

# State of Connecticut

## Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

### Annual Report



Program Year 2023

July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

December 2024

**Danté Bartolomeo**  
Commissioner  
Department of Labor

**Ryan Drajewicz**  
Chair  
Governor’s Workforce Council

**Mark Polzella**  
Deputy Commissioner  
Department of Labor

**Kelli-Marie Vallieres, PhD**  
Chief Workforce Officer  
Office of Workforce Strategy  
Vice Chair, Governor’s Workforce Council

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**On the cover:** Photo details are provided within the report at “Workforce Development Boards.”

**State of Connecticut**  
**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act**  
**Annual Report**  
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**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) - Program Year 2023**

Program Year 2023 (PY23) proved to be a success, once again, for the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and the state’s five Workforce Development Boards (WDB) in regard to the provision of programs and services under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). While many long-established employment and training options continued to be offered to program participants and job seekers, the boards also launched dynamic, new offerings with a great deal of potential for positive outcomes. Employers around the state also benefited from a variety of workforce development partnerships that have been created in each WDB region, as well as from the WIOA-funded programs and services that foster business growth. This report reflects the achievements attained by CTDOL and its partners in the many endeavors undertaken to ensure workforce strategies were carried out as planned, programs were effectively operating, and performance goals were met.

In the five years since taking office in 2019, Governor Ned Lamont has continuously demonstrated his commitment to the development of “a nation-leading, accessible, and equitable workforce in Connecticut that is responsive to the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.” The Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS) was established in 2020 and tasked with creating workforce development policies, strategies, and goals to help fulfill the governor’s objectives. Over the recent program years and during PY23, OWS furthered its efforts through ongoing partnerships with public and private stakeholders to develop, inform, and improve the state’s workforce ecosystem. Throughout the year, OWS continually collaborated with key WIOA partners, chief among them, CTDOL’s Performance and Accountability Unit and Legal Division and the WDBs.

Also during PY23, OWS fully implemented its flagship initiative, Career ConneCT. Residents of Connecticut who are seeking training and employment can find a path to free, short-term career training, across various industries, through Career ConneCT’s targeted, data-driven, and employer-informed workforce training opportunities. Funding was available for the provision of a variety of workforce service, such as case management, supportive services, job placement, and other employment-related assistance. Career ConneCT is modeled after Connecticut’s nationally-acclaimed Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) which has been successfully administered by the Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board for years. Through Career ConneCT, OWS has advanced and expanded the MPI model to multiple industries, statewide, ensuring that all interested residents have access to employment and training opportunities. OWS worked closely with CTDOL and the WDBs throughout PY23 to further this project and, given its success, the joint effort to advance Career ConneCT will continue in PY24.

In September 2022, Connecticut was awarded a Good Jobs Challenge grant for \$23.9 million by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the resulting project, “Strengthening

Sectoral Partnerships Initiative,” aims to train 2,000 individuals from underserved populations. Placement into high-demand careers in manufacturing, information technology, healthcare, infrastructure, and green sectors is available for training completers. The grant closely aligns with Connecticut’s commitment to foster economic equity, inclusivity, and resilience, and the collaborative effort with the EDA and regional partners has strengthened the state’s growing Regional Sector Partnerships.

Additionally, the Governor’s Workforce Council (GWC), which is the state workforce development board, held quarterly meetings throughout PY23. In compliance with WIOA regulations, council membership is comprised of businesses representing the state’s major industry sectors, labor organizations, education, state agencies, and community-based organizations, and reflects a well-balanced consideration of race, ethnicity, and gender. To respond efficiently to a changing workforce climate and effectively integrate the leadership and guidance of GWC members, OWS established six GWC sub-committees: Industry Leadership; Sector-based Training; Education and Career Pathways; Workforce Systems Alignment; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Access (DEIA); and Data and Accountability. These sub-committees are establishing data-based, short- and long-term goals, with a commitment to systemic alignment and continuous improvement.

Throughout Program Year 2023, employers and jobseekers benefited from a variety of endeavors undertaken by CTDOL’s Employment Services (ES) Operations Unit that resulted in advancements and improvements to programs and services. At the same time, goals and priorities of the agency were met. Details of the accomplishments are described in the “Employment and Training” section of this report, but highlights of successes by ES staff include:

- CTDOL, in partnership with the New York Department of Labor, transitioned to the final data analysis phase of the Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) evaluation study. The study, which serves as an essential tool for supporting continuous learning and program improvement, is designed to test a variety of promising RESEA service delivery strategies and interventions. Building new evidence on the effective interventions and their impact on UI claimants’ reemployment outcomes, including wages, are key components of the study. The final report from the study will be completed by the end of 2024.
- ES Operations staff continued to design and develop a new RESEA module within ReEmployCT that will enable CTDOL to expand the number of services provided to RESEA participants, ensure greater data integrity, and automate many manual processes within the program.
- CTDOL worked with Geographic Solutions, its information system vendor, to implement Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC) automation enhancements and system updates in CTHires, including a new process to efficiently verify veteran status for the veteran targeted groups included in employers’ WOTC certification requests. System updates accommodated form revisions and other programmatic changes required by the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration.
- For a third year, CTDOL hosted the annual Hiring Expo with Hartford Athletic, a professional soccer team. Held on September 20, 2023, the event featured over 115

hiring employers. To prepare jobseekers for successful engagement with the employers, which represented various industry sectors and supported workforce diversity, American Job Centers (AJCs) offered Job Fair Readiness workshops. Given the success of this event, planning for the fourth annual Hiring Expo has begun.

CTDOL's Consumer Contact Center is the cornerstone of the agency's customer service delivery for Unemployment Insurance (UI) services. Staffed by permanent and intermittent agency personnel utilizing efficient, convenient technology, the Center provides a direct link to customers seeking guidance in filing a new or continued UI claim; information regarding unemployment; or answers to claim status, payment, or specific benefit questions.

In PY23, the Center handled 13,732 AJC appointments and 504,600 claimant calls and cases, for a total of 518,332, which averages to 9,977 weekly and 1,995 daily. Experienced Consumer Contact Center agents provided virtual assistance for customers visiting the state's five comprehensive AJCs. Assistance was provided in regard to general claim status inquiries, unpaid claims, identification verification, and assistance navigating the system.

CTDOL's new UI system, ReEmployCT ([www.reemployct.com](http://www.reemployct.com)), which was launched in PY22, has continued to successfully operate as the agency's portal for all services related to filing unemployment compensation benefits, with most of these services available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Claimants may file a new claim, reopen an existing claim, file a weekly claim, check the status of their weekly payment, or use a variety of self-serve options to request services and support. Online assistance for employers reduces the number of times certain businesses must file their wage records. Several enhancements and self-service features were added to the site, including a chatbot feature (available in English and Spanish) that is designed to answer basic claimant questions. A callback feature allows customers to select a specific date/time for a Consumer Contact Center agent to assist them and avoid significant wait times. CTDOL provides interpreters, available in person or virtually, for deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing claimant customers.

CTDOL's WIOA Administration Unit carried out its oversight responsibilities of WIOA programmatic and fiscal activities throughout PY23 to ensure compliance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, applicable federal laws and regulations, and the state's WIOA policy. Monitoring of the WDBs was conducted, as was Data Validation. Ongoing technical assistance and support were provided to the WDBs in the administration of the Eligible Training Providers List. Other responsibilities, including Rapid Response activities, WIOA Annual Report preparation, and the provision of guidance regarding performance reporting were fulfilled by staff. Also, throughout the year, to support continued collaboration and communication, meetings were convened between the WIOA Administration Unit, other CTDOL units, the WDBs, state agencies, and other workforce partners.

The pages that follow demonstrate the efforts undertaken by CTDOL and its workforce development partners during PY23 to further the success of programs, activities, and services funded through WIOA. The various summaries show Connecticut's commitment to business engagement, assisting jobseekers and those who are unemployed; and meeting the state's workforce goals. Strengthening plans and partnerships, delivering high-quality services, and developing ideas for the future resulted in a successful year and a solid foundation for moving forward.

## **State Evaluations, Oversight Activities, and Guidance**

### **Compliance Monitoring**

CTDOL is committed to encouraging a continuous improvement culture through transparency and collaboration that supports the success and accountability of its Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners. With that commitment in mind, CTDOL conducts programmatic, fiscal, and administrative compliance monitoring of the WDBs on an ongoing basis throughout the program year. Monitoring activities may include on-site visits; desk reviews; monthly/quarterly virtual correspondence; analysis of programmatic, financial, and administrative records; interviews with staff and participants; and assessment of program outcomes and performance measures. During PY23, a sampling of WIOA active participant files were reviewed as part of both fiscal and programmatic monitoring. A formal monitoring report is issued to each WDB following a review. The report informs the WDB about areas of concern; any compliance findings requiring corrective action; and best practices that are in place.

As set forth in 2 CFR 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards,” CTDOL conducted annual fiscal compliance reviews at all five WDBs during the period of July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024, in accordance with WIOA regulations at 20 CFR §683.410. The annual WIOA compliance monitoring includes a review of financial management consisting of financial reporting, cost allocation methodology, cash management, allowable costs, payroll controls, audit requirements, procurement, and property controls. Payments to training providers were also examined during PY23 to ensure they properly corresponded to individual training account documentation regarding program participation, and the programmatic file reviews entailed verifying participant eligibility for Adult, Dislocated Worker, or Youth services. These methods help determine the effectiveness of workforce development programs and ensure accountability in the use of federal funds. By the close of PY23, all boards resolved corrective action items that had been identified during the fiscal monitoring of PY22 activity. Overall, adequate controls appeared to be in place.

Programmatic monitoring of PY22 activity was conducted at three boards during this past program year. The results of the monitoring showed that, overall, the boards were in compliance with federal and state administrative requirements in regard to all PY22 activity that was examined. Any findings were satisfactorily resolved. Additionally, the WDBs made continuous improvements through the implementation of new policies and procedures during the program year.

### **Status of State Evaluation Activities**

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes at Section 10a-57g(e), enacted in 2021, OWS is mandated to develop a plan to compile, analyze, and report on data for the purpose of assessing the performance of Connecticut’s workforce system. The resulting report will include the number of individuals served, demographic information, and outcomes achieved after completion of a workforce training program.

In PY23, OWS worked with the Executive Board of P20 WIN, the state’s longitudinal data

system, to submit “A Request (#0042) to Study the Impact of Workforce Training and Education on Economic Outcomes” to P20 WIN. The requested study proposes to answer the following questions:

1. What are the wage and employment outcomes of CT workforce training programs?
2. What are the wage and employment outcomes of CT post-secondary, adult education, and technical education programs?
3. What are the common career pathways in CT?
4. What are employment and wage outcomes by career pathways?
5. Which career pathways lead to the strongest wage growth?

The state will use the resulting data to evaluate the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs; Adult Education; Trade Act; Jobs First Employment Services; and other state and federal grant-funded initiatives. Specifically, college entry and co-enrollment outcomes, as well as successful career pathways among the programs and initiatives, will be evaluated.

The report will replace Connecticut’s Higher Education/Workforce Legislative Report Card (LRC), which CTDOL’s Office of Research has produced over the years and may be viewed at <https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/LRC/LRC2.aspx>. The most recent LRC, as of 2021, includes information on employment by industry and average wages of recent graduates of Connecticut’s public colleges and universities.

In addition to the aforementioned performance report, OWS worked closely with CTDOL on development of a unified reporting module in CTHires for reporting outcomes from Career ConneCT, a program that provides career training and workforce services across various industries for unemployed and underemployed individuals.

### **Administrative Review and Technical Assistance**

To fulfill its oversight responsibilities and the mandates of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and other applicable laws and regulations, CTDOL conducts annual program, data, and fiscal monitoring of the WDBs and performs administrative reviews to continually evaluate program components. Also, throughout the year, WIOA Administration staff offers guidance and technical assistance to WDB staff and their AJC partners. Data Validation, as required by USDOL, is conducted and WIOA Administration staff also evaluates program activities for compliance with USDOL ETA regulations and CTDOL policies. Administrative reviews include, but are not limited to:

- Eligibility for the WIOA program, including barriers and priority of service;
- Performance outcomes for Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth participants;
- WIOA outcome measures, including achievement of negotiated program goals.

Programmatic monitoring of each WDB was conducted remotely in PY23 and included review of the boards’ responses to CTDOL’s monitoring tools; entrance and exit interviews; and final report development. The monitoring focused on ETPL providers and, specifically, review of Individual Training Accounts.

To continue the collaboration and communication within Connecticut’s workforce system, the WIOA Administration Unit held periodic, remote meetings with the boards and other partners.

In addition, Dislocated Worker eligibility and certification presentations were held for AJC frontline staff and WDB managers, and guidance regarding program eligibility with or without work authorization was provided pursuant to TEGL 10-23. Also, “CTHires Activities Training” was provided to WDB subject-matter experts to create a uniform system for the selection and reporting of participant activities in the system, with alignment across all WDBs.

During PY23, the Peer Recovery Navigators project, funded with Rapid Response reserves as allowed under Dislocated Worker funding, served 198 participants across the state’s five comprehensive AJCs. Each of these AJCs has Peer Navigators trained as Peer Recovery Specialists through the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery. Peer Navigators educated employers on the Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative and made presentations to community-based organizations. They also provided outreach and employment assistance; assisted with addiction recovery; made referrals to housing, food, and mental health services; participated in Substance Abuse in the Workplace meetings with CTDOL and various partners; and maintained regular check-ins with their customers.

Also during PY23, the WIOA Administration Unit:

- Submitted a request to USDOL to waive the requirement that WDBs expend 75% of local youth formula funds on out-of-school youth. In May 2024, USDOL approved the waiver for PY24 and PY25, allowing Connecticut to lower the expenditure requirement to 50% for the Northwest and Southwest WDBs.
- Revised the WIOA Policy Manual to update the workforce system organizational chart and add the Performance Improvement and Sanction Policy, allowable waivers, and various reporting measures.
- Offered “Culturally Intelligent Leadership” certification to staff of WIOA Administration, CTDOL’s Business Management, and the AJCs. The training was designed to increase awareness of cultural norms and how they impact workforce service delivery. “Breaking Bad Communications” training was also provided to staff of the WIOA Administration and Contract Monitoring units to increase awareness about eliminating passive, unclear, or negative communications and enhancing active listening with internal units and external partners. Also, one WIOA Administration staff member attended the National Association of State Workforce Agencies Conference in September 2023 and participated in employment and training and labor market information workshops at the event.

CTDOL was awarded \$3,246,250.00 from the Office of Disability Employment Policy to participate in the Equitable Transition Models Demonstration Grants Project to improve career services and employment opportunities for marginalized youth and young adults with disabilities. CTDOL’s partners in this five-year demonstration project include the Department of Aging and Disability Services, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, the WDBs, and various community partners. The project, effective April 1, 2024, focuses on out-of-school and in-school youth, racial and ethnic minorities, youth in foster care, and homeless, low-income, and justice-involved youth.



## **WIOA Participant and Employer Survey Results**

During Program Year 2023, CTDOL utilized SurveyMonkey to gather customer satisfaction information from participants. The survey questions resulted in positive responses. The helpfulness of the AJCs' staff was noted, and one survey response emphasized that staff went "above and beyond" to help, without one feeling judged or ridiculed.

The results of the participant\* surveys were as follows:

- 71.43% were very satisfied with the services provided by the AJCs while 8.57% indicated they were satisfied with the services
- 51% believed the services exceeded their expectations
- 54% believed the services were very close to the ideal set of services

Satisfaction surveys were also made available to employers during PY23, through a combination of sources. CTDOL's WIOA webpage hosts an employer survey powered by SurveyMonkey. In addition, Connecticut's virtual one-stop delivery system, CTHires, includes an option for employer feedback. During PY23, a total of three surveys were completed by employers through SurveyMonkey.

The results of the employer\* surveys were as follows:

- 100% were satisfied with the services provided by the AJCs
- 100% believed the services met their expectations
- 66.67% believed the services were very close to the ideal set of services
- 33.33% believed the services were close to the ideal set of services

## **Performance and Accountability**

CTDOL's Performance and Accountability Unit is primarily tasked with the collection, compilation, evaluation, reporting, and distribution of performance and demographic data for state-funded and federally-funded programs and services that are administered and delivered by CTDOL, in collaboration with its partners and subcontractors. The unit also provides technical support to those administering the various programs and services that include:

- Veterans
- Registered Apprenticeship
- Unemployment Insurance (UI)
- Foreign Labor Certification
- Connecticut Individual Development Account Initiative
- Wagner-Peyser Act
- Jobs First Employment Services (JFES)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth)

To submit and generate required reports, the Performance and Accountability Unit utilizes the federal Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS). First, data extracts are generated for each report by Geographic Solutions, Inc., the developer of CTDOL's web-based case management system, then the extracts are provided to the Performance and Accountability Unit. Prior to report certification by CTDOL to USDOL, the unit collaborates with program administrators to ensure that program data is reviewed and accuracy is confirmed. For its

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\*Results are not intended to make any inferences beyond the survey's respondents.

performance data, Connecticut utilizes in-state wage information as well as data from the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS).

As mandated by WIOA, CTDOL must collaborate with the Connecticut Department of Aging and Disability Services and the Connecticut State Department of Education for quarterly and annual reporting purposes. CTDOL previously established Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) for the exchange of data with these WIOA-required core partners and continues to share data as outlined in each respective memorandum. Each core partner transmits data to CTDOL via CTDOL's PilotFish, a server with a collection of software tools that allows for the secure connection, translation, and transformation of data between heterogeneous systems. The parties to the MOU share both participant data of those co-enrolled in the core programs of each entity as well as wage and employment data for all participants, not only those co-enrolled. A unique identification number is assigned, via CTDOL's MS SQL Server database, to represent each data entity (individual) instead of their Social Security Number. The unique identification number and co-enrollment and wage information are returned to the core partners for inclusion in each agency's respective federal report.

The Performance and Accountability Unit also gathers and provides data that is critical to both negotiating the establishment of the state's WIOA performance goals with the WDBs and helping to ensure Connecticut is meeting those goals; prepares CTDOL's section of the Governor's Budget Narrative; supports various programs with Data Element Validation tasks; and designs surveys and analyzes their results for numerous CTDOL units.

### **Continuing Workforce Activities**

#### **CTHires**

In addition to the numerous reporting responsibilities described in this report's "Performance and Accountability" summary, the staff of the Performance and Accountability Unit also administer CTDOL's web-based case management system, CTHires. An array of helpful options are offered to users of CTHires, including a job skills assessment tool; a format to create and send résumés and cover letters to employers; a job bank; a list of training providers; a job search tracker; a virtual job recruiter/job candidate finder; labor market information; and system email for communications between jobseekers, employers, case managers, and training providers. CTHires also collects required data for reporting on self-services and staff-assisted services for WIOA (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth), Wagner-Peyser, Trade Adjustment Assistance, National Dislocated Worker Grants, and Registered Apprenticeship Expansion Grants. Since the launch of CTHires in Program Year 2015, various components have been added to the system to integrate other programs, such as Foreign Labor Certification, JFES, the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program, and Registered Apprenticeship.

#### **Rapid Response**

The state Rapid Response (RR) Unit, in conjunction with local WDBs and other One-Stop partners, is responsible under WIOA Title I (20 CFR, Part 682, Subpart C) for carrying out rapid response activities statewide. Headed by CTDOL, the RR Unit reaches out to employers contemplating or experiencing layoffs and plant closings. Employers, affected workers, and their unions are provided information on layoff aversion, mass layoff/plant closing, unemployment insurance, WIOA, One-Stop employment services, and various labor laws. The

RR Unit also makes referrals to, and coordinates services with, CTDOL units, other agencies, and programs for special intervention or supportive services applicable to dislocated workers and struggling businesses.

During the period of July 2023 to June 2024, the RR Unit made 303 initial outreach calls regarding potential layoffs and responded to thirty-two WARN notices affecting 2,674 workers. Additionally, RR staff made ninety-eight presentations to 1,121 impacted workers. The presentations included twenty-four “Dislocated Worker Job Search and Training Options” information workshops, and thirty-nine webinars for workers from companies that did not avail themselves of RR services prior to layoff.

Additionally, 2,926 webinar invitations were sent to workers whose employers either declined pre-layoff presentations or who were identified by CTDOL after layoff as being part of a mass reduction in force. RR Unit staff also resolved 741 unemployment-related issues that were holding up Dislocated Workers’ initial payments.

As a means of layoff aversion, RR staff also reached out to 115 employers that were participating in CTDOL’s Shared Work program to advise them of their status and make appropriate referrals to the Department of Economic and Community Development or other resources if the employers indicated they were continuing to struggle or have difficulty emerging from a downturn in business.

RR Unit staff continued its outreach initiative to target unemployed workers who were not part of a mass layoff but met the definition of a Dislocated Worker, that is, have been laid off or terminated; determined eligible for unemployment benefits; and, as defined by CTDOL, is unlikely to return to a previous industry or occupation. A total of 7,584 Dislocated Worker outreach letters were sent to workers who met that definition. One hundred thirty-nine workers who were sent the outreach letter attended a “Dislocated Worker Job Search and Training Options” workshop, and seventy-one of those attendees were referred to WIOA program operators for enrollment.

CTDOL staff from both the RR and Trade Act Units jointly submitted eleven TAA petitions on behalf of workers whose jobs were believed to be affected by increased imports, foreign competition, or a shift in production to a foreign country. All submitted petitions have been in pending status since the termination provision under Section 285(a) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended, took effect on July 1, 2022.

### **Outreach Efforts by the Office of Research**

Throughout PY23, CTDOL’s Office of Research offered outreach activities, via both virtual and in-person formats, and provided detailed labor market information of interest to jobseekers, students, workforce development professionals who provide job search and employment assistance, and to education, government, and business leaders. In addition, the Office of Research gave presentations to human resources professionals and civic associations and provided data and information to the GWC and OWS.

Both in-person and virtual presentations were offered to a variety of groups, including high schools, adult education providers, GWC, Connecticut Learns and Works Breakfast Symposia (two events), and to numerous associations, boards, and local organizations.

During PY23, the Office of Research continued to provide technical assistance to the WDBs for Help Wanted OnLine (HWOL) through an account Research administrators. All WDBs have access to the jobs data on HWOL which is gathered from the monthly postings on thousands of Internet job boards, corporate boards, and smaller job sites. The Office of Research published various updates to HWOL on a weekly basis and comprehensive monthly reports with information on job postings by industry, occupation, and employer, for each WDB area.

The Office of Research also continued to provide weekly updates of Unemployment Insurance claimants by race/ethnicity, gender, age, education, industry, town, and previous wages. Data were provided statewide and by workforce area. WDBs and other partners were particularly interested in this information.

## **Employment and Training**

### Wagner-Peyser

CTDOL receives federal funding under the Wagner-Peyser Act to provide universal access to an array of employment services offered at AJC locations throughout Connecticut. These services, delivered both virtually and in person, include assistance with career choices and job search, referrals to jobs, reemployment services to claimants receiving unemployment insurance, and employer recruitment services to businesses with job openings. Additional resources that are available through the AJCs include computers with Internet connection, copiers, and fax machines, as well as résumé writing, interviewing, LinkedIn, and job search workshops. During PY23, a total of 9,218 Wagner-Peyser program participants received services (staff-assisted or self-service) through AJC offices, with 27,898 staff-assisted services provided statewide.

### Reemployment Services for Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claimants

CTDOL provides a variety of federally-funded reemployment services to UI claimants through the Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (UI RESEA) program which serves claimants who are either profiled as most likely to exhaust benefits or those receiving Unemployment Compensation for Ex-servicemembers (UCX). The goal of this program is to provide UI claimants early access to services provided by the AJCs that will help get them back into the workforce faster. The UI RESEA program also serves as a prevention/detection program for improper UI payments.

In PY23, the UI RESEA program continued to remain offline while CTDOL worked with consortium partners and the UI Information Technology Support Center (ITSC), a national collaborative between USDOL, the states, and local workforce agencies, to address technology barriers. CTDOL continued to design and develop a new, enhanced RESEA module within the ReEmployCT system that will meet current and future needs of the program to better serve UI claimants. While the new RESEA is under development, a statewide interim solution was implemented in September 2023. This solution, which relies on manual processes to select and notice participants, track results, and compile federal reports, will remain in place to serve eligible participants pending the development and implementation of the new RESEA system, targeted for completion in 2025.

## Business Services

The Business Engagement Unit (BEU) provides a broad array of services to employers from across Connecticut's five workforce development areas. With staff assigned to each comprehensive AJC in the state, and oversight provided by the unit's appointed director, the BEU assists businesses in meeting hiring needs and connects job seekers to employment opportunities. In addition to these two key responsibilities, the unit also offers the following through its targeted approach to business services:

- Customized recruitment events;
- Promotion of events through BEU's vast network of workforce and community-based partnerships;
- Review of employer applications for CTHires registration and, for approved businesses, assistance with CTHires registration, job postings and résumé screening;
- Information to employers regarding free labor exchange services;
- Referrals to resources and programs to support business needs;
- Layoff aversion and downsizing support through Shared Work and RR programs; and
- Partnering with local organizations such as Chambers of Commerce, educational institutions, and non-profits to assist with job fairs held throughout the state.

In PY23, the Business Engagement Unit began hosting virtual employer seminars on various compliance topics, including Introduction to Employment Law, CT FMLA and CT Paid Leave, Drug Testing in the CT Workplace, Employment of Minors, What to Expect During a Wage Investigation, UI 101 for Employers, UI Trust Fund Solvency, and Labor Market Information. Seminars were held monthly via Zoom. Approximately 2,000 individuals attended these seminars. In addition, the Business Engagement Unit secured approval from the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) to offer professional development credits for each webinar attended.

In PY23, staff implemented a new centralized email distribution list for job seekers and workforce partners which generated 2,700 new subscribers. A total of 876 business registrations were processed by staff into CTHires; employers posted 49,480 new Connecticut job orders; and 200,258 job orders were indexed from corporate websites. Business Services Specialists held recruitment events, with 581 employers represented and approximately 4,000 job seekers in attendance. In addition, more than 29,000 services, including recruitment assistance, candidate referrals to job postings, business consultation, assistance utilizing CTHires, promotional contacts, and referrals to additional support programs were provided to over 5,710 employers by CTDOL Business Engagement Unit staff.

## Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)

WOTC, a federal tax credit available to employers, reduces a business's tax liability and is an incentive to hire individuals from certain target groups who face barriers to employment. The U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) and U.S. Department of Treasury, through the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), jointly administer the implementation of the WOTC program. USDOL, through the Employment and Training Administration, provides grant funding and policy

guidance to CTDOL and other state workforce agencies to administer the certification process, while the IRS administers all tax-related provisions and requirements. WOTC is one of several workforce development programs that promotes diversity in the workplace and access to jobs. During Program Year 2023, CTDOL processed a total of 46,271 WOTC applications from employers, of which 11,186 resulted in certification.

### **Serving Our Veterans**

Connecticut's veterans receive reemployment services from trained staff at the AJCs throughout the state. Among the staff are representatives funded by the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program which offers specialized services to veterans. Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists provide intensive services and facilitate job placements to meet the employment needs of certain veterans and eligible spouses. Those who have qualifying employment barriers, or other characteristics specified by the Secretary of Labor, may be referred to a DVOP to receive a jointly-developed employment plan and individualized career services administered through case management. Local Veterans' Employment Representatives conduct outreach to area employers to assist veterans in gaining employment and facilitate the employment, training, and placement services for all veterans in the AJCs.

To connect more veterans with the AJCs, DVOPs conduct community outreach, engage with service providers and veterans' organizations, and collaborate with other agencies. Services for homeless veterans, for example, are typically provided jointly with grantees of the U.S. Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) or the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. Veterans with service-connected disabilities who participate in the VA's Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program also receive assistance from the DVOPs.

Other JVSG partnerships include those with:

- The Department of Defense and Connecticut Military Department to assist both deploying and returning troops from the Connecticut National Guard and U.S. Armed Forces Reserves at Yellow Ribbon events and Soldier Readiness Program briefings, and
- The Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs' Stand Down event, an annual gathering for veterans who are homeless, chronically unemployed, or have difficulty adjusting in society.

During PY23, CTDOL's 617 JVSG participants included 597 eligible veterans. This figure (597) reflects 74.6% of the 800 eligible veterans who received employment and training services under Wagner-Peysner.

### **Jobs First Employment Services Integration in the American Job Centers**

In partnership with the Connecticut Department of Social Services and the five WDBs, CTDOL administers the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) program which provides a host of employment-related services to recipients of Temporary Family Assistance (TFA), Connecticut's federally-funded cash assistance program for low-income families under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The WDBs operate as intermediaries that

subcontract with other organizations to provide direct services to JFES participants in AJCs around the state.

The JFES budget for this period was \$13,145,177 and a total of 3,546 JFES participants were served during the program year.

### **Job Corps**

Job Corps offers low-income youth, ages 16-24 (no upper age or income limits for those with disabilities), the opportunity to receive academic and technical training in a variety of career fields, along with essential life and social skills, to promote independent, successful futures. This federally-funded program, administered by the USDOL Employment and Training Administration, also provides residential housing for Job Corps students and intensive, wraparound service to support student achievement such as:

- Career and mental health counseling
- Driver education
- Basic health care
- Bi-weekly living allowance
- Annual clothing allowance
- On-the-job training
- High school diploma and high school equivalency attainment
- Employability skills training
- Job placement and retention
- Support services after graduation

During PY23, a variety of trades were offered at the two Connecticut Job Corps locations. New Haven Job Corps Center offered Building Construction Technology, Plumbing, and Carpentry (all pre-apprentice programs), Culinary Arts, and Certified Nursing Assistant. Trades available at the Hartford Job Corps Center included Insurance & Financial Services, Manufacturing Technology, and Clinical Medical Assistant. Career preparation and transition, credit recovery toward a high school diploma, and literacy and numeracy remediation were also offered at the Hartford Job Corps. All these offerings, supportive services, and the collaborative efforts of the WDBs, state and local agencies and organizations, Job Corps' program operators, and CTDOL, which has staff designated to provide support for the two Job Corps Centers, have resulted in Job Corps' on-going success in Connecticut. In PY23, 731 students were served statewide (310 in Hartford and 421 in New Haven).

### **Serving Individuals with Disabilities**

CTDOL provides a number of workforce development options for individuals with disabilities and offers information to assist in meeting employment-related needs. For example, job search assistance and guidance on employment and training opportunities are available through the state's AJCs. Also, helpful resources are linked at [www.ctdol.state.ct.us/gendocs/pwd.htm](http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/gendocs/pwd.htm), a CTDOL web page that provides information for both employers and jobseekers on topics including assistive technology, tax credits, workplace accommodations, and disability employment initiatives.

In addition, CTDOL serves as a member of the Disability Focus Group. Other members include the Department of Aging and Disability Services, the Department of Developmental Services, State Department of Education, EdAdvance, and Adult Education providers. The group plans, organizes and convenes the Annual Conference on Serving Adults with Disabilities. This year's conference, held on May 3, 2024, was attended by 250 participants. Presentations on the topics of Depression, Suicide Prevention, Autism and Resilience were offered. CTDOL was a Gold Sponsor of this event, which enabled forty-five JFES staff to attend the conference.

### **Workforce Development Boards**

(Summary information has been provided by Connecticut's Workforce Development Boards.)

#### **Northwest (Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board)**

##### **Good Jobs Challenge Program - Regional Sector Partnerships**

Throughout Program Year 2023, the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board expanded two regional sector partnerships (RSP) under the Good Jobs Challenge program. Dozens of partners were engaged in both the NW CT Manufacturing and NW CT Health Connect RSPs to refine objectives, identify regional needs, clarify solutions, and outline action plans for community-based, public-support partners. These partnerships aimed to enhance local education and training programs; promote healthcare and manufacturing careers; strengthen the talent pool; attract career-changing adults; and advocate for regulatory improvements to boost industry efficiency.

Additionally, to ensure job readiness for Good Jobs Challenge clients, NRWIB procured training providers for in-demand certifications and partnered with Northwestern Connecticut Community College, Griffin Hospital, and local occupational training entities to offer certificate programs in a variety of healthcare and manufacturing areas. NRWIB's other successes included developing industry-driven curriculum for the metal finishing subsector of manufacturing for the Good Jobs Challenge, and the creation of two unique websites to foster both a collaborative environment for RSP members and regional industry engagement to build a cohesive network for economic development and industry advancement.

##### **Northwest Construction Careers Initiative**

The Northwest Construction Careers Initiative (NCCI) continued its growth throughout PY23, partnering with local trade unions with private sector companies to promote careers through apprenticeship and construction-readiness training. NCCI staff conducted outreach and offered recruitment events, both virtually and in person, targeting residents of the Northwest region.

The NRWIB's reentry program also thrived, providing job-readiness skills and training opportunities. As in past years, NRWIB collaborated with local trade unions. The board's ongoing collaboration with the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 478 once again resulted in success; the program facilitated job placements with private contractors actively seeking to hire qualified individuals.



NRWIB also administered the Good Jobs Ordinance, the local hiring mandate from the City of Waterbury requiring contractors working on projects valued at \$500,000 or more to hire 30% local residents and 10% minorities. The board offered OSHA 10 regularly, as the certification is essential for employment in the construction field. Training was also offered in environmental remediation, Heavy Equipment Awareness, and basic CORE construction courses that included plumbing, HVAC, and electrical. Flagging courses, which result in a viable employment credential, were newly offered in PY23. Additionally, NRWIB enhanced its client services by developing intensive career-building relationships, including a two-day, work-readiness bootcamp and personalized job placement assistance, ensuring participants are well-prepared and confident for employment opportunities.

### Ticket to Work

Ticket to Work is a voluntary Social Security program that assists SSI or SSDI recipients, age 18 to 64, in obtaining no-cost vocational counseling, job training through WIOA or other programs, job readiness, job referrals and other employment support services to ultimately attain self-sufficiency without disability benefits. Authorized as an “Employment Network” by the Social Security Administration since 2014, the NRWIB provided these services to thirty-nine participants during PY23. To participate, the SSI or SSDI recipients meeting the age criteria must be willing to work full time. Participants benefit from deferred disability reviews, continued Medicare/Medicaid benefits, and expedited reinstatement of benefits, if needed.

### Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative - Manufacturing Your Future

During PY23, the NRWIB continued to serve as both convener and broker in facilitating the implementation and delivery of an array of initiatives focused on the region’s priorities. For example, NRWIB’s Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative program addressed the manufacturing sector’s shortage of skilled workers through a regional partnership of schools; two community colleges, business associations, chambers of commerce, and local businesses participated.

### CareerConneCT G.R.E.E.N. Job Training and More

The CareerConneCT Growing Renewable Energy Employment Network (G.R.E.E.N.) program, funded until June 2025 through OWS, offers training in CDL, solar photovoltaic installation, weatherization, welding, and other green skills. The program also provides funding to Connecticut’s other WDBs, ensuring statewide access to similar, high-quality G.R.E.E.N. sector training programs. Job placement for trainees, which is also offered through the program, is underway, demonstrating successful transitions to employment. Additionally, NRWIB has received CareerConneCT funding from other WDBs (via OWS) to enhance training and job placement efforts in manufacturing, transportation, healthcare, and information technology, addressing critical workforce needs. These collaborative initiatives are building a robust framework for workforce development, thereby expanding employment opportunities, not just in the Northwest region, but across the state.



*Case managers Nathale Jamiolkowski (left) and LiLiana Schaaf of Career Resources, Inc. helped make the "Fall Job & Resource Fair" a success. The event, held on 9/20/23 at the Waterbury AJC, was sponsored by NRWIB and Career Resources, Inc.*

## Youth

During PY23, the NRWIB provided comprehensive services for both in-school and out-of-school youth in the Northwest region, targeting those with barriers to employment. These services prepared youth for post-secondary education, occupational skills credentials, and employment with career opportunities. Over three dozen out-of-school youth were served by Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC) and Northwestern Connecticut Community College (NCCC), and ten in-school youth were served by the Police Athletic League (PAL). Funded by NRWIB, the programs focused on work-readiness skills and career exploration. In addition, paid internships were offered, as were 14-element workshops on leadership, financial literacy, and more. Youths worked towards high school diplomas or associate degrees while earning occupational certificates in fields such as customer service, security, and early childhood education. Participant progress was monitored through CTHires, semi-annual reviews, and individual service strategy plans. As in past program years, NVCC, NCCC, and PAL consistently met performance outcomes for credential attainment and measurable skills rates.

## **Southwest (The WorkPlace)**

### Virtual Reality

The WorkPlace offers virtual reality (VR) training through the AJC, utilizing career exploration software that enables AJC clients and The WorkPlace's program participants to explore diverse career paths comprehensively, empowering them to make informed decisions about their future careers. Participants engage in immersive learning simulations that replicate real-world tasks from various career fields. These simulations provide hands-on experiences and insight into the necessary skills for success in each role. Training modules encompass sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, and construction.

In PY23, VR training initiatives extended to local high schools in Ansonia, Derby, and Shelton as well as at Platt Technical, where students benefited from interactive career exploration opportunities and practical demonstrations. Additionally, during National Apprenticeship Week in November, the board's ApprenticeshipWorks program organized an event featuring VR demonstrations of manufacturing training simulations for employers and participants. And, in May 2024, the department managing the VR program completed its inaugural micro-credential program in construction, offering courses focused on hand tools, power tools, and workplace safety.

### Health CareRx Academy

The Health CareRx Academy, a broad partnership of healthcare providers, educators, trainers, and community-based organizations, provides program participants with tuition assistance and support to ensure career goals in the healthcare industry are achieved. Designed with input from employers, the Health CareRx Academy supports the industry's evolving workforce needs by helping participants obtain industry-recognized credentials for diverse and in-demand occupations. These occupations include Administrative Medical Assistant, Central Sterile Processing Technician, CNA, Community Health Worker, EMT, Medical Assistant, Medical Billing and Coding, and Pharmacy Technician. A total of 210 participants completed training during Program Year 2023 and 120 of those completers have gone on to gain new employment as of June 30, with an average hourly wage of \$19.54.

In addition to the success of the Health CareRx Academy, The WorkPlace was one of twenty-five organizations, nationwide, to be awarded a five-year grant by the USDOL to train entry-level nursing professionals for careers as LPNs and RNs. The grant will expand and diversify Connecticut's pipeline of qualified nursing professionals. Activity under the grant began in PY23 with the hiring of a program manager. Also, a total of twenty-nine participants have received case management services, with twenty approved for funding.

### MaturityWorks

MaturityWorks is a Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) funded by the USDOL that helps individuals, age 55 or older, increase their job skills. The program provides paid community service, to which participants are matched, with partners that include social service organizations, non-profit organizations, and housing agencies. Based on employment interests and goals, participants may also receive supportive services and skills training. During PY23, community partnerships were strengthened, eight new community partners were added, and online and in-person training opportunities were expanded.

In an effort to offer training to more individuals, MaturityWorks continued providing distance learning through Dynamic Works' online programs to supply workforce courses specifically designed for older populations and those with barriers to employment. Courses covered essential job skills such as résumé building, effective communication strategies, interview preparation, and advanced computer skills.

MaturityWorks participants also took advantage of in-person and virtual WIOA training programs; workshops; hiring events/job fairs; soft skills coaching; and financial counseling. The MaturityWorks program served 169 individuals during PY23.

## Youth

During PY23, The WorkPlace continued to offer CareerHub, which coordinates youth programming and focuses on helping young adults (ages of 16 to 24) become self-reliant members of the community, develop the insight and confidence needed to impress potential employers, and stay competitive in the workforce. A variety of programs are offered and are tailored to the needs of disconnected youth to assist them in gaining the skills and training necessary to connect not just to a job, but to a meaningful career.

Once program eligibility has been determined, each participant receives individualized attention, including assistance in choosing and preparing for a career the youth can be proud of. Services provided include career and job search coaching, occupational skills training, GED exam assistance, support creating a résumé, job placement services, and supportive services.

This program year, CareerHub staff achieved more than 100% of their goals for employment and employment retention, and over 90% of the goal for credential achievement. CareerHub served 133 young adults this program year.

### **Eastern (Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board - EWIB)**

#### American Job Center Services

Although the number of customers that visited eastern Connecticut's AJCs increased further in PY23, the preferred method of service delivery continued to be virtual. Lack of transportation, an ongoing challenge in this largely rural section of the state, and daycare limitations both made the virtual services option a good fit for individuals encountering these issues. During the program year, EWIB moved toward a mix of virtual and in-person WIOA Orientation Workshops, providing flexibility for AJC customers. To further support jobseekers, EWIB offered numerous no-cost workshops, in person and virtually:

- Exploring CTHires
- Getting Started with Google
- Fundamentals of Résumé Writing
- Emailing Potential Employers
- Creating a Résumé in MS Word
- Getting Started with Google Docs
- Internet Search, Safety & Zoom
- Computer Assistance for Job Seekers
- Getting Started with MS Word
- Essential Computer Skills
- Pipeline to Your Manufacturing Career
- Networking with LinkedIn
- CTHires Résumé Builder
- How to Apply Online
- Powerful Job Search Emails
- How Social Media Impacts Your Job Opportunities

#### Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative

The Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI), an award-winning workforce program managed by EWIB and other partners, continued its remarkable growth. During PY23, over 1,000 individuals received training and, as of June 30, 2024, MPI placed over 4,400 individuals in jobs since the program's inception. This was accomplished by raising the baseline of competencies in jobseekers and aligning those skills with jobs in demand by manufacturers.

With a solid foundation of curriculum designed by manufacturers and academia, MPI's success is also attributable to its strong partnership of more than thirty stakeholders that make up the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance Regional Sector Partnership which designed and implemented the program. Electric Boat, for example, furthered its rewarding partnership with MPI in PY23 and, to meet the company's ongoing hiring needs, EWIB scheduled eighty-eight classes.

### Healthcare Pipeline Initiative

The Healthcare Pipeline Initiative (HPI), modeled after the MPI program, continued to provide training to individuals interested in healthcare careers. Guided through an orientation by EASTCONN's Healthcare Navigator, customers had the opportunity to review in-demand healthcare fields and appropriate trainings. The Navigator also referred customers to EASTCONN's Healthcare Careers Seminar, setting them up for success before training. HPI customers then chose training best suited to their career pathway. In addition, EWIB again contracted with some local training agencies as well as with CT State Community College's Three Rivers and Quinebaug Valley campuses which provide healthcare classes such as EMT, CNA, etc., Upon training completion, the customer either moved up in their healthcare career or was assisted by a job developer to find a healthcare career opportunity based on their training. EWIB also actively worked with the area's Healthcare Regional Sector Partnership to connect employers to HPI and, potentially, hires to fill their healthcare program needs. Additionally, EWIB's Business Services Team continued partnering with local, long-term care employers to quickly address the shortage of trained healthcare workers by providing Incumbent Worker Training to upgrade employees, such as becoming Certified Nurse Aides.

### Youth

#### Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative

The Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (YMPI), an extension of the Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) described above, offers the potential for a manufacturing career pathway for high school graduates who have chosen to enter the job market instead of college. In the six years since the program's establishment, EWIB has continually grown partnerships with regional high schools that worked toward embedding the YMPI curriculum into their schools. The program has received strong support from the participating schools' administrators and youth participants and, as of PY23, over 200 high school graduates have been placed into jobs. EWIB also continued to expand its K-8 YMPI program activities in PY23 through virtual reality training and career exploration opportunities for elementary and middle school students. Additionally, EWIB collaborated with community partners to provide job fairs for the YMPI students. These events provided opportunities for students to engage with manufacturing employers and apply to the employer they hoped to work for.

#### Youth Healthcare Pipeline Initiative

The Youth Healthcare Pipeline Initiative (YHPI) replicates the YMPI model by offering high school students in-school training that results in industry-recognized credentials and creates immediate employment opportunities on healthcare career pathways. The YHPI creates the early healthcare career onramps needed to adequately address healthcare employer hiring

demands. The YHPI was piloted in PY22 and experienced growth in PY23. This growth included expansion to several new schools and new program development. The YHPI gained support from the Eastern CT Healthcare Partnership which assisted with updating and refining curricula and partnered with regional high schools for career exploration, job shadowing, clinical rotations, and recruitment opportunities.

### Connecticut Youth Employment Program - Summer Youth Employment Program

In PY23, for the seventeenth year in a row, the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) was made available to eligible youth, ages 14-24, through a partnership with EASTCONN, New London Youth Affairs, and Norwich Youth, Families & Recreation Services. The program, which was available to 41 towns in the region, not only offered summer jobs to opportunity youth, it prepared them for a successful future as fully-engaged members of the labor force. Participants gained valuable experience working in various jobs in the community; learned how to plan career pathways; and also learned about in-demand jobs in the area, such as those in healthcare and manufacturing.



SYEP was a benefit to the

community as well, with summer help provided to local employers. Some employers continued to employ students after the summer program ended, which demonstrated the success of the program and its youth participants. Two SYEP participants, pictured here, are Gina (left), who worked in an ice cream shop, and Noah (above), who worked on marketing for EASTCONN.



### **North Central (Capital Workforce Partners)**

#### Regional Sector Partnerships (RSP)

Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) has adopted a Regional Sector Partnership (RSP) framework to coordinate strategic initiatives in high-growth and high-demand industries. RSPs are industry-led partnerships that convene business representatives and industry stakeholders from education, government, and the community to address industry-specific challenges and opportunities such as talent pipeline development. CWP supported three RSPs in PY23, detailed below. These RSPs helped to inform a variety of workforce and education strategies, including sector-based training initiatives, credential-based curriculum development, and future workforce programs.

CWP continued to co-convene the Capital Area Healthcare Partnership (CAHP) RSP, bringing together healthcare providers from acute, post-acute, primary care, long-term care, home health, behavioral health, and other healthcare sub-sectors to tackle shared challenges, increase the stability of the healthcare industry, which is a critical economic driver, and improve outcomes

through collaborative strategies. Among other priorities, the partnership advances strategies that address job quality and retention for frontline workers. CAHP is supported by over a dozen public partner entities representing workforce development, education, economic development, community-based organizations, and other areas.

Additionally, the Capital Area Tech Partnership (CATP), a collaboration of business leaders from the capital region's technology companies, continued to be co-convened by CWP and the Metro-Hartford Alliance. CATP focuses on tackling common challenges that impact the growth and resiliency of the IT sector; talent pipeline development, including talent retention, skills-based hiring, and business - higher education partnership development; and attracting and developing a viable tech workforce to meet hiring needs. CATP, whose membership includes eighteen of the Hartford region's largest IT-services providers, is supported by eight public partners, including many of Connecticut's higher education institutions.

CWP's Capital Area Transportation Distribution and Logistics (TDL) Sector Partnership, launched in February 2022 with support from the Workforce Solutions Collaborative, continued to bring together businesses from the TDL industry to address common challenges and strengthen the economic viability of the TDL industry in the region. This partnership is business-led, with a steering committee comprised of representatives from a number of transportation entities. Topics addressed by TDL partnership workgroups included workforce development, industry promotion, and career awareness.

### Returning Citizens



During Program Year 2023, CWP's BEST Chance Program provided a host of services to individuals who returned from incarceration, including work-readiness activities, supportive services, occupational skills training, job placement, and employment retention services. In PY23, a total of 278 individuals were served. Participant James Vaught (pictured, left) was a BEST Chance success. Upon completing the program, James attained employment in Dining Services at the University of Hartford. The BEST Chance Program is funded through USDOL, the Connecticut Department of Labor, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and other partners.

### Sector-based Training

CWP facilitated the offering of an array of sector-based training programs during PY23 to address employer talent-pipeline needs across numerous high-demand industries in the North Central region. A total of 905 individuals were served, with IT/tech and manufacturing training offered through the Connecticut Workforce and High-Tech Industry Skills Partnership (CT-WHISP). This statewide project, funded by a \$10 million H-1B One Workforce grant from USDOL, was granted a no-cost extension through January 2026. Also in PY23, CWP's state-funded Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative served 144 individuals through sector-specific, credential-based training; Career ConneCT sector-based training programs served 837 participants through an array of credential-based training opportunities in high-demand industry

sectors such as IT/tech, manufacturing, and transportation, distribution and logistics; and CWP's Jobs Funnel program provided 248 participants with construction and culinary sector training.

### Ticket To Work

Ticket to Work is a voluntary Social Security program that assists recipients of SSI or SSDI benefits, age 18 through 65, to obtain vocational counseling, training, job readiness, job referrals and other employment support services, free of charge. Authorized by the Social Security Administration as an "Employment Network," CWP provided these services to twenty-three participants during PY23.

### CT Statewide Accessible Workforce Services (CT SAWS)

The CT SAWS grant, offered in partnership with Workforce Alliance through June 23, 2024, encompassed various components to address the diverse needs of targeted populations. To effectively meet the needs of individuals from historically marginalized communities, Dislocated Workers affected by COVID, the long-term unemployed, and UI (including PUA) exhaustees, key strategies were utilized, such as a live chat platform, social media campaigns, and website language accessibility features. Within the North Central region, CT SAWS provided over 2,000 licenses for Metrix Learning, resulting in over 2,900 course completions. Staff connected with over 15,000 individuals through the live chat option.

### Youth

In PY23, a total of 443 participants were served in the North Central area by the WIOA Youth program. A total of 228 youth received training during the program year, which includes those who began training the prior year and 179 newly enrolled in training during PY23. Of the 179 youth, 158 received a credential. Training options included customer service, CNA, CompTIA A+, ServSafe, CDL, and more.

Through the Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program (SYELP), an additional 1,186 youth received paid summer internships, which included 120 hours of work experience with local employers, or work-based learning experiences. SYELP also provided career competency development, career awareness and exposure, and supportive services such as for mental health. SYELP is funded through CTDOL, numerous other state agencies, the City of Hartford, and other sources.

## **South Central (Workforce Alliance)**

### Overview

WIOA program services were provided to eligible jobseekers at the New Haven, Middletown, and Meriden offices and the Department of Labor in Hamden. A variety of services were offered to program participant through collaboration with community partners. Year-round career-readiness workshops, adult education, and monthly computer literacy classes were just a few of the options available through community action agencies and local education departments. AJC Ambassadors attended over 300 community events to promote WIOA services. There were 455 new WIOA enrollments and 234 adults exiters, with 73.93% exiting with employment and 80% earning credentials. Among the 88 dislocated workers, 76.13% exited with employment and 86.66% achieved credentials after training.



### Re-Entry: Next Steps Program

The Next Steps Program supports the re-entry population in gaining employment by offering career counseling, life coping skills, occupational skills training, on-the-job training, and support services such as transportation assistance. Customized workshops and virtual services are also available. In PY23, 76 re-entry customers were served, and 46 were placed into employment. Since its inception in 2003, the program has placed 2,458 individuals in jobs. The Next Steps Program collaborates with police departments, courts, prisons, probation offices, parole services, halfway houses, and community organizations to improve success rates.

### Business Services - South Central Region Employment Increase and the Benefits of Job Fairs

Employment in the South Central region notably increased, especially among WIOA-enrolled jobseekers at the AJC. Job fairs have been a crucial contributor to hiring, providing jobseekers with opportunities to connect with employers. Notable 2024 events included the Milford Job Fair on April 3; HUBCAP Medical Career Night on May 1; and the Tweed Airport Job Fair on May 7.

### Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative - Skill UP

The South Central board's focus on providing manufacturing opportunities resulted in the continued success of its Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative - Skill UP in PY23. Three Skill UP classes were held at Gateway Community College, and lab time was provided at Eli Whitney Technical High School. To enhance the training experience, virtual reality headsets were introduced. Of the thirty-four students enrolled, thirty-two completed the training. Résumé writing assistance and interview coaching were also provided to participants. Nine employers participated in virtual job fairs, resulting in numerous interviews and job offers. Workforce Alliance partnered with Manufacturing and Technical Community Hub and Middlesex Community College to offer additional training and support such as hands-on experience in the manufacturing field, OSHA certifications, résumé writing, and interview skills.

### Healthcare Careers

The Health Careers Advancement Program (HCAP) provides tuition assistance, professional development, and job placement to eligible jobseekers. Additionally, HCAP helps individuals who previously earned healthcare-industry certifications return to school, add skills, and move up the career ladder. In PY23, HCAP provided health career coaching, tuition assistance, professional development, and job placement to seventy-eight jobseekers. Training programs included Pharmacy Technician, CNA, EKG, Phlebotomy, Medical Billing and Coding, EMT, Sterile Processing Technician, and EEG. HCAP participants gained employment at a number of hospitals around the state and the program had a 26% increase in jobseekers served from the previous year.

### Youth

The South Central WDB provided many workforce-based opportunities for youth during Program Year 2023. Project CEO, Workforce Alliance's WIOA-funded program for youth, hosted a Healthcare Recruitment Fair in October 2023, attracting 114 attendees and twenty-

seven employers. Project CEO partnered with the Connecticut Center for Arts and Technology and ConnCORP to provide guidance and materials about career options that support arts and technology; exhibited at Yale’s Youth Job Fair; and attended the Career Resources Fair at Southern Connecticut State University. Presentations to in-school and out-of-school youth were offered on topics including career choice, money management, and entrepreneurship. Collaborations continued with a variety of local organizations and one partnership resulted in career readiness workshops for high school seniors. In addition, Project CEO college interns launched a high school summer tour, presenting to 100 youths at a local business academy.

**Cost of Workforce Development Activities**

A total of \$26,958,537.00 was allocated to the state’s five WDBs for WIOA services in PY23, an increase of \$2,598,758.00 from the PY22 WIOA allocation of \$24,359,779.00. The funds were distributed as follows:

Program Year 2023 Fund Allocation

Adult - \$9,310,262.00  
 Dislocated Worker - \$7,392,191.00  
 Youth - \$10,256,084.00

For the period of July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024, as reported by CTDOL to USDOL via form ETA 9169, a total of 4,430 participants were served during PY23. As the chart below indicates, the Adult program assisted the largest number of participants; the 2,634 Adults served represents 60 percent of the total WIOA participants served. Also in PY23, a total of 756 Dislocated Workers and 1,040 Youth were served, comprising 17 percent and 23 percent of the total number of WIOA participants served respectively.

<u>Program Year</u>	<u>Adult</u>	<u>Dislocated Worker</u>	<u>Youth</u>	<u>Total</u>
PY22	2,360	1,104	830	4,294
PY23	2,634	756	1,040	4,430

**Discussion of Activities Funded By WIOA 15% Statewide Funds**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires the Governor to allocate the majority of WIOA funds, via formula, to the local WDBs which are responsible for setting local policy and directing the use of these formula-allocated funds in their regions. Under the Act, the Governor also may reserve a percentage of the state’s WIOA funds for use in the administration and provision of statewide employment and training activities.

Statewide activities, delivered in Connecticut with 15% reserve funds during PY23, included:

- Maintaining the state list of eligible training providers;
- State administration of the adult, dislocated worker and youth workforce development activities, by conducting performance evaluations, including programmatic monitoring and customer satisfaction surveys;
- Assisting in the operations of the AJCs;
- Operating fiscal management and performance accountability system activities; and

- Supporting CTHires, the state's WIOA case management information system.

Activities related to monitoring, evaluation, and accountability provide essential information and guidance for the state and its workforce development partners in regard to continuous improvement and program efficiencies. Also, of particular value to the WDBs in achieving programmatic goals is performance data that is made available through CTHires. By having timely access to this data, WDBs can analyze performance, determine areas in need of attention, and focus on solutions.