

NORTHWEST REGIONAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD 2012 - 2016 PLANNING

I. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

A. Workforce

1. Describe the profile of the area's workforce based upon consideration of educational levels, demographics, etc.

To augment the data presented in the Connecticut Labor Department's Information for Workforce Investment Planning, the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board secured the Connecticut Economic Resource Center to conduct A Comprehensive Audit and Needs Assessment which was released in January 2012. Much of the data used throughout our planning process was developed from these primary sources.

These studies reveal that the population of the Northwest Region experienced a five percent growth between 2000 and 2010 reaching 618,330. Danbury, Waterbury and Wolcott each had an increase of more than 1,000 residents. The age distribution of the population found in the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board mirrors that of the state and country with 31% under 24 years; 54% between 25 and 64 years; and 14% at 65 years and over.

Eighty-three percent of the households in the service delivery area speak English and Spanish is found to be the primary language in 8% of the region's households. This is consistent with Connecticut statewide demographics.

In the 2008-2009 school year, the NRWIB region's high school students displayed a two percent dropout rate overall compared with a state average of 2.4%. Five school districts had dropout rates higher than average including Waterbury at 6.4%.

In 2010, the NRWIB region had 327,370 people in the labor force. 44% of the jobs in the NRWIB service delivery area are in Waterbury and Danbury. The median age of a worker in the NRWIB is 41 years. The 2010 average wage in the NRWIB was \$ 49,069 – an increase of \$ 681 from the previous year. The largest over-the-year pay increase was in the manufacturing sector – up by \$ 4,533 to \$ 74,968.

The Waterbury Labor Market area has had the highest annual unemployment rates in the state for the past twelve years and since 2008, the city of Waterbury has experienced double-digit unemployment rates reaching the second-highest rate in the state.

At the time of the CERC study, over 8,000 UI claimants exhausted their unemployment benefits beyond 99 weeks and almost 8,400 received emergency or extended benefits.

Similarly, in just two years, the number of SNAP (food stamp) recipients in the region increased 24%.

2. Describe the workforce investment needs of the following:

a. Job Seekers

Job seekers require ready access to the most up-to-date labor market information in order to best target job search efforts in areas of high occupational and industry demand. Job seekers benefit from knowledge of pertinent job search techniques and the demonstration of job holding skills. Successful job seekers would possess at least a high school level credential, English language proficiency and availability of reliable transportation.

b. Dislocated workers

With solid work histories, dislocated workers possess requisite job holding skills. However, given typical factors of dislocation, they could benefit from refresher training in job finding and job getting elements. Further, they need to undergo an assessment of transferable skills, the identification of growing industries and possible re-training or skills upgrading for emerging occupations.

c. Incumbent Workers

Incumbent workers have an express need to remain competitive. They need easy access to on-going skill upgrading in either a vestibule or on-the-job training situation consistent with their particular career pathway. Services to incumbent workers are critical to the functioning of a regional talent pipeline.

d. Youth

Youth must be exposed to the world of work in terms of career awareness as well as the soft skills necessary to compete in the labor force successfully. In-school youth need to be engaged during the summer to maintain the academic achievements gained during the school year. Occupational planning and orientation to the labor market are essential for out-of-school youth.

2. Labor Market

- 1. Identify the current and projected occupational/employment opportunities in your area based on DOL data and regional sources.**

Both the Labor Department annual planning information and the CERC study reflect four industry sectors that comprise the majority of the region's employment: health care/social assistance, retail, manufacturing and educational service/government. CERC location quotients and Labor Department concentration ratios also support these specifically identified sectors as a source of economic strength.

The Connecticut Labor Department Training and Education Planning System generates supply and demand information. This data confirms the availability of machine tool trades, retail, human services and educational occupations.

CERC also undertook an industry segmentation analysis for the Northwest Region comparing concentration of growth industries in the Northwest workforce investment area to their incidence across the nation. Their calculations revealed those industries with current strength or as a high priority retention target. Ninety percent of the jobs identified in this analysis were in the aforementioned target industries.

The occupational groups with the highest projected growth between 2006 and 2016 include: office and administrative support; healthcare practitioners; sales; food preparation; education, training and library; healthcare support; personal care; business and financial operations; computer and mathematical. Each of these groups is projected to produce greater than 100 annual openings.

Further, CERC reviewed real-time labor information through Monster listings and WANTED Technologies. These findings follow. The top three occupations in demand were sales, healthcare practice and office support. These occupations added the most net new job postings. Also notable were food preparation and business/financial operations as occupations with higher volume and higher compound annual growth rates.

Finally, while the level of activity may not compete with industry super-sectors, the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board has had particular success in placing individuals in construction trades and "green" jobs such as solar technology and weatherization.

Interestingly, the workforce investment area provides opportunity in most occupational areas even though annual average openings may not reach the magnitude found in targeted industries.

2. Describe the job skills necessary to obtain the current and projected employment opportunities.

The job skills necessary to obtain existing openings are highly variable dependent on the occupation and industry. They represent a full range of

opportunities including entry level occupations, mid-skill positions and high skill jobs.

At a minimum, entry level positions require basic literacy and numeracy along with the soft skills and work habits necessary to hold a job from day-to-day. New entrants to the labor force such as youth, displaced homemakers or welfare recipients will undergo a personal assessment to ascertain these demonstrable skills.

Mid-skill positions generally require an occupational credential or sufficient work experience to qualify for these openings.

Degrees or certificates, significant work history and evidence of advancement are often necessary for higher echelon positions.

3. Resources

1. Provide a description of the resources including programs and services, to meet the workforce development needs of:

a. employers

Employers may take advantage of a plethora of hiring incentives. STEP-UP, Vow to Hire Heroes, various tax credit programs and subsidized employment and on-the-job training opportunities may be accessed through any of the One Stop Partners.

Employers may also upgrade the skills of their current workforce through incumbent worker training.

b. job seekers

The One Stop Career Centers offer a full range of assessment and job search resources including workshops, resume preparation, job listings.

c. incumbent workers

To remain abreast of emerging technologies, the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board offers skill upgrading to incumbent workers.

d. dislocated workers

Dislocated workers can avail themselves of assessment services, training selection and referral activities and vouchers for institutional training or hiring incentives to return to productive employment.

e. youth

The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board network of service providers offers year-round and summer activities to in-school and out-of-school youth throughout the workforce investment area. Educational and employment related opportunities are provided to keep youth in school or allow for the granting of educational and occupational credentials to enhance employability.

4. Analysis

1. Based on the Board's analysis of the environmental scan, identify the gaps between the available jobs, projected industry growth, existent workforce and resources available to fill these gaps.

The Connecticut Labor Department reports a July 2012 unemployment rate for the Northwest Workforce Investment Area at 9%. This is in keeping with the 2011 annual rate of 8.9% and the 2010 rate of 9.4%.

The City of Waterbury which contains 22% of the region's jobs has not seen less than double-digit unemployment rates since 2008. Its current unemployment rate is 13.9% and the last three annual rates average 14%. Beyond this official rate, some economists suggest the disparity found in the "unofficial" U-6 rate to be as great as 7 percentage points higher.

The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board consistently achieves at a level where performance indicators are exceeded. The NRWIB takes best advantage of WIA funding by limiting administrative costs thereby allowing vital resources to be used for direct client services directed towards high demand occupations and industries. Yet, given the sheer number of unemployed and the continuing economic slowdown, the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board alone does not possess sufficient resources to effectively lower unemployment by any significant amount or come close to filling skill gaps. Local and state education systems must continue to prepare students for meaningful careers through exposure to the world of work and providing English proficiency to foreign speakers. Transportation must be focused on commutation patterns of the current labor market. Economic development agencies must be strident in their efforts to attract and retain business and industry.

2. Outline the Board's recommendations to address any disparities.

If the workforce investment system is to be effective in meeting challenges of a dynamic labor market, it must possess the ability to secure other than WIA formula funds to implement worthwhile employment and training programs. We must give workforce boards the ability to use WIA-formula funds to develop grant proposals. To insist that private funds are the only resource to secure private funds is a self-defeating proposition.

State agencies must commit to consultation with WIBs on local workforce development initiatives. The State Department of Education is to be commended for requiring such concurrence in their review of adult education activity. Likewise, the Department of Social Services distributes its welfare-to-work funds through the Labor Department to the WIBs and DEEP's Conservation Corps uses the workforce investment system. Such communication should occur with vocation technical high school offerings and community and technical college occupational programming as well. Further, the Department of Economic and Community Development should confer with the respective WIB when discussing employer incentives with prospective companies. State departments such as Correction, Mental Health which conduct employment and training programs should also consider greater coordination with the WIBs.

Local educational agencies must strengthen their links to their respective employer communities to provide the career awareness and vocational experience necessary to effectively transition students into productive workplace participants.

All actors in the workforce development system must advocate for enhanced funding to address the needs of the unemployed and amelioration of existing skills mismatch in the labor market. This includes additional funding for Care4Kids child care subsidy program to enable more working parents to benefit. A greater share of existing TANF funding must be diverted to the Jobs First Employment Services program to enable more welfare recipients to participate in training activities where they can gain an occupational credential to enhance their employability. Current program emphasis aimed at job search with a dearth of skill development keeps many clients dependent on public assistance.

3. Describe what initiatives the Board will undertake to secure additional financial resources to address the gaps identified in the analysis. Identify specific sources of potential funding the Board will pursue and identify specific activities for which the additional funding would be used.

The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board administers programs beyond the purview of WIA. We administer Jobs First Employment Services, Jobs Funnel, State Energy Sector Partnership and the Connecticut Conservation Corps. The NRWIB has been awarded a highly competitive H-1B federal grant for advanced manufacturing and information technology fields. The NRWIB participates with the State Department of Education in its One Stop infrastructure program through the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act.

The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board is seeking additional funds through an innovative financing mechanism, "social impact bonds" and is currently in negotiation to develop an appropriate proposal using this unique concept of pay for success.

II. LINKAGE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 1. What is the existing or proposed economic development strategy in your region as established by local and regional economic development agencies? Specifically describe strategies for the recruitment of new and expansion of existing businesses? What are the priorities? Identify the key industries that support your regional economy; identify emerging or growth industries.**

Fruitful economic development activity must be based upon a multi-faceted approach. While the strategy can include traditional elements of “bricks and mortar” and tax incentives, it has been shown that quality of life issues and access to a skilled labor force are as important, if not more. This is true for re-locating companies as well as retaining the businesses that currently exist.

The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board is not the primary driver of business recruitment for its region. However, it is a necessary partner that should be included in any recruitment strategy in order to best satisfy the labor force needs of any prospective employer.

One Stop Business Services can provide for ready access to a labor pool and WIBs can address incentives to hire through OJT, STEP or subsidized employment. Business retention can be enhanced by means of incumbent worker training.

CERC classified Northwest area industries into the following categories:

- *Current Strengths* have a basic employment in the local economy and have seen recent growth. These have been able to thrive. Three are manufacturing (chemical manufacturing, textiles, plastics and rubber products); two are retail trade (non-store retailers, clothing stores) and two are healthcare (nursing and residential care, social assistance).
- *High Priority Retention Targets* include industries that have done well but recent activity requires attention as national growth was higher than in the Northwest (ambulatory health care, educational services, hospitals, other information services).
- *Emerging Strengths* are not currently strong in the local economy but these industries have seen recent growth elsewhere (food services, gasoline stations, crop production, transportation support, warehousing, accommodation, securities, motion picture and sound recording).

- 2. How does the industry cluster initiative impact your regional economy? Which clusters have high concentrations of companies in your region?**

Manufacturing and health care are the most active clusters in the workforce investment area. In 2010, over half (56%) of the workforce investment area total employment was in the 1) trade, transportation and utilities; 2) educational and

health services; and 3) government sector. Rounding out the top ten are 4) manufacturing; 5) professional and business services; 6) leisure and hospitality; 7) construction; 8) other services; 9) financial activities; and 10) information.

3. What are the specific workforce development needs associated with the economic development priorities identified in #1? For example, companies may be seeking services including recruitment / assessment / referral of job applicants.

A major advantage of the workforce development system is the ability to address employment needs at every level. We can refer to entry level, technical or professional positions. We prepare candidates with the soft skills and work habits necessary to achieve on the job. We offer programs in pre-manufacturing, manufacturing certification and advanced manufacturing. We can assist in recruitment of prospective employees. We can provide skill upgrading to current employees or develop training incentives in the hiring of new staff.

4. Identify how the Board will address the workforce development needs as they pertain to the economic development strategy of the area. Describe programs and services available to support economic development recruitment and expansion priorities.

Please see #1, #2 and #3 above. The NRWIB will use WIA-formula programs, STEP-UP, JFES subsidized employment and H-1B incumbent worker training to support recruitment and expansion priorities.

5. Identify the economic development professionals and organizations involved in the development of this component of the plan.

The Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, local elected officials, municipal economic development officials, regional economic authorities and each of the regional chambers of commerce are represented on the NRWIB Board of Directors.

6. Describe how the Board will establish and maintain relationships and lines of communication with the economic development entities in its region.

The NRWIB has conducted information sessions for local elected officials, attended regional council of government meetings and established formal contractual relationships with local chambers of commerce to advise of program offerings, market programs and encourage coordination in business recruitment and expansion efforts with an emphasis on workforce development activities.

III. VISION AND GOALS

1. Describe the area's strategic economic and workforce development vision for the next two years based upon Sections I and II of your plan.

The NRWIB Strategic Plan is built around the notion that more education about local job opportunities and industry needs is needed in order to better inform decision-making.

Cultivating a more complete understanding of the region's workforce and economic dynamics will:

- help direct job seekers and students into in-demand career pathways,
- ensure education and training programs are targeted to employers' needs,
- facilitate collaboration that enables partners to better align resources.

The planning process revealed that the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board has a strong foundation of quality service delivery, demand-driven programming and fund development from which to build. The NRWIB is now poised to accelerate its efforts to communicate successes, convene partners and connect students, schools and employers for career development.

2. Identify the strategic goals developed to achieve that vision and identify how they relate to the priorities identified in the CETC Annual Plan.

NRWIB goals directly mirror CETC priorities of improving the state's talent pipeline, creating jobs, preparing a future workforce and developing middle skill opportunities.

Our specific strategic goals are:

#1: Continue to pursue and secure additional financial resources for the region's workforce development efforts.

#2: Increase communications to elected officials, educators and the general public about lifelong learning, career development and general workforce issues and trends.

#3: Ensure Northwest Connecticut's students and young adults are exposed to relevant and demand-driven career development opportunities.

#4: Engage employers in the development of Northwest Connecticut talent pipeline.

#5: Target training programs for both low-skill individuals seeking entry-level employment and more experienced, older individuals that need to "re-direct" their skills.

#6: Facilitate collaboration with and among the economic development agencies within the expanded Northwest region.

See Section III, #4 below for critical detail.

3. For each strategic goal, describe the specific objectives/action steps to achieve the goal and the corresponding deliverables and target dates. Also identify the Board Committee with oversight responsibility for the goal. See the attached template for providing this information.

See Section III, #4 below for critical detail.

4. Identify the measures to be used to track progress toward these goals.

The following template incorporates items Section III, Items #2 - #4 above.

Strategic Goal #1: Continue to pursue and secure additional financial resources for the region’s workforce development efforts.

| Strategies | Key Parties | Timeline | Measures of Success |
|---|--|---------------------------------|--|
| Monitor labor market information and industry trends to provide data-driven understanding of regional environment | NRWIB Staff | Ongoing | Up-to-date labor market information maintained |
| Using labor market information and other data, determine priority initiatives/ programs in need of funding | NRWIB members and staff | Ongoing Re-evaluate annually | Priorities determined and presented/ approved by WIB |
| Identify funding opportunities from federal, state and private sources | NRWIB staff | Ongoing | Funding opportunities identified and evaluated |
| Pursue funding for priority initiatives with strategic partners | NRWIB staff and partners, as appropriate | Ongoing | Outside funding secured |

Strategic Goal #2: Increase communications to elected officials, educators and the general public about lifelong learning, career development and general workforce issues and trends.

| Strategies | Key Parties | Timeline | Measures of Success |
|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Create a communications plan, identifying target audiences, messages and communications strategies for each | NRWIB members, staff and industry representatives | By December 31, 2012 | Communications plan approved by the WIB |
| Develop a quarterly NRWIB e-newsletter to send to partners, potential funders, elected officials, etc. that highlights recent successes and trends | NRWIB staff | Quarterly | Quarterly e-newsletter distributed |
| Author opinion pieces in local newspapers and media sources | NRWIB members and industry partners | Ongoing | 3 pieces/ year |
| Utilize new technologies (Twitter, LinkedIn/ Facebook, etc.) to reach younger populations and promote careers and training programs | NRWIB staff and web designers | In place by September 30, 2012; Ongoing | Online presence maintained |

Strategic Goal #3: Ensure Northwest Connecticut's students and young adults are exposed to relevant and demand-driven career development opportunities

| Strategies | Key Parties | Timeline | Measures of Success |
|---|---|----------------------|---|
| Engage young professionals on the WIB, Youth Council and/or other WIB committees | NRWIB staff, Chambers of Commerce, business groups & associations | Ongoing | 1 or more young professionals participating on WIB, Youth Council and/or committees |
| Convene the region's Superintendents and Boards of Education to gain buy-in and position the NRWIB as the "go-to" source for career development information | NRWIB members, staff, K-12 school districts | By December 31, 2012 | Successfully engage school district representatives in a pilot meeting with NRWIB |
| Expose faculty and guidance counselors to work places/ environments of target industries | NRWIB staff, K-12 school districts, industry partners | By June 30, 2013 | Successfully engage school districts in programs to provide industry exposure such as tours of manufacturing plants |

Strategic Goal #4: Engage employers in the development of Northwest Connecticut talent pipeline

| Strategies | Key Parties | Timeline | Measures of Success |
|---|--|------------------------------|---|
| Work with the Naugatuck Valley Community College's Manufacturing Advisory Committee to address additional workforce needs and identify common industry opportunities and challenges | NRWIB staff, Naugatuck Valley Community College, industry partners | Ongoing | Additional workforce issues included in Council agendas/discussions |
| Replicate the Naugatuck Valley Community College's Manufacturing Advisory Committee for the additional target sectors | NRWIB staff, industry partners | By June 30, 2013; Ongoing | Additional Advisory Councils meeting and providing feedback |
| Identify industry-specific challenges and opportunities in the target sectors | NRWIB staff, sector-based advisory committees | Ongoing | Opportunities and challenges identified |
| Engage partners and target resources to respond to common needs identified by industry | NRWIB staff, partners, as appropriate | Ongoing | Partners responding collaboratively to industry needs |

Strategic Goal #5: Target training programs for both low-skill individuals seeking entry-level employment and more experienced, older individuals that need to "re-direct" their skills.

| Strategies | Key Parties | Timeline | Measures of Success |
|--|---|-----------------|---|
| Expand the Northwest Construction Career Initiative building out opportunities for remediation | NRWIB staff, training providers, as appropriate | Ongoing | Remediation component added |
| Using input from Sector-based Advisory Committees, retool individuals' existing skills to meet employer demands in Information Technology and Healthcare | NRWIB staff, training providers, as appropriate | Ongoing | Increased number of participants enrolled in training for IT and Healthcare |

| | | | |
|---|-------------|---------|--|
| Utilize On-the-Job Training and the Connecticut Step Up program to promote skill upgrades for entry-level individuals | NRWIB staff | Ongoing | OJT contracts with area employers; Participants enrolled in Step Up program |
|---|-------------|---------|--|

Strategic Goal #6: Facilitate collaboration with and among the economic development agencies within the expanded Northwest region.

| Strategies | Key Parties | Timeline | Measures of Success |
|--|---|--|---|
| Educate economic development representatives about the NRWIB services and resources | NRWIB staff, economic development organizations | Ongoing | Outreach to the region's economic development organizations |
| Promote the NRWIB talent development resources as an additive tool for attracting new companies which is not in competition with their efforts | NRWIB staff | Ongoing | NRWIB proactively involved in attraction efforts |
| Invite economic development organizations to participate in NRWIB existing collaborative business services efforts to eliminate duplication of efforts | NRWIB staff, economic development organizations, CT Department of Labor | Invited to participate by June 30, 2013 Ongoing | Joint meetings with existing businesses and/or regular information sharing about outreach to businesses and their needs |

IV. WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

A. Role in Vision/Goals/Strategies

- 1. Describe what the Board views as its role as it relates to achieving the region's economic and workforce development vision and goals and how this role will be carried out.**

The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board serves the region's employers and job seekers through a workforce development system that provides demand-driven pathways to employment. The NRWIB must prepare today's workforce to possess the skills currently needed by employers and also produce a reliable pipeline of qualified talent for businesses' future hiring needs. As the region's premier training agency, it is critical that we advance an effective

labor market system that facilitates economic development and business growth while serving the needs of our unemployed citizens.

Our vision and mission are:

Vision

To promote and foster regional economic development by providing quality employment and training services to employers, jobseekers and youth.

Mission

To provide a seamless system of workforce services that:

- Balance the needs of the universal population against those prioritized or dislocated needing additional education and/or training in order to be productive and self-sufficient.
- Secure the economic health of the region by encouraging business growth and retention through the development of highly skilled workforce
- Encourage youth to stay in school, achieving the education levels necessary to meet the demands of the global economy.
- Develop an educational infrastructure, whose curriculum meets the demands of the professional specialty occupations projected by labor market forecasts for the region.

2. Describe how the Board will engage a broad array of economic and workforce development entities in the achievement of the vision and goals.

The NRWIB has recruited business and industry leaders to participate on the Board of Directors to advise on strategic and operational issues. Their participation is complemented by representatives of educational institutions, municipal leaders, organized labor, economic development entities and community organizations.

3. Describe the role of the Board in each strategy outlined in Section III above.

See Section III, Items #2- #4 above.

B. Planning Process

1. Describe how the Board consulted with and provided an opportunity for public input on the local plan.

The appropriate legal notice was published providing the opportunity for any and all public comment for a thirty day period.

In addition, during the conduct of our needs assessment, CERC convened a number of focus groups with area employers for their input. Our Strategic Plan

development was similarly informed by the private sector members through a specific strategic planning session for this express purpose.

- 2. Submit, as an attachment, any comments received as part of the public input process.**

All relevant comments will be forwarded at the close of the comment period.

C. Additional Functions

- 1. Describe what the Board views as its primary role as it relates to the region's economic and workforce development activities and how this role will be carried out.**

The primary role of the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board is serving the region's employers and job seekers through a talent development system that provides demand-driven pathways to employment. The workforce must be prepared with not only the skills needed by employers today but also a consistent pipeline of qualified talent for businesses' future hiring needs.

Consistent with the CETC Annual Plan, the NRWIB seeks to:

- help direct job seekers and students into in-demand career pathways,
- ensure education and training programs are targeted to employers' needs,
- facilitate collaboration and enable partners to better align resources and efforts.

- 2. Attach a diagram of the Board's committee structure and describe each committee's function.**

See Attachment.

D. Board Support

- 1. Provide a diagram depicting the staff support to the Board.**

See Attachment.

- 2. Describe how administrative support will be provided to the Board. Include the number and type of staff that are directly funded by the Board.**

See Attachment.

V. ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

- 1. Please provide a description of the one-stop delivery system to be established or designated in your local area, including:**

- **A description of procedures your local Board will use to ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of local employers and participants; and**

WIA performance measures provide the basic framework for continuous improvement. The measures capture all the relevant outcomes for each client population (i.e., adults, youth, dislocated workers) and enable the Board to accurately gauge progress and intervene immediately when current efforts prove insufficient in meeting the requisite standard.

Although probably unnecessary, this system is augmented by a competitive procurement process and on-going and regular programmatic and financial monitoring.

- **A copy of each Memorandum of Understanding between your local Board and each of the One-Stop partners concerning the operation of the One-Stop system in the local area.**

See Attachments.

2. A description of the local levels of performance negotiated with the Governor and Chief Elected Official to be used to measure the performance of the local area, the local fiscal agent (where applicable), eligible providers, and the local One-Stop delivery system.

Despite some limited industry growth, the Northwest region remains in economic distress. In this recession that began in 2008, the workforce investment area lost 19,000 jobs. Unemployment rates in the city of Waterbury are the highest in the state - currently hovering around 14%. The Waterbury labor market has recovered only 22% of the jobs lost. Special recognition must be given to these bleak economic factors when considering the appropriate mix and level of performance indicators.

Adults will experience an “Entered Employment” rate of 67% with an “Employment Retention” rate of 78% and “Average Earnings” at \$10,500.

Dislocated worker performance is planned to have an “Entered Employment” rate of 76% with an “Employment Retention” rate of 86% and “Average Earnings” at \$17,741.

Youth will achieve “Entered Employment or Post-Secondary Education” at 77%; an “Attainment of Degree or Credential” at 76%. Out of school youth have “Literacy and/or Numeracy Gains” planned at 35%.

- 3. A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area. This information must include a description of the local Individual Training Account (ITA) system, with procedures for ensuring that exceptions to the use of ITAs, if any, are justified under WIA Section 134(d)(4)(G)(ii) and 20 CFR 663.430.**

Employment and training services to adults and dislocated workers consists of the use of Individual Training Accounts. The employability development process begins with an assessment of client attributes, aspirations and limitations. This information includes, but is not limited to, skills, work experience, previous training, educational achievement, life skills, language ability and math proficiency, interests, physical restrictions, commuting ability, and need for support services. This assessment information, along with labor market data, is used to assist clients in developing realistic objectives for their engagement in the labor force and the client and case manager develop a strategy to obtain full-time, unsubsidized employment. Immediate placement is always a possibility as a plan goal. If a client demonstrates an interest in skill training, has an aptitude for the chosen profession and can commit to the demands of training, then the Education and Training Connection is consulted and the client is directed to the Eligible Training Providers List to select a training provider.

Contracts for services may be used for on the job training or customized training. Class size training projects will be considered for occupations in demand with preference given to programs of demonstrated effectiveness that award credentials and/or have experience in serving special participant populations that face multiple barriers. Appropriate procurement guidelines are followed to secure these services.

- 4. A description of how the local Board will coordinate local workforce investment activities with statewide rapid response activities.**

All the resources of the One Stop Career Center shall be made available upon notification of a plant closing or mass layoff. Should advance warning be provided to the Board, we can inquire on the use of incumbent worker training with the effected firm in an effort to upgrade worker skills and prevent dislocation. In the event of a mass layoff, plant closing or similar dislocation, One Stop staff accompanies state rapid response personnel to serve those affected.

- 5. A description and assessment of the type and availability of youth activities in the local area, including identification of successful providers of such activities (and the criteria and procedures used by your Board to identify successful and unsuccessful providers).**

Northwestern Regional Workforce Investment Board supports innovative approaches to working with young people, both in and out of school, that incorporate the following program features:

- Provide an objective assessment of the academic levels, skills levels, and service needs of each participant
- Develop service strategies for each participant identifying an employment goal, achievement objectives and appropriate services
- Provide preparation for post-secondary educational opportunities
- Provide strong linkages between academic and occupational learning
- Provide preparation for unsubsidized employment opportunities
- Provide effective connections to intermediaries with strong links to employers

Programs may include the opportunity for tutoring, study skills training, and instruction, leading to completion of secondary school, including dropout prevention strategies; alternative secondary school services; summer employment opportunities that are directly linked to academic and occupational learning; paid and unpaid work experiences, including internships and job shadowing; occupational skill training; leadership development opportunities, which may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social behaviors during non-school hours; supportive services; adult mentoring; follow-up services; and comprehensive guidance and counseling.

The NRWIB conducts competitive procurement through a Request For Proposal (RFP) process that rates submissions on these criteria: organizational background &, recruitment & target population, program design, goals & evaluation, program staff qualifications, previous experience, collaborations, timeline and budget.

The NRWIB provides funding and monitors the following programs for In-School Youth:

- Naugatuck Valley Community College
- Northwestern Connecticut Community College
- Waterbury Youth Services, Inc.
- Diversity of Dance

Out-of-School operators are:

- Goodwill Industries, Inc.
- WERACE – Western Connecticut Regional Adult & Continuing Education
- Naugatuck Valley Community College
- Northwestern Connecticut Community College

6. Identification of the fiscal agent or entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds, as determined by the CEO or the Governor.

The NRWIB fiscal agent for the disbursement of grant funds is the City of Waterbury pursuant to our Consortium Agreement.

7. A description of the competitive process to be used by the Board to award grants and contracts, including the process to be used to procure training services that are made as exceptions to the ITA process referenced in WIA Section 134(d)(4)(G).

The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board uses a competitive procurement process in keeping with federal guidelines found in pertinent OMB Circular governing such actions for non-profit organizations.

All submissions are reviewed by the pertinent sub-committee of the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board. The Program, Worker Education Committees as well as the Youth Council are involved with their particular programs and recommendations are made through the Executive Committee of the NRWIB for final approval by the Board of Directors.

To increase the availability of training to workforce system customers, the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board may award contracts to institutions of higher education, such as community colleges, when we can facilitate the training of multiple individuals in high demand occupations meeting the needs of job seekers and employers while ensuring that customer choice is not limited by this action.

8. A description of the criteria used by the Governor and the local Board, under 20 CFR 663.600, to determine whether funds allocated to the local area for adult employment and training activities under WIA Sections 133(b)(2)(A) or (3) are limited, and the process by which any priority will be applied by the One-Stop Operator.

In the event that funds allocated to the NRWIB are limited, priority for intensive and training services are given to recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals. Unemployed individuals; Unemployment Insurance claimants, exhaustees and ineligibles; and economically disadvantaged individuals may be considered as priority clients for this purpose.

9. In view of declining resources, please describe how the Board will integrate WIA, TANF and any other funding to support the operations of the one-stop system.

The One Stop system is the framework for all workforce development and employment and training services undertaken by the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board in its service delivery area. One Stop staff is co-located with Connecticut Labor Department Career Centers and the TANF case

management operator. Our primary One Stop in Waterbury also incorporates regional JobLinks, Jobs Corps and SCSEP activity.

10. A description of coordination of efforts across LWIBs: Examples of OJT efforts, apprenticeship, Reemployment of Long-Term Unemployed etc.

The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board is a willing partner in any and all collaborative projects. We have partnered with other WIBs and/or the State Labor Department in services to UI exhaustees, returning veterans and have extended outreach to other WIBs on non-formula programs where residency does not present a barrier to participation.

11. In order to increase jobseeker and employer awareness of workforce development resources available across the country, the Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (ETA) strongly encourages states and local workforce investment areas to implement the American Job Center brand in accordance with state plans. Please describe some ways the local workforce investment area may begin using the American Job Center brand immediately.

NOTE: USDOL strongly encourages the use of the American Job Center brand. In the future, the Department intends to work closely with states and localities to move to a requirement to use the brand.

The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board is willing to incorporate the American Job Center logo on its promotional material as it is re-ordered. Our website will incorporate the branding and we shall encourage our partners to adhere to these guidelines as well.

VI. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Please show evidence of sign-off on the plan submission by the Chief Elected Official(s) identified in your local area's Chief Elected Officials agreement and the Board Chair.

At the NRWIB Board of Directors meeting of June 14, 2012, approval was given under the Annual Grant of Authority for the subject grant submission.