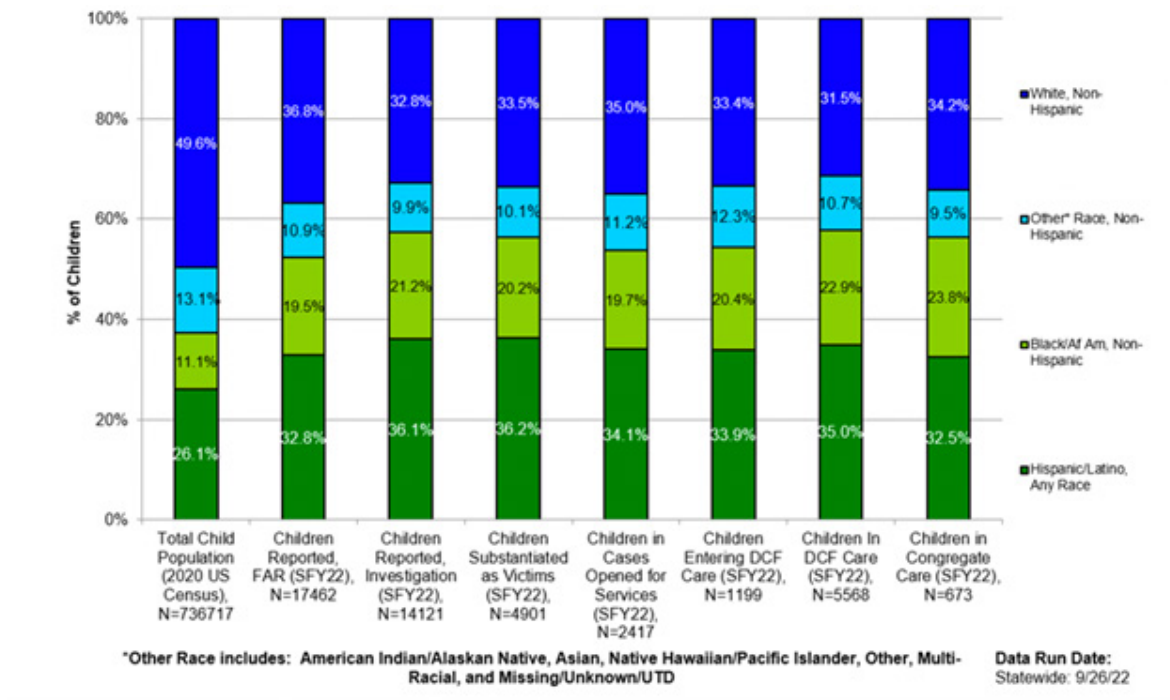
Commitment to Anti-Racism

DCF has remained committed to being an Anti-Racist child welfare system whose beliefs, values, policies, and practices eliminate racial and ethnic disparities. The Department is responsible for elevating the focus on racial equity and support for children and families of color, who have been historically and systemically disadvantaged, underserved, or marginalized.
The Department's racial justice journey has a deep history, including the evolvement and growth of its Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup (SRJWG). The work of the SRJWG continues to be charged with cultivating and sustaining an environment in which employees and DCF partners can feel safe to discuss the impacts of racism, power, and privilege on agency policies and practices.

Racial Ethnic Disproportionality Across the Connecticut Child Protection System

DCF has acknowledged that children and families of color (Black, Latino) are disproportionately over-represented system-wide and experience disparate outcomes at all levels in comparison to white children and families. DCF also understands that disparities are not solely a result of race or ethnicity; therefore, differences across groups can be explained by biases, systemic inequity, and structural racism (i.e., the design and operation of policies, practices, and programs).

DCF Exhibit 1: Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality across the CT Child Protection System SFY22 - Statewide

*Other Race includes: American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Other, Multi-Racial, and Missing/Unknown/UTD

Data Run Date: Statewide: 9/26/22

Disproportionality occurs when racial/ethnic groups in the child welfare agency child population are under or overrepresented compared to the general child population. DCF Exhibit 1 continues to reveal considerable overrepresentation of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino children in all areas along the pathway decision points.[5]

As shown in DCF Exhibit 2 below, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino children are the largest population of Children Reported Investigations, Children Substantiated as Victims, Children Entering DCF Care, and other DCF measures. This disproportionality is a major area of focus for DCF.

DCF Exhibit 2: Disparity – Children Reported, Investigation

Disparity-Children Reported, Investigation

*Other Race includes: American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Other, Multi-Racial, and Missing/Unknown/UTD

Data Run Date: 9/26/22

Hispanic/Latino, Any Race: SFY13: 2.20, SFY14: 2.20, SFY15: 2.87, SFY16: 3.12, SFY17: 3.13, SFY18: 3.19, SFY19: 1.73, SFY20: 1.81, SFY21: 2.00, SFY22: 2.09
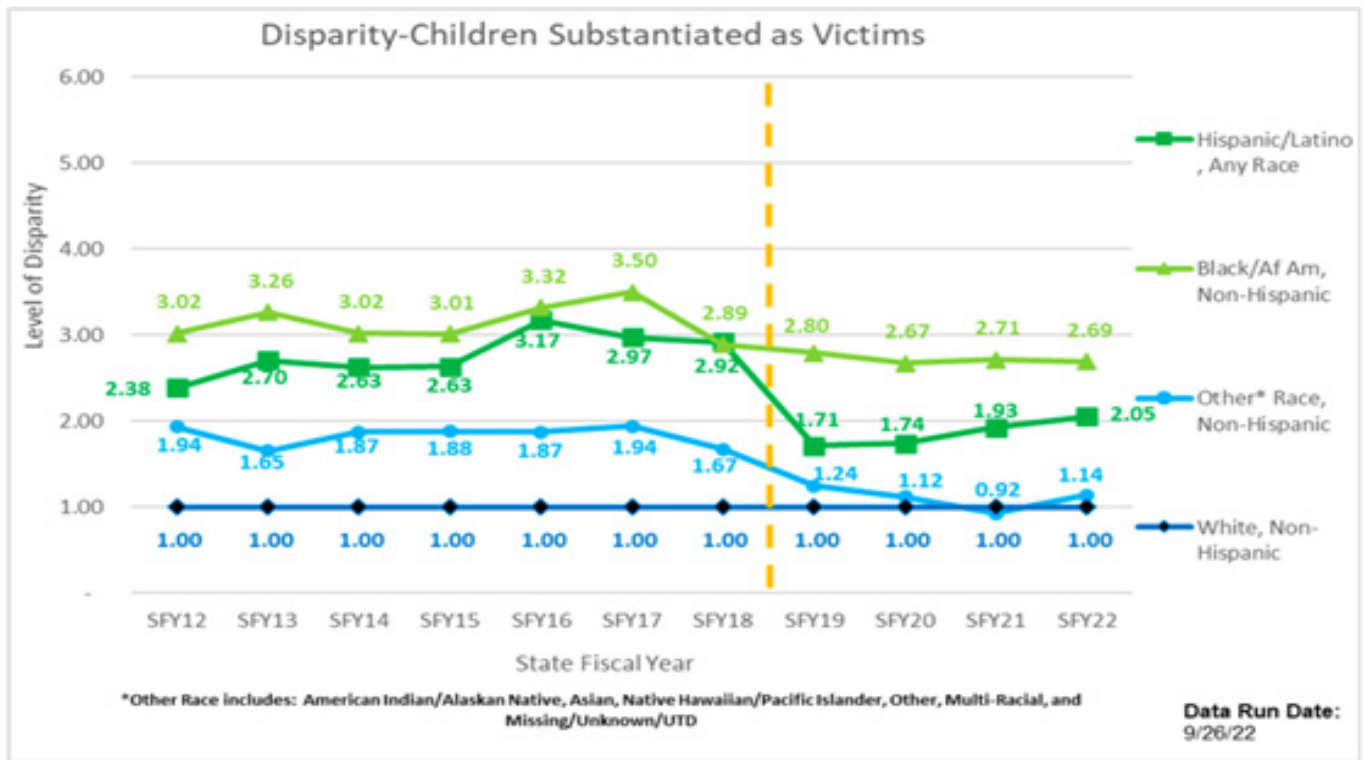
Black/Af Am, Non-Hispanic: SFY13: 2.91, SFY14: 2.94, SFY15: 3.37, SFY16: 3.56, SFY17: 3.76, SFY18: 3.72, SFY19: 2.77, SFY20: 2.72, SFY21: 2.86, SFY22: 2.89

Other* Race, Non-Hispanic: SFY13: 1.85, SFY14: 2.01, SFY15: 1.98, SFY16: 1.89, SFY17: 2.15, SFY18: 2.24, SFY19: 1.35, SFY20: 1.24, SFY21: 1.07, SFY22: 1.14

White, Non-Hispanic: SFY13: 1.00, SFY14: 1.00, SFY15: 1.00, SFY16: 1.00, SFY17: 1.00, SFY18: 1.00, SFY19: 1.00, SFY20: 1.00, SFY21: 1.00, SFY22: 1.00

Please note the yellow dotted lines denote the switch to using 2020 Census data. The years left of the line (2013-2018) use 2010 Census data while the years to the right of the line (2019-2022) use 2020 Census data for comparison. Thus, the years prior to 2019 should not be compared directly to 2019-2021.

DCF Exhibit 3: Disparity – Children Substantiated as Victims

Disparity-Children Substantiated as Victims

*Other Race includes: American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Other, Multi-Racial, and Missing/Unknown/UTD

Data Run Date: 9/26/22

Program Selected for this Study

DCF selected its Mandated Reporter training. Mandated reporters are required to report or cause a report to be made when, in the ordinary course of their employment or profession, they have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child under the age of 18 has been abused, neglected, or is placed in imminent risk of serious harm. (Connecticut General Statutes §17a-101a)[6]. Training is available for school employees and community providers. Online training is offered in English, Spanish and ASL. In person training is also available.

While DCF provided data on the population of Children Reported Investigations, Children Substantiated as Victims, Children Entering DCF Care, and other DCF measures, DCF did not provide data on the mandated reporter training program. Without data on the program, DCF cannot assess the impact of the training on outcomes.

Recommendations

Mandated Reporter Training Recommendations

- **Data Collection and Analysis.** DCF should collect demographic data, geographic distribution, and information on mandated reporter roles from Mandated Reporter training participants. Stratification of training participants across these variables might identify gaps or disparities in reporting and perhaps further insight into the over representation of racial and ethnic groups among the DCF population.

Overall Recommendations

- **Strategic Partnerships.** DCF provides training to its agency staff to ensure they are not removing children from their homes solely due to poverty. They have on a case-by-case basis connected families to the Department of Social Services (DSS) to address their needs. The agency believes that a more formal collaboration with

DSS is needed to make systemic changes to address the needs of families living in poverty and decrease disproportionality. DCF also collaborates with the Office of Early Childhood Services (OEC) on an executive fellowship program for emerging leaders and sees an opportunity to broaden their relationship with OEC by fostering collaboration around equity.

- **Sharing Best Practices.** DCF has established itself as a model for equity implementation and racial justice and has been sought out by organizations nationally. While DCF is a "go-to" agency for some agencies with Connecticut, they are very willing to broaden their reach and share their model with other agencies.

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[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Human Services. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230217_Human%20Services%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Children and Families, "Mission of DCF", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/1-DCF/Mission-Statement

[4] FCG interview with DCF leadership, April 20 2023.

[5] Connecticut Department of Children and Families. Connecticut General Statute (C.G.S) Section 17a-6e, Report on the Department of Children and Families' Racial Justice Data, Activities and Strategies. February 15, 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DCF/RACIAL-JUSTICE/2023/FINALSFY2022CGS17a6e.pdf

[6] Connecticut Department of Children and Families. Mandated Reporter Training Program Information. 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/Mandated-Reporter-Training/Home

Department of Consumer Protection

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Commissioner: Bryan T. Cafferelli

Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 264[1]

FY22 All Funds Budget: $15,954,180[2]

Background: The Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) protects Connecticut consumers from fraud, unfair business practices, and physical injury from unsafe goods or services through licensing, regulation, and enforcement.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- DCP reported having a dedicated community education and outreach staff person responsible for using new and innovative tools to reach underserved communities and vulnerable populations and to present public-facing materials in plain language. Examples the department shared of recent activities include:
  - Developing a diverse community outreach list of nearly 200 community organizations, advocacy organizations, and ethnic media contacts in Connecticut.
  - Researching the three most spoken languages in each Connecticut county to identify key languages in each region for translation, and subsequently sharing this information with other state agencies.
  - Creating marketing materials, including billboards, social media posts, and radio ads, in Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, and English to communicate with consumers about their rights in engaging homemaker and companion services and opportunities in skilled trades.
  - Creating a public awareness campaigns on ethnic media and writing regular consumer protection articles for ethnic newspapers.
  - Developing a webpage specifically focused on Notario Fraud to help immigrants avoid paying fees to individuals who promise assistance but are unauthorized to help with immigration legal issues.
- For 7 years, DCP has organized annual cross-cultural awareness symposiums that are open and free to the public and promoted to state agencies and nonprofit organizations. Recent themes have included: "Data with Dignity: People Behind the Numbers" and "Challenges and Opportunities for Generational Communication."
- DCP also reported collaborating with other agencies on equity-related issues, including with the FEMA Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15 to develop strategies to communicate public health messages to all populations in Connecticut during the Covid-19 pandemic. ESF 15 met weekly and worked to develop communication strategies about vaccinations and the various human and social services available for support – using different mediums and different languages.

Program Selected for this Study

DCP selected its Complaint Center as the program of focus for this study. The DCP Complaint Center tracks and attempts to resolve disputes between consumers and businesses operating in Connecticut, including complaints regarding automobiles (Lemon Law), home improvement/new home construction, occupational and professional services (electricians, plumbers, architects, etc.), accounting services, gaming, charities, foods, real estate, and weights and measures. Consumers can call the complaint center with questions, but complaints must be filed in writing. The center receives over 4,000 complaints per year that are tracked through the e-license system, which is also used by the Department of Banking.

Program Analysis

Based on the data provided by DCP, N1 imputed race, ethnicity and income information about the consumers filing complaints to provide some summary statistics. Using the individual level data sent by the Department of Consumer Protection, we delivered demographic insights by matching this data with census level data and individual third-party data. The main model prediction utilized in this analysis was the race of an individual, which was predicted through using the Bayesian Improved Surname Geocoding (BISG) model. The BISG model is designed to use surname and address data to predict the probability that an individual falls into the racial/ethnic group recorded by the Census.

DCP Exhibit 1 shows the imputed race and ethnicity of consumers in the complaint dataset compared to the demographic composition of Connecticut. The number of complaints filed by individuals imputed to be White is higher than that group's share of population.

DCP Exhibit 1: Race Breakdown – Consumer Protection Complaints vs. Connecticut Population[5][6]
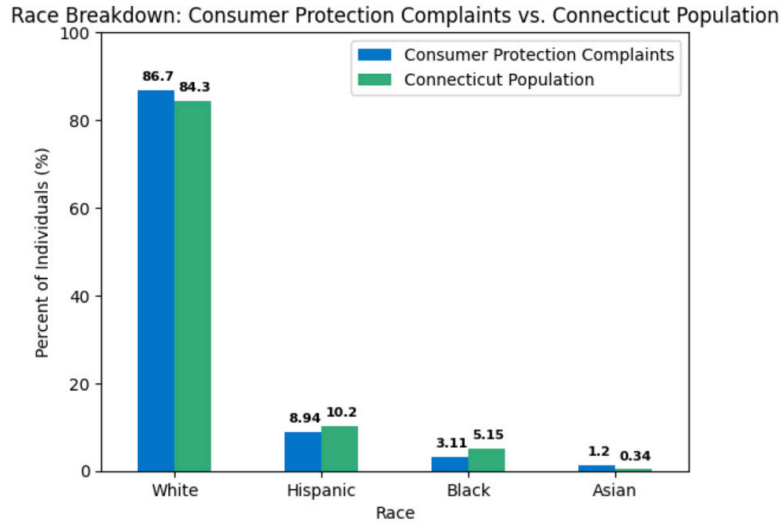
DCP Exhibit 2 shows the imputed income distribution of residents filing complaints compared to the income distribution of the state of Connecticut. The analysis showed that the number of complaints filed by individuals in the higher income brackets is higher than the share of population for those higher income brackets, particularly for those over $100,000.

DCP Exhibit 2: Income Breakdown – Consumer Protection Complaints vs. Connecticut Census Population[5][6]
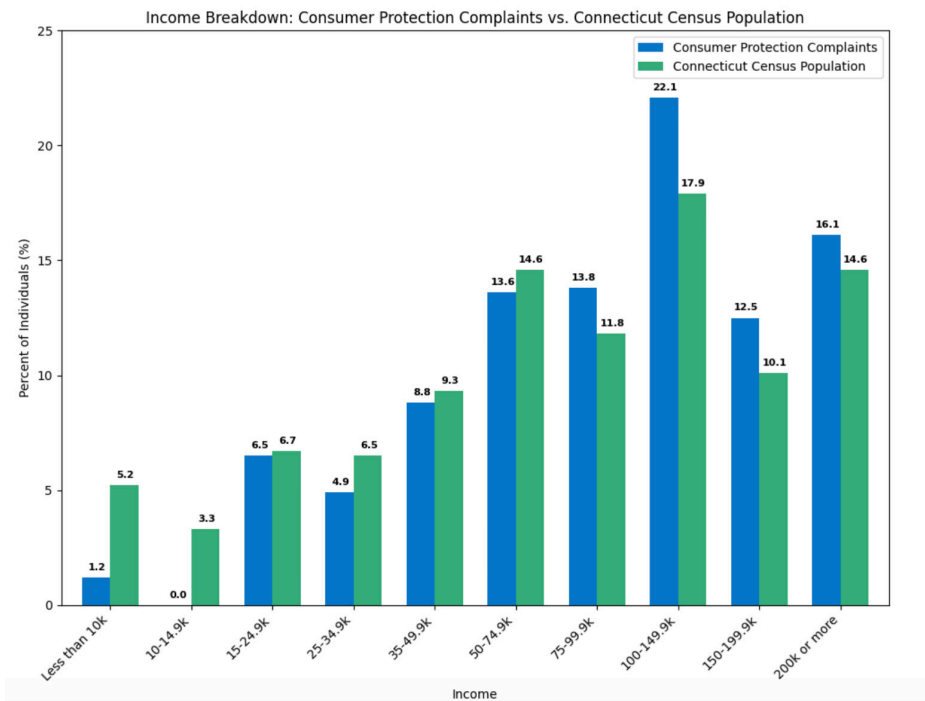
DCP Exhibit 3 shows the distribution of the consumer complaints across the state. Complaints are concentrated in the most populous counties but there is wide dispersion across the state.

DCP Exhibit 3: Consumer Protection Complaints Data[5][6]

● Individuals who filed complaints in Consumer Protection dataset
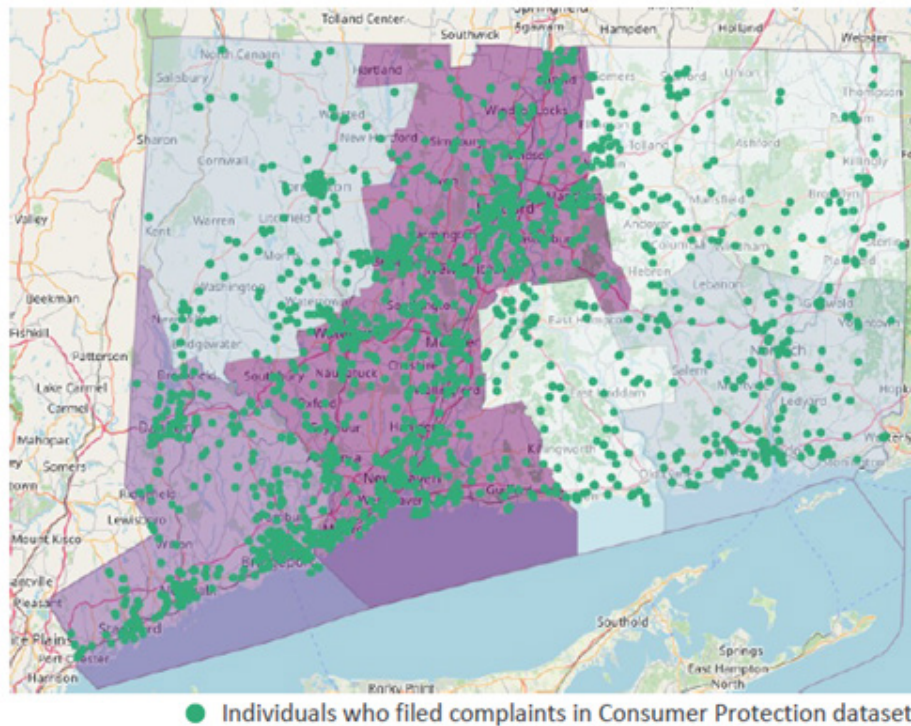
Note: across map darker color indicates more populous counties

In summary, the program analysis indicates that DCP outreach efforts for different racial and ethnic groups and communications in multiple languages may have helped ensure that residents in these groups and across the state know about and use the DCP's Complaint Center. However, DCP has opportunities to continue their targeted outreach to enhance equity, particularly for lower income populations.

Recommendations

Complaints Center Recommendations

- **Contact Center Best Practices.** The state could develop guidance on best practices for consumer affairs units/complaint centers/contact centers, and in particular, how to be responsive to the needs of underserved populations (e.g. data collection for race/ethnicity, translation/language assistance, policies and protocols to advance equity). Banking, Consumer Protection, and Insurance all have contact centers using similar systems.

- **Data.** DCP should collect race, ethnicity, and language (REL) data for individuals filing complaints to help the department better understand the population served by the complaint center. DCP could then regularly monitor whether they are providing the same level of service and achieving the same level of success for residents of color and residents who speak languages other than English as compared to white English-speaking residents. Analyzing geographic data for consumers filing complaints could also help the agency identify hot spots of activity in specific communities and respond to businesses that may be preying on vulnerable populations. This will need to be executed thoughtfully so that DCP does not discourage residents (such as undocumented individuals) who may feel concerned sharing demographic information when making a complaint.

- **Systems Improvement.** The state should improve the e-license system data collection and reporting so that DCP can classify complaints and more easily report on types of complaints – number received, number resolved, time to resolution, etc.

- **Outreach and Communications.** DCP should provide the electronic survey regarding the complaint center in other languages and provide respondents the option to share demographic/geographic information for analysis. DCP should also provide clearer instructions for residents who wish to submit paper complaint forms (mail, fax, or email) and provide all forms (PDFs) in languages other than English. Lastly, DCP should consider options to help residents who may have difficulty making a complaint in writing due to language barriers or limited literacy skills.

Overall Recommendations

- **Outreach and Communications.** To reach more low-income residents, DCP may want to target outreach and communications through community-based organizations that work with low-income households. DCP may also wish to target communications to residents in rural areas – such as the upper Northwestern and Northeastern regions of the state.
- **Internal DEI Responsibility.** DCP could improve diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work internally at DCP by assigning clear responsibility to specific roles. In the past, DCP reported focusing on institutional racism and microaggressions, but there are no current internal initiatives in this area.

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[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Regulation and Protection. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230215_Regulation%20and%20Protection%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection, "About Us", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DCP/Agency-Administration/About-Us/About-Us

[4] FCG interview with DCP leadership, March 28 2023.

[5] United States Census Bureau, 2021 Census Data. https://data.census.gov/

[6] Department of Consumer Protection Database, 2020-2023.

Department of Correction

Commissioner: Angel Quiros
Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 5,863[1]
FY22 All Funds Budget: $584,814,803[2]

Background: The Department of Correction (DOC) ensures the safety, security, and order of 14 correctional facilities' communities and supervises the reentry of justice-involved individuals (people who are now, or have spent time, in jails, youth correctional facilities, or prisons) and their return to the community.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- DOC reported its workforce demographically mirrors the population it serves and expressed that diversity in leadership is important. The department highlighted the following statistics:
    - 53% of administrative positions are held by women
    - During recent hiring, 71 hires and 54 promotions were people of color
- The DOC reported providing cultural competency training for all new hires, going beyond the CHRO-required training. They reported providing full day-long interactive cultural competency training to all managers and supervisors.
- The DOC's Diversity Council brings in staff or outside speakers and hosts Black History Month activities.
- DOC reported participating in the Women in Corrections Leadership Summit, a 2-day convening to discuss issues in correction that impact women. Additionally, the DOC reports they have made efforts to encourage more women to take steps toward promotion.
- The DOC Hang Time program brings cadets and the formerly incarcerated population together to hear success stories from the formerly incarcerated.
- DOC reported that Connecticut became the first state in the country to enable people in correctional facilities to communicate without charge with people in the community, using phone and instant messaging, supported with $9.5 million annually in General Funds.
- Connecticut's DOC was one of the first in the country to offer universal Hepatitis C screening to all incarcerated people.

Program Selected for this Study

DOC selected its Hepatitis C Screening Program. Beginning in October 2019, DOC began offering the incarcerated population Hepatitis C (HCV) screening. When the program began initially, DOC, in partnership with the Department of Public Health, offered HCV screening based on patient risk factors (e.g. those identified with an injection drug use history on intake) and upon patient request. In October 2019, DOC launched a universal HCV screening program for all incarcerated individuals.

Program Analysis

DOC has offered HCV screening to 31,051 incarcerated people since the inception of this program. The department has screened 25,647, and 5,408 (17.4%) of the population have opted out of screening. Of those screened, 22,156 or 86.4% were negative, and 3,491 (13.6%) screened positive. DOC offers treatment to individuals who screen positive for HCV and are subsequently determined to have a detectable HCV viral load, and therefore, an established diagnosis of chronic HCV. The department reports that since the launch of the mass screening program, the cumulative total number of DOC patients provided HCV treatment is 1,314 unique individuals, based on Diamond Pharmacy data.

In the dataset we received[5], most of the population, totaling 22,676 or 73%, did not specify their race or ethnicity. There were no individuals who reported being Hispanic or Latino and the lack of ethnicity data means that we

could not identify the Latino population and therefore do not have data on screening or positivity rates for that population. Of those that provided racial information, as shown in DOC Exhibit 1, 13.5% are Black, 13.3% are white, 0.2% are Asian and 0.1% are American Indian/Alaska Native. Given the extremely high numbers of those with unspecified races, it is exceedingly difficult to draw conclusions about any racial differences or disparities among the populations.

DOC Exhibit 1: Hepatitis C Screening by Race/Ethnicity from 2019-2023
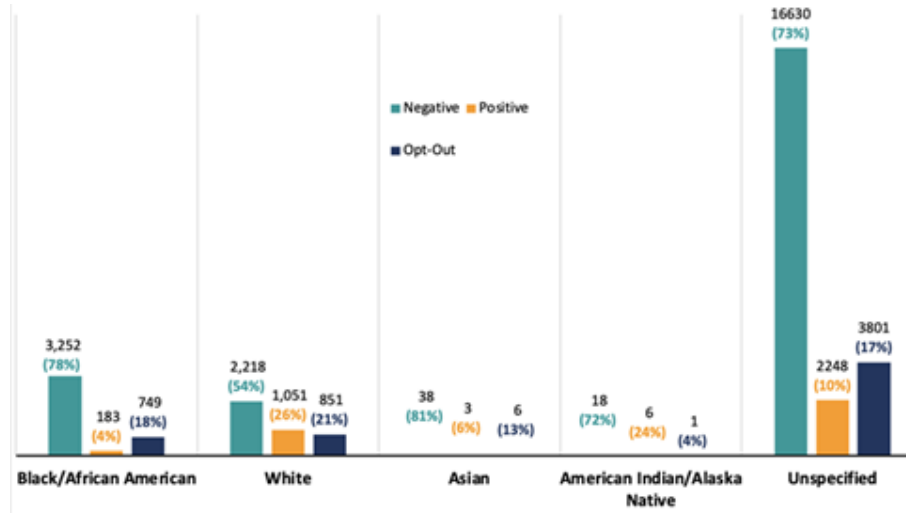
As shown in DOC Exhibit 2, the incarcerated population between the ages of 31 and 50 makes up the highest number screened, the highest number of positives, and the highest number of negatives. Those between the ages of 51 and 79 have the highest proportion of positive screens based on their population size. As shown in DOC Exhibit 3, male incarcerated people are overrepresented, yet females make up a larger proportion of those testing positive.

DOC Exhibit 2: Hepatitis C Screening by Age from 2019-2023
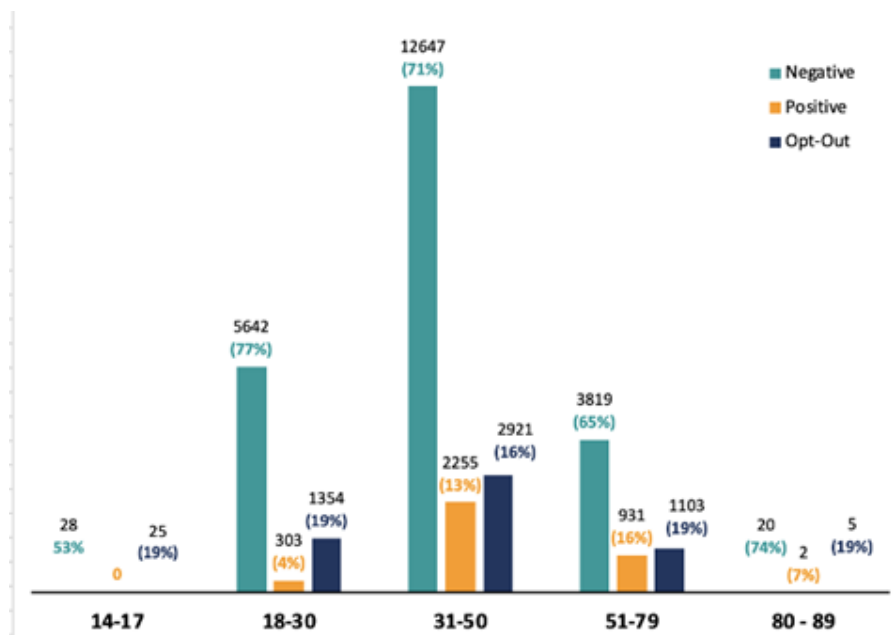
DOC Exhibit 3: Hepatitis C Screening by Sex from 2019-2023[5]
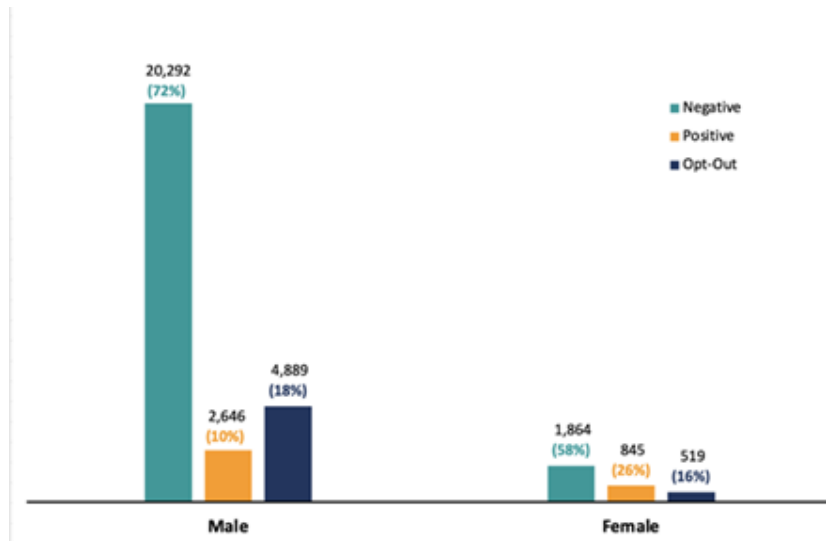
Recommendations

Hepatitis C Program

- **Data Collection and Analysis.** DOC should work to increase the number of participants providing complete demographic information including both race and ethnicity. DOC reported that the number of unspecified data seemed higher than anticipated, so it may require better integration of data sources. This may also require training staff responsible for data collection on the importance of this information to understanding the effectiveness of the intervention and identifying gaps within high-risk populations.

- **Decreasing Screening Opt Out Rate.** Given the prevalence of Hep C in incarcerated populations, further analysis is warranted to understand and address the nearly 18% opt out rate for screening.

- **Continuity of Care.** Most of those currently incarcerated will be returning to the community. Individuals in the community with Medicaid and those who are underinsured lack access to education, screening, and treatment of Hep C. Providing continuity of care in community settings would be an effective model to increasing screening and treatment for vulnerable populations and reducing the disease burden associated with Hep C.

[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Judicial and Corrections. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230222_Judicial%20and%20Corrections%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Corrections, "About Us", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DOC/Common-Elements/Common-Elements/About-Us-New

[4] FCG interview with DOC leadership, May 9 2023.

[5] Connecticut Department of Corrections, Health Services Unit, Hepatitis C Testing Data. 2019-2023.

Department of Developmental Services

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Commissioner: Jordan A. Scheff

Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 2,561[1]

FY22 All Funds Budget: $562,262,007[2]

Background: The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is responsible for the planning, development, and administration of complete, comprehensive, and integrated statewide services for persons with intellectual disability. DDS primarily provides services through a qualified private provider network, in addition to state-operated services. DDS also offers individuals and families the option to self-direct their services, which may include hiring their own staff. Services fall into three main categories: residential supports (in or out-of-home), employment and day programs, and family supports. Ancillary supports, such as transportation, interpreter services, and clinical services, are offered as needed.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- DDS created a Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) position in the Office of the Chief Operating Officer in 2022 to integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion into the culture of the agency and the culture of the service system. The DEI director facilitates a monthly meeting with the DEI directors from multiple agencies, including the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Department of Children and Families, Department of Public Health, Department of Education, and the Department of Transportation. They discuss their work across the agencies and are developing best practices for the state.

- DDS releases monthly DEI newsletters[5] and recently surveyed staff regarding perceptions and beliefs around equity. Responses were limited, but respondents reported interest in more training/professional development and opportunities for inclusion. DDS is developing new workshops/training, bylaws, and a cultural competency statement.

Program Selected for this Study

Using American Rescue Plan Act funding, DDS offered two grant opportunities for assistive technology (AT) – one for qualified providers and one for individuals/families. The Qualified Providers funding opportunity was to benefit individuals who are currently supported by DDS and living in a Community Companion Home (CCH), Community Living Arrangement (CLA), Continuous Residential Supports (CRS) or residing independently with In Home Supports (IHS). The Individual/Family grant was to benefit individuals who are currently supported by DDS and are living in a family home or residing independently with IHS. Grants were available for the procurement and utilization of hardware, software, equipment, and internet connectivity to enhance access to virtual supports and services, including the development of remote supports. The intent of the grant was to support and advance the creative use of AT to enhance independence and virtual interpersonal and community participation for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The first round of the grant provided funding to 5 qualified providers and 104 individuals. These two grants were selected by DDS for analysis in this study.

Analysis

DDS Exhibit 1 shows the race/ethnicity of assistive technology grant funding recipients. The proportion of Asian, Hispanic, and Black individuals served by the grant was higher than for the State of Connecticut as a whole when compared to the proportion on white individuals served by the grant.
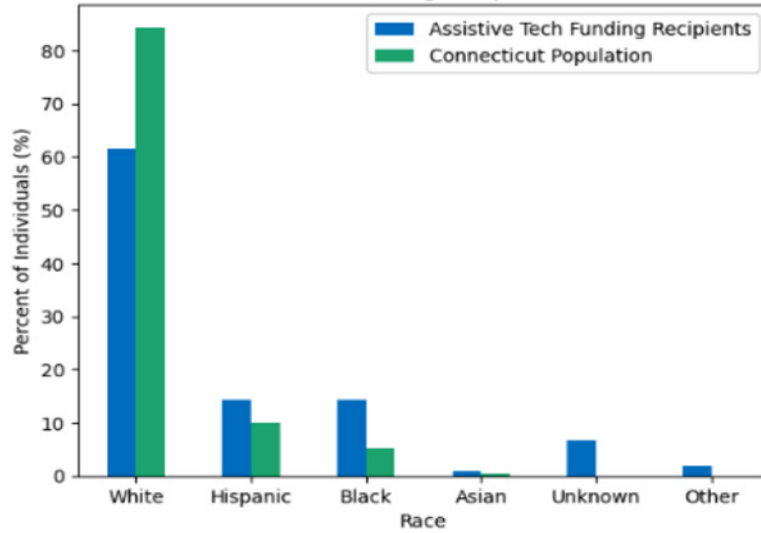
The average amount of the grant was between $1,000 and $5,000 per recipient. As seen in DDS Exhibit 2, while white residents comprised a higher percentage of the recipients and received more in total funding, the average funding breakdown by race shows that funding was distributed with the average funding per person around $2,000, with the Hispanic population having the highest average funding at $3,500.

DDS Exhibit 2: Total Assistive Tech Funding and Average Assistive Tech Funding Breakdown by Race[6]
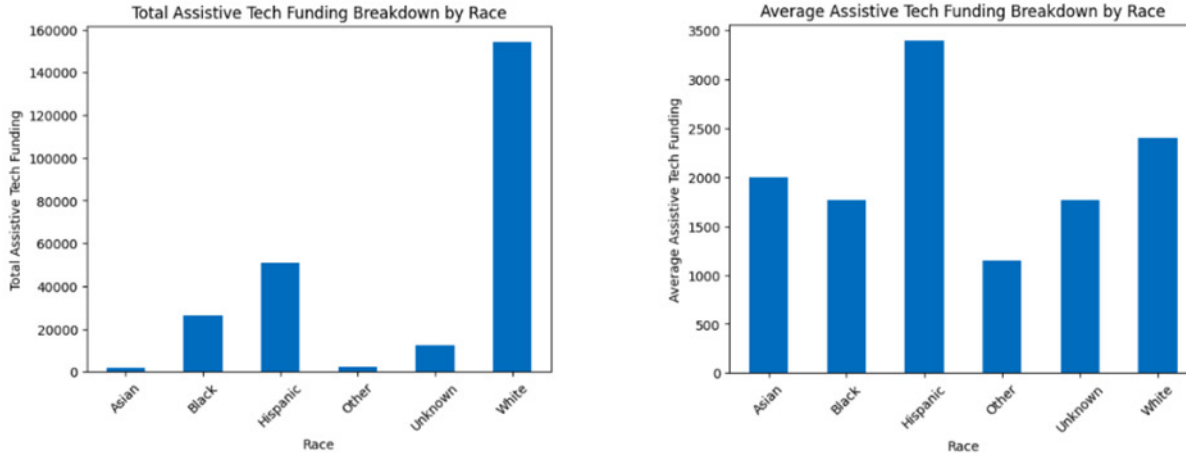
As shown in DDS Exhibit 3, the Connecticut towns where providers/families received the highest average assistive technology funding were Berlin, Bethany, Bridgeport, Bristol, and Cheshire. With the exception of Bridgeport, those communities are predominantly white. Funding tended to be concentrated along the I-91 corridor, in the center of the state – with an overall lack of funding in the western and eastern regions of the state, particularly rural areas.

DDS Exhibit 3: Average Assistive Tech Funding by Location

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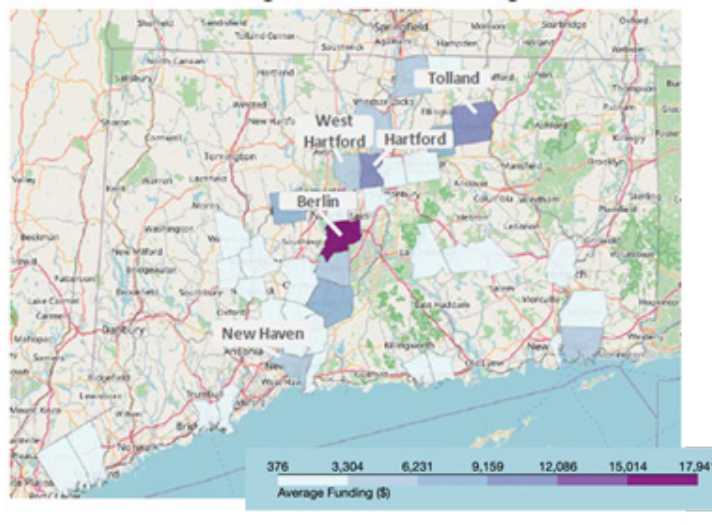
Recommendations

Assistive Technology Grant Recommendations
- **Expand Geographic Reach.** DDS should look to expand the geographic reach of the grant program to reach areas to the western and eastern regions of the state, particularly rural areas.

Overall Recommendations
- **Information Systems and Data.** The state should consider improving the information systems that support DDS. The system is outdated and difficult to change and needs to be able to incorporate data such as race, ethnicity and language (REL). If DDS collects and reports more complete demographic information about the population it serves across Connecticut (I.e., the demographics of residents engaged with DDS and/or the demographics of residents who qualify for DDS services), future program analyses could compare the demographics profile of program participants to the demographic profile of the DDS population for equity insights.
- **Enhanced Support for Individuals with Disabilities Across Agencies.** The state should consider opportunities to engage DDS in developing strategies across all state agencies to better support and integrate individuals with cognitive, physical, and intellectual disabilities.
- **Communication and Outreach.** DDS should continue to develop different ways to reach families in underserved populations. They are working on building trust with families, learning from families how to best communicate and engage, and collaborating with grassroots community-based organizations like churches and schools.

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[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Health. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230216_Health%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Developmental Services, "Statutory Responsibility", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DDS/General/AboutUs/Statutory-Responsibility

[4] FCG interview with DDS leadership, April 25 2023.

[5] Connecticut Department of Developmental Services, "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Newsletters". 2023. Accessed October 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DDS/Media/Publications/Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion-Newsletters

[6] Connecticut Department of Developmental Services, Assistive Technology Funding Data. 2023.

Department of Economic and Community Development

Background: The Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) is the lead agency responsible for supporting economic development in the state and takes a comprehensive approach that incorporates community development, transportation, education, arts and culture. DECD supports existing businesses and attracts new businesses and jobs, promotes Connecticut industries and businesses, provides funding and technical support for local community development programs, supports arts and culture, and helps eliminate brownfield properties.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- **Small Business Boost Program** – DECD has a small business loan program that helps businesses and nonprofits in underserved and underbanked communities, including women, disabled individuals, minorities, and veterans, by providing flexible low-interest loans and support and guidance. DECD provides support in multiple languages, and the Small Business Boost website can be translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Korean, and Arabic. The website also features borrowers' stories.[5]

- **New Community Investment Fund (CIF) 2030 Program** – DECD administers the CIF grant program, managing the application process, reporting, and project oversight. The State Bond Commission approves the grants. The state has allocated $875 million over 5 years to foster economic development in historically underserved communities, known as Alliance Districts and Public Investment Communities (PIC index). In April 2023, the state announced awards for the 2nd round of funding, providing $99 million for 28 projects in 20 municipalities. Eligible projects include capital improvements, such as those focused on affordable housing, brownfield remediation, infrastructure, and public facilities, as well as small business support programs that provide revolving loans, gap financing, microloans, or start-up financing. Projects must be intentionally designed to further consistent and systematic fair, just, impartial treatment of all individuals, including those belonging to underserved and marginalized communities, such as Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Native American persons, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; persons comprising the LGBTQ+ community; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.[6]

- **Social Equity Council** – The DECD Deputy Commissioner is the chair of the Social Equity Council (SEC), which ensures that the new cannabis marketplace in Connecticut is implemented equitably and brings resources back to the communities that were most impacted by the "war on drugs." The SEC recently released grant funding for disproportionately impacted areas (DIAs) for (1) reentry/reintegration programs that support formerly incarcerated individuals and their families and (2) youth education, recreation, and arts programs that help promote physical and mental health, wellness, and empowerment.[7][8]

- **CT Communities Challenge Grant Program** – In Spring 2023, DECD released a 3rd round of a competitive grant program to improve the livability, vibrancy, convenience, and equity of communities through transit-oriented development, downtown development, essential infrastructure, housing mobility, and public space improvements. The program has the explicit goal of directing 50% of funding to eligible projects in distressed municipalities. The program intends to create 3,000 new jobs and has affordable housing requirements.[9]

- **Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development (OBRD) Programs** – OBRD works to return brownfield sites across the state to productive reuse. A contaminated property in the community can be an environmental justice (EJ) and social equity issue. It is the mission of the program to help cleanup and redevelop these properties for the benefit of the communities. The office's competitive grant and loan funding opportunities prioritize funding for distressed municipalities and EJ communities. As of July 20, 2022, the program also has an affordable housing policy requirement mandating a minimum level of affordable housing units for all residential projects of 10 or more units.[10][11]

Program Selected for this Study

DECD selected its Small Business Boost program for review in this study, which provides between $5,000 and $500,000 in loans to businesses and nonprofits – with no origination fees, a fixed 4.5% interest rate, and 60-72 month payback terms, depending on loan size. Business owners and nonprofits can also receive technical assistance before, during, and after the loan application process, including identifying and gathering documents, developing financial projections and business plans, and credit improvement support. To be eligible for the program, businesses must have been operating in the state for over one year, employ less than 100 full-time employees, and have annual revenue of less than $8 million.

Analysis

According to May 2023 data from DECD, the program has provided 259 loans since July 2022. DECD's internal target was to issue 50% of the Small Business Boost loans to minority or women owned businesses. The actual distribution has been 64% to minority or women owned businesses. DECD Exhibit 1 provides a summary of the demographic data for Small Business Boost loan recipients.

DECD Exhibit 1: Demographic Profile of Small Business Boost Loan Recipients[12]

		Count	Loan Amount
Hispanic/Latino/Latinx	Yes	34	$1,840,552
	No	225	$31,491,751
Black/African-American	Yes	47	$6,622,950
	No	212	$26,709,353
Asian	Yes	10	$1,310,731
	No	249	$32,021,572
Native American	Yes	3	$188,426
	No	256	$33,143,877
Mixed Race	Yes	6	$675,300
	No	253	$32,657,003
LGBTQ	Yes	9	$621,820
	No	250	$32,710,843

While the loans are given directly to individual businesses and nonprofits, to assess the overall impact of the program we also looked at the communities where those businesses are located and the demographics of those towns. Our analysis looked at the top 10 Connecticut towns that have the highest level of Small Business Boost funding for businesses in their communities. DECD Exhibit 2 shows a list of those towns and their demographic profile. Five of the towns had larger percentages of white residents than the average for the state of Connecticut, including Newington, Glastonbury, Old Saybrook, West Hartford, and Fairfield. Five towns had higher percentages of Hispanic and Black populations than the statewide averages, including Hartford, Norwalk, Bridgeport, New Haven, and Stamford.

DECD Exhibit 2: Race | 10 Connecticut Towns with the Most Boost Loan Funding for Local Businesses[12][13]

	Hartford	Norwalk	Bridgeport	New Haven	Newington	Glastonbury	Old Saybrook	West Hartford	Stamford	Fairfield	State of CT
White	15%	51%	18%	29%	75%	79%	93%	69%	49%	84%	65%
Hispanic	45%	29%	42%	30%	10%	8%	5%	13%	28%	7%	17%
Black	34%	12%	32%	32%	4%	2%	<1%	7%	12%	2%	10%
Asian	3%	5%	4%	5%	7%	9%	2%	8%	9%	4%	5%

DECD Exhibit 3 shows the distribution of Connecticut Boost Funding across the state – and for comparison, a map of the distribution of low-income populations in the state.

DECD Exhibit 3: Low Income Population Distribution and CT Boost Funding
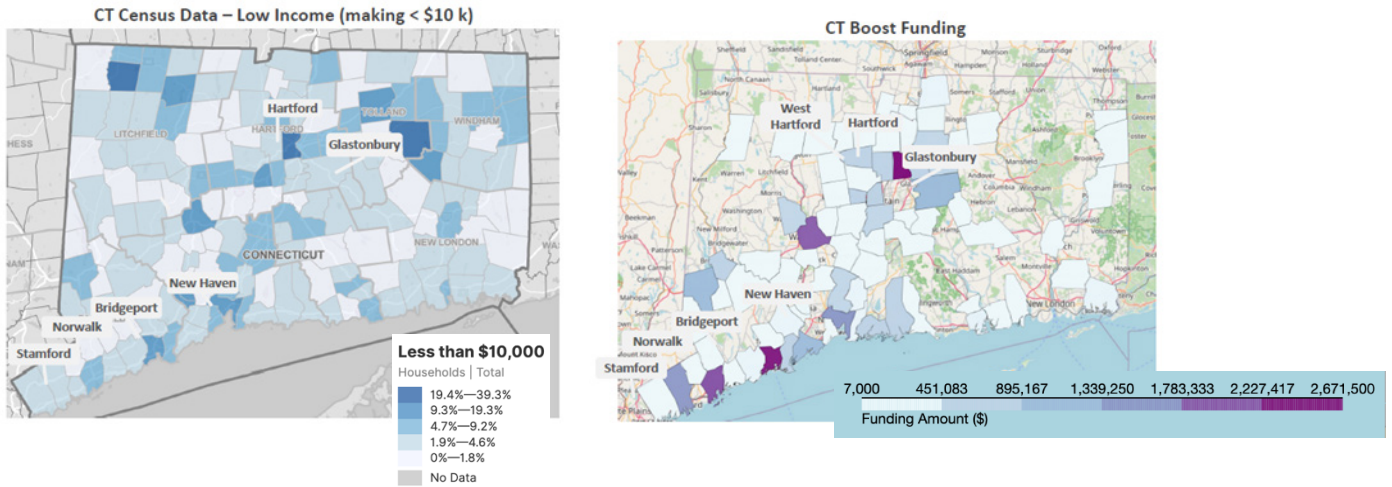
Hartford, Bridgeport, and New Haven are all areas receiving high rates of Boost funding that also have high concentrations of low-income individuals. Stamford, Glastonbury, and West Hartford stand out as higher-income areas that also received significant Boost funding.

Recommendations

Small Business Boost Program Recommendations

- **Monitor Applicant Data and Outcomes.** The Equity study provided a summary of the businesses and communities that have the highest levels of Small Business Boost program funding. The state could also consider analyzing data for the applicants who do not receive Boost funding to see why applicants are denied funding, and identify which applicants use DECD support to improve the strength of their applications in the future. To tailor outreach and support services, DECD should review where those businesses are located and what types of assistance they request/receive from DECD.

Other Opportunities - Brownfields Program

- **Review Equity Impacts.** The mission of the Brownfields Program is to return brownfield sites across the state to productive reuse, including mixed-use, residential, commercial, industrial, retail, and open space uses. The state should review whether there are equity impacts in this program, i.e., how well the program addresses the needs of underserved communities and environmental justice communities (defined as distressed municipalities or communities where at least 30% of the population is living below 200% of the federal poverty level).

- **Technical Assistance.** The state should provide financial and technical assistance on brownfield redevelopment to municipalities and economic development agencies as well as brownfield owners and developers and engage with underserved communities.

Overall Recommendations

- **Demographic Data Requirements.** There has been some discussion in the state about removing demographic reporting requirements for small business loans. While not necessarily in the control of DECD, it is important that the state retain these requirements to ensure that DECD can review the equity impacts of its programs.

[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Conservation and Development. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230222_Conservation%20and%20Development%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, "About the DECD Office", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/About_DECD/About-DECD-Office/About-DECD

[4] FCG interview with DECD leadership, May 2 2023.

[5] Connecticut Small Business Boost Fund. Accessed October 2023. https://ctsmallbusinessboostfund.org/

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[8] Connecticut Open Data. Disproportionately Impacted Areas: Identified for Public Act 21-1, An Act Concerning Responsible and Equitable Regulation of Adult-Use Cannabis. 2023. https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/Disproportionately-Impacted-Areas-Identified-for-P/8nin-pkqb/

[9] State of Connecticut, CT Communities Challenge Grant. 2023. Accessed October 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/Business-Development/05_Funding_Opportunities/CT-Communities-Challenge-Grant

[10] State of Connecticut, Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, Brownfield Remediation and Development, 2023. Accessed October 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/Community-Development/01_Project_Type/Connecticut-Office-of-Brownfield-Remediation-and-Development

[11] Connecticut General Assembly, Title 22a, Environmental Protection. Section 22a-20a. https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/title_22a.htm

[12] Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, Small Business Boost Program data, May 2023.

[13] KFF, Population Distribution by Race/Ethnicity, 2021. KFF estimates based on the 2021 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates. Rounded to the nearest whole number. Accessed December 2023. https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/distribution-by-raceethnicity

Department of Education

Background: The Connecticut State Department of Education is the administrative arm of the Connecticut State Board of Education. The Department helps to ensure equal opportunity and excellence in education for all Connecticut students and is responsible for distributing funds to all Connecticut public school districts.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- The agency reported that equity is part of the culture of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). Each office is charged with creating opportunities and access to the highest quality education for all students. CSDE recently updated its 5-year strategic plan, and one of the four key strategic priorities for 2023-2028 is "ensuring equitable access to education, regardless of background or advantage."[5]

- CSDE collects data from school districts and uses the EdSight portal to publicly provide data regarding student enrollment and outcomes (attendance, discipline, test scores) for individual schools, school districts, and the state. The department reviews and reports data for special populations, including students who are in foster care, English language learners (ELL), low-income (eligible for free/reduced lunch), have disabilities, or are homeless.

- CSDE has a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) challenge program that provides microgrants to support districts that have higher needs or lower completion rates for FAFSA, as well as districts with higher completion rates but disparities among student groups. CSDE reports FAFSA completion rates on an EdSight dashboard.

- CSDE reported that Connecticut became the first state in the nation to require all high schools to offer a full-year 1 credit elective course on African American/Black and Latino/Puerto Rican Studies and to develop a new model curriculum for the course. CSDE partnered with the State Education Resource Center (SERC) in the development of the course, and the process was guided by a 150-member advisory group of high school educators, higher education professors, national researchers and historians, representatives from education and community organizations, students, and families.

- CSDE, in partnership with the five recognized Connecticut Tribes and SERC, is developing model Native American curricula resources for the state.

- CSDE reported being focused for the past 6 years on increasing the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the educator workforce and set a goal of increasing the percentage of educators of color from 8.3% to 10% between 2017-2021 (or 1,000 certified educators). The state exceeded that goal and hired 1,900 educators of color. EdSight provides a Certified Staff of Color/Educator Diversity dashboard on EdSight.

- CSDE's state plan for the federal American Rescue Plan Act Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) made it one of only seven states to receive national recognition for commitment to equity in a study by Education Reform Now. The study highlighted the Learner Engagement and Attendance Program, Evidence-Based Practice Guides, and the state Covid-19 Educational Research Collaborative.

- CSDE reported providing school and district accountability reports, and 40% of the accountability score is based on the performance of high-need groups, including students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and students who are low income - i.e., a school or district's score depends on how well they serve those groups.

- CSDE reported making targeted investments for the state's 36 lowest performing districts ("Alliance Districts"), including additional resources for afterschool and summer programming. The department provides specific set-aside for Alliance Districts in funding, and the districts go through a rigorous process for the state to demonstrate a plan for improving academic achievement.

- CSDE reported that Connecticut is one of few states to have a "Science of Reading" law to address reading disparities and to expand evidence-based reading instruction in grades K-5. School districts need to implement one of the eighteen approved curriculum models, programs or compendiums by July 1, 2025, and schools will have to inform the Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success biannually about the curriculum model, program, or compendium they are using.[6]

Program Selected for this Study

CSDE selected its online curriculum services as its program of focus for this study. Since 2021, using the federal ARP ESSER funding available to support COVID-19 recovery, CSDE has provided schools with access to two online curriculum services to support learning recovery, credit accumulation, enrichment, and project-based learning. The first service, Apex Learning, provides a standards-aligned, interactive digital curriculum for grades 6-12 with tools to support individual student needs. The second service, Defined Learning, has online curricula for project- and-career-based learning for grades K-12, using customizable problem-solving tasks that strengthen career readiness skills.

Program Analysis

Apex Learning
As shown in CSDE Exhibit 1, 3,536 students enrolled in Apex Learning programs. The highest enrollments were in Middletown Public Schools, East Hartford Public Schools, Great Oaks Charter School in Bridgeport, Meriden Public Schools, and Capitol Region Education Council (CREC). In general, Apex is not widely used in Connecticut, with only 1% of the state's 278,933 public school students in grade 6-12 using the program.[7]

CSDE Exhibit 1: Top Five School Districts for Student Enrollment [8]

Top Five School Districts for Student Enrollment
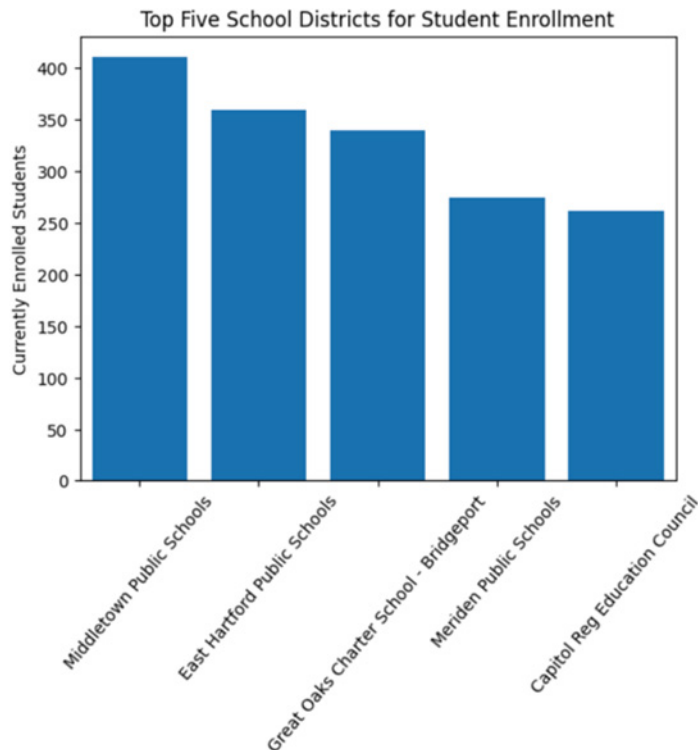
CSDE Exhibits 2 and 3 provide a summary of the profile of the ten districts with the highest participation in Apex Learning. All of these districts have higher percentages of students eligible for free and reduced lunch than the statewide average, with the exception of Middletown. Six of the districts (East Hartford, Great Oaks, Meriden, CREC, Windham, and Hartford) have higher percentages of ELL and multilingual learners than the state.

CSDE Exhibit 2: Highest Apex Enrollment Districts: ELL Population/F/R Lunch Population[8][9]

	Middletown	East Hartford	Great Oaks Charter	Meriden	Capitol Region Education Council	Windham	Bristol	Stratford	Hartford	Plainfield	State of CT
English Learners / Multilingual Learners	4.1%	14.6%	11.5%	17.1%	7.8%	31.0%	5.4%	7.3%	22.2%	1.7%	**8.8%**
Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Meals	36.5%	65.9%	60.6%	75.6%	64.2%	73.1%	54.5%	49.9%	76.3%	57.7%	**40.6%**

CSDE Exhibit 3 provides a summary of race and ethnicity profiles for the districts with the highest Apex enrollments. The districts with the highest Apex enrollments were generally majority Hispanic or Latino, except for Middletown, Bristol, and Plainfield.

CSDE Exhibit 3: Highest Apex Enrollment Districts: District Student Demographic Profiles [8][9]

	Middletown	East Hartford	Great Oaks Charter School	Meriden	Capitol Region Education Council	Windham	Bristol	Stratford	Hartford	Plainfield	State of CT
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.3%	0.3%	*	*	*	0.3%	*	0.2%	0.4%	0.7%	**0.3%**
Asian	4.7%	4.0%	*	2.0%	5.4%	0.6%	3.3%	2.5%	4.7%	1.6%	**5.1%**
Black or African American	21.8%	30.1%	45.8%	12.6%	30.5%	3.1%	12.6%	25.2%	29.4%	3.7%	**12.6%**
Hispanic or Latino	15.9%	50.5%	48.9%	59.6%	41.4%	72.6%	29.0%	38.2%	55.5%	8.3%	**29.0%**
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.4%	0.2%	*	*	*	*	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.6%	**0.1%**
Two or More Races	10.9%	3.6%	*	4.1%	5.3%	2.1%	4.3%	3.8%	2.6%	1.9%	**4.3%**
White	45.9%	11.3%	3.7%	23.0%	17.1%	21.2%	49.1%	29.9%	7.3%	83.3%	**48.6%**

As of the time of data collection, only 247 students had completed their Apex courses, and the students with the highest completion rates were in Montville, Plainfield, Meriden, Stamford, and Thompson.

Defined Learning
Across the state, there were 6,935 active users of the Defined Learning Program and 284,949 total engagements in School Year 2022-2023. Notably, Defined Learning reports that most of the engagements are by educator users rather than student users, as educators may use the program to prepare lessons for their classrooms. CSDE Exhibit 4 shows the 10 public school districts with the highest number of Defined Learning program engagements.

CSDE Exhibit 4: Highest Defined Learning Engagement School Districts by Number of Engagements [8]

Highest Defined Learning Engagements School Districts	Number of Engagements for 2022-23 School Year	Defined Learning Engagements as % of State Total
Bridgeport	52,384	18.4%
Milford	39,375	13.8%
Tolland	16,345	5.7%
Cromwell	16,280	5.7%
Plainville	12,264	4.3%
Bethany	11,971	4.2%
Bethel	7,778	2.7%
South Windsor	6,867	2.4%
Thompson	6,855	2.4%
New Haven	6,124	2.1%

Based on a review of EdSight data, these districts are all majority white, with the exception of Bridgeport and New Haven. They also are below the state average in percent of English Language Learners, except for Bridgeport and New Haven.

Recommendations

Apex/Defined Learning Program Recommendations

- **Outreach and Communication.** Apex seems underutilized as a tool for learning acceleration and credit recovery in Connecticut schools, particularly given its potential use for summer learning. The state should consider other options for communicating with districts about the availability of Apex, its potential uses, and how to sign up.

- **Data on Apex Program Use.** CSDE could also survey districts to get feedback on Apex and to better understand how the programs are being used and what they are achieving, in particular whether these programs are helping students graduate on-time. The department could also ask districts if there are any barriers to getting started or managing the program during the year and develop strategies to reduce these barriers.

- **Data on Defined Learning Program Use.** CSDE should reach out to districts that have high numbers of educator engagements to learn how they are using Defined Learning and what the impact of the program is for classrooms and students, and then communicate learnings/best practices with all districts.

- **Support for Schools.** CSDE could consider stipends for site coordinators in underserved communities to encourage districts to sign up for Apex/Defined Learning and enroll students. CSDE could also work with Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) to create learning communities around Apex/Defined Learning so schools could learn from each other how best to use the program to drive student achievement.

Overall Recommendations

- **Educator Linguistic Diversity.** The state should collect and report the linguistic diversity of teaching staff on the educator diversity dashboard.[9] [10]

- **Report Native Language of Students/Families.** Connecticut public schools collect native language information for students at registration. This data is collected by the CSDE but not currently reported with other school/district/state data on the EdSight website. Data regarding native language could help schools, districts, the state, and community partners tailor initiatives to strengthen family and school partnerships and provide culturally responsive support for students. It could inform the recruitment and training of staff, the purchase or development of curriculum, reading, or other materials, and the translation of communications with families.

[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

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[7] State of Connecticut, EdSight, Enrollment Dashboard, 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://public-edsight.ct.gov/Students/Enrollment-Dashboard/

[8] Connecticut Department of Education Apex and Defined Learning data. Provided June 2023 and August 2023.

[9] State of Connecticut, EdSight, 2023. Accessed October 2023. https://public-edsight.ct.gov/

[10] State of Connecticut, EdSight, Educator Diversity Dashboard, 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://public-edsight.ct.gov/educators/educator-diversity-dashboard

Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Commissioner: James C. Rovella

Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 1,487[1]

FY22 All Funds Budget: $206,577,510 [2]

Background: The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) provides a broad range of public safety services, training, regulatory guidance, and scientific services. DESPP is comprised of six divisions, including the State Police, Fire Prevention and Control, and Emergency Management and Homeland Security.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- The State Police, a division of the DESPP, has created a website, the Transparency Portal, to provide data and reference materials on the state police staffing and demographics, incidents of the use of deadly force by law enforcement officers, officer-involved shooting investigations (including press releases and videos), and vehicle pursuit summary reports.[5]
- The agency reported DESPP's Division of Emergency Management has become a clearinghouse for federal and state grants and financial assistance, public safety, and emergency preparedness for municipalities and nonprofits over the past 5 to 6 years. Grants include the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG); Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP); School Security Competitive Grant Program (SSCGP); Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP); State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP); Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Grant; Port Security Grant Program (PSGP); and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) for state governments, non-profit organizations, and tribal governments. Since 2013, the state-funded SSCGP has supported over 2,000 school security projects for over $83 million, and the grant prioritizes schools with the greatest needs and sets reimbursement rates based on the municipal wealth index of the school community.
- DESPP reported working with the Blue Hills neighborhood in Hartford to help identify potential funding sources to cover costs and losses due to recent flooding and to support flood mitigation and resiliency.
- DESPP reported working to address data infrastructure to support equity work through the Interagency Technical Working Group on Race and Ethnicity Data Standards[6].
- DESPP has focused on accessibility and emergency management through the Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15, diverse communities/external affairs program, including plain language, materials in the top 3 non-English languages in each community, building connections with trusted messengers, and using ethnic media and public radio stations.[7]
- In the spring of 2023, the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS), under a technical assistance award from the US Army Corps of Engineers through the Floodplain Management Services Program, partnered with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, National Weather Service, and the United States Geological Survey to provide region-specific workshops regarding flooding hazards, resources, and awareness information to local Emergency Management Directors, Chief Elected Officials, Local Planning and Zoning Officials, Town Engineers and organizations that work with underserved populations.

Program Selected for this Study

At the federal level, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has prioritized equity and meeting the needs of underserved communities, and Connecticut's Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security would like to similarly focus on reducing barriers for underserved populations and expanding access to programs. For this study, the division wanted to review the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) program, which is a FEMA-funded annual grant program for state and municipal emergency management programs for eligible personnel, training, equipment, and operational expenses associated with emergency management.

Program Analysis

The analysis looked at communities that have received funding - the demographic profile of the residents and the amount of funding received. As shown in DESPP Exhibit 1, the EMPG program has been serving a diverse population. Seven of the top ten towns receiving emergency services funding have higher percentages of Hispanic residents than the state of Connecticut as a whole, including Bridgeport, New Haven, Stamford, Hartford, Norwalk, Danbury, and New Britain. Four of the top towns have higher percentages of Black residents than the state average, including Bridgeport, New Haven, Hartford, and Hamden. Two towns, West Hartford and Fairfield, had very few residents who were Hispanic, Black, or Asian.

DESPP Exhibit 1: Towns Receiving Highest Total EMPG Funding[8] [9] [10]

	Bridgeport	New Haven	Stamford	Hartford	Norwalk	Danbury	New Britain	West Hartford	Fairfield	Hamden	State of CT
Total Funding	158k	143k	142k	134k	97k	93k	79k	69k	68k	66k	3.7M
White	22%	37%	77%	11%	70%	73%	52%	93%	100%	71%	65%
Hispanic	50%	31%	19%	55%	25%	27%	47%	6%		5%	17%
Black	29%	32%	3%	33%	4%	0%	1%	1%		24%	10%
Asian			2%	1%	1%						5%

DESPP Exhibit 2 shows the amount of EMPG funding per capita for each Connecticut town. The map shows that the EMPG funds are generally well distributed across the state – although there are notable gaps in the Northwestern part of the state. DEMHS indicates that some of the towns in Northwest Connecticut, particularly those with part-time or volunteer emergency management staff, have expressed a reluctance to participate in the EMPG program because of the amount of required administrative work compared with the relatively small grant award.

DESPP Exhibit 2: Average Per Capita EMPG Funding by Zip Code[9] [11]
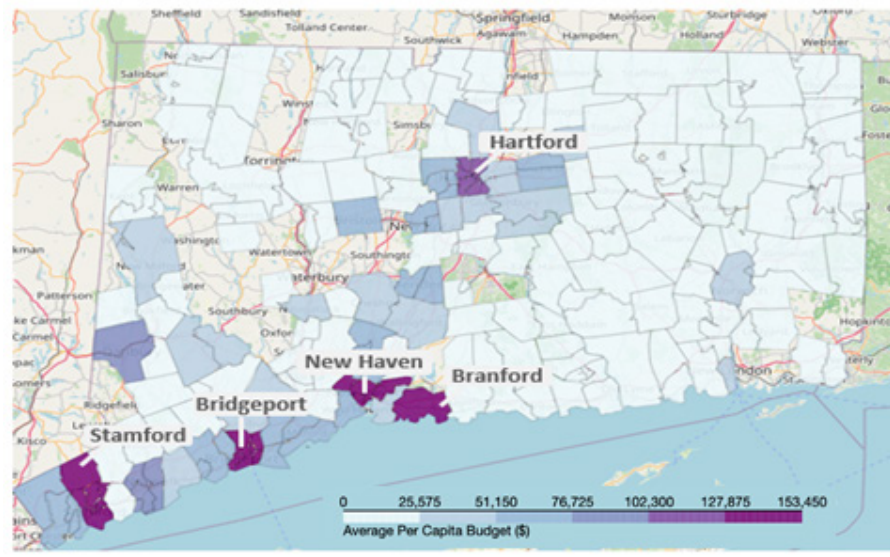
Recommendations

EMPP Program Recommendations

- **Administrative simplification.** DEMHS should simplify the grant application process for EMPG to enable communities with small, part-time, and/or volunteer emergency management staff to more easily access the grant program. DEMHS reports they are working to implement a grants management system that should reduce the administrative burden.

Overall Recommendations

- **New Grant Requirements.** The state should consider revising the statutes for the state-funded nonprofit security grant program to require the state to prioritize projects and adjust match requirements based on need, similar to the School Security Competitive Grant Program.
- **Simplify Grants Application Process**. To reduce barriers to access for underserved populations, the state should continue its work to implement a grants management system and simplify the application process for all grant programs.
- **Workforce Development Data.** The state should provide updated data on career firefighters in Connecticut on the DESPP website. The data on the website has not been updated since 2001, and the state should collect and provide data on the race, ethnicity, language, and gender distribution of career firefighters to target strategies to encourage a diverse workforce.
- **Data, community engagement, communication.** A recent study by the Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project (CTRP3) showed state troopers may have entered tens of thousands of false and inaccurate traffic tickets into the State Police database, and the false tickets were more likely to identify the driver as white, skewing racial profiling data[12]. While the investigation is still ongoing, this story may heighten public distrust about the accuracy of data regarding the Police and the department as a whole. The DESPP will need to develop a communication plan about the data it collects and reports, including on the Transparency Portal, and engage members of impacted communities to address questions and concerns. The State should also continue to support watchdog organizations, such as the CTRP3, and support audits of police data, including data on traffic stops, use of force, and the use of tasers. DESPP should continue to publicly demonstrate its support for CTRP3's mission and work.
- **Communication.** DESPP should communicate its goals and activities regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion on its website. There is currently very limited content related to diversity, equity, and inclusion on the public website.

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[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Regulation and Protection. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230215_Regulation%20and%20Protection%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%202024%20and%20FY%202025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, "About Us", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DESPP/Division-of-Emergency-Service-and-Public-Protection/About-Us

[4] FCG interview with DESPP leadership, April 19 2023.

[5] Connecticut State Police, Transparency Portal. https://www.cspnews.org/transparency

[6] U.S. Office of Management and Budget Interagency Technical Working Group on Race and Ethnicity Standards, June 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://spd15revision.gov/

[7] Connecticut State Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security. 2023 Flood Awareness Workshops and Materials. https://portal.ct.gov/DEMHS/Emergency-Management/Resources-For-Officials/Planning-For-All-Hazards/2023-Flood-Awareness-Workshops

[8] AdvanceCT 2023 Town Profiles. Accessed October 2023. https://www.advancect.org/site-selection/town-profiles

[9] Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, LMPG Data, 2022.

[10] KFF, Population Distribution by Race/Ethnicity, 2021. KFF estimates based on the 2021 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates. Rounded to the nearest whole number. Accessed December 2023. https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/distribution-by-raceethnicity

[11] United States Census Bureau, 2021 Census Data. https://data.census.gov/

[12] Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project (CTRP3), "Connecticut State Police Traffic Stop Data Audit Report 2014-21," June 2023. www.ctrp3.org

Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Commissioner: Katie Dykes
Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 1,573[1]
FY22 All Funds Budget: $120,114,817[2]

Background: The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is dedicated to conserving, improving, and protecting the state's natural resources and environment, and increasing the availability of cheaper, cleaner, and more reliable energy.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- **New Permitting Requirements for Environmental Justice Communities.** The state has established new permitting requirements[5] to support environmental justice (EJ) communities, defined as distressed municipalities or communities where at least 30% of the population is living below 200% of the federal poverty level. "Affecting facilities" such as electric generation facilities or waste treatment plants, that seek to build or expand within an EJ community must have an approved public participation plan prior to filing for a permit. If the municipality already has 5 or more affecting facilities, the applicant must enter into a Community Environmental Benefit Agreement (CEBA) with the municipality to provide financial resources to mitigate environmental impacts.

- **Environmental Justice Council.** Under Executive Order No. 21-3, the state established a Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council (CEEJAC) to advise the DEEP Commissioner on current and historical environmental injustice, pollution reduction, energy equity, climate change mitigation and resiliency, and health disparities. The Council must include representatives from EJ communities, environmental advocacy organizations, business and industry, municipalities, and Connecticut's Department of Public Health, Department of Economic Community Development, Department of Housing, and Department of Transportation.

- **DEI in the Parks.** In 2023, DEEP launched a DEI in Parks Initiative that included providing free swimming lessons at Connecticut YMCAs for children in underserved populations, expanding recruiting for seasonal job opportunities and internships, and integrating DEI into the new 5-year, Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. DEEP estimates that over 3,000 children will receive free swimming lessons this year. Drowning is a leading cause of death for young people and disproportionately impacts Black and Hispanic children living in urban areas[6].

- **Urban Green and Community Gardens program.** In 2007, DEEP created a program, the Urban Green and Community Gardens (UGCG) program, that is only available to distressed municipalities/targeted investment communities and provides funding to develop or enhance community gardens or public open spaces.

Program Selected for this Study

DEEP selected the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWA) Program, which is an annual grant program that provides funding to municipalities, nonprofit land conservation organizations, and water companies to acquire land for open space. The State of Connecticut has a goal of preserving 21% of Connecticut's land as public open space (CGS Section 23-8), of which 10% shall be held by DEEP and 11% shall be held by land conservation partners. To meet that goal, DEEP must acquire an additional 56,889 acres and partners must acquire an additional 100,437 acres. In 2023, DEEP completed the 25th round of the OSWA grant program, awarding $3.73 million for 15 projects to protect over 1,025 acres. DEEP recently revised the OSWA grant scoring criteria to align projects with the Governor's Council on Climate Change Environmental Justice recommendations and to prioritize properties in distressed municipalities and targeted investment communities, near public transportation, and in areas with higher population density. Funding is through State bond funds and/or the Community Investment Act.

Analysis

The analysis looked at the top towns receiving OSWA grants and the demographic profile of those communities (see DEEP Exhibits 1 and 2). In general, OSWA funding over time has been distributed primarily to majority white, higher income, nonurban communities. Of the top 10 ten towns, only Stamford had a notable non-white population, at 28% Hispanic.

DEEP Exhibit 1: Race | Top 10 Towns Receiving OWSA Grants[7][8][9]

|	Simsbury	Farmington	Madison	Redding	Stamford	East Haddam	Washington	Tolland	Guilford	Southington	State of CT
White	83%	71%	90%	86%	49%	95%	83%	88%	87%	87%	65%
Hispanic	7%	7%	3%	7%	28%	2%	12%	5%	5%	5%	17%
Black	3%	3%	<1%	<1%	12%	<1%	1%	<1%	2%	2%	10%
Asian	3%	16%	3%	3%	9%	<1%	2%	3%	4%	3%	5%

All of the top towns receiving OSWA funding have median incomes greater than the state average ($79,855).

DEEP Exhibit 2: Income | Top 10 Towns Receiving OWSA Grants[7][10]

	Simsbury	Farmington	Madison	Redding	Stamford	East Haddam	Washington	Tolland	Guilford	Southington
Median Income (2016-2020)	$128,829	$97,262	$119,777	$135,928	$96,885	$95,685	$102,114	$118,367	$108,243	$101,098
Ratio to State Average	1.61	1.22	1.5	1.7	1.21	1.2	1.28	1.48	1.36	1.27

The analysis looked at the distribution of funding over time (see DEEP Exhibit 3), and Western Connecticut has been the primary recipient of OSWA grant funding with Hartford and New Haven counties receiving the most funds from 1998-2012. From 2012-2022, there has been an increase in funding going to the southeast and New London County.

DEEP Exhibit 3: Grant Funding by Location by Year [7]
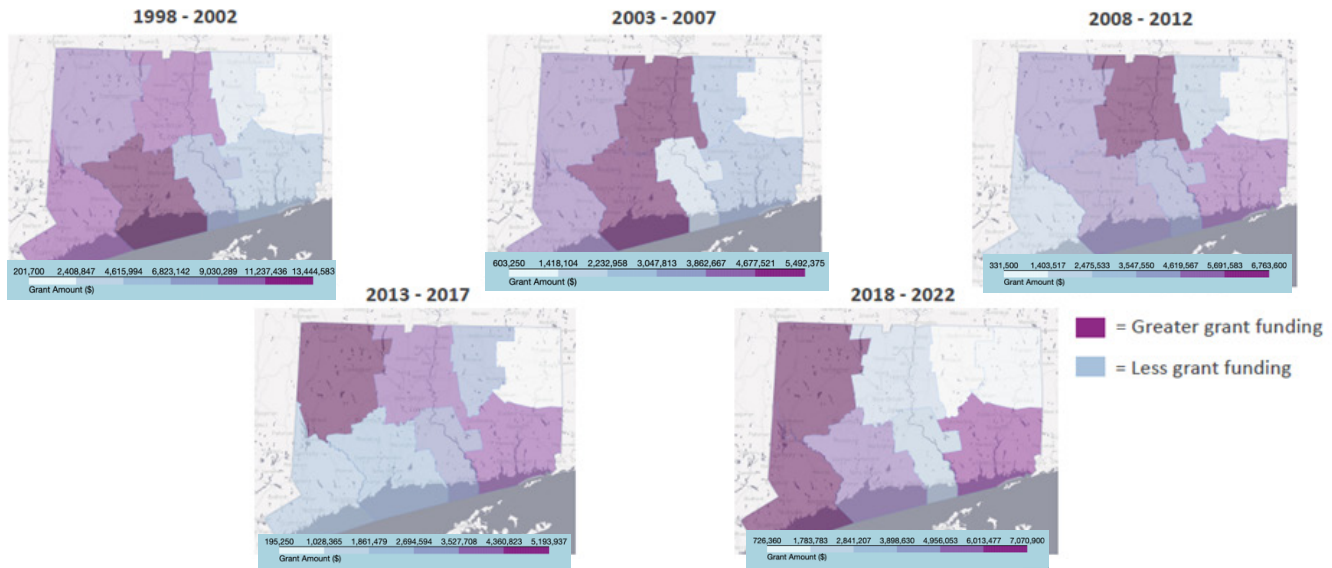
Additional Stakeholder Input

In Equity Study focus groups, stakeholder groups reported that barriers in the open space land acquisition process make it difficult for EJ communities to participate in the program. In the Equity Study focus groups, Stakeholders stated that they feel DEEP is making an effort to redefine their programs with an equity lens, but the agency has limited resources and still relies on nonprofit organizations to outreach to distressed communities and to provide technical assistance and reduce barriers related to the grant.

Some of the barriers to OSWA participation discussed in interviews and focus groups included:
- The property cannot include any contamination.
- If the land has a house on the property, the applicant needs to remove the house from the plan.
- The closing cannot be completed prior to the grant application, making it difficult to include properties that may be in high demand.
- The upfront costs are high and not reimbursable, including appraisals, surveys, and title research. The program also requires a "yellow book" appraisal, which is more complex and there are few qualified appraisers.

Recommendations

OSWA Program Recommendations
- **Technical Assistance.** The state should provide more assistance to underserved communities in the OSWA application process, or consider creating technical assistance partnerships with regional organizations, such as regional councils of governments.
- **Data.** The state needs to improve the data collection and reporting around open space acquisition and provide more transparency about the areas preserved and communities served, including better geographic information system (GIS) coordinate information about land parcels.
- **Potential Statute, Regulatory and Policy Changes.** The state should consider changes that would make it easier for contaminated properties in underserved communities to be protected through OSWA, in conjunction with other DEEP programs to mitigate hazards and protect residents/open space users. Also, the state should identify options to reduce application barriers and costs for underserved communities. These could include developing a way to cover reimbursement due diligence costs, changing the type of appraisals required, and/or designing a process that allows for quicker property closings. Lastly, the state should consider changes to allow partnerships with the Department of Housing/housing authorities to allow for the purchase of properties that include houses and create opportunities to meet both open space and housing needs.

Overall Recommendations
- **Stakeholder Engagement.** The state should engage environmental justice communities in the Green Plan creation and engage diverse stakeholders when determining how to increase open space preservation for underserved communities.
- **New Funding Sources.** The state should develop other avenues for land acquisition for environmental justice communities and other underserved populations, such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a federal program that many states use to provide grant funding to urban communities for open space acquisition.
- **Environmental Justice Support.** To provide greater assistance to Environmental Justice communities, the state may need to increase the number of dedicated staff for the DEEP environmental justice office.

[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Health. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/yearGOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230222_Conservation%20and%20Development%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, "About Us", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/About/About-Us

[4] FCG interview with DEEP leadership, May 15 2023.

[5] Connecticut General Assembly, Title 22a, Environmental Protection. Section 22a-20a. https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/title_22a.htm

[6] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Drowning Prevention". October 2022. Accessed November 2023. https://www.cdc.gov/drowning/facts/index.html

[7] Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, OSWA data.

[8] AdvanceCT Town Profiles, 2023. Accessed October 2023. https://www.advancect.org/site-selection/town-profiles

[9] KFF, Population Distribution by Race/Ethnicity, 2021. KFF estimates based on the 2021 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates. Rounded to the nearest whole number. Accessed December 2023. https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/distribution-by-raceethnicity

[10] CT Data Collaborative, "Median Household Income Town", data from 2016-2020. Accessed November 2023. http://databytopic.ctdata.org/dataset?dataset_name=median-household-income-town

Department of Insurance

Commissioner: Andrew N. Mais

Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 136[1]

FY22 All Funds Budget: $30,090,666[2]

Background: Guided by a mission of consumer protection, the Connecticut Insurance Department (CID) enforces state insurance laws to ensure policyholders are treated fairly. CID provides assistance, outreach, and education to help consumers make sound choices, and regulates the industry to foster market competition for the availability of insurance.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- The CID reported that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is a major focus of the department. CID staff participated in professional development LinkedIn Learning courses during the summer of 2022 that focused on DEI. Additionally, all directors and managers, approximately 15-20 individuals, took part in unconscious bias training through LinkedIn learning in June 2022. In 2023, CID will participate in the National Association of Insurance Commissioners' course on Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion for Regulators.

- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CID created the role of Chief Inclusion Officer. The goal of the role was to consider what efforts the department could undertake on equity. However, the role was not a separate position; it was in addition to an individual's existing role within the department. The role was vacant at the time of this report and the CID Deputy Commissioner is overseeing internal DEI initiatives and training for the department.

- The department acknowledged that there are gaps for underserved groups in the insurance industry, and they are looking at opportunities to eliminate those gaps. The gaps include:
  - Coverage gaps: The CID examined their role as regulators to improve the public's access to insurance products and increase the public's understanding of the various products. The Consumer Affairs Division offers a local community outreach program that provides consumer assistance and information to the public and policymakers through its speaker's bureau: Helping Consumers Navigate Insurance. Topics include[5]:

o Annuity Contracts	o Home Insurance	o Long-term care
o Automobile Insurance	o Home-based Business Insurance	o Renter's Insurance
o Health Insurance	o Life Insurance	o Small Business Insurance

  - Rate gaps: The CID is responsible for ensuring rates are not "excessive, inadequate or unfairly discriminatory." The CID noted that insurance is inherently discriminatory; rates are based on risk profiles, but it is their role to make sure there is "fair" discrimination based on risk classification and not "unfair" using proxy discrimination or other mechanisms. The department has issued notices regarding the use of big data and AI to ensure that potential discriminatory practices and historic biases are not used in models.[6]
  - Inequities in health status and health treatment: CID is examining their role, as regulators, in addressing the needs of communities that have not received adequate care.

- CID reported that they also examine equity in the insurance industry workforce, specifically related to language barriers. To be licensed as an insurance producer and insurance agent, individuals must take and pass examinations. In 2019, the CID began offering the examination in Spanish in an effort to promote equity. The CID also initiated a program to accommodate individuals for whom English is a second language. While the department does not collect demographic information on test takers, it does know the number of individuals who have utilized the Spanish examination and the ESL accommodations, as well as the passing rate for those individuals. In addition, Connecticut law permits insurers to offer policies in any language, provided the insurer submits an English version of the policy with certification as to the translation with the Department.

- The CID participates in various councils and commissions as part of its equity efforts. Within the state of Connecticut, it participates in Access Health Connecticut, Birth to Three Interagency Coordinating Council, Children's Behavioral Health Task Force, Connecticut Healthcare Affordability Advisory Committee, Drug and Alcohol Policy Council, Governor's Climate Change Council, Healthcare Cabinet, and State Agency Fostering Resiliency Council.

- On a national level, CID is a member of the National Association for Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) which has a significant focus on DEI. The insurance industry is regulated by individual states, thus, there is minimal federal

oversight. For national issues, coordination happens through the national association. The CID Commissioner, Andrew Mais, is currently president-elect of NAIC and is also a member of the NAIC's Special Executive Committee on Race and Insurance, which is charged with conducting research and analyzing issues of diversity and inclusion within the insurance sector.[7]

Program Selected for this Study

The CID selected its only consumer-facing component as its priority program, the Consumer Affairs Unit. This Unit receives, reviews, and responds to complaints and inquiries from state residents concerning insurance-related problems. The experienced staff examines each complaint to determine whether statutory requirements and contractual obligations within the commissioner's jurisdiction have been fulfilled. The Unit coordinates the resources available within the department to fully address consumer complaints and recovers approximately $4 million a year on behalf of consumers.

Unit staff members provide outreach and education on a variety of topics on an individual basis and in group settings. The Speakers Bureau[5] is available to groups and can tailor a presentation for a particular group. The Unit also distributes educational pamphlets and posters upon request. The Unit publishes the Rankings of Insurance Companies comparing the number of justified complaints related to premium volume. The Auto, Accident & Health Ranking Reports are published annually.[8][9] To ensure that anyone can have access to the department and get answers, materials are available in multiple languages. Additionally, complaints can be made in multiple languages.

Program Analysis

FCG requested data from the Connecticut Insurance Department on the Consumer Affairs program to respond to the following questions: Are there demographic differences in who is making complaints in general and compared to the state population? What are the monetary outcomes of complaint data? CID was unable to provide data by the deadline, therefore no data is available for analysis.

Recommendations

Overall Recommendations

- **Dedicated DEI Role.** To adequately address issues of DEI within the department and in its work with consumers, the CID should consider a dedicated Chief of Inclusion role.
- **Contact Center Best Practices.** The state could develop guidance on best practices for consumer affairs units/complaint centers/contact centers, and in particular, how to be responsive to the needs of underserved populations (e.g. data collection for race/ethnicity, translation/language assistance, policies and protocols to advance equity). Banking, Consumer Protection, and Insurance all have contact centers using similar systems.

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[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Regulation and Protection. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230215_Regulation%20and%20Protection%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%202024%20and%20FY%202025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Insurance Department, "Mission and Divisions", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/cid/Mission-and-Divisions

[4] FCG interview with CID leadership, May 1 2023.

[5] Connecticut Insurance Department, Speakers Bureau. "Request a Speaker". https://portal.ct.gov/cid/Searchable-Archive/About-Us/Consumer-Outreach--Speakers-Bureau?language=en_US

[6] Connecticut Insurance Department. "NOTICE TO ALL ENTITIES AND PERSONS LICENSED BY THE CONNECTICUT INSURANCE DEPARTMENT CONCERNING THE USAGE OF BIG DATA AND AVOIDANCE OF DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES". April 20 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/CID/1_Notices/Technologie-and-Big-Data-Use-Notice.pdf

[7] National Association of Insurance Commissioners. "Insurance Departments: Connecticut". https://content.naic.org/state-insurance-departments?field_contact_state_department_target_id=1031

[8] Connecticut Insurance Department. "The Consumer Affairs Unit". https://portal.ct.gov/cid/searchable-archive/about-us/the-consumer-affairs-unit?language=en_US

[9] Connecticut Insurance Department. "Auto, Accident & Health Ranking Reports". 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/cid/Searchable-Archive/Reports/Auto-Accident-and-Health-Ranking-Reports

Department of Labor

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Commissioner: Danté Bartolomeo
Staff: (as of August 31, 2022): 819[1]
FY22 All Funds Budget: $242,098,063[2]

Background: The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) protects Connecticut's workers from employment/labor law violations and promotes global economic competitiveness by strengthening the state's workforce. DOL 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.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Impact Activities[4]

- Many CTDOL programs are focused on addressing equity and potential barriers to employment and advancement. For example, the Connecticut Youth Employment Program (CYEP) prioritizes the enrollment of youth who have the following barriers to employment: low income, justice involvement, homelessness, English Language Learner, pregnant/parenting, and/or disability.
- In recent years, CTDOL has focused on simplifying enrollment into Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs by helping potential participants identify and submit eligibility documents. As part of this work, CTDOL has partnered with other state agencies that may already have the required documentation on file, so residents do not need to provide it. CTDOL has expanded eligible costs to include helping residents obtain social security cards, birth certificates, etc.
- CTDOL's BEST Chance Returning Citizens Program offers pre-employment training and job placement assistance for formerly incarcerated individuals in construction, culinary arts, or advanced manufacturing-related careers in North Central Connecticut through Capital Workforce Partners.
- CTDOL has worked for over 10 years on the statewide, multiagency, collaborative Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) led by the Department of Social Services. CFI focuses on changes in policies and programs to support the 50,000 single-father households in the state of CT and help engage all fathers in the lives of their children.[5]
- CTDOL convenes an annual Connecticut Learns and Works conference to share information and coordinate workforce development efforts across workforce boards, school systems, and business and industry. Conference sessions include a focus on meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities in the workplace and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).
- CTDOL worked with the Department of Administrative Services to remove four-year degree requirements for job titles of Accounting Careers Trainee (ACT/0034AR), Connecticut Careers Trainee (CCT/1992SH), and Connecticut Careers Trainee (CCT/1992AR) to advance equal employment opportunities.
- Resources available through CTDOL programming include the Business Engagement Unit that connects with employers, coordinates recruitment events specific to job openings. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a federal tax credit available to employers for hiring individuals from certain target groups such as a long-term unemployed recipients who have faced significant barriers to employment. The WIOA Administration Unit oversees the Platform to Employment (P2E), a nationally recognized solution, helping long-term unemployed residents get back to work. For employers, P2E gives businesses an opportunity to evaluate and consider hiring participants during a trial work experience.[6]
- CTDOL highlighted its partnership with the five regional workforce development boards. CTDOL supports and funds workforce board DEI programs, and believes their programs reduce barriers to employment and help build a more inclusive and equitable workforce.

Program Selected for this Study

The Connecticut Youth Employment Program (CYEP) provides year-round job opportunities and training to young people aged 14-24 via the state's regional workforce development boards and was selected by CTDOL for focus in this study. The goals of CYEP include helping young people build leadership skills, build professional networks, obtain work experience, and strengthen their resumes. In 2022, 2,339 young people from across the state participated in the program. As described above, the program is particularly focused on young people who are marginalized and underserved, providing support services to break down barriers to entering the job market. The data used for this analysis was provided by CTDOL from the cumulative reports submitted to CTDOL by Workforce Development Boards. As such, the analysis included here is only as accurate as the data received by our team.

Analysis

The CYEP program has significant support from the legislature, executive branch, workforce partners, and in communities. Enrollment demands continue to exceed the number of spots available. Program participation in 2021 was 2,462. In 2022, the program was level-funded and was fully enrolled at 2,330 participants partially due to an increase in the state's minimum wage.

CTDOL Exhibit 1 shows the distribution of participants as reported by workforce development region. The Northwest, North Central, and South-Central regions had the highest number of participants. However, CTDOL notes that there seems to be underreporting from some regions, particularly the Southwest region, which impacts the data.

CTDOL Exhibit 1: Towns by Workforce Development Areas[7]
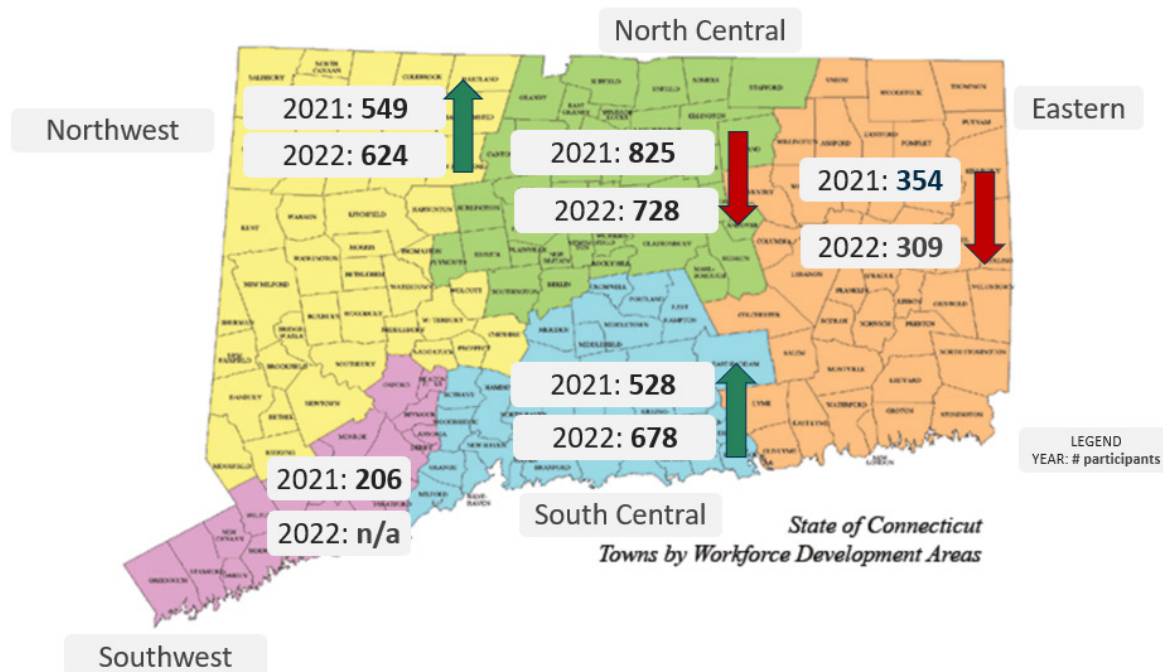
CTDOL Exhibit 2 shows the race and ethnicity distribution for program participants as reported from the data accessible from the submitted Workforce Development Board cumulative reports submitted to CTDOL. The data, as reported, indicates that the percentage of participants identifying as "white" remained level from 2021 to 2022; however, the "other" category shrank from 822 to 543 while the Black and multiracial categories increased from 874 to 1,155.

CTDOL Exhibit 2: CYEP Breakdown by Race[7]
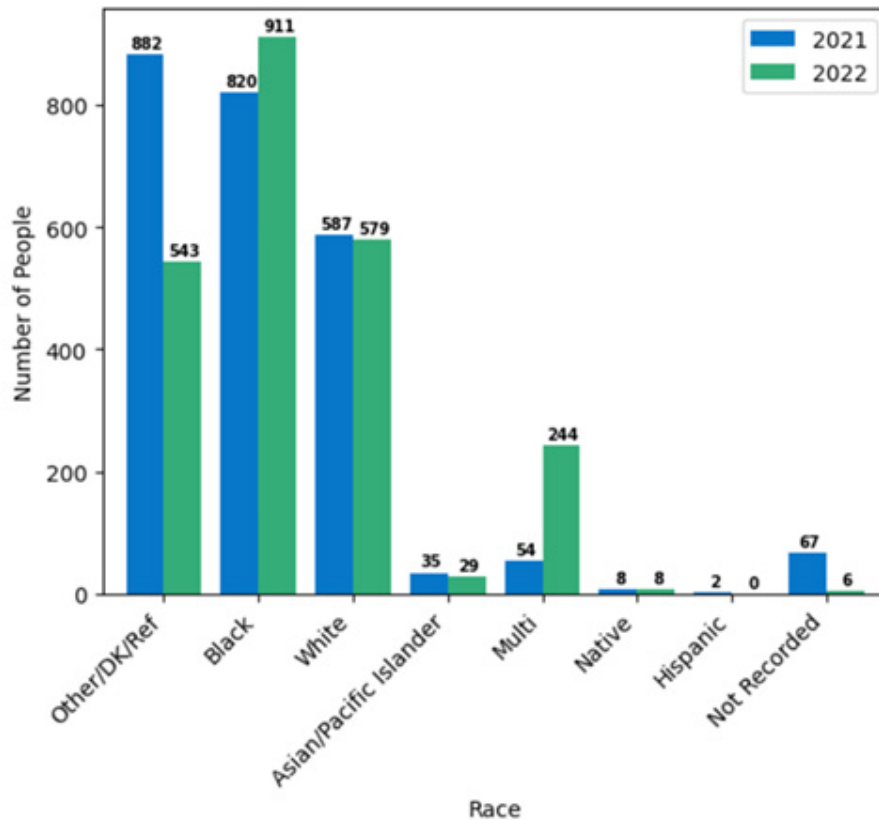
Note: "Other/DK/Ref" = Other/Don't Know/Refused

Recommendations

Connecticut Youth Employment Program Recommendations

- **Data.** CTDOL should continue to work with workforce development boards and their partner agencies to facilitate data collection and reporting for the Connecticut Youth Employment program. During SFY 23 (July 2022 – June 30, 2023), CTDOL facilitated multiple workgroups in partnership with the workforce development boards to develop an updated summer youth reporting structure that included an enhancement to the collection of demographic information. As a result, the template was implemented in SFY 24 (July 2023 - June 30, 2024) to ensure that data is gathered in a usable format for the workforce development boards to populate on a quarterly basis. The CTDOL will be able to review the results of that effort at the end of SFY 24.

- **Training for Program Staff.** The regional workforce development boards reported concerns about increased marijuana use among youth, including youth reporting to worksite and program events/training under the influence. The program could expand access to training and support for the workforce development board staff, the vendors who operate the youth employment programs in each town, and worksite supervisors on substance use prevention. Workforce development boards also highlighted the impact of trauma on underserved youth and the importance of training to ensure program staff are trauma-informed and can support youth who have experienced trauma.

- **Simplifying Enrollment.** The CTDOL and the workforce development boards should continue to seek to simplify enrollment in the CTDOL programs, including the youth employment program, and develop interagency systems and processes to share eligibility-related documents across agencies so that residents who do not have easy access to their documents can still successfully enroll. Specific examples included birth

certificates for youth and DMV IDs for returning citizens. It is important to note that CTDOL recently updated their policy to include a section on Expanded Disconnected Youth Considerations such as, ensuring eligible documentation can be self-attested, which means a written, or electronic/digital declaration of information for a particular data element, signed and dated by the participant. Since disconnected youth are more likely to be homeless or not in a stable living environment, youth who self-attest to a lack of stable housing may be counted as a family of one. In addition, part-time earnings may be excluded from calculations for low income if those earnings exceed the Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL)/poverty guidelines.

- **Support Services.** The CTDOL and Workforce Boards should continue to coordinate with other local agencies and identify additional options to meet the needs of adult and youth job seekers who have social and economic barriers, e.g., food insecurity, housing, and transportation. During the community focus groups, community organizations noted that because unemployment is relatively low in the state, the residents seeking services tend to have higher needs and higher barriers to access and there may be new creative strategies to support these residents. CTDOL currently provides services that include but are not limited to the following:

    1. Linkages to community services
    2. Paying for a driver's license included
    3. Assistance with childcare and dependent care
    4. Assistance with housing
    5. Needs Related Payments
    6. Assistance with educational testing
    7. Reasonable accommodations for youth with disabilities
    8. Legal Aide
    9. Referrals to healthcare
    10. Assistance with uniforms or other job appropriate attire and work-related tools, including such items as eyeglasses and protective eyewear
    11. Assistance with books, fees, school supplies, and other necessary items for students enrolled in postsecondary education classes
    12. Payments and fees for employment and training related applications, tests, and certification
    13. Food - Food may be provided to eligible youth when it will assist or enable the participant to participate in allowable youth program activities and to reach his/her employment and training goals, thereby achieving the program's overall performance goals. The use of grant funds for food should be limited to reasonable and necessary purchases that are coordinated, when possible, with other community, state, or federal services that provide food for low-income individuals.

Overall Recommendations

- **Out of School Youth Programs/Pandemic Recovery.** In focus groups, community organizations and residents reported the need for more CTDOL programs and services directed toward out-of-school youth – particularly students who dropped out of high school and students who graduated from high school during the pandemic. These students lack basic job readiness skills and social-emotional skills and face significant barriers to finding employment and engaging in their communities.

- **Older Adult Workforce Programs/Pandemic Recovery.** Community organizations and residents reported difficulties for older residents, particularly older women, in getting hired. Many older workers left their jobs during the Covid-19 pandemic, and now are trying to reenter the workforce. With labor shortages in key sectors such as healthcare and education, the CTDOL should consider additional programs and services to encourage businesses, nonprofits, and state agencies to hire older adults who have valuable work experience. A good example of this type of program is Maturity Works, a training program that helps people 55 and older increase their job skills through paid community service in local nonprofit organizations[8].

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[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Conservation and Development. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230222_Conservation%20and%20Development%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Labor, "About Us", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/dol/About-Us

[4] FCG interview with CTDOL leadership, April 10 2023.

[5] Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative. "Quarterly Newsletter: Issue No. 5, Summer 2023". 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Fatherhood/PDFs/CFI-Newsletter_Summer-2023_FINAL.pdf

[6] Platform to Employment: A WorkPlace Opportunity. Accessed November 2023. https://platformtoemployment.com/

[7] Connecticut Department of Labor CYEP data from 2021-2022.

[8] The Work Place, "Maturityworks". Accessed December 2023. https://www.workplace.org/maturityworks/

Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Commissioner: Nancy Navarretta, M.A., LPC, NCC

Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 3,222[1]

FY22 All Funds Budget: $665,254,197[2]

Background: The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) is a healthcare agency that promotes the overall health and wellness of persons with behavioral health needs. DMHAS administers a wide range of services related to mental health treatment and substance use prevention and treatment.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

DMHAS highlighted a significant focus on equity-related training both for its own employees and community providers, above and beyond what most agencies reported about their training efforts. DMHAS' training includes:

- Facilitating a cohort program for DMHAS staff and community members that meets two days per month for 10 months to go deeper into various diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues than the day-long DEI training required for all staff. Examples of topics include: an exploration of various cultures, the stigma around mental health and addiction, and how to use the information learned to be more culturally sensitive when engaging DMHAS clients. 25-30 staff members participate annually, and the experience was described as "transformational" for participants.
- LGBTQIA+ training[2], including hosting an annual conference with over 300 attendees and enhanced training system-wide for best practices for working with the LGBTQIA+ community, including the trauma-recovery-empowerment model.

DMHAS described efforts to actively address health issues that often disproportionately impact underserved communities through collaborative initiatives such as:

- Supporting substance-exposed infants, in collaboration with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Department of Public Health (DPH) and Department of Correction (DOC).
- Supporting housing options for DMHAS clients receiving housing supports, partnering with the Department of Housing (DOH) and community agencies to advance equitable housing-related initiatives.
- Establishing the Access Mental Health for Moms program where any prescriber in the community who is supporting a pregnant person and has questions about mental health or substance use can call a staffed hotline to receive expert consultation from a reproductive psychiatrist.
- Bringing increased transparency to service access (e.g., website for mental health and addiction residential bed availability.)

Program Selected for this Study

DMHAS selected its Young Adult Services (YAS) program as its program of focus. The YAS program started in 1997 as a collaboration with Department of Developmental Services (DDS), DCF, DOC, and Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to support young adults aging out of DCF to help them transition into their local community. DMHAS has stratified data on YAS program discharges by race, ethnicity, and gender to identify any opportunities for advancing equity within the YAS program. The following charts provide a summary of discharge outcomes in FY 2022 based on the discharge forms collected by the research division. There were 268 discharges, and the two discharge outcomes are summarized below: Housing, as shown in DMHAS Exhibit 1, and Employment as shown in DMHAS Exhibit 2.

DMHAS Exhibit 1: Housing Outcome by Race/Ethnicity [51]
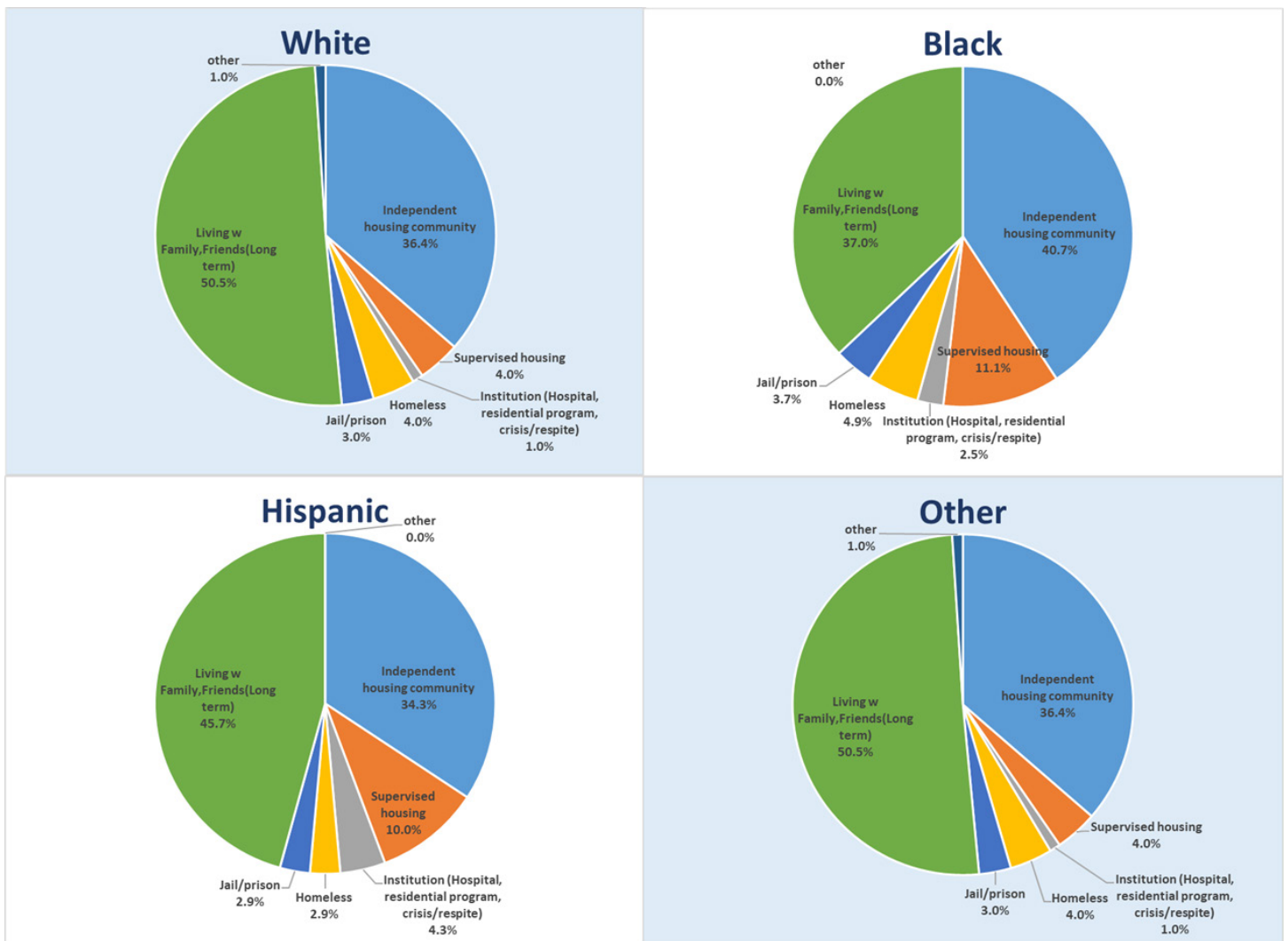
In general, Black youth were more likely to be in an independent housing community than other races, and Black and Hispanic youth were more likely to be in supervised housing than white or "other" youth. White youth were the most likely to be living with family or friends long term.

DMHAS Exhibit 2: Employment Outcome by Race/Ethnicity[5]
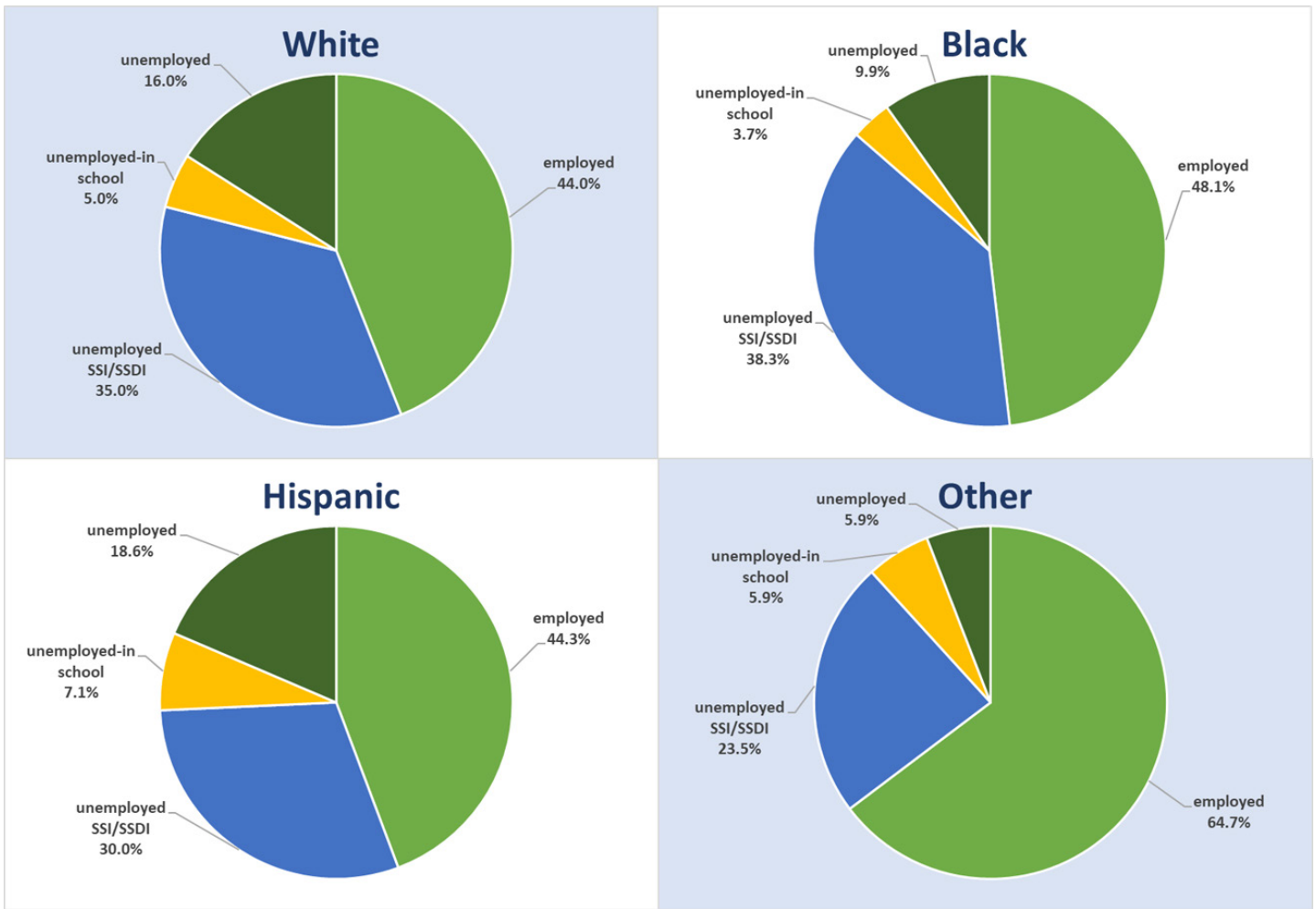
Black youth were less likely to be in school and more likely to be employed than white or Hispanic youth. "Other" had the highest percentage of youth employed. Hispanic youth had the highest percentage of youth in-school.

DMHAS Exhibit 3 shows the difference between males and females in living situation at discharge. The percentage of female youth who reported homelessness was 4.7%, 1.6% greater than the share of male youth reporting homelessness. 5.0% of male youth reported being in jail/prison, 4.1% greater than the share of female youth who reported living in the same setting. Notably, DMHAS did not report outcomes for other gender identities.

DMHAS Exhibit 3: Housing Outcomes by Gender [5]

Female

- other 0.9%
- Independent housing community 40.6%
- Living w Family, Friends (Long term) 40.6%
- Supervised housing 7.5%
- Institution (Hospital, residential program, crisis/respite) 4.7%
- Homeless 4.7%
- Jail/prison 0.9%

Male

- other 0.0%
- Independent housing community 34.2%
- Living w Family, Friends (Long term) 48.4%
- Supervised housing 8.7%
- Institution (Hospital, residential program, crisis/respite) 0.6%
- Homeless 3.1%
- Jail/prison 5.0%

Recommendations

Young Adult Services Program Recommendations

- **Data and Reporting.** The state should ensure that it monitors program outcome data stratified as shown in this profile to inform its overall program operations, as well as its equity action plan. The state should also consider disaggregating the YAS data by sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), following federal and state emerging guidelines.

Overall Recommendations

- **Data and Reporting.** DMHAS produces an annual statistics report with data on admissions, discharges, and level of care, including admissions and clients by primary drug and diagnosis.[6] DMHAS also publishes overall demographics of the population served, including gender, age, ethnicity, race, and town of residence. However, in the format currently published, equity insights are not available. The state should update the format of its statistics such that admissions, discharges, level of care, and other utilization statistics can be stratified by the available demographics. This would enable public evaluation of equity by these demographics for each utilization measure, and inform any reforms needed to advance equity among DMHAS clients and programs.

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[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Health. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230216_Health%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, "About DMHAS", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DMHAS/About-DMHAS/Agency/About-DMHAS

[4] FCG interview with DMHAS leadership, March 30 2023.

[5] DMHAS YAS data provided June 2023.

[6] Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Annual Statistical Data Reporting, FY22. https://portal.ct.gov/DMHAS/Divisions/EQMI/DMHAS-Annual-Statistics

Department of Motor Vehicles

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Commissioner: Tony Guerrera
Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 702[1]
FY22 All Funds Budget: $67,351,596[2]

Background: The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) promotes and advances public safety, security, and service through the regulation of drivers, their motor vehicles, and vehicle-related businesses.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- The DMV reported language assistance through the use of phone interpreter services and expanded language offerings for driver's license knowledge testing and web pages. Knowledge testing is offered in Albanian, Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, English, French, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Applicants also have the option to request and complete in hard copy format a written knowledge test in these additional languages: Amharic Ethiopia, Armenian, Bosnian, Chinese Simplified, Croatian, Dari, German, Greek, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Nepali, Pashto, Persian Farsi, Portuguese (Brazilian), Punjabi, Romanian, Somali, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, and Urdu.
- The DMV reported recruiting retired Commercial Driver's License (CDL) holders to drive school buses to remediate the shortage of school bus drivers.
- The department also reported the issuance of Drive Only Licenses, which are available for undocumented individuals.
- The DMV reported establishing community partnerships with organizations that serve underserved and underrepresented communities.
- The DMV reported working to ensure diversity in hiring, especially for hearing officers, to reflect Connecticut's diverse population.
- The DMV reported increasing engagement with small businesses in the state. This increased engagement with minority-owned, women-owned, small, and disadvantaged businesses aims to promote programs such as child safety classes, emissions stations, etc.
  - The agency reported working to engage minority and women-owned businesses to participate in its Connecticut Emissions program. During the scoring of applications and stations, additional points were assessed for locations that were minority/woman-owned business enterprises (MBE/WBE). The DMV now has 24 documented MBE/WBEs that participate in the Connecticut Emissions program.
  - The agency also reported adding more emissions station locations for customers in areas that were identified as underserved.
- The DMV has committed to continuing to ensure DMV satellite offices are located near bus routes to improve accessibility for underserved populations.
- The agency reported partnerships with other state agencies and municipalities, including:
  - Department of Veterans Affairs – participating in the Veterans' Stand Down event each year, an event that provides supplies and services to homeless veterans.
  - Department of Correction – partnering to issue IDs and licenses for inmates upon release and provide CDL knowledge testing.
  - Judicial Branch – the DMV is in the process of developing a Memorandum of Understanding for permit testing for the youth population currently in treatment programs.
  - Department of Children and Families – providing ID cards and licenses for DCF's youth ages 18-23.
  - CT Aging and Disability Services – providing training to individuals who want to learn how to drive vehicles that have been modified to accommodate their disability. As part of this service, inspectors evaluate driving capabilities and determine the appropriate vehicle modifications.
  - Municipalities – providing ID cards to participants of Bridgeport's Mayor's Initiative for Re-entry Affairs (MIRA) program.

Program Selected for this Study

Providing driver's licenses and identification cards to residents is a core function of the DMV. The DMV selected its Mobile Unit for this study, which aims to serve DMV customers who cannot easily get to the DMV in person or effectively use available online services, including license and identification card services. For this study, the DMV requested an analysis of the zip codes with the highest total number of expired days for expired driver's licenses or other forms of state-issued identification (ID) as well as an assessment of the demographics of those communities. This analysis could help the DMV improve the efficacy of the Mobile Unit and identify potential locations for Mobile services. For this analysis, the DMV provided the total number of expired days for expired licenses and expired IDs days by zip code for the last two years as of May 30, 2023.

Analysis

DMV Exhibit 1 shows the top 10 zip codes with the highest total number of expired license days in the state, and the racial and ethnic profile of these communities.

DMV Exhibit 1: Zip Codes with the Highest Total Expired License Days[5][6][8]

|	Stamford 06902	New Haven 06511	Danbury 06810	Enfield 06082	Bristol 06010	West Haven 06516	Middletown 06457	Milford 06460	Greenwich 06830	Westport 06880	State of CT
Total Expired License Days	660K	630K	480K	386K	365K	346K	329K	304K	287K	284K	26M
White	49%	29%	51%	74%	72%	48%	56%	82%	73%	84%	65%
Hispanic	28%	30%	30%	11%	17%	25%	11%	8%	13%	7%	17%
Black	12%	32%	8%	7%	5%	18%	13%	2%	2%	<1%	10%
Asian	9%	5%	6%	3%	1%	5%	6%	6%	7%	6%	5%

DMV Exhibit 2 shows the top 10 zip codes with the highest total number of expired ID days in the state, and the racial and ethnic profile of these communities.

DMV Exhibit 2: Zip Codes with the Highest Total Expired ID Days[5][6][8]

	Hartford 06106	New Haven 06511	New Britain 06051	West Haven 06516	Bridgeport 06604	New Haven 06513	Bridgeport 06606	Stamford 06902	Hartford 06114	Bridgeport 06605	State of CT
Total Expired ID Days	339K	381K	219K	209K	208K	207K	206K	193K	193K	184K	8M
White	15%	29%	38%	65%	18%	29%	18%	49%	15%	18%	65%
Hispanic	45%	30%	43%	17%	42%	30%	42%	28%	45%	42%	17%
Black	34%	32%	12%	10%	32%	32%	32%	12%	34%	32%	10%
Asian	3%	5%	3%	5%	4%	5%	4%	9%	3%	4%	5%

DMV Exhibit 3 shows two maps. The left map shows a population heat map for Connecticut, with darker shading for towns with denser populations. The right map shows the top zip codes with the highest number of expired IDs and licenses combined. In comparing the two maps, the areas with the highest number of expired licenses and IDs are generally also areas with denser populations.

DMV Exhibit 3: Connecticut Population Heat Map and Zip Codes with Highest Number of Expired IDs and Licenses Days[5][8]

CT Census Data: Population Heat Map

Zip Codes with Expired IDs and Licenses
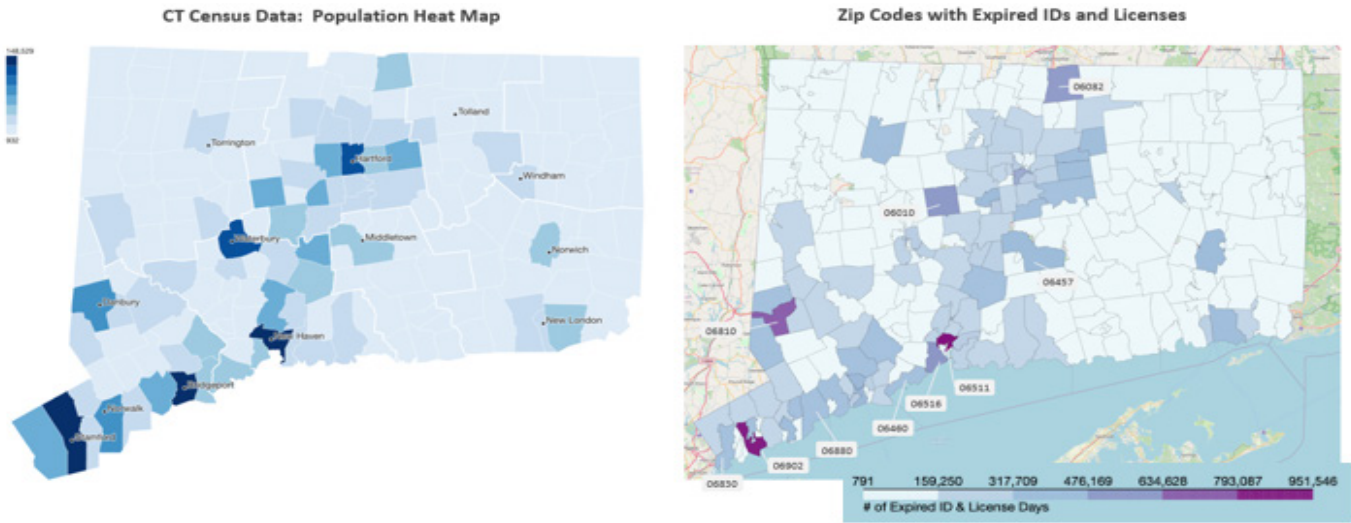
DMV Exhibit 4 also shows two maps. The left map shows a population heat map for Connecticut, with darker shading for towns with denser populations. The right map shows the zip codes with the highest number of expired IDs and licenses per capita. In general, the highest number of expired licenses and IDs per capita are concentrated in the areas closer to the perimeter of Connecticut, with less dense populations.

DMV Exhibit 4: Connecticut Population Heat Map and Zip Codes with Expired IDs and Licenses per Capita[5][8]

CT Census Data: Population Heat Map

Zip Codes with Expired IDs and Licenses per Capita
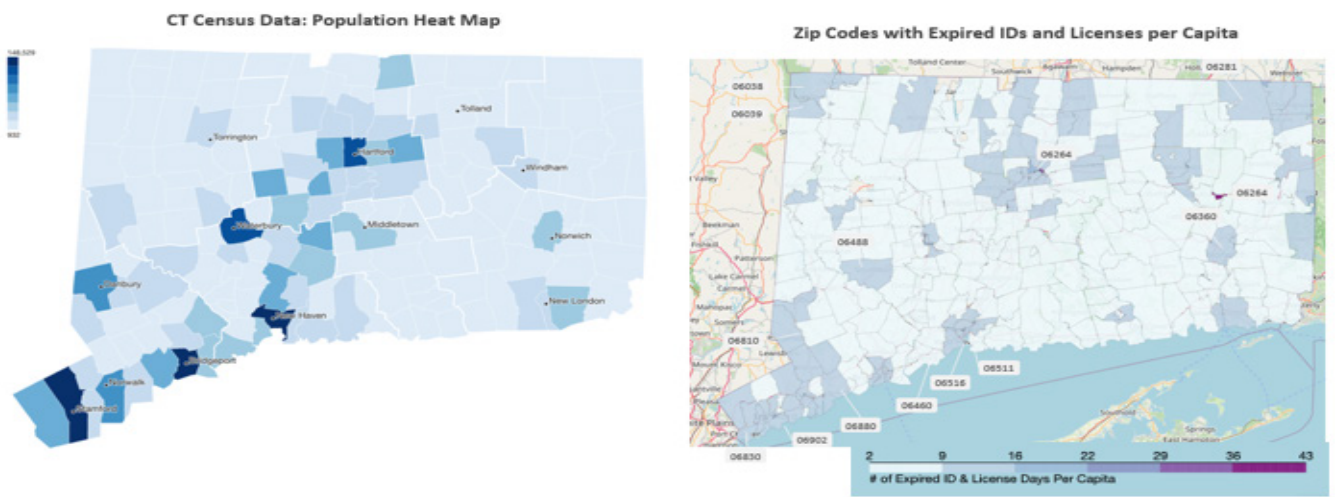
Recommendations

Mobile Services Recommendations
- The DMV should review the map of locations of the most expired licenses and IDs and target those areas for mobile services. When setting up the mobile locations, the DMV should review the demographic profile of those communities to determine if there are any specific needs, such as translation services.
- The DMV should also consider areas with the highest per capita expired IDs and licenses as these are more rural areas that may be underserved by the state.

Overall Recommendations
- **Data and Reporting.** The DMV needs better tools and data systems to focus services geographically. DMV reported that analysis of the following data points would help the agency understand where access is limited and develop strategies to address any barriers:
  - The percentage of late renewals by geographic location
  - Failure to renew statistics (no-shows, turned away due to issues with documentation, compliance issues, etc.)
  - Inability to obtain first-time issuance of licenses or ID cards (issues with accessing DMV, being turned away due to issues with documentation, no-shows, compliance issues, etc.)
  - Inability to complete online transactions (ineligible transactions, unsuccessful transactions that create a "case" that requires worker intervention, etc.) could show why certain customers are choosing to appear in person.
- **Access and Communication.** The state should identify ways to reach out and provide information to customers who may not have access to technology. DMV highlighted the following options:
  - Mobile services
  - Co-located state offices
  - Expanding the services that can be provided by phone through the contact center
- **Community Engagement.** The DMV could provide training and support to dealers, repairers, driving schools, doctors signing off on disability placards, etc., regarding the completion of DMV forms by Limited English Proficient individuals.

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[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Transportation. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230221_Transportation%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles, "About Us", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/dmv/resources/dmv-about-us

[4] FCG interview with DMV leadership, May 8 2023.

[5] DMV Data extract as of May 30, 2023.

[6] AdvanceCT, "Town Profiles", 2023. Accessed October 2023. https://www.advancect.org/site-selection/town-profiles

[7] KFF, Population Distribution by Race/Ethnicity, 2021. KFF estimates based on the 2021 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates. Rounded to the nearest whole number. Accessed December 2023. https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/distribution-by-raceethnicity

[8] United States Census Bureau, 2021. Accessed October 2023. https://data.census.gov/

Department of Public Health

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Commissioner: Manisha Juthani, MD

Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 650[1]

FY22 All Funds Budget: $139,648,060[2]

Background: Dedicated to optimizing the health and well-being of Connecticut residents, the Department of Public Health (DPH) is the state's leader in public health policy and oversight. In partnership with local health departments, DPH provides coordination and access to federal initiatives, training and certification, technical assistance and oversight, and specialty public health services.[3]

Agency Equity Impacts Highlights[4]

The Department of Public Health identifies advancing equity as a core component of its mission. Their leadership discussed that all the work at DPH is driven with a lens of equity, as they view equity as one of the guiding priorities of public health and why public health exists. DPH described how they use the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) to inform decisions and the distribution of resources under their purview, including immunization funding and workforce development investments. SVI is a measure that combines 15 demographic variables to identify communities that are the most vulnerable to negative health impacts from disasters and public health crises. These variables include: socioeconomic status, household composition, disability, race, ethnicity, language, and transportation limitations[5].

Examples of specific initiatives that DPH has established that directly advance health equity in the community include:
- Breast and cervical screening program
- Initiatives that address climate change and health
- Implementing a menstrual equity program to distribute menstrual supplies directly to schools

DPH has significant experience using data to inform program design and to monitor the impact of public health programs on health equity. DPH provided the following examples of how the agency uses data to address equity:
- The Office of Local Health Administration evaluates how local health departments use funding received from all sources, including state grants, federal grants, fee for service, and private foundation funding. Metrics also include per capita spend on public health and compare spending against 10 essential services of public health. The Office of Local Health drafts an annual report to show where improvement is needed, including by demographics that address race equity.
- DPH's emergency preparedness team also evaluates all funding received and compares it against the hazards that exist (e.g., flooding, wind events) to inform strategic planning for communities for hazards. The evaluation includes metrics stratified by demographics to inform advancing health equity.
- Benchmarking water quality for private wells and public systems for drinking water, including against future standards (e.g., the EPA's proposed rule for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)). Communities are in varying degrees of readiness and have different infrastructure. This evaluation includes applying a health equity lens to its recommendations for improvement.

Program Selected for this Study

DPH requested a review of its workforce development activities, including the department's partnership with the state community colleges for an Associate of Public Health (APH) program. DPH has worked with four campuses in the Connecticut State Community College system to establish an Associate of Public Health degree: Housatonic Community College (Bridgeport), Capital Community College (Hartford), Gateway Community College (New Haven), and Three Rivers (New London/Norwich). These campuses were chosen because they serve students from areas with a high SVI and high SVI communities may be less resilient to disaster or a public health emergency. As part of this community college initiative, DPH offers paid experiential learning (e.g., internships), and need-based "wrap-around" funds for second-year students to support full-time enrollment and program completion. DPH has

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also begun a targeted recruitment campaign for future high school graduates in Alliance school districts. The Alliance school districts are 36 of the highest-need school districts in the state, reporting the lowest performance to the Connecticut State Department of Education according to Accountability Index scores, a set of indicators on school and student performance. This program offers an opportunity to transform educational experiences for underserved students across the state[6].

Analysis

The analysis reviewed data on social vulnerability and data on healthcare workforce shortages in Connecticut to identify additional campuses for DPH to consider expanding the APH program. The State of Connecticut has 12 Community College campuses, and DPH Exhibit 1 provides their SVI index and designation according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control[5], their health professional shortage area index for primary care according to the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration[7], their school enrollment[8], and student race/ethnicity profile[8]. The blue shading indicates the campuses where DPH already has existing partnerships for the APH program.

DPH Exhibit 1: Connecticut Community College Campuses by Enrollment and Non-White Population

Campus	Location	Community SVI Designation	Community SVI	Health Professional Shortage Area Index (HPSA)	School Enrollment	% Students Non-White*
Housatonic Campus*	Bridgeport, CT	High	0.9495	12	3,821	74%
Three Rivers Campus	Norwich, CT	High	0.8314	13	3,160	42%
Quinebaug Valley Campus	Danielson, CT	High	0.8005	n/a	1,161	22%
Naugatuck Valley Campus	Waterbury, CT	Medium-High	0.7477	9	5,083	53%
Norwalk Campus	Norwalk, CT	Medium-High	0.6927	12	4,420	25%
Middlesex Campus	Middletown, CT	Medium-High	0.6456	8	2,106	37%
Manchester Campus	Manchester, CT	Medium-High	0.6353	n/a	4,448	51%
Tunxis Campus	Farmington, CT	Medium-High	0.5894	n/a	3,365	45%
Gateway Campus	New Haven, CT	Medium-High	0.5528	13	6,003	63%
Capital Campus	Hartford, CT	Medium-High	0.5011	10	2,715	79%
Asnetuck Campus	Enfield, CT	Low-Medium	0.344	16	1,304	36%
Northwestern Campus	Winsted, CT	Low-Medium	0.3096	9	1,228	25%

*Includes percent of students who identify as Hispanic/Latino, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Two or More Races, Non-Resident Alien, or Unknown.

Based on the SVI index for the location of the schools, Quinebaug Valley (Danielson), Naugatuck Valley (Waterbury), and Norwalk are additional high-priority areas to target for the APH program and program supports – with the HPSA index showing potential greater healthcare workforce needs for low-income populations in the Waterbury and Norwalk areas.

DPH highlighted their outreach to Alliance school districts to generate interest in public health professions among diverse high school student populations. To focus its efforts and resources, DPH could target outreach toward Alliance high schools/magnet schools or Connecticut Technical Education and Career System high schools that meet the following criteria:
- Located near community college campuses where DPH already has partnerships
- Have an established health curriculum or health career pathway (or other relevant pathway)

DPH Exhibit 2 provides examples of high schools that meet those criteria.

DPH Exhibit 2: Alliance and CTCES High Schools with Health Pathways Located Near DPH Community College Partners

District	HighSchool	CTE Pathways/MagnetTheme	Distance
Capital Campus (Hartford)			
Hartford Public Schools	Bulkeley High School	Leadership and Public Service Pathway	3.1 miles
Hartford Public Schools	Capital Preparatory Magnet School	Social Justice Theme	.3 miles
Hartford Public Schools	Pathways Academy of Technology and Design	High School Partnership Program with Capital	3.3 miles
Hartford Public Schools	Sport and Medical Sciences Academy	Health and Education in Urban Communities courses	1.5 miles
Hartford Public Schools	Hartford Public High School	Allied Health Sciences Pathway	2.1 miles
CTECS	A.I. Prince Technical High School	Health Technology Pathway	3.7 miles
Housatonic Campus (Bridgeport)			
CTECS	Bullard-Havens Technical High School	Health Technology Pathway	3.1 miles
Bridgeport Public Schools	Harding High School	Health Careers Magnet Academy	2.7 miles
Gateway Campus (New Haven)			
CTECS	Eli Whitney Technical High School	Health Technology	3.8 miles
New Haven Public Schools	Hill Regional Career High School Interdistrict Magnet	Health/Science Program	1.1 miles
New Haven Public Schools	Hillhouse High School	Health Careers Academy Partnership	2.2 miles
New Haven Public Schools	Metropolitan Business Academy Interdistrict Magnet	Academy of Allied Health and Science Theme	7 miles
New Haven Public Schools	New Haven Academy Interdistrict Magnet	Facing History and Ourselves	1 mile
New Haven Public Schools	High School in the Community	Social Justice Theme	.7 miles
New Haven Public Schools	Wilbur L. Cross High School	Health and Culinary Science Academy	1.9 miles
Three Rivers (Norwich)			
CTECS	Norwich Technical High School	Health Technology Pathway	3.7 miles
New London Public Schools	High School with 3 Magnet Pathways	STEM Pathway	13 miles

Hartford Public Schools, Bridgeport Public Schools, New London Public Schools, and New Haven Public Schools are also Opportunity School Districts. Opportunity districts are the 10 highest need/lowest performing of the 36 Alliance districts.[6]

Recommendations

APH Program Recommendations

- **Data and Evaluation.** DPH should request that the Community College system track APH degree program results – program entrance rates, program completion rates, job placement rates, and job placement location for graduates, disaggregated with demographic data. This will help assess the impact of the program on diversifying the Connecticut public health workforce and providing trusted messengers for health in communities with the greatest needs.

- **High School Outreach.** When DPH engages with Connecticut high schools, DPH should provide materials about the APH degree and careers in public health. Most of the health career pathways at Connecticut high schools are structured to provide certification for certified nursing assistants (CNA) or Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) or to prepare for two- or four-year degree programs for nursing, radiology, occupational therapy, physical therapy, dental assistant, etc. Students and families may not be aware of other public health-related fields.

Other Recommendations

- **Equity Impact Assessment Tool.** DPH should fully implement its equity impact analyses. Currently, DPH has two avenues – equity impact forms and a bill tracker database. DPH, through the Office of Health Equity, should communicate expectations regarding the analyses and provide training/support to agency staff. In general, DPH should continue the work of expanding and adapting the Office of Health Equity so it can serve as a technical assistance resource for the whole department, helping agency staff understand key equity questions and how to analyze equity impacts.

[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Health. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230216_Health%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Public Health, "Mission Statement", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Communications/About-Us/About-Us

[4] FCG interview with DPH leadership, May 3, 2023.

[5] Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, "CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index". July 12, 2023. Accessed October 2023. https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html

[6] State of Connecticut, Department of Education. "Alliance Districts". https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Alliance-Districts/Alliance-and-Opportunity-Districts

[7] Health Resources and Services Administration, "Health Workforce Shortage Areas". Accessed November 2023. https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/shortage-areas

[8] *U.S. News*, "Community Colleges in Connecticut", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://www.usnews.com/education/community-colleges/connecticut

[9] Connecticut Department of Housing, "Connecticut Opportunity Map", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DOH/DOH/Policy-and-Research/Opportunity-Map

Department of Revenue Services

Commissioner: Mark D. Boughton

Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 474[1]

FY22 All Funds Budget: $60,998,928[2]

Background: The Department of Revenue Services (DRS) is responsible for tax collections for the State of Connecticut and manages over 40 taxes for the state. Approximately $22-25 billion is collected each year to fund programs and services. The department's primary role and responsibility is to collect taxes fairly and accurately.[3]

Agency Equity Impacts Highlights[4]

- DRS believes that providing outreach to the public on taxpayer services is a key role of the department and emphasizes how critical the "front door" is for the system. Given the importance of voluntary compliance, the department focuses on providing information to taxpayers to help them file on time and pay what they owe. To address equity, DRS has increased targeted education and outreach and is working to provide publications and information on its website in languages other than English. For example, DRS provides information on child tax rebates in English and Spanish.

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, DRS reestablished its Taxpayer Services Division, providing more ways for taxpayers to connect with the department. DRS has a robust call center and provides limited in-person services (taxpayers can request an in-person meeting if needed). They are expanding their footprint to increase accessibility and have implemented a new online taxpayer-centered portal, myconneCT[5], to help support taxpayers. Taxpayers can file tax returns, make payments, and view their filing history through the portal.

- DRS reported that women and people of color have been traditionally underrepresented not only in accounting, but also in other key DRS roles such as law enforcement, information technology, and data security. DRS is working with the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to increase the diversity of the department workforce across different roles.

- Governor Lamont's budget for FY 2024 and FY 2025 highlighted efforts to promote equity in the state. The two efforts below are within the purview of DRS.

  o Personal Income Tax Cuts
    The recent historic $541 million in tax relief included the first income tax cut in 27 years. The income tax cuts offer tax relief for working families of all ages, whether they have children or not, and small businesses.

  o Earned Income Tax Credit Increase
    The Governor increased the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) from 30.5 percent to 40 percent, one of the highest levels in the country. The increased EITC provides an additional $44.6 million in state tax credits to approximately 211,675 qualifying low-income households, above the amount they are currently receiving under the program. Typically, families with children receive more than 95% of all EITC dollars.

Program Selected for this Study

DRS identified the EITC as its program for analysis. The EITC is a refundable state income tax credit for low to moderate-income working individuals and families. The state credit follows a similar structure to the federal Earned Income Tax Credit. Currently, Connecticut is one of only 29 states and the District of Columbia that offers the EITC.

Analysis

DRS provides summary data on EITC participation by town on the Connecticut Open Data Portal.[6] Based on the data on the Open Data Portal, DRS Exhibit 1 shows the 20 towns with the highest number of EITC credits per capita in 2020.

DRS Exhibit 1: Top 20 Towns with the Highest Number of EITC Credits Claimed Per Capita[6]

Town	Total Credits Claimed	$ Amount EITC Claimed	2019 Population[7]	Number of Credits Per Capita	$ Amount Claimed Per Capita
CANAAN	201	$76,906	1,053	0.191	$73.04
HARTFORD	14,933	$8,030,280	122,105	0.122	$65.77
WATERBURY	12,740	$7,041,346	107,568	0.118	$65.46
NEW BRITAIN	8,007	$4,260,774	72,495	0.110	$58.77
BRIDGEPORT	14,782	$7,527,232	144,399	0.102	$52.13
EAST HARTFORD	4,879	$2,422,039	49,872	0.098	$48.57
NORWICH	3,666	$1,824,426	38,768	0.095	$47.06
NEW LONDON	2,483	$1,273,957	26,858	0.092	$47.43
NEW HAVEN	11,895	$6,072,045	130,250	0.091	$46.62
WINDHAM	2,115	$1,113,108	24,561	0.086	$45.32
ANSONIA	1,603	$805,996	18,654	0.086	$43.21
MERIDEN	5,013	$2,597,286	59,395	0.084	$43.73
WEST HAVEN	4,007	$1,936,044	54,620	0.073	$35.45
DERBY	891	$428,450	12,339	0.072	$34.72
TORRINGTON	2,438	$1,134,740	34,044	0.072	$33.33
MANCHESTER	3,986	$1,915,436	57,584	0.069	$33.26
SPRAGUE	190	$92,691	2,859	0.066	$32.42
NAUGATUCK	2,057	$996,125	31,108	0.066	$32.02
BRISTOL	3,956	$1,872,447	59,947	0.066	$31.24
PUTNAM	607	$262,211	9,389	0.065	$27.93

These towns align with the towns that have the lowest median household incomes in the state, with the towns with the lowest incomes generally claiming the most credits per capita. See DRS Exhibit 2 below.[8] Five municipalities were among the top towns with the lowest median household incomes but did not have the highest participation in EITC per capita: Mansfield, North Stonington, Middletown, Griswold, and West Haven. This may suggest additional outreach is needed in those areas to encourage families who could benefit from the tax credit to apply.

DRS Exhibit 2: Top 20 Towns with the Lowest Median Household Income in Connecticut[8]

Town	Year	Median Household Income
Hartford	2016-2020	$36,154
Windham	2016-2020	$42,909
New Haven	2016-2020	$44,507
Waterbury	2016-2020	$46,329
New Britain	2016-2020	$47,393
New London	2016-2020	$47,424
Bridgeport	2016-2020	$47,484
Mansfield	2016-2020	$50,492
Ansonia	2016-2020	$53,709
Norwich	2016-2020	$57,565
Meriden	2016-2020	$58,472
Derby	2016-2020	$58,534
East Hartford	2016-2020	$59,954
Torrington	2016-2020	$60,662
North Stonington	2016-2020	$61,963
Middletown	2016-2020	$62,022
Griswold	2016-2020	$62,361
North Canaan	2016-2020	$63,214
Winchester	2016-2020	$63,882
West Haven	2016-2020	$64,255

Recommendations

EITC Program Recommendations

- **Targeted Partnerships.** Partnerships with community-based organizations that specialize in supported individuals who experience persistent poverty should identify strategies for areas where there may be lower than expected participation in programs such as Child Tax Rebate and EITC due to lack information/ understanding on how to apply.

Overall Recommendations

- **Communication and Awareness.** DRS should continue to improve communication and education through the Taxpayer Services Division. DRS should provide education and awareness to be accessible and visible to the general public and tailor outreach to connect with underserved populations.
- **Stakeholder Engagement.** DRS should continue to coordinate and consult with key stakeholders on outreach strategies, including:
  - United Way and other community-based organizations (for programs such as voluntary income tax assistance (VITA) and child tax rebate)
  - National Association of Tax Practitioners
  - Connecticut Society of CPA
  - Connecticut Society of Enrolled Agents
  - Connecticut Bar Association

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[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/ Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. General Government B. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/ GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230214_General%20Government%20B%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20 Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Revenue Services, "Mission of the Department of Revenue Services", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal. ct.gov/DRS/DRS-Commissioner/Welcome/Mission-of-the-Department-of-Revenue-Services

[4] FCG Interview with DRS leadership, May 16 2023.

[5] Connecticut Department of Revenue Services, "myconneCT", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DRS/myconneCT/myconneCT

[6] Connecticut Open Data. "Connecticut Earned Income Tax Credit By Town". https://data.ct.gov/Tax-and-Revenue/Connecticut-Earned-Income-Tax-Credit-By-Town/4vva-amjy/data

[7] Connecticut Data Collaborative. Census Annual Population Estimates by Town, Year 2019. http://data.ctdata.org/visualization/census-annual-population-estimates-by-town

[8] Connecticut Data Collaborative. Data by Topic: Median Household Income by Town. http://databytopic.ctdata.org/dataset?dataset_name=median-household-income-town

Department of Social Services

Commissioner: Andrea Barton Reeves

Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 1,567 [1]

FY22 All Funds Budget: $4,449,567,883 (reflects $32.75M additional funds as well – e.g., American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding) [2]

Background: The Department of Social Services (DSS) is Connecticut's health and human services agency. Serving 1 million Connecticut residents to support basic needs, DSS delivers and funds a wide range of programs and services, including food and economic aid (e.g., the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)), healthcare coverage (e.g., HUSKY Health, the Medicaid & Children's Health Insurance Program), independent living and home care, social work, child support, home-heating aid, and protective services for older adults.[3]

Agency Equity Impact Highlights[4]

DSS strives to incorporate inclusive and equitable policies and practices within all its programs and services, such as Medicaid and SNAP. For example, DSS currently contracts with a Connecticut-based vendor dedicated to advancing health equity for people of color to assess DSS programs' impact on equity and recommend opportunities for program improvements. DSS collects data to identify trends and mitigate disparities in program eligibility processes and outcomes. In addition, DSS convenes an All-Administrative Service Organization (ASO) Equity Workgroup. This workgroup's charge is to close racial disparities in health outcomes across validated quality measures. Current priorities for this ASO Equity Workgroup include: (1) reducing health disparities for behavioral health follow-up for hospitalization for Black adults; (2) increasing rates of well-child visits, immunizations, and vaccinations for Black youth; and (3) reducing maternal adverse outcomes during the postpartum for Black women.

DSS is an example of an agency that incorporates a focus on equity at the front end of program design for new initiatives[5]. For example, the design of its Medicaid Maternity Bundle Payment Program demonstrates DSS' approach to advance health equity. The program aims to address disparities of access, utilization, and outcomes for pregnant birthing people, with a particular emphasis on birthing people of color, birthing people with substance use disorders, and birthing people with a high social vulnerability index. From the project onset, DSS centered the lived experiences of Medicaid members in the program's design through Medicaid member focus groups, consisting of members who have lived birthing experience through Medicaid. DSS also convened a Maternity Bundle Advisory Council, a broad group of stakeholders including community-based advocacy organizations and two Medicaid members, for input on the program's design and implementation. With detailed feedback from this Advisory Council, DSS created a health equity tool to apply a health equity lens throughout the program's design, development, and implementation.[6] Using this tool, DSS assessed the equity impact of program design elements including risk adjustment, quality incentives, and cost-sharing methodology to mitigate unintended adverse consequences, which prompted thoughtful conversations about health equity in stakeholder meetings. In addition, DSS engaged the Yale Center for Outcomes Research & Evaluation (CORE) to recommend equity-sensitive quality measures that will be stratified by race and ethnicity.

DSS also described their approach to advance equity within its workplace environment. DSS hosts Racial Justice League forums for managers to discuss how DSS policies and procedures impact staff and the members they serve. In 2022, DSS hired a Manager of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) to specifically focus on DEI initiatives within the agency. The Department's DEI Manager has been responsible for pooling informational resources, facilitating DEI discussions in the workspace, and creating a training workshop for DSS' internship and fellowship programs.

Program of Focus

DSS provides supportive housing benefits under Medicaid ("HUSKY Health") through the Connecticut Housing Engagement and Support Services (CHESS) program.[7] CHESS is a joint state and federal program that pools the housing efforts of state agencies (DSS, DOH, DMHAS, and DDS) and non-profit partners (Partnership for Strong

Communities, the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, and the Corporation for Supportive Housing). The program aims to bring coordinated healthcare and housing services to individuals with mental health, substance use and other serious health conditions. Medicaid-covered housing engagement and support services include chronic disease management and wellness education, in addition to pre-tenancy supports (help with locating and securing housing), tenancy sustaining supports (help with maintaining successful tenancy), and non-medical transportation.

As of December 2023, 222 Medicaid members have been housed through CHESS. Members are eligible for CHESS through either a self-referral application or shelter outreach. As the contracted administrator of CHESS, Carelon Behavioral Health (Carelon) developed the algorithm to identify eligible members with the greatest medical needs and housing needs for program participation. Carelon conducted rigorous assessments to refine the algorithm during its development to reduce racial/ethnic bias when screening eligible members for program participation and is conducting a post-implementation evaluation of the algorithm and overall program. Without duplicating the work of Carelon and DSS, CHESS was selected as DSS' program of focus to provide additional guidance and recommendations to enhance the program's outreach and enrollment processes, including the eligibility algorithm and referral process.

Analysis

For this study, we reviewed the algorithm detail to provide any additional insights for variables that could be tested in the algorithm. We also conducted interviews to identify potential operational improvements and policy recommendations in the outreach and enrollment processes to address equity concerns related to self-applicants and shelter members who receive outreach.

Analysis of algorithm
Carelon developed the algorithm based on Medicaid's full claims dataset and the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness' Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data. Carelon tested several algorithms prior to launch to reduce selection bias. The first algorithm tested focused on member's inpatient hospitalization and their chance of readmissions, and the second algorithm tested built off this methodology by also screening for members with high healthcare expenditures. However, Carelon found that the algorithms based on hospital utilization and cost data unintentionally introduced racial and ethnic selection bias. Since members who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color typically consume healthcare at lower rates than non-Hispanic white members, the first two algorithms were biased in favor of selecting non-Hispanic white members, who were more likely to have inpatient hospitalizations and thus higher expenditures. Following a literature review and feedback from community stakeholders, Carelon focused the third algorithm tested on comorbidity diagnoses, specifically utilizing the Combined Comorbidity Index and Behavioral Health diagnoses instead of cost and utilization indicators. Results showed that the third algorithm reduced racial and ethnic disparities in the selection of eligible program members. The final algorithm tested applied non-healthcare HMIS data on shelter utilization, which most significantly reduced bias and ensured equitable program selection outcomes. Carelon then implemented this fourth algorithm[8].

To further assess opportunities to enhance the algorithm, our partner N1, an applied artificial intelligence platform for healthcare organizations, reviewed Carelon's methods and resulting outputs in comparison to their own approach to algorithms deployed for social determinants of health programs. They compared the algorithm to their best practices for identifying Medicaid members who can benefit from programs that support social drivers of health, as well as best practices for advancing health equity. Additional considerations and recommendations for DSS regarding this algorithm are included in the recommendations below.

Analysis of the referral process
As shown in DSS Exhibit 1, there are several pathways to enroll in CHESS, in which members became eligible through either a self-referral application ("self-applicants") or through outreach in shelters ("sheltered members"). For self-applicants, the algorithm is applied retrospectively - if an individual submits an application, their information is screened through the algorithm. For sheltered members, the algorithm is applied proactively – the member's information is screened through the algorithm, and if the individual passes, Carelon will conduct outreach to see if the member is interested in applying[9].

DSS Exhibit 1: Graphic of Pathways to CHESS[8]

The Algorithm Process
There are multiple paths to get into CHESS
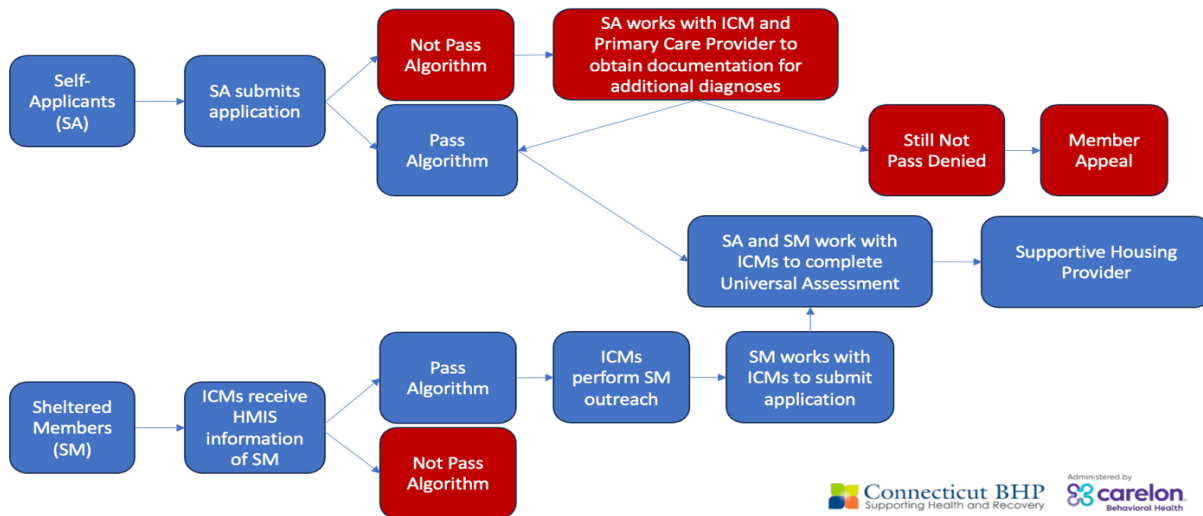
Of the program's 168 participants, 155 participants (83%) were self-applicants, while only 13 participants (7%) were sheltered members who were identified by the algorithm. According to intensive care managers (ICMs), CHESS received ~3500 self-referral applications, significantly more than anticipated. As the self-referral applications have a time-sensitive review period (targeting a 30-day timeframe), ICMs dedicated more of their attention and resource capacity to processing self-applicants, leaving less time to outreach to sheltered members than originally planned[9]. While ICMs still performed outreach for many members with at least one night in shelters, ICMs noted that the sheltered member population could be difficult to contact during the outreach and enrollment process since sheltered members were less likely to have a phone number or voice mail. Outreach challenges were also impacted by the limited capacity of CHESS' ICM and supportive housing provider staff[10].

Overall, the distribution of program participation by enrollment type (self-applicant vs. sheltered member) presents equity concerns because the self-applicant population are more likely to be non-Hispanic white[8] relative to the shelter outreach population.

Recommendations

Algorithm recommendations
- **Socioeconomic markers.** Carelon has done extensive analysis on the distribution of program participants by race and ethnicity to assess if it reflects the program's expected racial and ethnic distribution. Building off this work, Carelon could further separate any portions of algorithm bias that may be related to income and race/ethnicity. For example, Carelon could further split the algorithm's output results by a socio-economic marker, either individual or geographic, to expose any biases.
- **Predictive modeling.** Carelon could apply a predictive approach, such as model cards, to evaluate bias. This could be done by predicting whether a self-applicant member will pass the algorithm based on a variety of indicators that do not include race/ethnicity. From there, Carelon could test if that prediction is consistent across all race and ethnicity categories.
- **Ongoing monitoring and evaluation.** DSS and Carelon conducted an initial assessment to determine that the demographic profile of self applicants was different than that of sheltered members eligible and enrolled in the program. Following implementation of any changes to the algorithm and/or business processes described below, DSS and Carelon should continue to monitor the demographics of the participating CHESS members to identify whether the algorithm and overall program are serving its intended population. Carelon can continue to

examine whether members of historically marginalized groups are more likely to fail the algorithm or whether the algorithm could be adjusted to target underrepresented members that would benefit from CHESS.

For additional resources to refine CHESS' algorithm, this literature review "Mitigating Racial And Ethnic Bias And Advancing Health Equity In Clinical Algorithms: A Scoping Review" identifies health care applications, frameworks, reviews and perspectives, and assessment tools that identify and mitigate bias in clinical algorithms, with a specific focus on racial and ethnic bias[1].

Referral process recommendations

- **Housing status qualifying criteria.** One opportunity for DSS and Carelon to consider in advancing equity is the housing status qualifying criteria, in which applicants must either be homeless or at risk of homelessness to be eligible for the program. The criteria is broader than just current homelessness to include housing instable individuals. This definition arose because the program's initial (i.e., pre-program participation) and reevaluation (i.e., at the end of the program year) qualifying criteria were designed to be the same, so that participants maintain program eligibility after their first year in the program. However, the inclusion of the "at risk of homelessness" qualification opens eligibility to many Connecticut residents with varying housing needs, creating a much larger pool of self-applicants than initially anticipated. DSS could consider creating separate qualifying criteria for the referral process (for new members seeking to join CHESS) and for the reevaluation process (for returning CHESS participants) to more narrowly target chronically homeless members with severe housing needs.

- **Automation for self-referral application review.** In the current business process, DSS receives self-referral applications and confirms the member's Medicaid eligibility before sending the applications to Carelon for further processing. Carelon could find ways to automate their review of self-applicants for eligibility criteria beyond the initial Medicaid eligibility screening check completed by DSS, which would reduce the volume of self-applicants that Carelon manually processes, creating more time and capacity for outreach to shelter members. For example, since the current qualifying criteria opens CHESS to a broad of array of Connecticut residents with different housing needs, Carelon could automate a process to identify with members with less severe housing needs and work with DSS to refer them to other housing support programs for which they may qualify.

- **Timeframe.** DSS/Carelon could also assess whether to extend the informal 30-day target review period to plan for more outreach capacity.

- **Provider Preparedness to Participate in CHESS.** One of the biggest challenges reported in interviews is the lack of provider capacity for CHESS, particularly in the New Haven, Bridgeport, and Northwestern Connecticut regions. Providers who do participate are also often unprepared for the level of care coordination they need to provide for the CHESS program. For those already participating, the state could consider additional training and education for providers about program expectations, billing, and redetermination processes. To increase provider capacity, the state could also consider any incentives to participate and/or reductions in administrative burden to increase the number of qualified providers participating in CHESS.

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[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Human Services. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230217_Human%20Services%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Social Services, 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/dsshome/

[4] FCG Interview with DSS leadership, May 18 2023

[5] State of Connecticut, Department of Social Services. "HUSKY Maternity Bundle". https://portal.ct.gov/DSS/Health-And-Home-Care/HUSKY-Maternity-Bundle

[6] State of Connecticut, Department of Social Services. "Health Equity Framework". https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DSS/Health-and-Home-Care/HUSKY-Maternity-Bundle/PDF-Health-Equity-Framework-6212022.pdf Note: DSS contracted with FCG to support this work.

[7] State of Connecticut, Department of Social Services. "Connecticut Housing Engagement and Support Services (CHESS) Initiative". https://portal. ct.gov/DSS/Health-And-Home-Care/Connecticut-Housing-Engagement-and-Support/Connecticut-Housing-Engagement-and-Support-Services---CHESS

[8] Noam, Krista R., et al. "Mitigating Racial Bias in Healthcare Algorithms: An Account of Improving Fairness in Access to Supportive Housing". Carelon Behavioral Health CT.

[9] FCG Interview with Carelon CT, June 27 2023

[10] FCG Intreview with Carelon CT, June 20 2023

[11] Cary Jr., Michael P. et al. "Mitigating Racial And Ethnic Bias And Advancing Health Equity In Clinical Algorithms: A Scoping Review". *Health Affairs*. Vol. 42, No. 10. October 2023. https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2023.00553?utm_medium=email&utm _source=hat&utm_campaign=journal&vgo_ee=xadROIt7N85%2BvcsWHLW6aviqkhUihU9I0q7Ehj5mI70P6qR89IChT7%2FJ%3AC0hv JHwkzVk%2B%2FroheD9P9OBUMjLpDEeY

Department of Transportation

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Commissioner: Garrett Eucalitto
Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 2,936[1]
FY22 All Funds Budget: $622,158,645[2]

Background: The mission of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) is to provide a safe and efficient intermodal transportation network that improves the quality of life and promotes economic vitality for the State and the region.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- CTDOT has an Office of Equity that is responsible for the administration of four federal aid programs: the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program, the On-the-Job Training (OJT) Program, the Contractor Compliance Program, and the Title VI Program. The Office of Equity is also responsible for translation services and language access.

- CTDOT is formalizing an internal equity advisory committee which will institutionalize equity principles into CTDOT programs, policies, regulations, and activities. This committee will also provide guidance, make policy recommendations, and identify opportunities that support the advancement of transportation equity within all CTDOT program areas including planning, design, construction, research, policy, and outreach.

- Additionally, CTDOT has a customer experience (CX) unit that has created an action plan that will shape future investments in public transportation based on meaningful customer engagement, insights, and feedback. CTDOT realized that people who did not ride buses were making decisions about buses. To obtain input from the people who ride buses, the CX Unit is working to engage the community in decisions like updating bus routes to better meet the needs of passengers.

- CTDOT has been particularly focused on workforce equity through recruiting and hiring efforts across the state and has been collaborating with the Department of Labor and regional workforce development boards in this work. The CTDOT has also collaborated with high schools in underserved and underrepresented communities, as well as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

- CTDOT is establishing an agencywide workforce development strategic plan which will set goals, objectives, and actions for workforce development and build a more equitable and inclusive workplace representative of the state. CTDOT has also established an internal workforce development lead in the Commissioner's Office to coordinate workforce development activities across bureaus within the agency and with universities, high schools, and other partners.

- CTDOT has a public involvement plan in place that outlines how to engage the public proactively around decisions, policies, and programs of the agency. The plan aims to involve the public in decision-making in a meaningful and inclusive way. The CT DOT has also created Senior Advisor for Inclusive Communications and Culture role to ensure the agency has robust outreach efforts and relationships with the public. This role will work closely with Communications, Intergovernmental affairs, and the Office of Equity teams and play a key role in supporting the stand up of the Equity Committee.

- When the department proposes changes to any public transit route, it performs a Service and Fare Equity (SAFE) Analysis to determine the potential equity impacts of those changes.

- CTDOT also cited the following programs as equity-related: Move New Haven, Community Connectivity Grant Program, Active Transportation Plan, Transportation Rural Improvement Program, Strategic Highway Safety Plan, Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project, Greater Hartford Mobility Study (GHMS), Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) framework, the CTDOT High School Construction Pre-apprenticeship Program, On-the-Job Training (OJT) Program, CTDOT Asphalt Quality Control Technician Program, Transportation Careers Pathways Program, Engineering and Construction Internship Program, General Internship Program, Summer Worker Program, STEM Exploration Program, and the 2023 COMTO CITY Internship Program.

Program Selected for this Study

CTDOT selected three CTDOT job training programs for analysis: the On-the-Job (OJT) Program for high school students entering the trades, the CTDOT Asphalt Quality Control Technician Program for high school students entering the trades, and the Transportation Careers Pathways Program for college students.

Program Analysis

CTDOT provided aggregated data for the On-the-Job (OJT) program (2021 data), the CTDOT Asphalt Quality Control Technician Program (2021-2022 data), and the Transportation Careers Pathways Program (2018-2023 data).

As shown in CTDOT Exhibit 1, based on the total data provided, white participants made up the largest portion of individuals who completed one of the three programs, followed by Black participants and then Hispanic participants. The table shows the distribution compared to the race/ethnicity distribution across Connecticut.

CTDOT Exhibit 1: Participation Across Job Training Programs by Race/Ethnicity[5][6]

	Participation Across All Job Training Programs	% of Total Across All Job Training Programs	State of CT Race/ Ethnicity Distribution
White	95	62%	63%
Hispanic	19	12%	18%
Black	30	20%	10%
Asian	7	5%	5%
Other	2	1%	5%
Total	153	100%	100%

Recommendations

Workforce Program Recommendations:

- **Standardize Workforce Program Data Collection and Reporting.** CTDOT should standardize data collection and reporting for the workforce programs to ensure the new workforce development lead and other agency leaders are able to easily review program participation data, compare results against goals, and monitor trends over time. The workforce development lead should also monitor completion rates for each workforce program and develop strategies as needed to support students and ensure participants successfully complete their programs.

- **Program Outreach and Communication.** Improved data collection and reporting will also help CTDOT more easily track the participation of Connecticut high schools and colleges in the workforce programs and target outreach to increase participation of students from underserved populations. The new Senior Advisor for Inclusive Communications and Culture can lead the development of relationships with schools and community organizations and ensure distribution of information about positions and career opportunities to community contacts.

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[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Transportation. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230221_Transportation%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Transportation email to CHRO on December 17 2023

[4] FCG interview with CTDOT leadership, April 6 2023.

[5] Connecticut Department of Transportation email to CHRO with data for the On-the-Job (OJT) Program, CTDOT Asphalt Quality Control Technician Program, and Transportation Careers Pathways Program on December 17, 2023.

[6] KFF, Population Distribution by Race/Ethnicity, 2021. KFF estimates based on the 2021 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates. Rounded to the nearest whole number. Accessed December 2023. https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/distribution-by-raceethnicity

Department of Veterans Affairs

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Commissioner: Ronald P. Welch

Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 333[1]

FY22 All Funds Budget: $23,604,247[2]

Background: The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) strives to connect Connecticut veterans and their eligible dependents with information and support regarding state and federal veterans' benefits. DVA has 4 core functions: long-term care skilled nursing, residential and vocational services, advocacy and assistance, and cemetery and memorial services.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- The DVA reported offering internal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training to its veteran residents and receiving positive feedback via a survey from attendees.
- The department also informally attends legislatively driven events (e.g., veterans resource fair, senior center visits) through its Office of Advocacy and Assistance.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, veterans in urban areas and veterans who did not have internet access became disconnected from the department. The agency reported having conducted significant outreach over the last few years to reengage those veteran populations.
- The DVA also reported substantial work to notify veterans and veteran families about its cemetery and memorial service offerings, especially in underserved communities.
- For veteran residents and those attending events on the agency's campus, the agency recently remodeled its auditorium to make it ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant. This remodel has allowed the agency to host more events on campus such as training sessions, recognition ceremonies, and celebrations. Gathering veterans for events also provides the agency an opportunity to market its available services and connect veterans to resources.
- DVA's main campus held public events celebrating Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, and Women Veterans Recognition that were open to veterans in DVA's programs.

Program Selected for this Study

The Department of Veterans Affairs provided admissions data on two facilities, its Veteran Residential Services Program and the Sgt. John L. Levitow (JLL) Healthcare Center. The data for JLL Healthcare Center includes admissions from 2020-2023 and the data for the Veteran Residential Services Program includes admissions for 2020 and 2023.

Analysis

Race. As shown in DVA Exhibit 1, the individuals admitted to both facilities are majority white veterans, with the residential population having a larger proportion of Hispanic veterans.

DVA Exhibit 1: JLL Health Care Center and Residential Veterans Race Breakdown by Year[5]
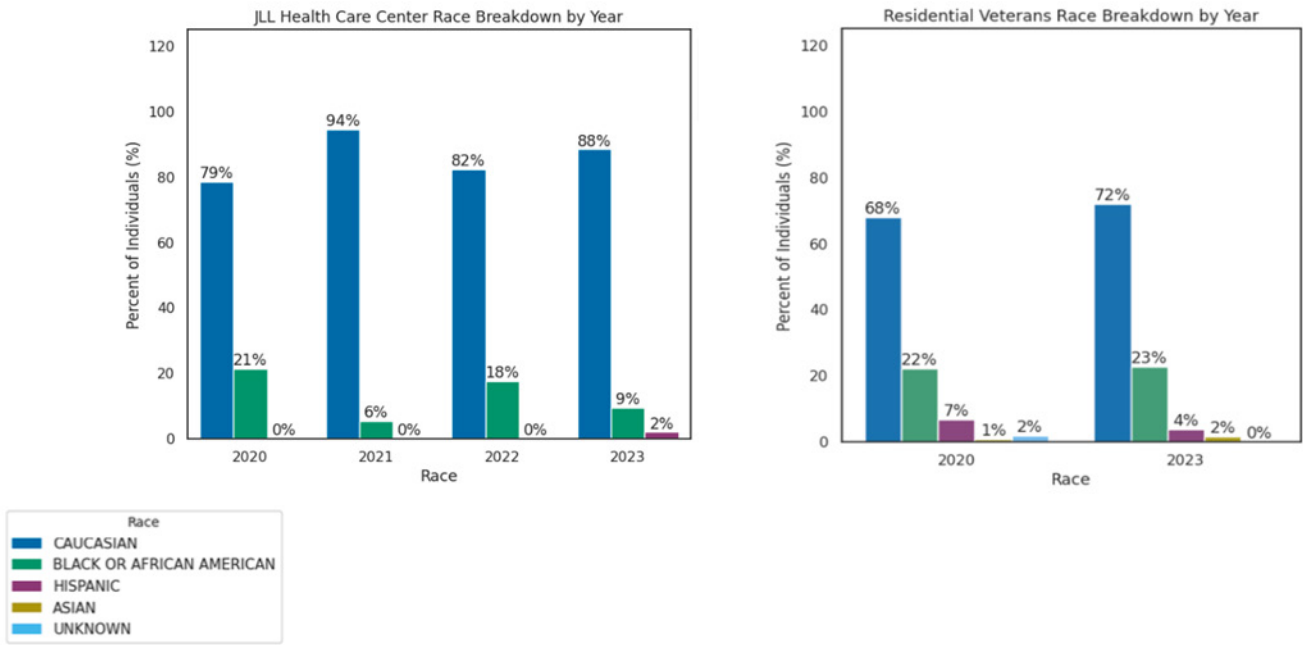

Gender. As shown in DVA Exhibit 2, both facilities see mostly male veterans, with both facilities also seeing a drop in the proportion of female veterans seeking care/residence from 2020 to 2023.

DVA Exhibit 2: JLL Health Care Center and Residential Veterans Gender Breakdown by Year [5]
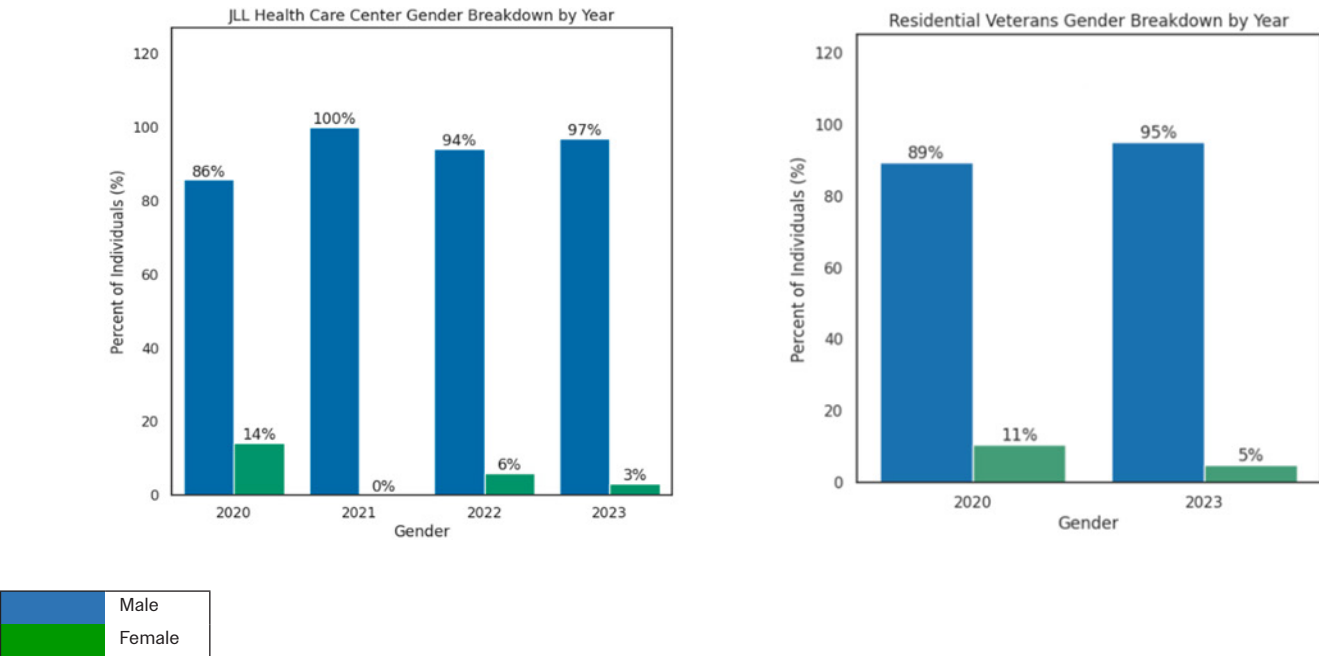
Geographic Location of JLL Admissions. As shown in DVA Exhibit 3, the top zip codes with JLL admissions in 2020-2023 were:
06067/Rocky Hill (8.2%), 06105/Hartford (4.9%), 06051/New Britain (3.3%), 06234/Brooklyn (3.3%), and 06385/ Waterford (3.3%). These zip codes vary in their location across the state, and the top zip codes for percent of admissions do not coincide with the most populated areas of the state, except for 06105 (Hartford).

DVA Exhibit 3: Top Zip Codes for JLL Health Care Center and % of Individuals Served[5]

CT Census Data: Zip Code Population Heat Map
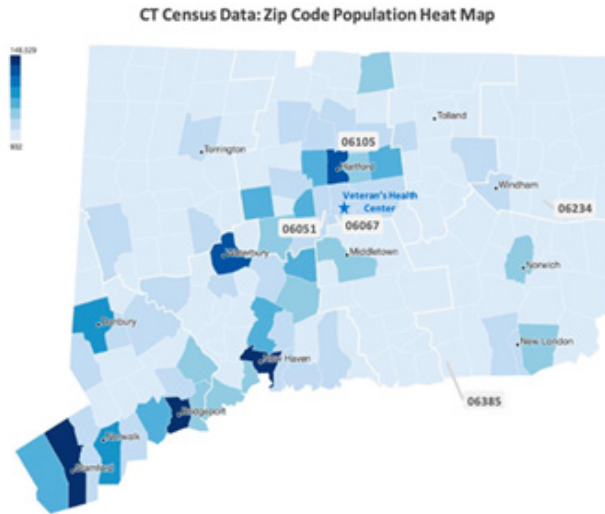
Top Zip Codes JLL Health Care Center	Individuals (%)
06067 (Rocky Hill)	8.2%
06105 (Hartford)	4.9%
06051 (New Britain)	3.3%
06234 (Brooklyn)	3.3%
06385 (Waterford)	3.3%

Recommendations:

John L. Levitow (JLL) and Veteran Residential Services Recommendations

- **Data Analysis.** The department should review the data on admissions from this study and determine if there are any opportunities for increasing participation in JLL and the residential services programs for veterans from underserved populations. The department should also explore the drop in admissions for female veterans, and consider outreach to female veterans to inform how best the program can meet their needs, as well as how to communicate the programs effectively.

Overall Recommendations

- **Outreach and Communication.** The department reported that they would like to strengthen their communication and outreach to advance equity. To ensure successful engagement with veterans from underserved communities, the department should continue to build on the work that grew out of the emergency response to the pandemic on statewide communication and outreach. The department should develop a communication plan that identifies strategies for reaching specific target populations and geographic regions.

[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Health. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230216_Health%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs, "Overview", 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DVA/About-Us

[4] FCG interview with DVA leadership, April 27 2023.

[5] 2020-2023 JLL Health Care Center Data & 2020/2023 Residential Veteran Program Data.

Office of Higher Education

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Executive Director: Timothy D. Larson
Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 26[1]
FY22 All Funds Budget: $59,751,766[2]

Background: The Office of Higher Education (OHE) seeks to advance the promise of postsecondary education for all state residents, and to advocate on behalf of students, taxpayers, and the postsecondary schools and colleges that fall under its purview. Key state responsibilities include student financial aid administration, licensure and accreditation of Connecticut's independent colleges and universities (programmatic and institutional; non-profit and for-profit), licensure of in-state academic programs offered by out-of-state institutions, regulation of more than 150 postsecondary career schools, and operation of the Alternate Route to Certification. Major federal responsibilities include AmeriCorps and Veterans Program Approval.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- The OHE implements several federal programs with equity components. For example, the OHE reported a strong focus on equity in the distribution of federal AmeriCorps grant funds to Connecticut non-profits.

- The OHE also administers an Educator Prep Program (EPP) called the Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) that recruits teachers who are mid-career in a different field who decide to pursue teaching. The process is a truncated certification program by which those professionals can become teachers. In this program, the OHE has looked at the recruitment of underrepresented groups with the goal of diversifying the teacher population to be representative of the population of Connecticut.

- The OHE operates the Minority Advancement Program (MAP), which gives middle and high school students from disadvantaged backgrounds the skills, knowledge, and academic support they need to succeed in college. The MAP initiative consists of two signature programs – the Connecticut Collegiate Awareness and Preparation Program (ConnCAP) and Promoting Academically Successful Students (PASS). These programs provide funds, on a competitive review basis, to Connecticut colleges and universities to support activities that strengthen student readiness for college, as well as college retention and graduation. ConnCAP supports partnerships between Connecticut institutions of higher education and public school systems that provide skills development and encourage college preparation for middle school or high school underachievers. "Underachiever" is defined as a student who is likely to achieve academic potential with programmatic interventions. The PASS initiative provides support for college students of color who are placed on academic probation and need additional support to redress their academic standing. A successful student of the PASS program will remain on track to graduation and be removed from academic probation.

- The OHE reported recently receiving a million dollars of U.S. State Department of Education funding to study equity as it relates to Connecticut's Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program, which provides scholarships to Connecticut residents. The scholarship is based on need and merit. The agency aims to better understand the demographics of the students receiving these scholarships and identify strategies to make the scholarship more equitable for students across the state.

Program Selected for this Study

OHE was unable to select a program or provide data by the deadline, therefore no data is available for analysis.

Recommendations

Overall Recommendations:

- **Funding for Key Programs.** The state should seek opportunities to expand funding for programs that help students from underserved populations go to college and graduate on time. OHE reports that many students are working while trying to earn a college degree and they need additional support. Examples of programs to support the underserved include:
    - o The Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program. More students qualify than the state has funding for, and it currently does not fund students for all four years.[5]
    - o The PASS program. There is a need for more funding for services to support college students of color who are struggling academically.[6]
- **Reducing Barriers.** The Department of Education, the Office of Higher Education, and state colleges and universities should work together to address key barriers to college applications and college entrance. For example:
    - o Provide clearer communication, in multiple languages, about dual enrollment opportunities in high school for students and families and simplify the process for applying for and receiving credit for dual enrollment.
    - o Increase state support to help high schools set up dual enrollment courses. Currently, each high school sets up its own individual agreements with colleges. The state or Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) could facilitate this process to encourage more dual enrollment opportunities, particularly for underserved youth. In September 2023, the Connecticut State Department of Education announced a $3.8 million grant program for 83 school districts to expand their dual credit programs at their high schools. The program also includes funds to support higher education partners in increasing their institutional capacity to support the growth in demand for dual credit courses. [7]
    - o Reduce the barriers for students to requesting and receiving their transcripts from high schools and colleges. OHE reported that some students are unable to receive transcripts due to outstanding fines/fees from their schools, which at colleges can include significant unpaid tuition balances.
    - o Facilitate the process of transferring credits between colleges and accessing old credits.

[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/ Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. Health. February 2023. https://cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/ GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230213_Higher%20Education%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20 and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Office of Higher Education, "About Us", 2015. Accessed November 2023. https://www.ohe.ct.gov/AboutUs.shtml

[4] FCG interview with OHE leadership, April 25 2023.

[5] Connecticut Office of Higher Education, "Roberta B. Willis Need-Based Grant Program 2024-25 Enrollment Information", 2015. Accessed November 2023. https://www.ohe.ct.gov/SFA/WillisScholarship.shtml

[6] Connecticut Office of Higher Education, "Minority Advancement Program", 2015. Accessed November 2023. https://www.ohe.ct.gov/MAP/Default. shtml

[7] Office of Governor Ned Lamont, Press Releases, "Governor Lamont and Commissioner Russell-Tucker Announce $3.8 Million Investment To Expand Dual Credit Offerings for High School Students". September 26 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Press-Releases/2023/09-2023/Governor-Lamont-and-Commissioner-Russell-Tucker-Announce-Investment-To-Expand-Dual-Credit

Department of Policy and Management

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Commissioner: Jeffrey Beckham

Staff: (as of August 31, 2022) 171[1]

FY22 All Funds Budget: $499,979,067[2]

Background: The Office of Policy and Management (OPM) functions as the Governor's staff agency and plays a central role in state government, providing the information and analysis used to formulate public policy for the State and assisting State agencies and municipalities in implementing policy decisions on the Governor's behalf.[3]

Agency-Reported Equity-Related Activities[4]

- **Budget** – The Office of Policy and Management is tasked with developing the governor's annual budget. This year, OPM included a section at the beginning of the budget highlighting equity-related work across agencies. OPM described the building of the budget as "an act of equity in itself."

- **Senior Center Grants** – The OPM data team developed a methodology aiming to equitably distribute $9 million American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars to senior centers based on total population and population composition including race/ethnicity, rurality, percent of the population with a disability, and percentage of the population below the poverty line. The methodology has been documented, and the data is publicly available.

- **Universal Home Visiting Program** – This pilot program is a collaboration with DCF and DPH to bring Community Health Workers to families and children in Bridgeport.

- **Equity Group** – OPM has worked with other state agencies to develop a monthly equity group. The group meets for an hour and is open for staff to voluntarily participate in equity discussions.

- **Data Portal** – The OPM team maintains a data portal and is working on improving reporting on race, ethnicity, and language (REL), and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) data across agencies to improve equity. Part of that work is making included datasets from across agencies more accessible for the public. The OPM team has added narratives and explanations and is working on decluttering the data. Additionally, OPM will refine the metadata as well for consistency and accurate language.

Program Selected for this Study

OPM chose the Senior Center ARPA Grants program. The grants were one-time, ARPA-funded disbursements to senior centers in Connecticut towns. The Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) was responsible for distributing funds and partnered with OPM to develop an equitable distribution model. Two methods were used for distributing the funds, a $5,000 base amount was given to each town in addition to a formula-based grant using town demographics (see above). OPM used the Census Bureau's 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) data 5-year estimates for the formula calculations. The analysis did not account for the number of senior centers per town or the size of senior center budgets.[5]

Analysis

As shown in OPM Exhibit 1, the towns and cities with the largest total allocations tended to be larger in terms of total population, however the per capita (for the population aged 60 years and over) allocation was fairly consistent across geographies. According to OPM, the allocation per capita 60 and over ranged from $8 per capita to $22 per capita. On average, towns received $11 per capita 60 and over.[5]
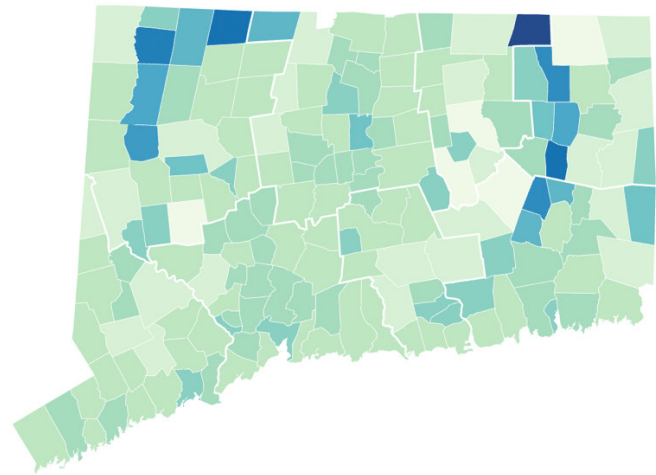
Total Allocation by Town

Using Equity Weighted Formula with $5k Base Grant

7K — 301K
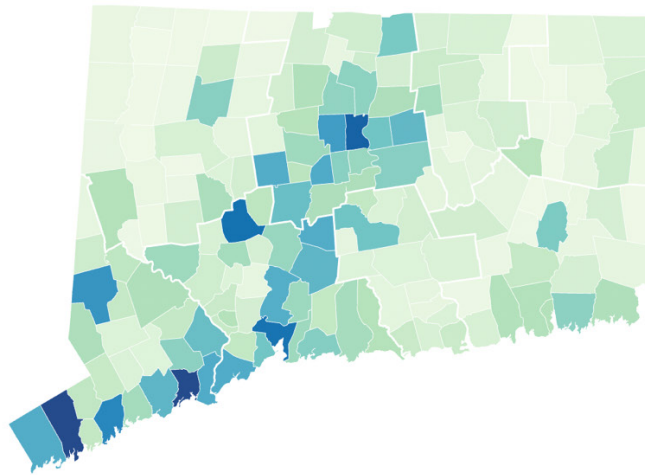
Created with Datawrapper

Allocation by Town, Per Capita 60+

Using Equity Weighted Formula with $5k Base Grant

8 — 22

Created with Datawrapper

OPM Exhibit 2 shows the top five towns by Total Allocation and their demographic factors relevant for the equity weighted formula. These are urban communities, with significant non-white populations.

OPM Exhibit 2: Top Five Towns by Total Allocation

Town	Population 60+	▼ Total Allocation	Per Capita Allocation	Share Non-White	Share with Disability	Share below poverty	Share Rural
Stamford	27,688	$300,738	$11	34%	12%	8%	1%
Bridgeport	25,418	$299,561	$12	60%	15%	16%	0%
Hartford	20,480	$263,212	$13	75%	14%	24%	0%
Waterbury	21,544	$238,785	$11	34%	16%	11%	0%
New Haven	19,218	$235,535	$12	56%	12%	17%	0%

OPM Exhibit 3 shows the top five towns and cities with the highest per capita allocations and their demographic factors relevant for the equity weighted formula. These towns are all predominately white, rural communities.

OPM Exhibit 3: Top Five Towns by Per Capita Allocation

Town	Population 60+	Total Allocation	▾ Per Capita Allocation	Share Non-White	Share with Disability	Share below poverty	Share Rural
Union	312	$6,901	$22	2%	14%	8%	100%
Colebrook	366	$6,982	$19	0%	6%	5%	100%
Scotland	366	$7,109	$19	3%	12%	3%	100%
Canaan	400	$7,276	$18	9%	8%	1%	100%
Eastford	438	$7,580	$17	0%	17%	6%	100%

Recommendation

Overall Recommendations

- OPM should look at per capita allocations and corresponding demographic data in advance of awarding future grants to ensure maximal opportunity for advancing equity with grant funding.
- OPM will continue to have an important role in the state in setting standards and guidelines for REL and SOGI data collection and reporting in the executive branch. In the Equity Study recommendations in section V: Summary of Recommendations of this report, there are other opportunities for OPM to lead state agency work on equity, including developing a framework for equity action plans and equity impact assessments, formalizing an interagency workgroup on equity, and developing a dashboard for key indicators for equity.

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[1] Connecticut Department of Administrative Services Workforce Data Report, August 2022. https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Communications/Communications-List-Docs/Workforce-Data-Reports/Workforce-Report---August-2022.pdf

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Fiscal Analysis. General Government B. February 2023. https://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/GOVBS/2023GOVBS-20230214_General%20Government%20B%20Subcommittee%20Budget%20Sheets%20Agency%20Hearing%20Phase%20FY%2024%20 and%20FY%2025.pdf

[3] Connecticut Office of Policy and Management, 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/OPM

[4] FCG interview with OPM leadership, April 20 2023.

[5] Socrata CT Enterprise Data Platform. "ARPA Senior Center Allocation". https://internal-ct.data.socrata.com/stories/s/ARPA-Senior-Center-Fund-Allocation/27bg-hkyr/

Summary of Agency Specific Recommendations

Based on the agency interviews, public input, and program analyses, we identified agency-specific recommendations for most of the agencies included in the study. We had varying levels of engagement with state agencies and therefore were able to collect more findings and recommendations for some agencies than others. Below is a summary of agency-level recommendations:

State Agency	Findings/Recommendations

Connecticut Technical Career and Education System (CTECS)
 	
Program Selection: Student Credentials
	Student Credentials Program Recommendations
	
	• **Report and Review Student Credential Data.** The Equity Study provided a profile of the students who earned a few of the top career and technical education credentials. Credentials are a key component of the CTECS high school education, and the state should summarize the credentials earned by students each year and show disaggregation by race and gender for each school and the district as a whole. CTECS should ensure they use this analysis in program planning, recruitment, outreach, and other aspects of program management to inform their equity action plan.
	
	• **Communicating the Value of Credentials.** CTECS should also communicate the value of the credentials on the district website and show students and families how specific credentials can lead to in-demand, higher-skill, higher-wage jobs.
	
	• **Track Student Outcomes Post-Graduation.** The state tracks college entrance and persistence on the state education website, but there should also be a process to track students who enter the workforce immediately after graduation and see how CTECS training and credentials impact employability. This information, qualitative and quantitative, can be provided back to educators, students, and families.
	
	Overall Agency Recommendations
	
	• **Representative Educator Workforce.** Students benefit from having teachers, staff members, and administrators with whom they can identify and share cultural backgrounds. The state should consider the following key components of diversifying the CTECS educator workforce:
	
	  o **Training:** The state will need to prepare hiring managers and administrators who are involved in the hiring process and make sure they can identify internal biases and reduce barriers.
	
	  o **Data:** The state should move the application process for all positions to a centralized job application information system. Job Aps (the State of Connecticut executive branch online employment center) currently only includes school and central office administrators, and therefore CTECS cannot track the applicants who are selected for interviews and the applicants who are hired, and CTECS cannot disaggregate by race, gender, or language. The district has data on the workforce after staff members are hired, but not during the application process.
	
	  o **Outreach:** With better data, the state could modify strategies for how to reach the right communities and diversify the workforce. CTECS should include questions on the online application questionnaire to understand where applicants first learn about an opportunity and what drives them to apply. This could help identify what outreach efforts are successful.
	
	  o **Training.** Standardized DEI training should be provided at all schools but allow schools to customize modules to meet the needs of the different populations and unique cultures of each school. Training should incorporate student perspectives and experiences and elevate student voices to ensure DEI efforts have a meaningful impact on student experiences and student outcomes.

Department of Administrative Services (DAS)

Program Selection: School Construction Grant Program

School Construction Grant Program Recommendations

- **Limiting Projects Added After Priority List Development.** The legislature could prohibit or limit the projects added through the "notwithstanding" language to ensure projects are vetted and go through the review process. This would likely reduce costs, reduce the potential use of funds for unallowable costs, ensure proper reimbursement rate, and target funds for municipalities with higher financial need.

Department of Agriculture (DoAg)

Program Selection: Local Food Purchase Assistance Grant Program (LFPA)

LFPA Program Recommendations

- **Addition of Distribution Sites to Areas with High Need.** As the program grows, the state should seek to add distribution sites to the areas with the highest need, i.e., areas that have a large number of food-insecure individuals, low food access, and little or no current access to LFPA distribution sites.
- **Participation of Socially Disadvantaged Producers.** As the program grows, the state should track the data on producers and ensure the program increases, or at least maintains, the number of socially disadvantaged producers and the dollar value of product distributed by socially disadvantaged producers.

Overall Agency Recommendations

- **Data and Evaluation.** The state should ensure it collects data on the number of BIPOC producers served for all programs that it operates and develop consistent definitions to support data collection and disaggregation.
- **Workforce Development.** In addition to the continued engagement with the University of Connecticut's College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources, and Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapters at the agriscience schools throughout Connecticut, DoAg should enhance partnerships with Connecticut high schools, colleges, and universities to inform BIPOC students about career pathways in agriculture.
- **Expanding Land Access.** The state could improve accessibility to land for agricultural production by BIPOC producers by exploring models for cooperative land trusts and cooperative land ownership in urban/suburban areas.

Department of Banking (DOB)

Program Selection: Complaint Center

Overall Recommendations

- **Contact Center Best Practices.** The state should develop guidance on best practices for consumer affairs units/complaint centers/contact centers, and in particular, how to respond to the needs of underserved populations (e.g. data collection for race/ethnicity, translation/language assistance, policies and protocols to advance equity). Banking, Consumer Protection, and Insurance all have contact centers using similar systems that could benefit from this guidance.

Department of Children and Families (DCF)

Mandated Reporter Training Recommendations

- **Data Collection and Analysis.** DCF should collect demographic data, geographic distribution, and information on mandated reporter roles from Mandated Reporter training participants. Stratification of training participants across these variables might identify gaps or disparities in reporting and perhaps further insight into the over representation of racial and ethnic groups among the DCF population.

Overall Recommendations

- **Strategic Partnerships**. DCF provides training to its agency staff to ensure they are not removing children from their homes solely due to poverty. They have on a case-by-case basis connected families to the Department of Social Services (DSS) to address their needs. The agency believes that a more formal collaboration with DSS is needed to make systemic changes to address the needs of families living in poverty and decrease disproportionality. DCF also collaborates with the Office of Early Childhood Services (OEC) on an executive fellowship program for emerging leaders and sees an opportunity to broaden their relationship with OEC by fostering collaboration around equity.
- **Sharing Best Practices.** DCF has established itself as a model for equity implementation and racial justice and has been sought out by organizations nationally. While DCF is a "go-to" agency for some agencies with Connecticut, they are very willing to broaden their reach and share their model with other agencies.

Department of Consumer Protection (DCP)

Program Selection: Complaint Center

Complaints Center Recommendations

- **Contact Center Best Practices.** The state could develop guidance on best practices for consumer affairs units/complaint centers/contact centers, and in particular, how to be responsive to the needs of underserved populations (e.g. data collection for race/ethnicity, translation/language assistance, policies and protocols to advance equity). Banking, Consumer Protection, and Insurance all have contact centers using similar systems.
- **Data.** DCP should collect race, ethnicity, and language (REL) data for individuals filing complaints to help the department better understand the population served by the complaint center. DCP could then regularly monitor whether they are providing the same level of service and achieving the same level of success for residents of color and residents who speak languages other than English as compared to white English-speaking residents. Analyzing geographic data for consumers filing complaints could also help the agency identify hot spots of activity in specific communities and respond to businesses that may be preying on vulnerable populations. This will need to be executed thoughtfully so that DCP does not discourage residents (such as undocumented individuals) who may feel concerned sharing demographic information when making a complaint.
- **Systems Improvement.** The state should improve the e-license system data collection and reporting so that DCP can classify complaints and more easily report on types of complaints – number received, number resolved, time to resolution, etc.
- **Outreach and Communications.** DCP should provide the electronic survey regarding the complaint center in other languages and provide respondents the option to share demographic/geographic information for analysis. DCP should also provide clearer instructions for residents who wish to submit paper complaint forms (mail, fax, or email) and provide all forms (PDFs) in languages other than English. Lastly, DCP should consider options to help residents who may have difficulty making a complaint in writing due to language barriers or limited literacy skills.

Overall Recommendations

- **Outreach and Communications.** To reach more low-income residents, DCP may want to target outreach and communications through community-based organizations that work with low-income households. DCP may also wish to target communications to residents in rural areas – such as the upper Northwestern and Northeastern regions of the state.
- **Internal DEI Responsibility.** DCP could improve diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work internally at DCP by assigning clear responsibility to specific roles. In the past, DCP reported focusing on institutional racism and microaggressions, but there are no current internal initiatives in this area.

Department of Correction (DOC)

Program Selection: Hepatitis C Screening Program

Hepatitis C Program

- **Data Collection and Analysis.** DOC should work to increase the number of participants providing complete demographic information including both race and ethnicity. DOC reported that the number of unspecified data seemed higher than anticipated, so it may require better integration of data sources. This may also require training staff responsible for data collection on the importance of this information to understanding the effectiveness of the intervention and identifying gaps within high-risk populations.
- **Decreasing Screening Opt Out Rate.** Given the prevalence of Hep C in incarcerated populations, further analysis is warranted to understand and address the nearly 18% opt out rate for screening.
- **Continuity of Care.** Most of those currently incarcerated will be returning to the community. Individuals in the community with Medicaid and those who are underinsured lack access to education, screening, and treatment of Hep C. Providing continuity of care in community settings would be an effective model to increasing screening and treatment for vulnerable populations and reducing the disease burden associated with Hep C.

Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD)

Program Selection: Small Business Boost Program

Small Business Boost Program Recommendations

- **Monitor Applicant Data and Outcomes.** The Equity study provided a summary of the businesses and communities that have the highest levels of Small Business Boost program funding. The state could also consider analyzing data for the applicants who do not receive Boost funding to see why applicants are denied funding, and identify which applicants use DECD support to improve the strength of their applications in the future. To tailor outreach and support services, DECD should review where those businesses are located and what types of assistance they request/receive from DECD.

Other Opportunities - Brownfields Program

- **Review Equity Impacts.** The mission of the Brownfields Program is to return brownfield sites across the state to productive reuse, including mixed-use, residential, commercial, industrial, retail, and open space uses. The state should review whether there are equity impacts in this program, i.e., how well the program addresses the needs of underserved communities and environmental justice communities (defined as distressed municipalities or communities where at least 30% of the population is living below 200% of the federal poverty level).
- **Technical Assistance.** The state should provide financial and technical assistance on brownfield redevelopment to municipalities and economic development agencies as well as brownfield owners and developers and engage with underserved communities.

Overall Recommendations

- **Demographic Data Requirements.** There has been some discussion in the state about removing demographic reporting requirements for small business loans. While not necessarily in the control of DECD, it is important that the state retain these requirements to ensure that DECD can review the equity impacts of its programs.

Department of Education (CSDE)

Program Selection: Apex/Defined Learning Programs

Apex/Defined Learning Program Recommendations

- **Outreach and Communication**. Apex seems underutilized as a tool for learning acceleration and credit recovery in Connecticut schools, particularly given its potential use for summer learning. The state should consider other options for communicating with districts about the availability of Apex, its potential uses, and how to sign up.
- **Data on Apex Program Use.** CSDE could also survey districts to get feedback on Apex and to better understand how the programs are being used and what they are achieving, in particular whether these programs are helping students graduate on-time. The department could also ask districts if there are any barriers to getting started or managing the program during the year and develop strategies to reduce these barriers.
- **Data on Defined Learning Program Use.** CSDE should reach out to districts that have high numbers of educator engagements to learn how they are using Defined Learning and what the impact of the program is for classrooms and students, and then communicate learnings/best practices with all districts.
- **Support for Schools**. CSDE could consider stipends for site coordinators in underserved communities to encourage districts to sign up for Apex/Defined Learning and enroll students. CSDE could also work with Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) to create learning communities around Apex/Defined Learning so schools could learn from each other how best to use the program to drive student achievement.

Overall Recommendations

- **Educator Linguistic Diversity.** The state should collect and report the linguistic diversity of teaching staff on the educator diversity dashboard.
- **Report Native Language of Students/Families.** Connecticut public schools collect native language information for students at registration. This data is collected by the CSDE but not currently reported with other school/district/state data on the EdSight website. Data regarding native languages could help schools, districts, the state, and community partners tailor initiatives to strengthen family and school partnerships and provide culturally responsive support for students. It could inform the recruitment and training of staff, the purchase or development of curriculum, reading, or other materials, and the translation of communications with families.

Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP)

Program Selection: Emergency Management Performance Grant Program (EMPG)

EMPP Program Recommendations

- **Administrative simplification.** DEMHS should simplify the grant application process for EMPG to enable communities with small, part-time, and/or volunteer emergency management staff to more easily access the grant program. DEMHS reports they are working to implement a grants management system that should reduce the administrative burden.

Overall Recommendations

- **New Grant Requirements.** The state should consider revising the statutes for the state-funded nonprofit security grant program to require the state to prioritize projects and adjust match requirements based on need, similar to the School Security Competitive Grant Program.
- **Simplify Grants Application Process.** To reduce barriers to access for underserved populations, the state should continue its work to implement a grants management system and simplify the application process for all grant programs.
- **Workforce Development Data.** The state should provide updated data on career firefighters in Connecticut on the DESPP website. The data on the website has not been updated since 2001, and the state should collect and provide data on the race, ethnicity, language, and gender distribution of career firefighters to target strategies to encourage a diverse workforce.
- **Data, community engagement, communication.** A recent study by the Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project (CTRP3) showed state troopers may have entered tens of thousands of false and innaccurate traffic tickets into the State Police database, and the false tickets were more likely to identify the driver as white, skewing racial profiling data[2]. While the investigation is still ongoing, this story may heighten public distrust about the accuracy of data regarding the Police and the department as a whole. The DESPP will need to develop a communication plan about the data it collects and reports, including on the Transparency Portal, and engage members of impacted communities to address questions and concerns. The State should also continue to support watchdog organizations, such as the CTRP3, and support audits of police data, including data on traffic stops, use of force, and the use of tasers. DESPP should continue to publicly demonstrate its support for CTRP3's mission and work.
- **Communication.** DESPP should communicate its goals and activities regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion on its website. There is currently very limited content related to diversity, equity, and inclusion on the public website.

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)

Program Selection: Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program (OSWA)

OSWA Program Recommendations

- **Technical Assistance.** The state should provide more assistance to underserved communities in the OSWA application process, or consider creating technical assistance partnerships with regional organizations, such as regional councils of governments.
- **Data.** The state needs to improve the data collection and reporting around open space acquisition and provide more transparency about the areas preserved and communities served, including better geographic information system (GIS) coordinate information about land parcels.
- **Potential Statute, Regulatory and Policy Changes.** The state should consider changes that would make it easier for contaminated properties in underserved communities to be protected through OSWA, in conjunction with other DEEP programs to mitigate hazards and protect residents/open space users. Also, the state should identify options to reduce application barriers and costs for underserved communities. These could include developing a way to cover reimbursement due diligence costs, changing the type of appraisals required, and/or designing a process that allows for quicker property closings. Lastly, the state should consider changes to allow partnerships with the Department of Housing/housing authorities to allow for the purchase of properties that include houses and create opportunities to meet both open space and housing needs.

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Overall Recommendations

- **Stakeholder Engagement.** The state should engage environmental justice communities in the Green Plan creation and engage diverse stakeholders when determining how to increase open space preservation for underserved communities.

- **New Funding Sources.** The state should develop other avenues for land acquisition for environmental justice communities and other underserved populations, such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a federal program that many states use to provide grant funding to urban communities for open space acquisition.

- **Environmental Justice Support.** To provide greater assistance to Environmental Justice communities, the state may need to increase the number of dedicated staff for the DEEP environmental justice office.

Department of Developmental Services (DDS)

Program Selection: Assistive Technology Grant Program

Assistive Technology Grant Recommendations

- **Expand Geographic Reach.** DDS should look to expand the geographic reach of the grant program to reach areas to the western and eastern regions of the state, particularly rural areas.

Overall Recommendations

- **Information Systems and Data.** The state should consider improving the information systems that support DDS. The system is outdated and difficult to change and needs to be able to incorporate data such as race, ethnicity and language (REL). If DDS collects and reports more complete demographic information about the population it serves across Connecticut (I.e., the demographics of residents engaged with DDS and/or the demographics of residents who qualify for DDS services), future program analyses could compare the demographics profile of program participants to the demographic profile of the DDS population for equity insights.

- **Enhanced Support for Individuals with Disabilities Across Agencies.** The state should consider opportunities to engage DDS in developing strategies across all state agencies to better support and integrate individuals with cognitive, physical, and intellectual disabilities.

- **Communication and Outreach.** DDS should continue to develop different ways to reach families in underserved populations. They are working on building trust with families, learning from families how to best communicate and engage, and collaborating with grassroots community-based organizations like churches and schools.

Department of Insurance/ Connecticut Insurance Department (CID)

Overall Recommendations

- **Dedicated DEI Role.** To adequately address issues of DEI within the department and in its work with consumers, the CID should consider a dedicated Chief of Inclusion role.

- **Contact Center Best Practices.** The state could develop guidance on best practices for consumer affairs units/complaint centers/contact centers, and in particular, how to be responsive to the needs of underserved populations (e.g. data collection for race/ethnicity, translation/language assistance, policies and protocols to advance equity). Banking, Consumer Protection, and Insurance all have contact centers using similar systems.

Department of Labor (DOL)

Program Selection: Connecticut Youth Employment Program (CYEP)

Connecticut Youth Employment Program Recommendations

- **Data.** CTDOL should continue to work with workforce development boards and their partner agencies to facilitate data collection and reporting for the Connecticut Youth Employment program.   During SFY 23 (July 2022 – June 30, 2023), CTDOL facilitated multiple workgroups in partnership with the workforce development boards to develop an updated summer youth reporting structure that included an enhancement to the collection of demographic information. As a result, the template was implemented on SFY 24 (July 2023 - June 30, 2024) to ensure that data is gathered in a usable format for the workforce development boards to populate on a quarterly basis. The CTDOL will be able to review the results of that effort at the end of SFY 24.

- **Training for Program Staff.** The regional workforce development boards reported concerns about increased marijuana use among youth, including youth reporting to worksite and program events/training under the influence. The program could expand access to training and support for the workforce development board staff, the vendors who operate the youth employment programs in each town, and worksite supervisors on substance use prevention. Workforce development boards also highlighted the impact of trauma on underserved youth and the importance of training to ensure program staff are trauma-informed and can support youth who have experienced trauma.

- **Simplifying Enrollment.** The CTDOL and the workforce development boards should continue to seek to simplify enrollment in the CTDOL programs, including the youth employment program, and develop interagency systems and processes to share eligibility-related documents across agencies so that residents who do not have easy access to their documents can still successfully enroll. Specific examples included birth certificates for youth and DMV IDs for returning citizens.   It is important to note that CTDOL recently updated their policy to include a section on Expanded Disconnected Youth Considerations such as, ensuring eligible documentation can be self-attested, which means a written, or electronic/digital declaration of information for a particular data element, signed and dated by the participant. Since disconnected youth are more likely to be homeless or not in a stable living environment, youth who self-attest to a lack of stable housing may be counted as a family of one. In addition, part-time earnings may be excluded from calculations for low income if those earnings exceed the Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL)/poverty guidelines.

- **Support Services.** The CTDOL and Workforce Boards should continue to coordinate with other local agencies and identify additional options to meet the needs of adult and youth job seekers who have social and economic barriers, e.g., food insecurity, housing, and transportation. During the community focus groups, community organizations noted that because unemployment is relatively low in the state, the residents seeking services tend to have higher needs and higher barriers to access and there may be new creative strategies to support these residents. CT DOL currently provides services that include but are not limited to the following:
  - Linkages to community services
  - Paying for a driver's license included
  - Assistance with childcare and dependent care
  - Assistance with housing
  - Needs Related Payments
    Payments for Youth
  - Assistance with educational testing
  - Reasonable accommodations for youth with disabilities
  - Legal Aide
  - Referrals to healthcare
  - Assistance with uniforms or other job appropriate attire and work-related tools, including such items as eyeglasses and protective eyewear
  - Assistance with books, fees, school supplies, and other necessary items for students enrolled in postsecondary education classes
  - Payments and fees for employment and training related applications, tests, and certification

o Food - Food may be provided to eligible youth when it will assist or enable the participant to participate in allowable youth program activities and to reach his/her employment and training goals, thereby achieving the program's overall performance goals. The use of grant funds for food should be limited to reasonable and necessary purchases that are coordinated, when possible, with other community, state, or federal services that provide food for low-income individuals.

Overall Recommendations

- **Out of School Youth Programs/Pandemic Recovery.** In focus groups, community organizations and residents reported the need for more CTDOL programs and services directed toward out-of-school youth – particularly students who dropped out of high school or students who graduated from high school during the pandemic. These students lack basic job readiness skills and social-emotional skills and face significant barriers to finding employment and engaging in their communities.

- **Older Adult Workforce Programs/Pandemic Recovery.** Community organizations and residents reported difficulties for older residents, particularly older women, in getting hired. Many older workers left their jobs during the Covid-19 pandemic, and now are trying to reenter the workforce. With labor shortages in key sectors such as healthcare and education, the CTDOL should consider additional programs and services to encourage businesses, nonprofits, and state agencies to hire older adults who have valuable work experience. A good example of this type of program is Maturity Works, a training program that helps people 55 and older, increase their job skills through paid community service in local nonprofit organizations[2].

Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)

Program Selection: Young Adult Services Program (YAS)

Young Adult Services Program Recommendations

- **Data and Reporting.** The state should consider disaggregating the YAS data by sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), following federal and state emerging guidelines.

Overall Recommendations

- **Data and Reporting.** DMHAS produces an annual statistics report with data on admissions, discharges, and level of care, including admissions and clients by primary drug and diagnosis.[4] DMHAS also publishes overall demographics of the population served, including gender, age, ethnicity, race, and town of residence. However, in the format currently published, equity insights are not available. The state should update the format of its statistics such that admissions, discharges, level of care, and other utilization statistics can be stratified by the available demographics. This would enable public evaluation of equity by these demographics for each utilization measure, and inform any reforms needed to advance equity among DMHAS clients and programs.

Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

Program Selection: Mobile Services

Mobile Services Recommendations

- The DMV should review the map of locations of the most expired licenses and IDs and target those areas for mobile services. When setting up the mobile locations, the DMV should review the demographic profile of those communities to determine if there are any specific needs, such as translation services.

- The DMV should also consider areas with highest per capita expired IDs and licenses as these are more rural areas that may be underserved by the state.

Overall Recommendations

- **Data and Reporting.** The DMV needs better tools and data systems to focus services geographically. DMV reported that analysis of the following data points would help the agency understand where access is limited and develop strategies to address any barriers:
  o The percentage of late renewals by geographic location
  o Failure to renew statistics (no-shows, turned away due to issues with documentation, compliance issues, etc.)
  o Inability to obtain first-time issuance of licenses or ID cards (issues with accessing DMV, being turned away due to issues with documentation, no-shows, compliance issues, etc.)
  o Inability to complete online transactions (ineligible transactions, unsuccessful transactions that create a "case" that requires worker intervention, etc.) could show why certain customers are choosing to appear in person.

- **Access and Communication.** The state should identify ways to reach out and provide information to customers who may not have access to technology. DMV highlighted the following options:
  - o Mobile services
  - o Co-located state offices
  - o Expanding the services that can be provided by phone through the contact center
- **Community Engagement.** The DMV could provide training and support to dealers, repairers, driving schools, doctors signing off on disability placards, etc., regarding the completion of DMV forms by Limited English Proficient individuals.

Department of Public Health

Program Selection: Associate of Public Health (APH) Program

APH Program Recommendations

- **Data and Evaluation.** DPH should request that the Community College system track APH degree program results – program entrance rates, program completion rates, job placement rates, and job placement location for graduates, disaggregated with demographic data. This will help assess the impact of the program on diversifying the Connecticut public health workforce and providing trusted messengers for health in communities with the greatest needs.
- **High School Outreach.** When DPH engages with Connecticut high schools, DPH should provide materials about the APH degree and careers in public health. Most of the health career pathways at Connecticut high schools are structured to provide certification for certified nursing assistants (CNA) or Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) or to prepare for two- or four-year degree programs for nursing, radiology, occupational therapy, physical therapy, dental assistant, etc. Students and families may not be aware of other public health-related fields.

Other Recommendations

- **Equity Impact Assessment Tool.** DPH should fully implement its equity impact analyses. Currently, DPH has two avenues – equity impact forms and a bill tracker database. DPH, through the Office of Health Equity, should communicate expectations regarding the analyses and provide training/support to agency staff. In general, DPH should continue the work of expanding and adapting the Office of Health Equity so it can serve as a technical assistance resource for the whole department, helping agency staff understand key equity questions and how to analyze equity impacts.

Department of Revenue Services

Program Selection: *Earned Income Tax Credit Program (EITC)*

EITC Program Recommendations

- **Targeted Partnerships.** Partnerships with community based organizations that specialize in supported individuals who experience persistent poverty should identify strategies for areas where there may be lower than expected participation in programs such as Child Tax Rebate and EITC due to lack information/understanding on how to apply.

Overall Recommendations

- **Communication and Awareness.** DRS should continue to improve communication and education through the Taxpayer Services Division. DRS should provide education and awareness to be accessible and visible to the general public and tailor outreach to connect with underserved populations.
- **Stakeholder Engagement.** DRS should continue to coordinate and consult with key stakeholders on outreach strategies including:
  - o United Way and other community-based organizations (for programs such as voluntary income tax assistance (VITA) and child tax rebate)
  - o National Association of Tax Practitioners
  - o Connecticut Society of CPA
  - o Connecticut Society of Enrolled Agents
  - o Connecticut Bar Association

CHESS Algorithm recommendations

- **Socioeconomic markers.** Carelon has done extensive analysis on the distribution of program participants by race and ethnicity to assess if it reflects the program's expected racial and ethnic distribution. Building off this work, Carelon could further separate any portions of algorithm bias that may be related to income and race/ethnicity. For example, Carelon could further split the algorithm's output results by a socio-economic marker, either individual or geographic, to expose any biases.

- **Predictive modeling.** Carelon could apply a predictive approach, such as model cards, to evaluate bias. This could be done by predicting whether a self-applicant member will pass the algorithm based on a variety of indicators that do not include race/ethnicity. From there, Carelon could test if that prediction is consistent across all race and ethnicity categories.

- **Ongoing monitoring and evaluation.** DSS and Carelon conducted an initial assessment to determine that the demographic profile of self-applicants was different than that of sheltered members eligible and enrolled in the program. Following implementation of any changes to the algorithm and/or business processes described below, DSS and Carelon should continue to monitor the demographics of the participating CHESS members to identify whether the algorithm and overall program are serving its intended population. Carelon can continue to examine whether members of historically marginalized groups are more likely to fail the algorithm or whether the algorithm could be adjusted to target underrepresented members that would benefit from CHESS.

- For additional resources to refine CHESS' algorithm, this literature review "Mitigating Racial And Ethnic Bias And Advancing Health Equity In Clinical Algorithms: A Scoping Review" identifies health care applications, frameworks, reviews and perspectives, and assessment tools that identify and mitigate bias in clinical algorithms, with a specific focus on racial and ethnic bias[4].

Referral process recommendations

- **Housing status qualifying criteria.** One opportunity for DSS and Carelon to consider in advancing equity is the housing status qualifying criteria, in which applicants must either be homeless or at risk of homelessness to be eligible for the program. The criteria are broader than just current homelessness to include housing instable individuals. This definition arose because the program's initial (i.e., pre-program participation) and reevaluation (i.e., at the end of the program year) qualifying criteria were designed to be the same, so that participants maintain program eligibility after their first year in the program. However, the inclusion of the "at risk of homelessness" qualification opens eligibility to many Connecticut residents with varying housing needs, creating a much larger pool of self-applicants than initially anticipated. DSS could consider creating separate qualifying criteria for the referral process (for new members seeking to join CHESS) and for the reevaluation process (for returning CHESS participants) to more narrowly target chronically homeless members with severe housing needs.

- **Automation for self-referral application review.** In the current business process, DSS receives self-referral applications and confirms the member's Medicaid eligibility before sending the applications to Carelon for further processing. Carelon could find ways to automate their review of self-applicants for eligibility criteria beyond the initial Medicaid eligibility screening check completed by DSS, which would reduce the volume of self-applicants that Carelon manually processes, creating more time and capacity for outreach to shelter members. For example, since the current qualifying criteria opens CHESS to a broad of array of Connecticut residents with different housing needs, Carelon could automate a process to identify with members with less severe housing needs and work with DSS to refer them to other housing support programs for which they may qualify.

- **Timeframe.** DSS/Carelon could also assess whether to extend the informal 30-day target review period to plan for more outreach capacity.

- **Provider Preparedness to Participate in CHESS.** One of the biggest challenges reported in interviews is the lack of provider capacity for CHESS, particularly in the New Haven, Bridgeport, and Northwestern Connecticut regions. Providers who do

participate are also often unprepared for the level of care coordination they need to provide for the CHESS program. For those already participating, the state could consider additional training and education for providers about program expectations, billing, and redetermination processes. To increase provider capacity, the state could also consider any incentives to participate and/or reductions in administrative burden to increase the number of qualified providers participating in CHESS.

Department of Transportation

Program Selection: Workforce Development Programs

Workforce Program Recommendations:

- **Standardize Workforce Program Data Collection and Reporting.** CTDOT should standardize data collection and reporting for the workforce programs to ensure the new workforce development lead and other agency leaders are able to easily review program participation data, compare results against goals, and monitor trends over time. The workforce development lead should also monitor completion rates for each workforce program and develop strategies, as needed, to support students and ensure participants successfully complete their programs.

- **Program Outreach and Communication.** Improved data collection and reporting will also help CTDOT more easily track the participation of Connecticut high schools and colleges in the workforce programs and target outreach to increase participation of students from underserved populations. The new Senior Advisor for Inclusive Communications and Culture can lead the development of relationships with schools and community organizations and ensure distribution of information about positions and career opportunities to community contacts.

Department of Veterans Services

Program Selection: John L. Levitow (JLL) and Veteran Residential Services

John L. Levitow (JLL) and Veteran Residential Services Recommendations

- **Data Analysis.** The department should review the data on admissions from this study and determine if there are any opportunities for increasing participation in JLL and the residential services programs for veterans from underserved populations. The department should also explore the drop in admissions for female veterans, and may consider outreach to female veterans to inform how best the program can meet their needs, as well as how to communicate the programs effectively.

Overall Recommendations

- **Outreach and Communication.** The department reported that they would like to strengthen their communication and outreach to advance equity. To ensure successful engagement with veterans from underserved communities, the department should continue to build on the work that grew out of the emergency response to the pandemic on statewide communication and outreach. The department should develop a communication plan that identifies strategies for reaching specific target populations and geographic regions.

Office of Higher Education

No Program Selected

Overall Recommendations:

- **Funding for Key Programs.** The state should seek opportunities to expand funding for programs that help students from underserved populations go to college and graduate on time. OHE reports that many students are working while trying to earn a college degree and they need additional support. Examples of programs to support the underserved include:
  o The Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program. More students qualify than the state has funding for, and it currently does not fund students for all four years.[5]
  o The PASS program. There is a need for more funding for services to support college students of color who are struggling academically.[6]

- **Reducing Barriers.** The Department of Education, the Office of Higher Education, and state colleges and universities should work together to address key barriers to college applications and college entrance. For example:
  o Provide clearer communication, in multiple languages, about dual enrollment opportunities in high school for students and families and simplify the process for applying for and receiving credit for dual enrollment.

o Increase state support to help high schools set up dual enrollment courses. Currently, each high school sets up its own individual agreements with colleges. The state or Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) could facilitate this process to encourage more dual enrollment opportunities, particularly for underserved youth. In September 2023, the Connecticut State Department of Education announced a $3.8 million grant program for 83 school districts to expand their dual credit programs at their high schools. [7] The program also includes funds to support higher education partners in increasing their institutional capacity to support the growth in demand for dual credit courses.

o Reduce the barriers for students to requesting and receiving their transcripts from high schools and colleges. OHE reported that some students are unable to receive transcripts due to outstanding fines/fees from their schools, which at colleges can include significant unpaid tuition balances.

o Facilitate the process of transferring credits between colleges and accessing old credits.

Office of Policy Management

Program Selection: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Senior Center Grant

Overall Recommendations

- OPM should look at per capita allocations and corresponding demographic data in advance of awarding future grants to ensure maximal opportunity for advancing equity with grant funding.

- OPM will continue to have an important role in the state in setting standards and guidelines for REL and SOGI data collection and reporting in the executive branch. In the Equity Study recommendations in section V: Summary of Recommendations of this report, there are other opportunities for OPM to lead state agency work on equity, including developing a framework for equity action plans and equity impact assessments, formalizing an interagency workgroup on equity, and developing a dashboard for key indicators for equity.

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[1] Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project (CTRP3), "Connecticut State Police Traffic Stop Audit Report 2014-21," June 2023.

[2] Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, "Annual Statistical Data Reporting". 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/DMHAS/Divisions/EQMI/DMHAS-Annual-Statistics

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[4] Cary Jr., Michael P. et al., "Mitigating Racial And Ethnic Bias And Advancing Health Equity In Clinical Algorithms: A Scoping Review", Health Affairs, Vol. 42, No. 10. October 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2023.00553

[5] Connecticut Office of Higher Education, "Roberta B. Willis Need-Based Grant Program 2024-25 Enrollment Information", 2015. Accessed November 2023. https://www.ohe.ct.gov/SFA/WillisScholarship.shtml

[6] Connecticut Office of Higher Education, "Minority Advancement Program", 2015. Accessed November 2023. https://www.ohe.ct.gov/MAP/Default.shtml

[7] State of Connecticut, Office of Governor Ned Lamont, "Governor Lamont and Commissioner Russell-Tucker Announce $3.8 Million Investment To Expand Dual Credit Offerings for High School Students". September 26 2023. Accessed November 2023. https://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor/News/Press-Releases/2023/09-2023/Governor-Lamont-and-Commissioner-Russell-Tucker-Announce-Investment-To-Expand-Dual-Credit

Appendix IV. Community Feedback on Equity Challenges and Opportunities

The Equity Study collected feedback from the community through focus groups with community-based organizations, focus groups with the general public, and an online public survey. The community provided substantive feedback on equity challenges and opportunities, and we have summarized this feedback by population-specific themes.

Population-specific themes
• Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons; Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color • Non-native English speakers • Persons with disabilities • LGBTQ+ • Age (youth, seniors) • Persons affected by persistent poverty

A few items to note when reviewing this feedback:

- Public participation was limited to 15 focus groups (consisting of 62 CBO representatives and 18 residents) and 66 survey responses. This is not a large enough sample to be considered representative of the entire Connecticut population and may be biased based on those who chose to participate in focus groups and the survey and those who did not participate.
- Not all public participants were able to differentiate between municipal, state, and federal agencies and programs, and many individuals provided input on topics that are outside of the control of the state of Connecticut executive branch and outside of the focus of this study.
- We were not able to verify the accuracy of any statements presented by the public, and there may be errors and omissions in their comments.

Despite these limitations, we still feel that it is important to share these perspectives, using quotes whenever possible, to elevate the voices of community members, particularly members of underserved populations. While some feedback may not be related to programs and services under the state's control, the feedback still can help the state understand the experiences and perspectives of members of underserved populations and the challenges, inequities, and discrimination they may face in their daily lives in Connecticut. In section V: Summary of Recommendations, we highlight the importance of all agencies conducting meaningful stakeholder engagement, particularly with underserved populations. We hope that the Equity Study feedback from community members is only a starting point to engaging the public and elevating community voices on equity-related issues in Connecticut.

Population-specific Themes

Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons; Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color

1. Community members described racism as a persistent and ongoing challenge in their lives. One participant said, *"As an African American male … I see [historical and systemic racism] every day."* A few study participants described incidents of microaggressions when they or their clients interacted with government offices. For example, one participant stated that state workers would not use terms like "persons with disabilities" or "persons of color", *"they'll say, 'the people who came here from Hartford or New Britain' and we all know what they mean."* The participant also described an experience with discrimination in a local school district where they advocated for a Latina woman who *"felt attacked when trying to get an [individualized education plan] IEP for her daughter, but when her husband attended [who is not a person of color], there was no issue."* While this is not a state agency example, it shows the challenge people of color can face in trying to access services and supports.

2. Community members expressed their views that education funding is inadequate and structurally contributing to inequities. Examples of feedback from study participants on this topic include **"***We should disband the district-level funding of public schooling. The connections among historic patterns redlining, segregation between towns in terms of ethnic and socioeconomic diversity, and academic performance illustrate a historic pattern that must be interrupted.***"** And **"***Put more resources where they are needed most – Title I schools – and also the students with the greatest needs at Title 2 and 3 schools.***"** Some participants also noted a need for air quality and temperature standards in education buildings.

3. Community members, including community organization leaders, stated their concerns that teachers in many school communities are not representative of the student population. Community members discussed a range of factors that may impact the lack of teachers of color including: a lack of outreach; administrative barriers and hiring standards that hold back applicants of color; a white majority teachers' union; and an underlying diversity gap in qualified graduates from local university education programs.

4. Participants discussed barriers for those seeking to become homeowners and inequities in the home selling process. One study participant described inequity *"for people selling their homes and getting a fair value. I've been discriminated against, for the color of my skin and also for my pride flag, to be honest. We got a terrible value, and we were told to fight it, but we got stuck and had to just take the hit."*

5. Residents discussed the need for sensitivity training to address racial bias and discrimination. Several participants specifically suggested that the state require more training for agency staff on topics including anti-racism, disability, LGBTQ+, and people living in persistent poverty.

6. Community members noted a need for policies and regulations to reduce inequities in affordable housing, which disproportionately impact people of color and people with a poor housing history or criminal records. One participant commented, *"Something we see a lot is individuals with poor housing histories have criminal records, and when they finally get Section 8 vouchers, they can't use it because of their criminal records - That's really frustrating for folks. We talk a lot about being a second chance state, but … that's a huge barrier."*

Non-native English speakers

1. Non-native English speakers consistently reported challenges when accessing language supports. Study participants described how non-native English speakers need professional interpreter support, not just someone who is conversationally bilingual. One participant shared that: **"***individuals have been discriminated against for asking for interpreters… Some commented that staff express visible annoyance and have screamed at them … made them feel little.***"** Another participant described, people interacting with non-native English speakers often have *"no patience for folks who can't communicate in English, or any translation other than Spanish."* A Spanish interpreter provided an example from the local school district describing the problem, **"***I know last year I had four families that said that they would call the school in Spanish and the school staff would hang up on them … This isn't isolated to one school, I'm just sharing one example. There's no real accountability.***"** While it is important to note that this feedback does not pertain to services provided by a state agency, these are the types of obstacles that could easily be faced by non-native English speakers when interacting with state agencies.

2. Community based organizations and individuals who support non-native English speakers described the additional challenges in serving people who cannot read in their native language. For example, a representative from a literacy organization said, "*What we find is – occasionally – and it's really reported more for Bridgeport and New Haven … that many of the expectant families that we're serving with our literacy materials and books – sometimes self-report that they are actually illiterate. So we not only have a challenge with ESL, but we also have a challenge that they don't [read in] their native language. And so we are in a position where we're a literacy organization and we've unfortunately made assumptions, we show up with stuff that you have to read and books that you have to read, but we need some sort of connection where we can support people who are illiterate. And do what we can do to remove the shame and stigma that comes along with that fact.*"

3. Community members expressed challenges accessing non-English speaking behavioral healthcare providers, particularly Spanish. Community members discussed the importance of individuals being able to obtain behavioral healthcare in Spanish or their native language to close any disparities in behavioral health outcomes.

Persons with disabilities

1. Community members felt that there were insufficient interpreter services for the deaf and hard of hearing community and expressed concerns about recent changes in how those services are provided in the state. One community member said they have *"had such a hard time finding translation services, just to meet with my deaf/hard of hearing coworkers."* A community member also provided the feedback that video meetings with close captioning have improved the accessibility of meetings for the deaf/hard of hearing, and it is generally more challenging to participate in in-person meetings and public forums.

2. Some community members reported concerns about the equity of special education funding across school districts. One community member provided their perspective that, **"***Special education, funding specifically – and beyond excess cost, the excess cost formula is an incredibly small part of what's at play with special education dollars – the state funding of special education, the method that they have chosen is absolutely inequitable. It hides under a really thin veil of equity, but when you really dig into it, it lacks substance ...it both harms general education students and special education students – in this funding policy, everyone is being harmed."*

3. Community members also raised concerns related to the stigma associated with persons with disabilities using special education services, particularly in communities of color. As one example, a community-based organization representative described the challenge as follows, **"***What we're finding is ... parents saying 'I need you to get my 21-year-old [with autism] a job'... did they receive services when they were in high school? And most of them were saying no. And having the conversation as to why – again, when you're talking about our communities, our communities of color, there is that fear of having that stigma of being called 'special education' and not recognizing the importance of connecting your child to getting special education while you are in school so you're not [trying to get] your child a job when they can't even tell you what their name is. "*

LGBTQ+

1. Community members expressed a desire for more explicit inclusion and representation of LGBTQ+ community in state decision making and noted concerns about the lack of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) data. For example, one community member stressed the importance of including those with lived experiences in discussions related to state policy making, such as *"attention to people in the LGBTQ+ community, especially folks who identify as transgender who have historically been alienated from the homeless response system and shelters based off of their ... gender identity."* To quote another participant, *"there are demographic data barriers, especially for queer folks."*

2. Community members reported challenges with state agencies consistently respecting gender identity. One community based organization representative explained that in their experience, one state agency *"does not do a great job with LGBTQ folks. In fact, they're pretty terrible. We've had a number of clients who've complained about a lack of understanding and just straight-up disrespect – using wrong pronouns, not letting people use the bathroom with the gender they identify."*

3. Additionally, people of color and members of the LGBTQ+ community who are seeking behavioral health providers with lived experience that mirror theirs express difficulty finding providers in the state, especially ones who accept new clients. As one community member stated, *"I had to go out of state to get a therapist, I wanted to find a woman who had some color and some knowledge of queer issues, and I didn't think that was a big ask. We're woefully underserved. I was having problems finding anyone who had availability too."* The community members did not specify if this was in state-run behavioral healthcare settings or more general.

4. Another issue raised by community members was the microaggressions people in the LGBTQ+ community experience in healthcare settings when preferred pronouns, preferred name, and gender identity are not consistently and appropriately discussed, documented, and used in electronic health records. The community members did not specify if this was in state-run healthcare settings or more general.

Age

1. Community members expressed concerns about youth who are transitioning from youth services to adult services. For example, one community based organization representative shared their concerns about youth over the age of 17 that, " *for whatever reason, those kids fall through the gap. In terms of vocational support, housing support, wraparound services, even DCF attention, it's not there for that age group.*"

2. Community organizations that work with youth expressed specific concerns about adolescents and young adults who graduated high school and college during the COVID-19 pandemic experienced unprecedented difficulties transitioning into the workforce. As one participated had concerns about, *"Older youth, particularly those who dropped out of high school and aren't in a vocational training"* but also noted that *"even if someone does have a high school diploma, COVID has made the education they received not adequate."*

3. Study participants described how youth do not necessarily receive education about career paths that do not involve college, but that the subsidized employment programs **"***have been particularly effective, in particular with youth – it's been extremely effective in building their self-esteem, but also in helping them gain those work values, work ethics – and also identify the potential pathways.*"

4. Community based organizations also shared concerns regarding older adults who left the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic. In their view, many of these older adults may require specialized support to transition back into the workforce or to change fields/careers within the workforce. One study participant commented, *"since the COVID pandemic, we've seen a lot of people retire, but now realizing that they have to get back to work because of the economy. We're seeing a lot of older workers."*

Persons affected by persistent poverty

1. Community members provided their perspective on the "benefit cliff" and the lack of economic mobility for persons affected by persistent poverty. Several participants described how individuals can feel "trapped" in poverty, because *"any increase of money may make people lose their SNAP/HUSKY benefits,"* and that can discourage individuals from increasing their incomes, unless they can increase it so significantly it more than supplants the value of their benefits. Another participant provided perspective on the challenges in trying to become a homeowner, **"***It's difficult to know what support is out there to become a homeowner, get out of Section 8 housing; 33% of income is going to housing, difficulty to save - supposed to be transitionary, feels stuck - any amount of savings/extra money is put into rent increase."*

2. Participants described financial challenges when seeking home ownership, as well as a lack of information. They stressed the importance of providing education and support for underserved populations as it relates to moving from renting to homeownership. For example, one participant said that there is *"no bridge from renting to homeownership, teachers can't even afford to live where they teach."* Another participant noted, **"***it's difficult to know what support is out there to become a homeowner, get out of Section 8 housing; 33% of income is going to housing, difficulty to save - supposed to be transitionary, feels stuck - any amount of savings/extra money is put into rent increase."* Others spoke favorably of the Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America (NACA) and their approach to helping Connecticut residents move from Section 8 into homeownership.

3. Community members reported that access to healthcare is very limited for the uninsured, especially for healthcare in community-based settings. In particular, community members described access to behavioral healthcare as extremely limited for the uninsured.

4. Community members expressed concerns about the challenges that individuals without internet access face in accessing forms and applications that are primarily available online. Some participants expressed the importance of having paper copies of forms available at relevant agencies, with staff who can support residents in completing the forms and applications. Multiple community members also indicated that the in-person office hours of some agencies are not adequate. One community member provided the perspective that an agency that provides direct services should be *"open all day every workday, because many people cannot just use the online system to get their needs met; the current closing would never be deemed to be acceptable for an agency that primarily served middle class people."*

Appendix V: Agency Feedback on Report Recommendations

Prior to publishing the final draft, all participating agencies had the opportunity to review the draft final report and provide feedback. Any inaccuracies or changes to facts from the review process were incorporated into the body of the report. In this Appendix, we have listed any feedback from agencies relative to their progress implementing the report's recommendations.

Report Content	Agency Feedback on Final Draft
Statewide Recommendations "Training made available for state agencies could be improved to continuously address all aspects of equity."	**Department of Administrative Services Response:** DAS has implemented LinkedIn Learning to provide on-demand instructional videos and trainings. The platform offers several DEI(B) trainings for our agencies and employees to use. There are 3318 entries on LinkedIn Learning related to the DEI topic.
"Continue efforts to improve internet access and access to devices to support rural residents' access to digital government."	**Department of Administrative Services Response:** "We continue to address access to digital government through Digital Equity work. Libraries and education are key cross agency partners."
"Consider a single grants management system software tool for all state agencies where all grant opportunities would be posted, and organizations would submit funding applications."	**Department of Administrative Services Response:** "DAS-BITS is implementing a pilot project for an enterprise level grants management solution. Four executive branch agencies are participating in the research phase of the project to help inform the design of a statewide grant management platform."
"Study participants describe Connecticut's website as difficult to navigate, which can contribute to persisting inequities."	**Department of Administrative Services Response:** "We've addressed language choice through the new web design system. We will continue to examine better ways to establish primary language."

State Agency	Recommendation	Agency Response
Department of Administrative Services	**Limiting Projects Added After Priority List Development.** The legislature could prohibit or limit the projects added through the "notwithstanding" language to ensure projects are vetted and go through the review process. This would likely reduce costs, reduce the potential use of funds for unallowable costs, ensure proper reimbursement rate, and target funds for municipalities with higher financial need.	"DAS is developing a cost model for grant analysis"
Department of Social Services	"One opportunity for DSS and Carelon to consider in advancing equity is the housing status qualifying criteria, in whichapplicants must either be homeless or at risk of homelessness to be eligible for the program."	"Due to the overwhelming number of applicants for the program, DSS is working on refining the target population to better match the needs of the homeless population"

Department of Developmental Services

Information Systems and Data. The state should consider improving the information systems that support DDS. The system is outdated and difficult to change and needs to be able to incorporate data such as race, ethnicity and language (REL). If DDS collects and reports more complete demographic information about the population it serves across Connecticut (I.e., the demographics of residents engaged with DDS and/or the demographics of residents who qualify for DDS services), future program analyses could compare the demographics profile of program participants to the demographic profile of the DDS population for equity insights.

"This year, DDS continued to plan for implementation of updated race, ethnicity, and language (REL) categories in support of compliance with Public Act 21-35 Section 11, which requires that standards are developed and implemented for the collection and reporting of REL data. Through discovery, we identified that REL information is asked upon eligibility application and is not part of the routine data collection process and is not updated often. To capture the information accurately when new people apply to DDS, we evaluated modifications to our paper-based forms for the Eligibility Application. These changes were the subject of two focus group sessions to review options with the DDS self-advocate coordinators, who provided feedback on content and usability from the individual's perspective. DDS participates in an ongoing implementation workgroup hosted by the Office of Health Strategies and has presented to the work group to share the importance of including feedback from those receiving services when considering making important changes to the information we collect. DDS has also explored accessing valid sources of external data for DDS individuals through data sharing agreements to provide additional context and for comparative purposes. It is our hope that DDS will identify external data which is already in use and meets our permitted use cases, so that we can leverage existing information to assess equity of services and supports in the DDS system using key demographic features. DDS has begun to review key areas, such as Abuse and Neglect allegations and Planning and Resource allocation to assess differences through the lens of equity and inclusion. We plan for ongoing collaborating with the DDS Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to identify key areas for exploration and will work to support ongoing measurement to gauge the effectiveness of any strategies to address inequities encountered."

Enhanced Support for Individuals with Disabilities Across Agencies. The state should consider opportunities to engage DDS in developing strategies across all state agencies to better support and integrate individuals with cognitive, physical, and intellectual disabilities.

"DDS works regularly with sister agencies, including DSS, ADS, DCF, DHMAS, SDE, and others to ensure that the needs of individuals with intellectual disability are being met. We have both formal and informal partnerships to this end, including several MOUs outlining specific areas of data sharing or shared work. In addition, the Office of Policy and Management has recently hired a team member specifically to coordinate efforts related to supports for individuals with intellectual disability across state agencies, pursuant to PA 23-137. DDS would support any additional efforts toward viewing equity extended to individuals with disabilities within services offered throughout the state, as a long-marginalized group."

Dept of Developmental Services Communication and Outreach. DDS should continue to develop different ways to reach families in underserved populations. They are working on building trust with families, learning from families how to best communicate and engage, and collaborating with grassroots community-based organizations like churches and schools.

"DDS is approaching community outreach through several channels. The agency's ARPA STEP initiatives have provided our communications team an opportunity to conduct additional outreach and develop better marketing materials. We have used this opportunity to capitalize on existing partnerships with family and advocacy organizations, as well, developing new relationships through their networks. Alongside this work, our Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is working to expand relationships with non-disability-specific grassroots community organizations and trusted leaders in an effort to connect with individuals and families who may need DDS' support, but have not yet found their way to us."

Department of Consumer Protection

Data. DCP should collect race, ethnicity, and language (REL) data for individuals filing complaints to help the department better understand the population served by the complaint center. DCP could then regularly monitor whether they are providing the same level of service and achieving the same level of success for residents of color and residents who speak languages other than English as compared to white English-speaking residents.

"To expand access to additional communities and populations throughout the state, the Complaints Center in November launched new complaint forms in multiple languages, including Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, and Mandarin."

Internal DEI Responsibility. DCP could improve diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work internally at DCP by assigning clear responsibility to specific roles. In the past, DCP reported focusing on institutional racism and microaggressions, but there are no current internal initiatives in this area.

"DCP leadership continues to engage in discussions on ways to improve and expand DEI practices and policies within the agency. Currently, all agency staff are participating in a three-hour Workplace Diversity and Inclusion Training program, to be completed by December 8, 2023."

Appendix VI: About the Authors

This study was led by Faulkner Consulting Group (FCG), in partnership with McClain Consulting Associates for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion expertise and N1 Health or data analytics and data visualization support.

Team Members Included:

Angela Sherwin, FCG Managing Director
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Ryan Driscoll, FCG Consultant
Min Tunkel, FCG Consultant
Jacob Luria, CEO, N1 Health
Divya Kopalle, N1 Health
Katie Morgan, N1 Health

About Faulkner Consulting Group

Faulkner Consulting Group (FCG) is a women-owned, New England-based consulting firm, with over 40 consultants focusing on public policy, strategy, analytics, and program operations. For more than 15 years, FCG has played an instrumental role in policy and program design, working on topics such as Covid-19 response and recovery, health equity analytics, evaluation of health and social services programs, and the transformation of social and human service operations. Our strength – and a common thread across FCG's portfolio – is engaging state policymakers and community stakeholders to facilitate well-informed decisions that result in measurable outcomes that best meet the state's needs.

At Faulkner Consulting Group we take a data driven approach, working with state government agencies and private sector clients to design and implement innovative programs that leverage national best practices and build on the unique strengths and capacities of our clients. Our work focuses on three specific areas, as shown in the graphic below:

Bringing an analytical approach to policy and program design

At Faulkner Consulting Group we take a data driven approach, working with state government agencies and private sector clients to design and implement innovative programs that leverage national best practices and build on the unique strengths and capacities of our clients. Our work is focused in three specific areas:

Policy
Developing innovative programs and payor-provider partnerships

Operations
Building processes, tools and reports to enable program implementation

Analytics
Quantifying population & program specific performance and goals

Our most successful projects combine these areas: policy decisions based on underlying data analysis, programs developed with an eye toward operational implementation, and using data to define priorities for operational improvements.

For more information about FCG, visit our website at www.faulknerconsultinggroup.com

For more information, please contact Angela Sherwin at **asherwin@faulknerconsultinggroup.com** or go to **www.faulknerconsultinggroup.com**

About McClain Consulting Associates (MCA)

McClain Consulting Associates (MCA) is strategic consulting practice founded by Wanda McClain, a former healthcare executive and financial service professional, to provide expert advice and strategies to clients including leading academic medical centers, behavioral health organizations, departments of public health and state led efforts to advance equity. MCA helps clients successfully achieve their strategic priorities while advancing equity. MCA employs key strengths -- collaboration, communication and negotiation -- to promote critical issues and leverage resources to bring about essential and sustainable change. MCA is a certified women-owned/minority-owned business.

About N1 Health

N1 Health is an applied AI platform that solves complex challenges that healthcare business leaders face today. We specialize in combining our customer's data with detailed consumer data, predictive models, and cloud native technologies to create a holistic picture of every individual to generate meaningful predictions that enable precision in your outreach and interventions. Our expert Customer Experience team, forward-deployed data scientists, and forward-deployed engineers partner closely with customers to transform these predictions into actions that improve health outcomes and drive financial performance. We get you the results that matter, fast – better health for every one.

For more information, visit N1 Health's website at **www.n1health.com**.

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Equity Study Listening Tour Key Takeaways
February 2024

Background
The Connecticut Equity Study was published on 1/19/24 and can be found here:
https://portal.ct.gov/equitystudy/-/media/CHRO/Equity-Study/CT-Equity-Report.pdf.

Process
A listening tour was undertaken after the Equity Study was published to share findings with interested parties across the state. The Equity Study was first released to the public in conjunction with the "Cementing Equity in State Government" symposium at the State Capitol on January 19, 2024.

Following the release of the report, there were two listening tour sessions for community-based organizations.
- February 1, 2024 at noon
- February 14, 2024 at 9:00 AM

There were also three listening tour sessions for the general public. Links for these sessions were available on the state website.
- February 5, 2024 at noon
- February 12, 2024 at noon
- February 20, 2024 at 7:00 PM

During the listening sessions, the following topics were covered:
- Study Background
- Methodology
- Findings and Recommendations
- Next Steps and Implementation

41 individuals participated in the listening tour sessions.

Questions/Feedback from Participants
Participants in the listening tour sessions provided the following feedback:

- *Equity Champions.* One CBO session participant discussed the importance of preserving institutional memory when equity champions have been identified.
- *Equitable Access to State Leadership Roles.* CBO session participants discussed that as state agencies add more people of color to their staff, it is important to consider what types of positions they hold and if they are in decision-making roles and leadership positions.
- *Next Steps to Advance Equity.* Session participants commented that some of the report's recommendations will not be implemented without new legislation and asked how the public can help utilize or maximize community members to advance these recommendations. Several participants reiterated that they did not want this to become

another report that "sits on a shelf." One participant noted that the longer the state takes to implement the recommendations, the greater the racial disparities that exist in Connecticut will become.

- *Selection of the Programs for the Agency-Specific Analyses.* One session participant asked how agency programs were selected for analysis. The participant expressed concern that agencies selected their own programs for review in an independent study. The study authors clarified that the legislation stated that agencies would select the programs, but agencies were advised to select programs that: (1) Serve a significant number of individuals; or (2) Have a significant impact on the lives of those served; or (3) Were specifically designed to achieve equity; or (4) Have known disparities in outcomes or barriers to access.

- *Importance of Community Engagement.* Session participants stressed the importance of community engagement and discussed how it can be an afterthought for state agencies. Engagement needs to be front and center to ensure programs are designed from the start to meet community needs. Session participants appreciated the recommendation to compensate community members for engaging in state feedback sessions and discussed the importance of showing community members how their feedback is being used and how their voice has an impact.

- *Communication and Messaging with the Public.* A session participant discussed how terminology related to programs and services can change (e.g. "advocates" are now called "family support"), and that these changes make it harder for the public to understand what organizations do and who is the right person to contact for assistance. Connecticut needs to be able to get the message out to the public, involve the community in developing messaging, and ensure translation as needed.

- *Simplifying Grant Processes.* A CBO session participant emphasized the importance of simplifying grant applications and grant application processes to make it easier for community organizations that serve disenfranchised and marginalized populations to access funding. It can be costly for organizations to apply for grants.

- *Data Availability.* One participant discussed that the state should not only look at whether data on race, ethnicity, and language is available but at how current the data is, noting there is often a multiyear lag in data reporting.

- *Monitoring Nonprofit Organizations that Contract with the State.* A session participant raised a concern that the state should monitor nonprofits that contract with the state and ensure that they serve all racial and ethnic identities and do not have patterns of discrimination. They emphasized the importance of transparency in monitoring CBOs that receive public funds and making that information accessible to the public. Organizations that are under investigation for discrimination should not receive funding from the state to serve marginalized communities.

- *Simplifying Certification Processes for Teaching Positions.* One participant discussed the challenges of getting certified to teach in Connecticut if you have been certified in

another country. The process is overly burdensome as there are multiple review processes and fees to evaluate a degree from a foreign university.

- *Expanding the Scope of the Study.* Participants discussed that it is important for the state to assess equity in areas that were not part of the Equity study or Disparity study, such as other state agencies and quasi-governmental agencies, the Connecticut General Assembly, and the judicial branch. Participants also discussed how it is important for the state to understand what municipalities are doing to advance equity and what the barriers to equity are at the municipal level.

- *Public Engagement in the Equity Study.* Session participants expressed interest in continuing to engage with the Equity Study and equity work and asked how they can continue to provide feedback on the Equity Study and use it to help advance equity.

- *Translation Assistance for Public Testimony.* While the Connecticut General Assembly was not in the scope of the report, one CBO session participant raised a concern that there should be better support for non-native English speakers who provide important testimony to the state legislature.

- *Challenges in Filing Discrimination Complaints and the Importance of Following Up on Investigation Action Plans.* While the Commission of Human Rights and Opportunities was not in the scope of the report, multiple session participants discussed the challenges of filing a discrimination complaint. They discussed the risk of retaliation and the emotional toll of recounting their experience. They requested sensitivity for victims of discrimination during the investigation process. They also discussed the importance of holding organizations accountable and following up on any action plans that result from investigations. They asked who holds the organizations accountable if the actions are not taken.

- *Update on Disparity Study.* Participants requested an update on the Disparity Study, and some participants were unclear regarding the difference between the Equity Study and the Disparity Study. The state confirmed that the Disparity Study, a review of the State of Connecticut's procurement and contracting processes, is due in March 2024. Information on the Disparity Study is available at CHRO Disparity Study (ct.gov)

Additional Feedback:

If there are any additional questions or feedback related to the Equity Study, the public can contact Darcy Strand, Legislative and Administrative Advisor at the Executive Office of the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities at darcy.strand@ct.gov.

Appendix: Goal of Equity Study and Executive Branch Agencies Included in Study

As defined by Public Act No. 21-2, the primary goal of Connecticut's Equity Study was to provide the Department of Administrative Services, the Office of Policy and Management, and the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities with a comprehensive report evaluating key state programs and policies – including at least one program of focus selected by each included executive branch agency – to identify any patterns of discrimination, inequality, or disparities in outcomes for underserved communities, and to make recommendations to remedy identified disparities. The executive branch agencies listed below were identified in the legislation for inclusion within the scope of this study.

Executive Branch Agencies	
Career and Technical Education System	Department of Insurance
Department of Administrative Services	Department of Labor
Department of Agriculture	Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Department of Banking	Department of Motor Vehicles
Department of Children and Families	Department of Revenue Services
Department of Consumer Protection	Department of Public Health
Department of Correction	Department of Social Services
Department of Developmental Services	Department of Transportation
Department of Economic and Community Development	Department of Veterans Affairs
Department of Education	Office of Higher Education
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	Office of Policy and Management
Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection	