

2015 CETC ANNUAL PLAN

Connecticut Employment and Training Commission

January 2015

Background

The Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) is Connecticut's State Workforce Investment Board, authorized under the federal Workforce Investment Act and state statute. CETC is the State body with lead responsibility to provide workforce development policy and planning guidance to Governor Malloy. CETC is broadly charged to promote strategic coordination of Connecticut's workforce development policies, strategies, investments, and programs. CETC's statutory responsibilities include:

- Review and comment on the success of employment and training programs in leading to economic self-sufficiency and serving the needs of workers, employers and the economy;
- Develop and submit a plan to the Governor – including recommended policies and procedures – to coordinate employment and training programs, avoid duplication, and promote delivery of effective services;
- Oversee implementation of the federal Workforce Investment Act in Connecticut;
- Develop and oversee a continuous improvement plan for the regional workforce boards;
- Coordinate development of incumbent worker, vocational and customized job training programs to enhance business productivity and increase workers' skills and earnings
- Coordinate strategy to provide comprehensive services to eligible youth

Donald Shubert, President of the Connecticut Construction Industries Association, serves as CETC Chair, appointed in 2011 by Governor Malloy. Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman currently serves as Vice-Chair. CETC's twenty-four voting and eight ex-officio members represent Connecticut businesses, key state agencies, regional/local public entities, organized labor, community organizations and other stakeholders, and are all actively engaged in efforts to strengthen the state's workforce and economic competitiveness. The Office of Workforce Competitiveness (Connecticut Department of Labor) provides staff support and technical assistance to CETC.

CETC Goals

In 2012 CETC produced a strategic state workforce plan, providing an objective review of key conditions and trends in Connecticut's economy and jobs landscape, the adult workforce, the future talent pipeline, and the state's workforce system. CETC proposed overarching goals to frame state workforce policy and strategy, and a set of recommendations to pursue those goals. Those goals and recommendations created a useful framework to encourage the efforts of the numerous business sector, government and non-profit partners and stakeholders involved in the state's many and multi-faceted workforce development efforts. They remain relevant today.

- Goal 1: Promote Business Growth: Connecticut businesses in key sectors (economic drivers) must have the skilled, talented employees needed to compete effectively, prosper and create jobs for Connecticut workers.
- Goal 2: Strengthen Current Workforce: Workers must have the skills and credentials needed to prosper and advance in careers that support their families.
- Goal 3: Develop Future Talent: Connecticut youth must be prepared and ready for career and postsecondary success as productive contributors to a competitive state economy.

- Goal 4: Align Workforce System: Connecticut's multi-faceted workforce system must align and integrate goals, strategies, policies, investments, services, infrastructure and accountability.

Over the past four years the fundamental importance of building and sustaining a well-educated, highly skilled, globally competitive Connecticut workforce has gained critical attention and support across a broad spectrum of state business leaders and policy leaders. Through the efforts of its members and the work of its various committees and work groups, CETC contributed significantly to building increased understanding among critical audiences of the need for focused action and investment in multiple workforce priorities crucial for state economic growth and the financial well-being of Connecticut workers and families.

From the outset of his administration, Governor Malloy pursued a series of initiatives and investments focusing on various aspects of the state's workforce challenges, ranging from early childhood development, to strengthened career and technical education, to industry-specific enhancements in higher education, to focused training for targeted workers. Likewise, the General Assembly has raised the broad workforce development, education and training agenda to a new level of attention and support through an array of investments in innovative programs. Connecticut businesses and employers have increased their active support for and hands-on participation in numerous practical efforts and partnerships to help build the skills of the workers they need for their companies to prosper.

This 2015 CETC Annual Plan is an overview briefly highlighting selected efforts undertaken during the past two years by a wide array of stakeholders, many of whom sit on CETC and/or collaborate with other partners to tackle the workforce priorities, challenges and opportunities CETC has addressed in its policy and strategic efforts.

These efforts fall into several categories: innovative programs providing training to workers and jobseekers in line with employers' needs and expectations; planning efforts providing important practical information to guide workforce strategy and system design; major workforce initiatives intended to effect significant change in key institutions and move the needle to significant outcomes; and efforts targeting the career and college readiness of Connecticut youth.

The document concludes with an overview of the recently enacted federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, including development of a new unified state workforce plan in 2015.

Economic Overview

Review of economic data and labor market information recently developed by the Connecticut Department of Labor (Labor Situation, December 2014) and jointly by CTDOL and the Department of Economic and Community Development (The Connecticut Economic Digest, January 2015) suggests positive trends in state economic and employment growth. Highlights include:

- Connecticut's real state domestic product (SGDP), the broadest measure of the state's economic health, increased 0.9% in 2013 (the most recent year available).

- Connecticut added 4,800 jobs in December 2014. The state's nonfarm employment increased 26,700 positions (1.61%) in the past year, to a level of 1,690,000 jobs – a new employment recovery highpoint from the great recession of 2008-2010.
- The state added 23,600 jobs (2,145 a month) through the first eleven months of 2014.
- Connecticut has recovered 96,300 jobs, or 80.9% of the 119,000 seasonally adjusted total nonfarm jobs lost during the March 2008-February 2010 recession. The state's jobs recovery is now 58 months old, averaging 1,660 jobs per month since February 2010.
- The state's labor force saw strong growth in new entrants/re-entrants, increasing by 60,254 (3.3%) in 2014.
- The state's unemployment rate, after peaking at 9.4% for five consecutive months in 2010, and hovering around 8% in 2013, declined to 6.4% (seasonally adjusted) in December 2014, a full point lower than the 7.4% rate in December 2013.
- Nine industry super-sectors had net job growth in 2014: Trade, Transportation and Utilities; Leisure and Hospitality; Education and Health Services; Professional and Business Services; Manufacturing; Government; Construction and Mining; Other Services; Information.
- Average hourly earnings in Connecticut were at \$28.42, up 1.4% from December 2013.
- Personal income in the first quarter of 2015 is expected to increase by 3.2% from a year earlier. Increases in personal disposable income indicate stronger growth in consumer spending, which can lead to additional gains throughout the economy.
- New England Economic Partnership forecasts a gain of about 25,000 jobs (1.4%) in 2015.
- Positive economic growth in Connecticut is expected to continue into 2015.

CETC Committees

CETC conducts its work through its committees and work groups, bringing products and recommendations developed in committee to the full CETC for action.

The **Allied Health Workforce Policy Board** is co-chaired by Frances Padilla (President, Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut) and Stuart Rosenberg (President and CEO, Johnson Memorial Medical Center). Established in statute (Public Act 04-220), since 2010 the Policy Board has operated as a CETC committee to conduct planning and research on Connecticut's allied health workforce and provide policy guidance on identified priorities. Comprising an array of health care employers and stakeholders, the Board meets regularly to review current initiatives in allied health, gaps in workforce-related data, issues related to educational programming, recruitment and retention of a skilled workforce, researches and proposes solutions to identified allied health workforce shortages. Annually the Board produces a report to the General Assembly identifying priority issues and corresponding recommendations. With CETC's endorsement, those priorities identified for legislative consideration in 2015 address:

- Collection and strategic utilization of healthcare workforce data
- Supporting the pipeline of new and incumbent allied health workers
- Creating an infrastructure to support Direct Care workers engaged in community care
- Coordinating a statewide allied health workforce outreach campaign.

The **CETC Manufacturing Committee** is co-chaired by Elliot Ginsberg (President and CEO, Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology) and John Harrity (President, Connecticut State Council of Machinists). In 2014 the committee focused on developing timely information directly from manufacturers on current vacancies, anticipated openings, skill/employability requirements, recruitment and training strategies, etc. Staff conducted direct interviews with a selected sample of manufacturers, largely from the northwest area of the state, and produced an informal report on the findings and resulting recommendations. Based on that outreach to employers and deliberations by members, the committee's identified priorities for 2015 include:

- Bridging the middle-skills "experience gap" by accelerating workers' acquisition of experience and skills in occupations threatened by increasing demand and an aging workforce.
- Stimulating innovative partnerships and creative use of existing resources and facilities (public and private) to tackle the experience gap challenge.
- Providing accelerated "post-graduate" hands-on, workplace, experiential training for recent community college and technical high school manufacturing program graduates.
- Increasing the number and pace of manufacturing apprenticeships.
- Using available facilities during off-hours in technical high schools, community colleges, adult education centers, manufacturing labs, manufacturing companies etc., to train incumbent and other adult workers.

The **CETC Career Advancement Committee** is co-chaired by Carlton Highsmith (Board President, Connecticut Center for Arts and Technology) and Deborah Monahan (Executive Director, Thames Valley Council for Community Action). The committee focuses on challenges to the career advancement prospects of Connecticut's low-skill workers, promoting strategies to develop pathways into middle-skill jobs/career opportunities in key industry sectors. In 2014 committee members engaged in supporting efforts of the Board of Regents for Higher Education and other key community-based stakeholders and adult educators to implement college readiness and completion strategies for students not prepared for college. Members contributed to the development of CETC's recommendations to key Federal agencies on strengthening career pathways opportunities and strategies in Connecticut. Members also contributed to CETC's efforts to develop a statewide plan addressing contextualized learning, early college and career certificate programs in Connecticut, and will continue to pay close attention to those efforts in 2015.

The **CETC Youth Employment Committee** is co-chaired by James Ieronimo (Executive Director, United Way of Meriden and Wallingford) and Norma Ortega (Manager, University Relations, Travelers Companies). The committee coordinates efforts with the Workforce Investment Boards, educators, employers and other stakeholders to promote youth career development opportunities. In 2014 the committee's efforts focused on:

- Increasing the awareness of school guidance and career counselors and teachers about key Connecticut industries and occupations, to help strengthen their career guidance efforts with middle- and high school students.
- Expanding work experience opportunities for youth in key Connecticut industries.
- Collaborating with the State Department of Education and other partners to help strengthen the Student Success Plan as an effective career exploration tool.

- Working with the Workforce Boards' Youth Councils to showcase their efforts, identify system challenges and solutions, and support successful strategies.

Connecticut Energy Workforce Development Consortium: In 2014 CETC suspended its Energy Workforce Partnership Committee and decided instead to work in close collaboration with the Connecticut Energy Workforce Development Consortium, to consolidate efforts intended to address the workforce needs and priorities of the state's energy sector employers. Supported by CBIA, the Consortium is working directly with businesses and employers to define the energy sector in a useful manner for planning purposes, quantify the anticipated jobs impact of impending state energy investments, inventory relevant training and education programs and develop related workforce strategies.

The **CETC Statewide Plan Work Group** was established in 2014 to address the legislative charge to CETC ((Public Act No. 14-217, Section 197) to develop a plan addressing contextualized learning, early college and career certificate programs. That effort is described on page X.

NOTEWORTHY EFFORTS

Following is a high-level overview of selected recent noteworthy workforce-related efforts undertaken in Connecticut by an array of public, private and non-profit entities to address critical challenges and opportunities for improvement. These examples are illustrative, not an all-inclusive inventory

PROGRAM INITIATIVES

Numerous stakeholders across Connecticut are engaged in efforts to provide workforce-related services to individuals seeking to prepare themselves to meet the practical skill and readiness demands for career success and advancement. Following is a sample of selected initiatives.

Subsidized Training and Employment Program (Step-Up)

Established in the 2011 Jobs Bill, Step-Up is a joint venture of the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and the state's five regional Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs). Originally providing two employer incentives – *Wage Subsidy* and *Small Manufacturing Training Grant* – to encourage eligible Connecticut businesses to hire more qualified workers, the focus has been on small businesses and manufacturers and economically threatened unemployed residents of high unemployment communities. Step-Up expanded in 2012 to include the *Unemployed Armed Forces Member* incentive for employers of any size to hire eligible veterans. Step-Up participants typically are Connecticut residents possessing some of the qualifications needed for work but require additional on-the-job training experience to meet the job-specific needs of participating employers. Wage Subsidy incentives for new hires extend over a six-month period and can amount to a \$12,000 employer reimbursement. Small Manufacturing Training Grants provide up to \$12,500 per new hire.

Jobs for which Step-Up participants have been hired cover a wide range of occupations, including CNC operators, machine operators, CAD designers, engineers, production coordinators, plant operators, graphic designers, sales representatives, warehouse support specialists, marketing

support specialists, customer service representatives and office assistants. Through December 2014, a total of 705 employers had participated in the Subsidized Wage and Small Manufacturing initiatives, resulting in the hiring of 2,590 individuals, at an average hourly wage of approximately \$14.76. Average employer reimbursement was approximately \$9,576 per new employee.

Advanced Manufacturing Technology Centers

As a result of the 2011 Jobs Bill, State bond funds were committed to establish three new community college-based Advanced Manufacturing Centers, modeled on the successful Manufacturing Machine Technology Program at Asnuntuck Community College (Enfield). The new centers opened in August 2012 at Housatonic Community College (Bridgeport), Naugatuck Valley Community College (Waterbury) and Quinebaug Valley Community College (Danielson). Their mission is to offer a variety of credit and non-credit advanced manufacturing courses for incumbent workers, displaced workers, returning veterans, current community college students, adult education students and high school students from both technical and comprehensive high schools. Overall program coordination is provided through the Board of Regents for Higher Education.

Students earn a one-year/two-semester Advanced Manufacturing Certificate, plus 576 hours of related instruction toward an Apprenticeship in manufacturing, as well as the OSHA 10 Certificate. Manufacturers/employers are intensively involved in all phases of program planning, design and implementation, through advisory boards at each Center and through a Statewide Advanced Manufacturing Advisory Committee (SAMAC). Beginning in Fall 2014 graduates can acquire a minimum of 4 National Institute of Metal Skills (NIMS), towards the 11-credential Machine Level I certificate. Recent enrollment data shows 323 students had enrolled across the four Centers in Fall 2013 (for both Level I and Level II); 213 had graduated by June 2014; 86 student participated in internships; 192 students were employed in Summer 2014; and 331 students enrolled in Fall 2014. Manufacturing companies employing the most program graduates represent tool and die, aerospace, stamping, automotive, medical device, plating, molding, construction, commercial lighting, and general manufacturing. As of June 2014 graduates of the four Centers had a 90% job placement rate.

Connecticut Advanced Manufacturing Initiative

In September the US Department of Labor awarded a \$15 million grant to implement the Connecticut Advanced Manufacturing Initiative (CAMI) across the eleven community colleges that do not have Advanced Manufacturing Centers, along with Charter Oak State College. CAMI builds on the foundation of the nationally recognized Advanced Manufacturing Centers, and expands post-secondary manufacturing education to every community college in Connecticut. Grant funds pay for capital equipment to provide hands-on training, new teachers and educational assistants, and development of registered apprenticeships for high-demand manufacturing jobs. Manchester Community College serves as leader of the multi-college CAMI consortium.

Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Programs - Jobs First Employment Services

In 2011, the Department of Labor (CTDOL) and Department of Social Services (DSS) convened a workgroup to recommend strategies to help Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) participants become more competitive in the job market, while meeting federal TANF work participation

requirements. JFES is a component of the State's Temporary Family Assistance program. Participants receive employment services from American Job Center One-Stop staff or contracted service providers. Services include job search assistance, vocational education, adult basic education, subsidized employment, case management, and other support services such as transportation assistance. In FY2013-2014 the legislature designated \$1.7 million for "additional programming and evaluation" for (JFES) Program participants.

CTDOL used the FY2013-14 designated funding to implement an "Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)" pilot program statewide, based on the state of Washington's nationally recognized model. I-BEST is an evidence-based model providing vocational skills training simultaneously with adult basic education. Curriculum is designed jointly and classes are co-taught by an adult education instructor and a specialist in the appropriate vocational field. I-BEST has proven to help participants improve basic skills and achieve progress towards a secondary education credential while attaining an industry-recognized credential.

The JFES I-BEST pilots were administered by CTDOL through the Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), operating as regional intermediaries, subcontracting with service providers. WIBs received funding in proportion to their enrollment of JFES participants. Additional pilot-related expenditures (e.g., case management) were capped at \$5,000, allowing for a maximum possible total of 288 JFES I-BEST participants statewide. The WIBs divided their programs across a total of 10 subcontractor service providers statewide.

The primary goals for the JFES I-BEST pilot included attainment of industry-recognized credentials and improved post-program employment, creating incentives for the WIBs to develop training opportunities meeting local labor market needs. Programs were expected to result in the following credentials: Certified Nursing Assistant; Introduction to Culinary Arts Certificate; Level 1 NIMS (National Institute for Metal Working Skills) Certificate; Medical Office Assistant; Medical Office Receptionist Certificate; Medical Terminology Certificate; Microsoft Technology Certificate; National Professional Certificate in Customer Service (National Retail Federation); Qualified Food Handler License (OSHA 10, First Aid, CPR); Software Application Certificate.

The period of instruction varied from four to twenty-one weeks. More than half of the service providers incorporated some type of post-program work experience, including unpaid internships, paid internships, or subsidized employment. Among those with a prior high school credential, sixty percent (60%) completed the training. For those without a high school credential, fifty-four percent (54%) completed the training. The overall completion rate was fifty-eight percent (58%). This completion rate compares favorably to the forty-four percent (44%) completion rate achieved by Washington State's I-BEST program's pilot year (2005).

Of those participants that successfully completed the training, seventy percent (70%) passed the relevant certification exam. Among those who completed the training and had a high school credential, seventy-two percent (72%) passed the exam to receive the industry credential. For those without a high school credential at the acceptance of training who completed the course,

sixty-five percent (65%) passed the relevant certification exam. Due to the six-month lag in wage records data, employment outcomes will be available later in 2015.

Programs varied considerably among the WIBs, reflecting differing regional economic conditions and job markets. Evaluators had no concerns with training program quality. A lesson learned is that allowing qualified training/adult education providers to develop courses within broad guidelines is an effective strategy, while holding providers to a reasonable level of co-curricular development and delivery, within the integrated vocational and adult basic education context.

Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Programs – Adult Education Programs

Starting in 2010 the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has invested in Program Improvement Project (PIP) grants to implement the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) program model across the state to accelerate basic skills learning and career enhancement for adult education learners. Initial grants provided two years of incentive funding. PIP grants are underwritten through the state's Workforce Investment Act Title II funds, to expand and improve educational services for adults lacking the basic skills and literacy skills for effective parenting, citizenship and employment. Eligible participants are students enrolled in mandated adult education classes (e.g., at least 17-years-old and officially withdrawn from high school). Objectives are to help adult secondary-level students and English-as-a-second-language learners improve reading, writing, math, English language acquisition and/or obtain a high school diploma while earning an industry-recognized credential in fields offering good wages and opportunities for career advancement.

CSDE selected seven adult education providers to operate the I-BEST projects: New London Adult Education, EASTCONN, Enfield Adult Education, Capitol Region Education Council, Women and Families Education Center, Education Connection, Waterbury Adult Education. Providers collaborate with a training partner to offer funding for the technical aspects of instruction. In FY2012-13 and FY2014-15 a total of \$210,000 in PIP funding was awarded to support educational (not technical) dimensions of the training, serving a total of 192 participants. The projects have offered certifications in manufacturing, auto technician, culinary arts, emergency medical technician, pharmacy technician, certified nursing assistant, and software, serving individuals in English as a Second Language, adult basic education and high school completion programs.

Disability Employment Initiative

In October 2013 Connecticut was one of eight states to receive a grant through the U.S. Department of Labor's Disability Employment Initiative (DEI). CTDOL's Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) administers the three-year \$3,058,706 award from USDOL's Employment and Training Administration and Office of Disability Employment Policy. Broad objectives are to provide additional education, training and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and to expand the workforce investment system's capacity to serve eligible beneficiaries in the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work Program. The initiative features strong partnerships and collaboration among key agencies; service coordination through an integrated resource team; integrated services and resources, including blended, braided and leveraged funding and resources; and, innovative asset development strategies.

Services are offered in four of Connecticut's workforce regions. Capital Workforce Partners and the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board employ Disability Resource Coordinators to implement project activities and coordinate services for participants. Integrated Resource Teams are formed to address individual needs and provide increased support for job seekers with disabilities. Partners include CTDOL's Office for Veterans Workforce Development and the state Departments of Rehabilitative Services, Labor, Education, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Social Services, Transportation, and other public and private sector representatives.

DEI efforts focus on:

- Promoting inclusiveness of disabled individuals to enhance competitive advantage
- Organizing business-to-business forums to share strategies on recruiting, hiring and retaining people with disabilities
- Creating employer/service provider partnerships to develop internships and strengthen connections for ongoing collaboration
- Improving service coordination among American Job Centers and partner agencies
- Increasing transportation alternatives and awareness of transportation resources
- Improving staff knowledge of employment's impact on benefits individuals with disabilities
- Upgrading assistive technology software and technologies
- Providing sensitivity training for staff regarding LGBT jobseekers with disabilities
- Advocacy for state-level change (e.g., expanding Medicaid waiver option)

Anticipated outcomes include increases in the rates of individuals with disabilities who get and retain jobs; increased wages; increased number of persons with disabilities served by the One-Stops; increased number of participants earning industry-recognized credentials; and, increased number of individuals with disabilities co-enrolled with One-Stop partners.

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is a strategy of "learning while earning", blending classroom training and workplace-based, job-specific learning under supervision of an experienced journey person. Apprenticeship is based on an employer-employee relationship, in which the apprentice employee voluntarily enters into a training agreement with a participating employer sponsor. Apprenticeshipable occupations require a diverse range of skills, knowledge and judgment. The Office of Apprenticeship Training (CTDOL) manages registered apprenticeships in Connecticut. Significant efforts are underway to expand apprenticeship opportunities in targeted industries, including healthcare, information technology, and a major emphasis on advanced manufacturing. Starting in 2014 participants in the community college-based Advanced Manufacturing Centers can earn 576 hours of related instruction toward an Apprenticeship in manufacturing. The Step-Up program recently added a new apprenticeship component. Aggressive outreach by the Office of Apprenticeship Training has increased the number of manufacturers enlisted as employer sponsors and the number of full-time manufacturing apprentices and pre-apprentices. More Connecticut employers have taken advantage of the Manufacturing Apprenticeship Tax Credit.

The Obama Administration and USDOL have announced a goal of doubling apprenticeships by 2019. Expansion opportunities will be encouraged through competitive American Apprenticeships Grants. The Office of Apprenticeship Training will be lead applicant in Connecticut to expand apprenticeships in high-growth fields (including advanced manufacturing, healthcare and business services); align apprenticeships to pathways for further learning and career advancement; and, scale-up effective apprenticeship models. The grants emphasize pre-apprenticeship opportunities to engage younger students earlier, and conversion of completed apprenticeship instruction into college credits. The recently adopted Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) emphasizes apprenticeship as a key element of the new unified strategic state workforce plan to be developed in the year ahead. All signs point to an increasing role for apprenticeships in Connecticut, expanding the number of partners, participants and targeted occupations.

Jobs Funnels

The initial Jobs Funnel was launched as a pilot in Hartford to provide qualified workers opportunities to pursue careers in the building and construction trades. The model has since expanded across Connecticut, with Jobs Funnels programs operating under the aegis of four regional workforce investment boards (WIBs) and the City of New Haven, respectively. State-level coordination is provided through the Office of Workforce Competitiveness at the Connecticut Department of Labor. State general fund dollars have supported Jobs Funnel efforts for several years. A three-year \$5.8 million Green Jobs Innovation Fund USDOL grant (extended to 2015) helped to promote career pathways in “green construction” jobs. That successful effort was cited for several noteworthy and promising practices. These include the effective use of targeted outreach to job candidates, strong partnerships with the organized building trades, significant statewide partnerships among key stakeholders, proactive engagement of women in construction training, employment and innovative local hiring ordinances, specifically in New Haven and Waterbury.

Jobs Funnel services typically include: outreach/recruitment, assessment, case management, pre-employment training, job placement, and retention support services. Since their inception, the various regional funnel initiatives have helped to place more than 3,900 individuals in a variety of construction-related jobs, in both union and non-union settings, and in apprenticeships. The average hourly starting wage for participants who have completed the Jobs Funnel training is approximately \$15-18. The Jobs Funnels are an example of innovative public-private partnerships involving employers, labor, community-based organizations, state and local agencies, non-profits and local funders to address shared objectives.

Incumbent Worker Training

For the program year July 2013 – June 2014 the General Assembly adopted legislation consolidating into a single program the 21st Century Job Training Program administered by the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and the Incumbent Worker Training program operated by the Workforce Investment Boards. The resulting consolidated Incumbent Worker Training program is administered by CTDOL. The program provides critical resources to help Connecticut businesses and employers partially defray the instructional costs of enhancing the skills of current employees. Goals are to sustain economically vital industries with high-growth occupations and assist workers obtain skills to advance their careers. CTDOL Business Service Consultants work

directly with participating companies to develop training projects and locate qualified training providers. Participating employers are required to provide a match of 50% or greater for each program IWT grants are structured to be flexible in meeting the company's training objectives.

In the 2013-14 program year CTDOL expended approximately \$700,000 in Incumbent Worker Training funds, writing a total of 88 training contracts with Connecticut employers. The governing legislation mandates that a minimum of 50% of available state funds go to "new" employers that had not previously participated in the program, thereby encouraging a variety of companies to utilize these resources. Priority is given to high-growth organizations committed to creating career ladders for their front line employees, providing a safe and healthy workplace, and offering wages and benefits that exceed industry averages. CTDOL far surpassed this legislative requirement by expending 81% of available funds with new employers. A total of 2,061 employees participated in these training offerings. That number does not include three statewide contracts executed with Central Connecticut State University's Institute of Technology and Business Development, CONNSTEP, and the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce, respectively, which included training in the Manufacturing, Allied Health, and Green Technology sectors.

Student Success Center

In March 2014 the Board of Regents for Higher Education won a \$500,000 grant from the Kresge Foundation to establish a statewide Student Success Center, working across the state's twelve community colleges, to help more of Connecticut's low-income, first-generation and under-represented students complete college and earn degrees or certificates. Connecticut is one of seven states to establish these centers. Based at Central Connecticut State University, the Student Success Center serves as a statewide hub to support access to, retention in, and graduation from college, promoting effective strategies to support persistence and degree completion. The Center promotes coherence and cohesion between policy and best practices, fostering collaboration among college students, faculty, administrators and staff to develop a culture of academic and personal success for students as they work towards degree and certificate completion.

Go Back to Get Ahead

By 2020 approximately 70% of Connecticut jobs will require post-secondary education. To help address this challenge the Board of Regents for Higher Education in June 2014 launched the *Go Back to Get Ahead* initiative. The initiative targets individuals who had taken college courses before December 2012 but left school prior to completing their degree, or had achieved an associate's degree but not a bachelor's degree, a total population of approximately 65,000 individuals in Connecticut. The initiative provides up to 9 free credits towards degree completion, via courses offered in a classroom setting or online, at the 17 institutions of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system. At the start of the 2014 Fall semester in September, a total of 942 individuals had enrolled in *Go Back to Get Ahead*.

Platform to Employment

The Platform to Employment program – P2E – was launched by The Workplace, Inc., the regional Workforce Investment Board of southwest Connecticut, to assist the long-term unemployed return to work, while addressing employers' needs to recruit skilled workers. P2E is a public-

private partnership providing businesses a risk-free opportunity to evaluate and consider hiring qualified participants during a work experience program. P2E is geared to individuals who have exhausted their unemployment benefits. Participants engage in a structured preparatory program including skills assessment, career readiness workshops, employee assistance services, coaching and other supports. Upon completion participants are helped to find open positions at local companies. Placements occur on a provisional basis, partially subsidized over an eight-week trial period. The expectation is that a company satisfied with a candidate's performance will offer a full-time job. With the support of Governor Malloy, the General Assembly allocated \$3.6 million to implement P2E statewide in 2014-15, intended to serve 500 Connecticut residents. The first statewide P2E class of 100 participants began in September. P2E operates as a partnership of the Connecticut Department of Labor, the Department of Rehabilitation Services and the five regional Workforce Investment Boards, managed statewide by The Workplace, Inc.

PLANNING INITIATIVES

Several planning efforts have been undertaken in the past year to lay the foundation for future strategic workforce innovations. Following is a sample of selected initiatives.

State Plan on Contextualized Learning, Early College and Career Certificate Programs

In 2014 General Assembly charged the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (Public Act No. 14-217, Section 197) to collaborate with Connecticut's regional Workforce Investment Boards to develop a statewide plan and funding proposal to implement, expand, or improve contextualized learning, early college, and career certificate programs – to examine how these strategies can provide cost-effective education and training leading to job placement and career advancement in manufacturing, health care, construction/green industries, and other emerging industry drivers.

Concerns raised by legislative leadership that served as the focus for this plan/report include: What do we know about career opportunities in the targeted industries? What are useful program attributes for each of the targeted strategies? What relevant programs exist in Connecticut in each category? How can these discrete program strategies be aligned systemically across agencies and funding streams, in an effective career pathways framework? What level of resources is needed to support these programs?

A CETC Statewide Plan Work Group was established to take on this assignment. The planning exercise intentionally built on the work of several recent planning efforts, including the Early College Steering Committee, CETC Career Advancement Committee, Program Review and Investigations Committee study of certificate programs, CETC's Career Pathways System paper, the 2014 Legislative Report Card, and the Planning Commission for Higher Education. The Statewide Plan adopted by CETC in December asserts that focused attention on the targeted strategies can help to address employers' needs for skilled workers in key industries and develop the necessary skills of Connecticut's workforce. The CETC-produced plan recommends:

- Creating an Interagency Program Team to coordinate, promote, report on effective contextualized learning programs based on established program standards and outcomes.

- Establishing an Industry and Education Partnership Fund to focus training investments for contextualized learning and career certificate programs, targeting middle-skill jobs.
- Supporting the plan and recommendations of the Early College Steering Committee to expand early college opportunities.
- Developing an accessible information clearinghouse on early college, contextualized learning and career certificate programs.
- Aligning contextualized learning, early college and career certificate programs in a statewide career pathways system within the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act state strategic workforce plan to be developed in 2015.

Connecticut's impending WIOA unified state strategic workforce planning process should integrate early contextualized learning, early college and career certificate programs into a statewide career pathways system responsive to the specific workforce priorities of each industry sector and workers' aspirations for jobs that lead to productive careers and financial security.

Career Pathways Report

In May 2014 the US Departments of Education, Labor and Health and Human Services issued a Request for Information (RFI) concerning Career Pathways. The Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) coordinated a response on CETC's behalf, providing a statewide perspective on career pathways system efforts in Connecticut. That paper was endorsed by CETC for submission in June. Its findings and recommendations lay groundwork for the upcoming planning process to implement the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in Connecticut.

Connecticut's response asserts that the state has an unofficial network of state, regional and local entities in an extensive workforce development system (a "system of systems") that collaborate informally to support career pathways efforts. Many stakeholders can point to exemplary, innovative projects featuring defining career pathways principles, many ongoing and sustained over time. CETC asserts that while Connecticut has considerable experience building career pathways strategies, most relevant efforts occur at program scale and are difficult to sustain over time to achieve maximum impact for jobseekers, workers and employers. The volatile nature of the job market requires regular review of skills and training curricula to ensure that programs align to demand and that students are best prepared to fill job vacancies.

The paper offers several state-level recommendations that will help to inform future WIOA-driven state workforce planning efforts, including:

- Strengthen the state-level leadership role of the State Workforce Development Board to drive career pathways efforts across the myriad agencies/programs/funding streams in the statewide workforce system.
- Ensure that available resources are invested in programs that achieve tangible desirable results. Collect and analyze data at the program level to determine effectiveness and impact on outcomes. Use high-quality performance standards to drive funding decisions and reward for exceptional performance.
- Build effective state-level capacity to collect, analyze and report on accurate, sector-sensitive career pathways-related data to inform planning and accountability.

- Incentivize employers to take more responsibility to pay for and provide training. Increase direct employer investment in training and commitment to job placement and retention for trained, productive workers.
- Inventory training offerings provided by employers, to identify opportunities to leverage/braid private dollars with government funding to maximize training opportunities.
- Build early-college programs on the growing foundation of theme-based career academies (high schools) across Connecticut to focus on careers in key sectors.
- Build bridges between community college continuing education and academic programs at institutional and promote navigation through mentors/case managers.
- Adopt/fund career advising and case management services for career pathway programs.
- Capitalize on Connecticut's strong technical high school system infrastructure by opening up (in off-hours) the school facilities for adult instruction and other training options.
- Develop and maintain an accessible career pathways website that provides step-by-step guidance for potential students and their parents.
- Infuse career content into adult education services to reach lower-level learners at the first stage in career pathway system.

Inventory of Healthcare Initiatives

The Allied Health Workforce Policy Board was established by statute in 2004, charged to conduct research and planning to promote a skilled Connecticut allied health workforce. Since 2011 the Board has operated as a standing committee of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission, serving in a policy advisory role on allied health workforce needs. The Board reports annually to the General Assembly on labor market trends and changes impacting the allied health workforce, offering recommendations for legislative consideration. The Board's *Inventory of Healthcare Initiatives in Connecticut 2014* highlights relevant programs and initiatives statewide. It provides an overview of Connecticut's workforce training landscape in this increasingly important industry sector. The inventory reports on programs operated by state agencies, comprehensive and technical high schools, public and private colleges and universities, Workforce Investment Boards, and various non-profit, employer and labor-sponsored entities. It will be updated regularly going forward.

Early College Steering Committee

The Early College Steering Committee, a joint effort by the Board of Regents for Higher Education and Connecticut State Department of Education, was convened to review early college learning challenges and opportunities, examine best practices, and recommend expansion of early college programs at each of Connecticut's community colleges. Members include representatives of the Board of Regents, Connecticut State Department of Education, Connecticut Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, Connecticut Technical High School System, local school districts, state universities and business. The Steering Committee was charged to identify: high school/college partnership programs in the community college system and joint projects between school districts and colleges statewide; attributes of successful high school/college transition programs; models to take to scale, and funding strategies.

An initial report in December 2013 identified attributes of early college programs and promising efforts across Connecticut. The Steering Committee's updated report in October 2014, includes recommendations for future growth of early college programs, including: collaboration and alignment across K-12, college and workforce efforts; support of statewide policies and legislative changes that reinforce a robust early college system; alignment of early college efforts with other key state strategies, including the Planning Commission on Higher Education and CETC State Plan addressing contextualized learning, early college and career certificate programs; and accelerated development of an aligned longitudinal data system.

Connecticut Jobs Vacancy Survey

The Connecticut Department of Labor's Office of Research (with support from the Office of Workforce Competitiveness) recently conducted the statewide Connecticut Jobs Vacancy Survey, sampling 10,300 Connecticut businesses representing the state's private sector across industry type, labor market area and number of employees. Survey results will be available in February 2015. Forty two percent of companies sampled responded, with good coverage across all survey strata. Businesses were asked to identify job openings for which they were actively recruiting during the late-July/early-August 2014 period. Employer-generated survey results will reveal the apparent actual demand for specific occupations by industry type, geographic location and company size. The results will be particularly useful in focusing workforce policy and strategy responsive to employer-generated information on specific occupations in demand, including upcoming efforts to develop a unified state strategic workforce development plan.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Several major workforce-related initiatives have been undertaken intended to impact significantly the operations of key institutions and/or move the needle to significant outcomes.

Tomorrow's Framework Strategic Action Plan - CT Technical High School System

The Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) statewide system of 16 degree-granting technical high schools and one technical education center serves approximately 10,800 full-time high school students, offering education and training in 36 occupational areas. CTHSS also serves approximately 5,500 part-time adult students in apprenticeship and other programs. In recent years CTHSS has received considerable attention as a valued asset in addressing the state's workforce priorities in critical areas of need.

2012's education reform legislation established a new CTHSS Board, including representatives of businesses and partnering state agencies, to promote and guide CTHSS strategic development. In 2014 Dr. Nivea Torres was appointed Superintendent. Under the leadership of the Board and Superintendent, CTHSS collaborated with numerous partners to develop the *Tomorrow's Framework Strategic Action Plan 2014-2017* to address the CTHSS mission of providing a world class career technical and academic education preparing students for careers in business and industry. *Tomorrow's Framework's* goals are to: partner with business and industry in developing career technical education providing students the skills and work habits to succeed in a dynamic 21st century work environment; align K-12, post-secondary and adult programs in a continuum of educational services resulting in career and college readiness; transform CTHSS via

programs responsive to Connecticut's workforce needs, positioning the system as a leading force in career technical education; and, invest in developing faculty and staff to support the core CTHSS mission. Those goals build on fourteen foundational imperatives, establishing a strategic direction, addressing expectations of students, emphasizing program quality, and focusing on STEM skills, employer responsiveness, structured career exposure for students, strength of faculty and staff, visibility and collaboration.

CTHSS Central Office leadership, CTHSS schools principals and CTHSS faculty are actively engaged in a wide range of partnerships and collaboration with employers, post-secondary institutions, K-12 schools, workforce agencies and others, to meet the aggressive goals set out in the action plan. Much has already been accomplished. Going forward these efforts and partnerships will become increasingly important elements of the state's broad workforce development strategy, particularly in occupations in critical industries demanding specific technical skills.

Connecticut Manufacturing Innovation Fund

In 2014 the General Assembly created a \$30 million Connecticut Manufacturing Fund to support innovation and growth in the advanced manufacturing sector. The fund assists manufacturers develop or modernize critical equipment, support technological advancement, encourage advanced manufacturing research and development, and provide critical workforce training. The objective is to create a center for manufacturing excellence, strengthen the supply chain network of small/medium manufacturing companies, and ensure a productive, flexible, well-trained advanced manufacturing talent pool with competitive skills. The Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) provides administrative oversight, with the counsel and support of an eleven member advisory board, the majority coming directly from manufacturing companies. The Fund encourages company/university research efforts; creates a voucher program to support targeted business development and technical needs; provides funding for access to training and educational programs to develop required workforce skills; provides matching funds for federal grants; and helps attract new manufacturers to Connecticut.

Natural Gas Transmission Workforce Initiative

Connecticut's *Comprehensive Energy Strategy* was produced in 2013. A key feature is the emphasis on moving to natural gas, as a lower-cost, cleaner, more reliable foundation for Connecticut's future energy needs. It lays out a game plan to expand natural gas access to 300,000 Connecticut homes, businesses and other customers. That \$7 billion gas conversion will create demand for a substantial number of skilled workers qualified to do the necessary work building the new natural gas pipeline infrastructure. Workers will be needed across a spectrum of construction services, including civil, construction and operating engineers, logistics, project managers, laborers, pipe fitters, inspectors and safety professionals.

To ensure that state companies and the workforce is ready, Connecticut Construction Industries Association (CCIA) President and CEO (and CETC Chair) Donald Shubert convened a Natural Gas Transmission Workforce Committee, including representatives of the three investor-owned utilities, the Natural Gas Association (NGA), CCIA, contractors, organized building trades, Connecticut Department of Labor, Department of Economic and Community Development, Workforce

Investment Boards and the Connecticut Technical High School System. Initially the committee completed an inventory of all skills required for the jobs and tasks, to ensure contractors know what is needed to train and certify workers involved in the gas conversion. Subsequently, representatives of the utilities and NGA collaborated to develop specific requisite contractor and workforce qualifications to perform gas conversion work under Federal operator qualification (OO) regulations. These efforts led to development of a covered task list for OO in Connecticut (and also in New York, New Jersey and the rest of New England).

This initiative will contribute to efforts of apprenticeship training programs, Jobs Funnels, training providers and contractors to align training efforts and create a pool of companies and workers qualified to perform the impending gas conversion work in Connecticut. Participants in the Natural Gas Transmission Workforce Initiative intend to work together going forward to make sure that Connecticut companies have the skilled and qualified workers they will need to perform the pipeline expansion as it comes on line over the next decade.

P20 WIN Data Sharing System

Connecticut's *Preschool through Twenty and Workforce Information Network* – P20 WIN – represents a groundbreaking approach to education and workforce training-related data sharing in Connecticut. P20 WIN provides a secure data vehicle producing critical information needed to understand patterns over time and inform policy and strategy decisions to improve outcomes of education and training programs for Connecticut students. With this new system, Connecticut can evaluate how well our public education and training programs prepare students for additional education and careers in Connecticut. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) and Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) are the State agencies actively participating in P20 WIN. An inter-agency data governance structure and data sharing agreements support collaborative decision-making about data access and use. As it evolves, P20 WIN will provide a systematic, secure and repeatable process to gather and analyze critical data to understand the impact of investments in education and workforce training programs, leading to better outcomes.

College Readiness and Completion - Implementation of Public Act 12-40

In 2012 the General Assembly enacted Public Act 12-40: An Act Concerning College Readiness and Completion. The law addresses the challenge of having many recent high school graduates unable to qualify for college credit courses upon registering at the state's community colleges, and the limitations of remedial instruction strategies. PA12-40 was intended to match developmental education with the capabilities of incoming community college students, and requires alignment of high school curricula with Common Core Standards. Community colleges were allowed significant latitude in creating courses to meet the new law's requirements. The legislation outlined a three-tiered structure colleges could use to provide developmental instruction:

- Embedded: College-level instruction, with embedded developmental support designed for entering students with 12th grade skills (or close), who are approaching college readiness but require modest remediation.
- Intensive: One semester of developmental education instruction or an intensive readiness experience for entering students with skills below the 12th grade level.

- Transitional: For students who test below the intensive level of readiness.

In 2012-13 the community colleges met with adult education providers, workforce agencies and community-based organizations to explore options. Models for embedded, intensive and transitional strategies were developed and piloted, and the PA 12-40 Advisory Board was established. In 2013-14 embedded and adapted intensive level strategies were launched, expanded placement procedures were put in place and additional funding was pursued. For 2014-15 all community colleges offer three levels of developmental instruction in Math and English studies. \$250,000 was allocated in 2012-13 to develop and test embedded and intensive models, plus \$750,000 for the Bridges to Success initiative focusing on college readiness and high school alignment. \$200,000 was provided in 2013-14 to test transitional strategies. \$2,000,000 was allocated to begin implementing the developmental education effort across the 12 community colleges. \$10,800,000 was provided for FY15 to support implementation, including \$1,972,175 earmarked specifically for transitional strategies.

Particular attention has been focused on the Transitional Strategies tier, dealing with students testing well below college readiness. The community colleges developed collaborative partnerships with local/regional adult education programs. Each community college partners with local/regional adult education providers to offer short-term “boot camps” and semester-long remedial Math and English courses, at no cost to transitional tier students. Strategies include: cohort groups/learning communities; peer mentoring; co-enrollment in First Year Experience courses to address time management, study skills, research methods, career exploration, financial aid, while earning credits; case management; co-teaching; tutoring, etc. Workforce readiness options are available for students unable to test at the intensive level after two attempts.

Challenges noted informally to date include: assuring sufficient funding and resources to sustain new models of instruction and support; collecting and using better data to inform/adjust program strategy; tracking student success over time across multiple semesters; and developing effective practices while allowing for local flexibility. Results from an independent evaluation of the developmental education pilots will be available in 2015. Program adjustments are anticipated based on analysis of outcomes achieved.

Next Generation Connecticut

The Next Generation Connecticut initiative is intended to significantly expand educational opportunities, research and innovation in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines at the University of Connecticut. The broad objective is to leverage UConn’s strengths and resources to help build Connecticut’s future workforce, create jobs and invigorate the state economy. The cornerstone of the effort is a major increase in student enrollment, faculty expansion, development of facilities for enhanced STEM research and teaching, and expansion of critical programs at UConn’s Hartford and Stamford campuses.

Next Generation Connecticut aims to transform UConn into an elite public research institution, fueling Connecticut’s economy with new technologies, training highly skilled graduates, creating new companies, patents, licenses and high-wage jobs. Components of the plan include: hiring

research and teaching faculty in STEM disciplines; building research facilities for materials science, physics, biology, engineering, cognitive science, genomics and related disciplines; constructing teaching laboratories; creating a STEM Honors program to attract high achieving undergraduate students; upgrading aging infrastructure; expanding Stamford degree programs; providing student housing in Stamford; and relocating the Greater Hartford campus to downtown Hartford. This aggressive investment hopes to dramatically increase UConn STEM research and graduates, producing innovations and inventions contributing directly to sustainable economic growth in Connecticut, with high-wage jobs for a STEM-skilled and educated workforce.

Transform CSCU 2020

In 2013 the Board of Regents for Higher Education launched an extensive strategic planning process, *Transform CSCU 2020*, a multi-year plan adopted by the Board this year. The objective is to unite the CSCU public colleges and universities in an integrated system to: increase student accessibility and affordability, position CSCU to serve as a major economic engine, and promote a rigorous, high-quality higher education experience for all CSCU students. The plan focuses on: developing a long-term tuition plan to help students plan for the cost of college; improving student retention rates and increase enrollment; building high-tech smart classrooms to enhance learning; streamlining core administrative functions; improving system-wide credit transfer to reduce time to graduation; expanding early college programs to reduce remediation, decreasing degree completion time and connecting with students who might not consider college; aligning workforce development efforts with industry growth sectors; strengthening partnerships with business and industry; improving teacher training programs and supports; expanding on advanced manufacturing programs; addressing deferred maintenance at CSCU institutions; and developing a system-wide academic/facilities master strategy.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

An array of state and local educators, workforce professionals, businesses and employers, community leaders, philanthropies and other stakeholders are engaged in a range of innovative efforts across Connecticut to improve the readiness of Connecticut's young people for successful and productive careers. Following is a small sample of illustrative examples.

Early College Programs

The label "early college" program encompasses various models focusing on the transition of high school students to college and into the workforce. The premise of the early college strategy is that all high school students should pursue some form of post-secondary education, recognizing that multiple pathways lead to success. The mix of strategies under the early college umbrella ranges from individual high school students taking college courses in a college setting or at their home high school, to high schools where all students graduate with an industry-validated certificate or associate's degree, with multi-year curriculum pathways, supports and experiences. Some early college programs focus exclusively on academics and college readiness, while others emphasize career pathways and exposure to career options. Successful early college programs rely on collaborations and partnerships among school districts, high schools, community colleges, universities and businesses and employers.

Early college initiatives have proliferated in Connecticut, reflecting these strong partnerships. Examples of innovative efforts with potential for replication include: New Haven Public Schools developmental initiative with Gateway Community College; Pathways in Technology (P-TECH) Early College High School (Norwalk Early College Academy); Asnuntuck Community College Fifth Year Program with East Granby School System; Waterbury Career Academy partnership with Naugatuck Valley Community College; Fundamentals of Early Childhood Education program of the Meriden School District and Middlesex Community College; and, Manchester Community College's College Career Pathways program. It is anticipated that these and similar early college efforts will expand going forward. The Early College Steering Committee will continue to promote early college program efforts in Connecticut going forward. CETC will report annually on the progress of these efforts to the General Assembly.

Norwalk Early College Academy

Norwalk Early College Academy (NECA) formally opened its doors in August 2014 with approximately 90 students in Grade 9. Built on the IBM Pathways in Technology (P-TECH) model, NECA will add one grade per year, ultimately serving grades 9 – 14, enabling students to earn both a high school diploma and a no-cost associate's degree in Applied Science within six years from Norwalk Community College. The model puts young adults on a path to a career in a growth industry. NECA graduates will acquire the skills and knowledge needed to continue their studies and/or begin careers in a range of competitive jobs in the Information Technology (IT) industry, with good pathways to future career opportunities.

NECA is collaboration of Norwalk Public Schools, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Norwalk Community College and IBM Corporation, with the support of other private and public sector partners. It is open at no cost to all Norwalk students. Admission is by lottery and students of all abilities are eligible. No testing or screening is required for admission. NECA enables students to begin their college and professional lives quickly, with more support than the traditional school-to-work pathway.

NECA students take regular high school courses required to earn a high school diploma. They receive individual support and guidance as they plan their high school years and begin taking college courses. Students receive mentoring support and internship opportunities to help prepare them for college and competitive careers in IT. They take courses with college faculty during normal school hours. Students participate in real-world work experiences to learn teamwork and develop the skills needed for personal growth and professional success. Students explore career options through internship, coaching and mentoring opportunities provided by IBM Corporation and other local companies. Upon graduation students may continue studies at Norwalk Community College or apply to four-year institutions.

Waterbury Career Academy

Following several years of planning by community leaders, educators, workforce system representatives and local businesses, construction began in 2011 on the \$65 million state-of-the-art facility for the new Waterbury Career Academy, a high school with a curriculum intended to address the workforce priorities of industry in Waterbury and surrounding municipalities for tal-

ented, educated, skilled future employees. The Academy operates within the Waterbury Public Schools system. Responding to the demands of local businesses and employers, four educational strands focus academic/classroom instruction and career readiness preparation: Computer Information Technologies, Engineering/Manufacturing Technologies, Human Services, and Health Services. Industry partners were recruited to establish Advisory Panels to assist with curriculum development, student selection criteria, and ongoing technical assistance and support.

The Academy opened in September 2013, welcoming an initial class of 9th grade students. Four hundred fifty seven 9th and 10th graders are currently enrolled, with a new 9th grade class of 240 students scheduled to enroll in September 2015 as the school builds to full capacity. Grade 9 students explore each of the four strands before choosing an area of focus. Each strand offers three career pathway options: employment following high school graduation with one of several certifications; two-year community college degree track with college credits; four-year college degree track with college credits. Honors and Advanced Placement courses are offered to qualifying students. World language courses are offered. The Academy has an articulation agreement offering 8 dual credit courses with Naugatuck Valley Community College. All 10th grade students have the opportunity to earn at least 3 college credits in their chosen strand.

Summer Youth Employment Program

Connecticut's five regional Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) strive to offer youth aged 14-20 meaningful employment experiences. Various national studies document the positive impact importance of structured work experience on academic performance and earnings. Since 2007 between 4,300 – 7,400 young people annually have been able to participate in the state's Summer Youth Employment program, coordinated statewide by the WIBs. In FY2015 the program was supported by a mix of \$5.5 million in State funding, \$637,500 from the Department of Children and Families, and a variety of leveraged private funds totaling nearly \$1.9 million. Unfortunately no Federal funding has been available to support the summer jobs program since 2010. In summer 2014 a total of 5,025 youth participated. For many it was a first job. This was a modest reduction from the 5,270 participants in summer 2013, due to a combination of reduced leveraged funding, the increased minimum wage, and placement of some youth in year-round employment-based programs. The larger underlying story is the fact that more than 6,600 eligible Connecticut youth were unable to participate in 2014 due to limited funding and resources.

Manufacturing Mania

October 2014 marked the third annual *Connecticut. Dream It. Do It.* Manufacturing Month, proclaimed by Governor Malloy to recognize the importance of the manufacturing industry to Connecticut and to showcase manufacturing career opportunities statewide to middle school students, their teachers, counseling staff and parents. With advanced, computer-driven tools and streamlined, clean and brightly lit facilities, manufacturing today is more advanced than ever before. So too are the talents, skills and teamwork required of the next generation of Connecticut's manufacturing workforce.

During Manufacturing Month, *Connecticut. Dream It. Do It.* coordinated "Manufacturing Mania" events at The Aqua Turf Club in Southington on National Manufacturing Day, October 3, and two,

back-to-back events at Webster Bank Arena in Bridgeport, October 15-16. Activities were designed to expose middle school students and teachers to the wide variety of careers that today's manufacturing offers. At the events, students were introduced to manufacturing through team-based activities that replicate the manufacturing process. They experienced the full production stream from concept, to design, to fabrication, to quality control, saw 3-D printing in action, and talked with many Connecticut manufacturers about advances in manufacturing technology and future career opportunities. More than 600 students participated in this year's Manufacturing Mania events, along with 40 companies and other exhibitors.

Throughout Manufacturing Month, tours of manufacturing facilities, open houses at colleges and the state's technical high schools, and expos hosted by organizations such as the Aerospace Components Manufacturers and the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund, helped Connecticut students learn about manufacturing and the career pathways it offers. Overall participation in various events included approximately 1,250 middle school students; 1,300 high school students, 88 educators; and 60 manufacturers. The activities provide a foundation for students, schools, employees and employers to foster the next wave of Yankee ingenuity needed to make Connecticut manufacturing companies more innovative, more productive, and more competitive in the global market.

Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative

The Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative brings together leaders and stakeholders from key systems – education, youth development and workforce development – to improve outcomes for “opportunity youth”, defined as 6-24 year olds lacking a high school diploma, or who have a diploma but are not in school and not working, estimated at 6,000 youth in Hartford. The effort is one of 21 grantees nationally of the Aspen Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund. A collective impact approach is used to demonstrate best practices to improve outcomes and scale-up effective practices across systems. The resulting comprehensive plan is expected to decrease the number of Hartford youth disconnected from education and employment.

Primary success indicators are post-secondary credentials and/or two- and four-year degrees obtained, and securing employment in a targeted sectors/career field. Capital Region Education Council offers contextualized learning to prepare justice-involved high school dropouts for the GED, offering industry credentials and internships. Blue Hills Civic Association partners with Capital Community College to offer an enhanced certificate and associate degree program for allied health careers, with Success Coaches creating individual service plans and offering financial aid counseling. Our Piece of the Pie partners with Asnuntuck Community College to deliver contextual learning including occupational skills instruction in manufacturing, welding and electronics, leading to certificates relevant to manufacturing careers.

Jobs for America's Graduates

Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) is a state-based national program dedicated to preventing dropping out of school by young people who are most at-risk. JAG operates in 31 states, and in more than three decades has delivered consistent, compelling results. Key outcomes nationally include a 91% graduation rate, doubling the rate that at-risk youth get jobs, and tripling the rate at which they get full-time jobs. JAG operates within partner school districts to deliver the prov-

en JAG professional-skills curriculum as a one-credit elective course. The program focuses on personal engagement and accountability, education and training needed for in-demand careers, and employment. JAG also includes mentoring, project-based learning, community engagement and 12 months of post-graduation follow-up.

JAG CT launched in Connecticut in 2014 as a program of the Hartford Consortium for Higher Education, working in partnership with local school districts to serve high school juniors and seniors. JAG CT currently operates in two New Britain and two New Haven schools, Manchester High School and East Hartford High School. Goals are high school graduation, post-secondary education, and sustained employment. JAG CT operates under a contract with the Connecticut Department of Labor and funding from Court Support Services Division (Connecticut Judicial Branch), Department of Children and Families, Department of Social Services, Department of Economic and Community Development, and Office of Policy and Management.

INTEGRATED WORKORCE SYSTEM

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

In July 2014 the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act was signed into law. WIOA passed both houses of Congress on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis. The new law maintains the basic structure of WIA (i.e., an occupational training title; Wagner-Peyser services; an adult basic education/literacy/English language acquisition title; Vocational Rehabilitation), and does not create a single block grant or consolidate current funding streams. WIOA highlights include:

- **State and Local Plans**: Requires a single, unified state plan covering all core programs, describing the State's overall workforce development strategy and how it will meet identified skill needs for workers, job seekers and employers. Local plans must align to the State plan, and describe how local services align to regional labor market needs.
- **Workforce Investment Boards**: Maintains structure of state and local workforce boards, requiring a business majority and chair. The number of required members is reduced.
- **Performance Measures**: Creates single set of common measures for adults across core programs, and common measures across youth programs. Adult measures include: unsubsidized employment; median earnings; receipt of secondary diploma or postsecondary credential; skills gains toward a credential or employment; employer engagement.
- **American Job Centers**: Requires State boards to establish criteria for local boards to assess the effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility, and continuous improvement of American Job Centers at least every three years.
- **Employment and Training Activities**: Eliminates "sequence of services," combining core and intensive services into a new career services category. Signals an interest in several best practices, including: career pathways; sector partnerships; industry-recognized certificates and credentials linked to in-demand occupations.
- **Data and Accountability**: Requires a revised performance system, making all programs accountable for the same core metrics.
- **Governor's Set-Aside**: Restores the statewide funding set-aside to 15 percent.

State Workforce Board

WIOA lays out responsibilities for the State Workforce Board, charged to:

- Develop the unified State workforce plan.
- Recommend aligned policies and programs to support a comprehensive workforce system.
- Develop guidance for continuous improvement of the workforce development system
- Develop and update comprehensive performance accountability measures.
- Identify and disseminate best practices.
- Develop and review statewide policies to coordinate service provision through the one-stops.
- Develop strategies for technological improvements.
- Develop allocation formulas to distribute formula funds to local areas.
- Prepare annual reports.
- Develop statewide workforce and labor market information system.

Unified State Plan

Over the next several months Connecticut will embark on the process of creating the required new unified state workforce plan. The state workforce board (CETC) is charged to play the lead role to assist the Governor in developing the unified state workforce plan. CETC is expected to engage in an extensive planning process with broad stakeholder participation. Stakeholders include state agencies that implement the programs in the plan; advocacy organizations for the programs' customers, including business, labor, and community-based organizations; local workforce development boards; local program providers, and others. The process must include a range of opportunities for stakeholders to provide input and comment on drafts, including multiple locations and communication methods.

Preparing the new unified state workforce development plan is a major opportunity for Connecticut. WIOA emphasizes sector partnerships, career pathways, cross-program data and measurement, and job-driven investments. It encourages strategies that support economic growth and will help a wide range of workers advance in their careers. The state can use the planning process to describe the workforce development system Connecticut truly needs and show how WIOA and other state and federal programs can achieve that vision. Rather than a compliance document, the new state plan can serve as a playbook to help workers and businesses succeed. Broad stakeholder engagement during the planning process will ensure that the plan is supported by those who will implement its strategies and those intended to benefit. The basic structure for the new state plan consists of a broad strategic component, and operational elements consistent with the strategic framework. The strategic section must include the state's vision, goals, and strategies to prepare a skilled workforce and close skills gaps. CETC has lead responsibility for this portion of the plan. Key strategic elements include analysis and description of: state economic conditions; the state's workforce, including educational and skill levels; workforce development efforts in the state; the state's strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce; and, a strategy to align programs and other resources. The operational planning elements – including state operating systems and policies, and program-specific requirements – must identify programmatic steps the state will take to implement the strategies. Operational elements will be developed by relevant state agencies.

Key WIOA Strategies

WIOA highlights sector partnerships as a key strategy to meet the needs of employers, workers, and jobseekers. A sector partnership organizes employers and stakeholders from an industry cluster into a working group focused on shared goals and human resources needs. The state plan must describe key elements of sector partnerships that will be pursued, and how the development, convening, and implementation of local area sector partnerships will be supported.

WIOA promotes career pathways as a key workforce development strategy, to align and integrate education, job training, counseling and support services to create accelerated pathways to postsecondary education credentials and employment for in-demand occupations. Career pathways must align with skill needs of industries statewide or at the regional level. States can use sector partnerships to inform the development of career pathways, to identify and define industry skill standards, curriculum, and certifications that should be part of career pathways.

WIOA focuses on data analysis and performance measurement, proposing common metrics applicable across programs and training providers. These common metrics can also be applied to other programs. Besides employment and earnings measures, the common metrics include a postsecondary credential attainment measure. These requirements provide the opportunity to use cross-agency data and measurement to align workforce and education programs with employers' skill needs.

State investment in education and training should reflect the jobs in the state. Middle-skill jobs account for a significant share of Connecticut's labor market, yet we lack sufficient workers trained to the middle-skill level, and invest far less in middle-skill training than other levels of higher education. The state plan must include an analysis of both employers' and workers' skill needs, and how well state investments in education and training match those needs. The state plan must identify skill gaps and guide state investments in education and training, indicating how state investments in middle-skill programs will close skill gaps.

WIOA emphasizes training directly connected to jobs, including incumbent worker training, on-the-job training, apprenticeship, and other types of work-based learning. By definition, sector partnerships and career pathways are also job-driven. The state plan must identify how training directly connected to jobs will be part of the strategy to close the skills gap.

State Planning Process

The impending state planning process to be pursued in 2015 by CETC and key workforce development stakeholders provides an opportunity for policymakers to commit to a vision and strategy. To be achievable, Connecticut's unified state workforce plan must articulate how different programs, agencies, and stakeholders will work together to execute key strategies, including sector partnerships, career pathways, cross-program data and measurement, and job-driven investments. As CETC embarks on this planning effort in 2015, it will employ a broad planning process to create a state plan structured around a vision of a workforce system that will help a wide range of workers and industries prosper.

Conclusion

CETC will be proactive in 2015 to support Governor Malloy's leadership in refining an effective, coordinated workforce development system and strategy for Connecticut.

Information about CETC's work, including the efforts discussed in the 2015 Annual Plan, is available at: www.ctdol.state.ct.us/OWC/CETC/CETC.htm.

Or contact: Office of Workforce Competitiveness,
 200 Folly Brook Boulevard
 Wethersfield, CT 06109 (860-263-6523).