

STATE OF
CONNECTICUT

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

Unified State Plan

2016 - 2020

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Disclaimer: The United States Department of Labor and United States Department of Education have not yet issued final regulations implementing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This draft version of the Connecticut Unified State Plan is based upon WIOA's statutory provisions and the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking issued by the federal agencies last year. The final implementing regulations are expected to be issued in spring of 2016. Because the Connecticut WIOA Unified State Plan must comply with WIOA and its final implementing regulations, this draft version is subject to change.

I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE – UNIFIED STATE PLAN

Select whether the State is submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that covers the six core programs.

The State of Connecticut has opted to submit a Unified State Plan encompassing the six core programs covered by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) – Adult Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program, Wagner-Peyser Act Program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation Program. In addition to the six aforementioned core programs, the Connecticut Unified State Plan also includes reference to the linkages for various programs administered by the Connecticut Department of Social Services (CTDSS). These programs include the following; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), including the SNAP Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) program, the Community Services Block Grant and the Child Support Program.

Background

Coordination of Connecticut’s planning efforts has been provided by the Connecticut Department of Labor, Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC), in conjunction with: Governor Malloy’s Office, State Agencies with administrative responsibility for the core programs under WIOA [Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL), Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), and Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)], various programs operated by the Connecticut Department of Social Services, local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), and the State Workforce Board - Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC). With CETC’s endorsement, OWC and State and Local partners established four Work Groups in spring 2015 to allow for a wide variety of stakeholder input into Connecticut’s WIOA planning process. These include:

- Service Design and Delivery Work Group – Focusing on the effective and efficient operations of Connecticut’s American Jobs Centers One-Stop career system.
- Technology, Data, Outcomes Work Group – Addressing the collection and reporting of data across core WIOA programs to support transparent performance accountability.
- Business Engagement Work Group – Proposing actions to promote strong employer-led industry partnerships, sector strategies and career pathways initiatives.
- Administration/Governance Work Group – Responsible for ensuring that requisite administrative policies, agreements, procedures and structures are in place to support and sustain an aligned and integrated statewide workforce system.

Each Work Group is co-led by senior managers from CTDOL and Connecticut’s five WDBs. Work Group participants include designated representatives of key State agency partners and each of the five WDBs. Several CETC members volunteered to participate on the Work Groups as well. Collectively the work groups and State agency partners contributed the specific content comprising this Unified State Plan. In addition, OWC and State Agencies and local WDBs solicited input from businesses, job seekers, Chief Elected Officials, community-based organizations, educators, and philanthropists.

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

The Unified State Plan must include a Strategic Planning Elements section that analyzes the State’s current economic environment and identifies the State’s overall vision for its workforce development system. The required elements in this section allow the State to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify successful strategies for aligning workforce development programs to support economic growth. Unless otherwise noted, all Strategic Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs.

(a) (1) (A) Economic Analysis: Unified State Plan must include an analysis of economic conditions and trends in CT (including sub-state regions and any specific economic areas identified by the State).

Our shared history in Connecticut demonstrates a commitment to new ideas and betterment of the old. From the invention of the sewing machine to decades of leading the insurance industry to the development and production of fuel cells, we in Connecticut have spent centuries showing the world how to improve. From world-ranking productivity to one of the highest levels of foreign direct investment, Connecticut models the attributes that are defining the modern economy. As we move further into the 21st century, Connecticut is dedicated to continuing to innovate and live up to our rich history as a national and world leader.

Connecticut’s strength starts with its people. We have the third most educated workforce in the nation, as well as the healthiest residents and the highest per capita income. We are a community of forward-thinkers, innovators, and researchers. By aligning education more closely with the needs of the private sector, Connecticut is ensuring that future generations have the skills to transform our world.

Connecticut also possesses an unparalleled quality of life. The abundance of natural resources, extensive network of cultural and creative assets, and variety of communities make Connecticut a great place to live and do business. Our location is ideal for residents and businesses alike, with ready access to major markets, financial centers, and colleges and universities. Within a one-day drive from Central Connecticut is one-third of the U.S. economy and two-thirds of the Canadian economy, making Connecticut one of the best locations in the nation.¹

Connecticut Rankings in the United States ²	
Healthy Residents	1 st
Share of Finance & Insurance Jobs	3 rd
Advanced Degrees per Capita	3 rd
State Innovation	4 th
Productivity per Capita	4 th
Business Research & Development per Capita	5 th
Scientists & Engineers per Capita	5 th
Energy Efficiency	6 th
Venture Capital Deals per 1 Million Residents	7 th
Patents per 100,000 workers	7 th

¹ CT Economic Development Strategy, CT Department of Economic and Community Development

² Eversource, 2015 Connecticut Economic Review

On February 3, 2016, Governor Dannel P. Malloy gave his State of the State Address to the House of Representatives at the State Capitol. For the most part he addressed the need for change, presenting five budget principles: limit our spending to available resources; address unsustainable and post-employment costs; prioritize funding for core services; and hold state agencies accountable to the public and state legislature for their results. But he also recognized that progress is happening in Connecticut illustrated by these examples:

As a result of Connecticut's concerted efforts to grow its economy, the private sector has grown more than 80,000 jobs in the last five years.

Since July of 2015, Connecticut has secured employers such as Synchrony Financial and welcomed new employers like Serta Simmons from Massachusetts and MC Credit Partners from New York. These employers alone will create and retain more than 700 jobs in Connecticut.

In January 2016 Electric Boat announced plans to add 800 new jobs to its workforce this year and 4,000 jobs in the years to come.

Connecticut has held onto major employers such as United Technologies and Sikorsky along with their 24,000 employees.

Connecticut is supporting more small businesses than ever before. In 2015 Connecticut's Small Business Express Program worked with more than 230 businesses to create or retain more than 4,400 jobs.

In a special session last fall, Connecticut's Legislature made changes to its tax code that both parties agreed were necessary to help our business community. Because of this, employers can continue their strong pace of hiring and investing in the new innovative economy that will drive us into the future.

Connecticut's community colleges and regents system has answered the challenge for precision manufacturing training. The University of Connecticut has increased its engineering school capacity by fifty percent, helping meet the demand for technology and manufacturing job openings across Connecticut.

The Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF) has launched two new programs geared specifically to training. One of those programs has already assisted 88 companies in training their workforce.

Connecticut's public school teachers are working hard as well. Test scores are up; graduation rates have increased; and we're closing in on the achievement gap every year.

Housing is more affordable; last year alone Connecticut funded more than 11,000 units of housing.

Connecticut is the first state in the nation to end chronic veteran homelessness and this year will end chronic homelessness for everyone.

And lastly, crime in Connecticut is at a 48-year low. Violent crime is down again from the previous year; the prison population has reached new lows and this year Connecticut closed its fourth prison.

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| <p>(i) <u>Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations</u> – Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.</p> |
|---|

A Detailed Look at Connecticut's Recovery

Connecticut's economic recovery has been progressing slower than the nation, but faster than some of its neighboring states. The low point of Connecticut's recession was in February 2010, but only recently has the state come close to the employment levels it experienced prior to the recession. As of July 2015, it has been 65 months into recovery. Exhibit 1 shows a year-by-year breakdown of growth in nonfarm employment since the trough. This gives us a better idea of how each industry has shaped the state's

current situation. Exhibit 2 provides a visual representation of where each industry was at during each year of the recovery.

The first year of recovery started out strong with an increase of 17,100 jobs. The momentum has been slowly tapering off with each year into recovery. From 2013 to 2014, Connecticut added 12,500 nonfarm jobs, a growth rate of .8%.

Four of the major industries have provided steady growth year-over-year throughout the recovery. Leisure and hospitality has had the largest yearly average percentage increase at 3%, while professional and business services has had the largest average of jobs added each year at 5,300. The education and health services industry has experienced an average of 4,500 added each year of the recovery. Trade, transportation, and utilities is the other sector that has shown consistent growth year-over-year.

Exhibit 1 Growth in Recovery of Annual Connecticut Nonfarm Employment (in thousands)

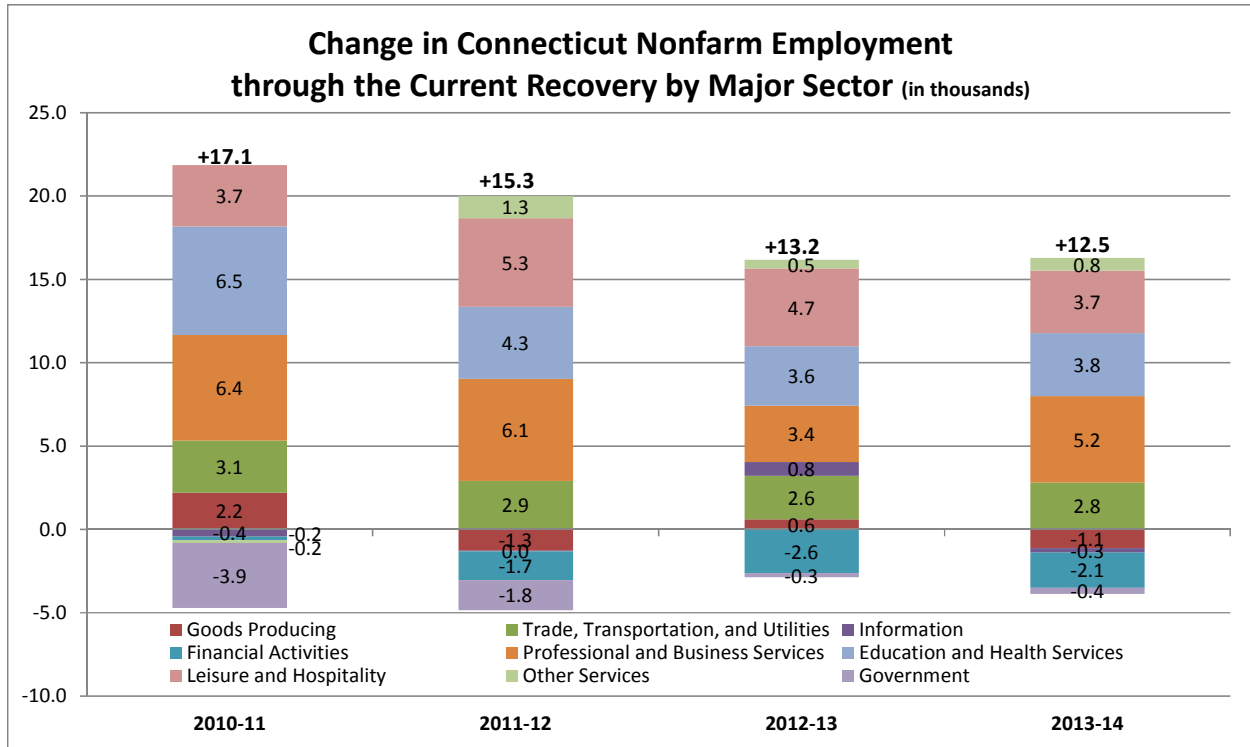
Connecticut Employment	Trough 2010	Recovery 2011	Recovery 2012	Recovery 2013	Recovery 2014	Change 2010-11	Change 2011-12	Change 2012-13	Change 2013-14	% Change 2010-11	% Change 2011-12	% Change 2012-13	% Change 2013-14
Total Nonfarm	1,608.0	1,625.1	1,640.4	1,653.6	1,666.1	17.1	15.3	13.2	12.5	1.1%	0.9%	0.8%	0.8%
Goods Producing	215.4	217.6	216.3	216.9	215.8	2.2	-1.3	0.6	-1.1	1.0%	-0.6%	0.3%	-0.5%
Construction, Nat. Res., & Mining	50.6	52.1	52.2	54.3	56.1	1.5	0.1	2.1	1.8	3.0%	0.2%	4.0%	3.3%
Manufacturing	164.8	165.5	164.2	162.6	159.7	0.7	-1.3	-1.6	-2.9	0.4%	-0.8%	-1.0%	-1.8%
Durable Goods	127.3	128.5	128.5	127.2	124.3	1.2	0.0	-1.3	-2.9	0.9%	0.0%	-1.0%	-2.3%
Nondurable Goods	37.5	37.0	35.7	35.4	35.4	-0.5	-1.3	-0.3	0.0	-1.3%	-3.5%	-0.8%	0.0%
Service Providing	1,392.6	1,407.5	1,424.1	1,436.7	1,450.3	14.9	16.6	12.6	13.6	1.1%	1.2%	0.9%	0.9%
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	289.8	292.9	295.8	298.4	301.3	3.1	2.9	2.6	2.8	1.1%	1.0%	0.9%	0.9%
Wholesale Trade	62.7	63.0	63.2	63.1	63.0	0.3	0.2	-0.1	-0.1	0.5%	0.3%	-0.2%	-0.2%
Retail Trade	178.2	180.2	182.2	183.6	185.6	2.0	2.0	1.4	2.0	1.1%	1.1%	0.8%	1.1%
Transportation & Warehousing	41.0	41.9	43.0	44.2	45.3	0.9	1.1	1.2	1.1	2.2%	2.6%	2.8%	2.5%
Utilities	7.9	7.8	7.6	7.5	7.4	-0.1	-0.2	-0.1	-0.1	-1.3%	-2.6%	-1.3%	-1.3%
Information	31.7	31.3	31.3	32.1	31.8	-0.4	0.0	0.8	-0.3	-1.4%	-0.1%	2.7%	-0.8%
Financial Activities	135.2	135.0	133.3	130.7	128.6	-0.2	-1.7	-2.6	-2.1	-0.1%	-1.3%	-2.0%	-1.6%
Finance and Insurance	116.3	116.4	114.4	111.8	109.4	0.1	-2.0	-2.6	-2.4	0.1%	-1.7%	-2.3%	-2.1%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	18.9	18.7	18.8	19.0	19.3	-0.2	0.1	0.2	0.3	-1.1%	0.5%	1.1%	1.6%
Professional and Business Services	190.7	197.1	203.2	206.6	211.8	6.4	6.1	3.4	5.2	3.3%	3.1%	1.7%	2.5%
Prof., Sci., & Tech. Serv.	86.7	88.8	90.3	92.0	95.4	2.1	1.5	1.7	3.4	2.4%	1.7%	1.9%	3.7%
Management of Comp. & Ent.	26.3	27.4	29.1	29.5	30.6	1.1	1.7	0.4	1.1	4.2%	6.2%	1.4%	3.7%
Admin. & Waste Serv.	77.7	80.8	83.9	85.1	85.8	3.1	3.1	1.2	0.7	4.0%	3.8%	1.4%	0.8%
Education and Health Services	306.9	313.3	317.6	321.2	325.0	6.4	4.3	3.6	3.8	2.1%	1.4%	1.1%	1.2%
Educational Services	59.2	60.9	61.6	62.2	63.5	1.7	0.7	0.6	1.3	2.9%	1.1%	1.0%	2.1%
Health Care & Social Assistance	247.7	252.4	256.0	259.0	261.5	4.7	3.6	3.0	2.5	1.9%	1.4%	1.2%	1.0%
Social Assistance	45.6	47.5	49.1	50.8	52.8	1.9	1.6	1.7	2.0	4.2%	3.4%	3.5%	3.9%
Leisure and Hospitality	133.6	137.3	142.6	147.3	151.0	3.7	5.3	4.7	3.7	2.8%	3.9%	3.3%	2.5%
Arts, Entertainment, & Rec.	23.6	24.0	24.9	25.8	26.6	0.4	0.9	0.9	0.8	1.7%	3.7%	3.6%	3.1%
Accommodation & Food Serv.	110.0	113.3	117.8	121.5	124.4	3.3	4.5	3.7	2.9	3.0%	4.0%	3.1%	2.4%
Other Services	60.5	60.4	61.7	62.2	63.0	-0.2	1.3	0.5	0.8	-0.3%	2.2%	0.9%	1.2%
Government	244.2	240.3	238.5	238.2	237.9	-3.9	-1.8	-0.3	-0.4	-1.6%	-0.7%	-0.1%	-0.2%
Federal	19.7	18.0	17.6	17.3	17.4	-1.7	-0.4	-0.3	0.1	-8.6%	-2.2%	-1.7%	0.6%
State	67.4	67.2	66.8	66.9	67.0	-0.2	-0.4	0.1	0.1	-0.3%	-0.6%	0.1%	0.1%
Local*	157.1	155.1	154.1	154.0	153.4	-2.0	-1.0	-0.1	-0.6	-1.3%	-0.6%	-0.1%	-0.4%

*Includes Indian tribal government employment

Source: B.L.S. Current Employment Statistics

Meanwhile, two industries have been a drag on the current recovery. The employment levels in financial activities and government have been decreasing year-over-year. Government started in 2010 to 2011 with its largest drop of 3,900 jobs and has been slowing down its job losses with only 400 from 2013 to 2014. Local government is the largest subsector of government and includes Indian tribal employment. Financial activities are showing an opposite trend. The sector only lost 200 jobs the initial year of recovery, but the most recent year-over-year figure shows it lost 2,100 jobs.

Exhibit 2



(ii) Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations – Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.

Industry Employment Projections Short-Term

The current short-term projections developed by the Department of Labor’s Office of Research are for the two-year period from the third quarter of 2014 to the third quarter of 2016 are presented in Exhibit 3. Connecticut is expected to continue on its rebound from the recent recession over the period. The average annual growth rate is expected to be 0.7%. This will potentially bring the employment level to 1,823,049 by the third quarter of 2016.

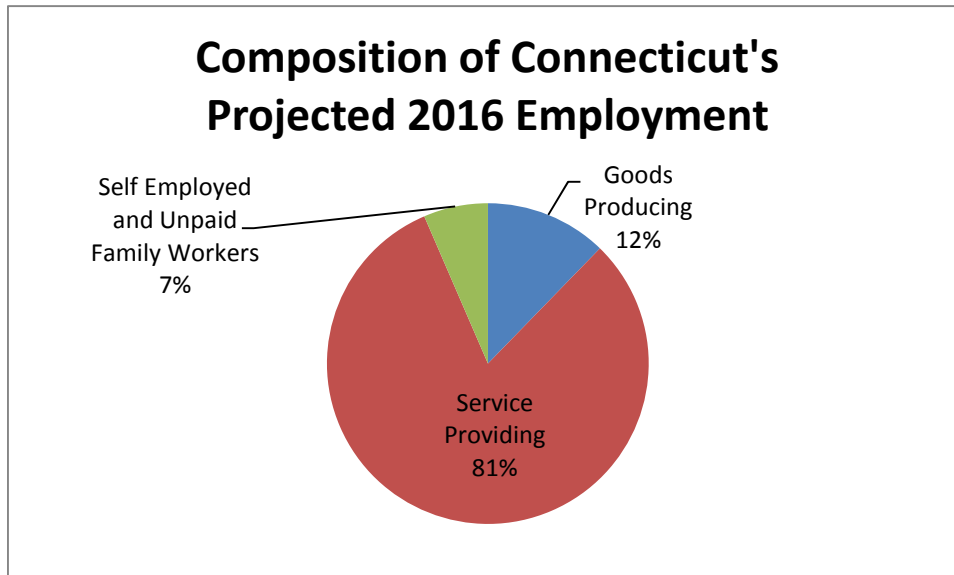
The goods producing industries are expected to contract at an annual average rate of 0.6%. The largest contributor to this is the manufacturing industry. Over the two-year period, it is expected to drop by 5,454 jobs. Construction has a brighter outlook, as it is projected to grow on average 2.2% annually.

The much larger service providing industries are forecasted to grow 0.9% on an annual average basis. Exhibit 4 shows the extent to which service providing industries make up Connecticut’s employment. The projected growth is largely aided by education and health services. The industry is expected to grow 1.4% annually, keeping with recent trends. Other significant contributions to the anticipated employment growth are the trade, transportation, and utilities, professional and business services, and leisure and hospitality sectors. Information, financial activities, and government are all likely to shrink over the next two years.

Exhibit 3

Industry	2014 Employment	2016 Projected Employment	Avg. Annual Growth Rate (%)
Total All Industries	1,799,082	1,823,049	0.7
Goods Producing	226,341	223,520	-0.6
Natural Resources and Mining	7,098	7,100	0.0
Construction	59,611	62,242	2.2
Manufacturing	159,632	154,178	-1.7
Service Providing	1,455,087	1,481,366	0.9
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	296,252	299,374	0.5
Information	32,050	31,959	-0.1
Financial Activities	129,566	128,322	-0.5
Professional and Business Services	214,718	220,389	1.3
Education and Health Services	446,494	458,814	1.4
Leisure and Hospitality	171,027	177,329	1.8
Other Services (except Government)	76,000	76,419	0.3
Government	88,980	88,760	-0.1

Exhibit 4



Occupational Employment Forecast Short-Term

Connecticut’s occupational employment is expected to grow by 23,967 jobs over the 2014-2016 projections period. Exhibit 5 presents these projections by major occupational category. The major categories with the largest employment change are food preparation and serving related, education, training, and library, personal care and service, and building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations. Exhibit 6 and 7 list the fastest growing and shrinking occupations based on the minor occupation group.

Exhibit 5

Occupation	2014 Employment	2016 Projected Employment	Emp. Change
Total	1,799,082	1,823,049	23,967
Management	135,313	136,335	1,022
Business and Financial Operations	94,899	95,431	532
Computer and Mathematical	47,516	49,165	1,649
Architecture and Engineering	33,787	33,458	-329
Life, Physical, and Social Science	13,203	13,335	132
Community and Social Service	37,911	38,915	1,004
Legal	15,242	15,301	59
Education, Training, and Library	119,293	123,402	4,109
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	36,917	37,196	279
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	105,660	107,205	1,545
Healthcare Support	53,490	54,316	826
Protective Service	35,456	35,855	399
Food Preparation and Serving Related	139,510	144,188	4,678
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	76,989	79,210	2,221

Occupation	2014 Employment	2016 Projected Employment	Emp. Change
Personal Care and Service	92,842	96,497	3,655
Sales and Related	179,960	180,415	455
Office and Administrative Support	268,983	269,054	71
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	4,676	4,675	-1
Construction and Extraction	58,810	60,639	1,829
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	56,814	57,188	374
Production	96,922	94,801	-2,121
Transportation and Material Moving	94,889	96,468	1,579

Exhibit 6

Fastest Growing Occupations by percentage, by Minor Occupation Group	2014	2016	% Change
Water Transportation Workers	870	1,014	16.6
Helpers, Construction Trades	1,384	1,461	5.6
Postsecondary Teachers	32,000	33,614	5.0
Other Personal Care and Service Workers	59,223	62,163	5.0
Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapist Assistants and Aides	1,761	1,836	4.3
Entertainment Attendants and Related Workers	6,753	7,020	4.0
Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	11,418	11,857	3.8
Computer Occupations	44,775	46,356	3.5
Food and Beverage Serving Workers	75,408	78,069	3.5
Preschool, Primary, Secondary, and Special Education School Teachers	48,094	49,640	3.2

Exhibit 7

Fastest Shrinking Occupations by percentage, by Minor Occupation Group	2014	2016	% Change
Printing Workers	2,982	2,722	-8.7
Communications Equipment Operators	1,589	1,532	-3.6
Supervisors of Production Workers	8,081	7,851	-2.9
Plant and System Operators	2,415	2,355	-2.5
Other Production Occupations	23,595	23,023	-2.4
Religious Workers	2,848	2,784	-2.3
Assemblers and Fabricators	21,198	20,744	-2.1
Drafters, Engineering Technicians, and Mapping Technicians	8,578	8,396	-2.1
Metal Workers and Plastic Workers	28,398	27,798	-2.1
Material Recording, Scheduling, Dispatching, and Distributing Workers	42,513	41,984	-1.2

Ten-Year Projections

Every two years, the Connecticut Department of Labor prepares ten-year projections of employment by industry and occupation. The current projections are for the 2012-2022 period. The projections are prepared using national projections produced by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The projections are based on the assumption of a full employment economy at the end of the projections period (2022).

Industry

The largest sector, and the one expected to add the most jobs over the next ten years, is Health Care. Driven by the aging population employment is projected to growth by nearly 40,000 jobs by 2022. Most of that growth is expected to be in Ambulatory Care settings – offices of practitioners and outpatient centers. Home health care services are also expected to add employment. Hospitals and Assisted Living Facilities are expected to grow but employment at Skilled Nursing Facilities (nursing homes) is expected to remain flat.

Educational Services is projected to add almost 18,000 jobs over the next ten years, the second largest sector in terms of job growth as elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities (public and private) are expected to add employment. This is a smaller increase than experienced over the past 10 years driven by slower projected growth in school-aged population.

Close behind education and in a turnaround from the previous ten years, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services are projected to add 17,500 jobs over the next ten years with the largest gain in the Computer Systems Design industry. Similar to the national projections, Management Consulting, Accounting, and Architectural and Engineering Services are projected to grow strongly. Most other sectors are expected to add jobs over the next ten years. For example, Construction is expected to add over 11,000 jobs after a similar decline over the past decade with all major industries within the sector expected to grow strongly. In another major turnaround, Manufacturing is projected to add jobs. While the growth is less than 1% over 10 years, this follows a decline of over 40,000 jobs over the prior decade. Growth is uneven – with some manufacturing industries growing while others contract.

Two sectors that are expected to decline over the next ten years are Information and Arts, Entertainment & Recreation, although the declines will be significantly smaller in the next ten years than over the prior ten. Newspaper publishing is the main reason for the information decline while increased competition in other states for Connecticut's casino business will cause declines in the Entertainment sector.

Occupations

Consistent with the industry projections, the largest increases in employment are projected to be in Healthcare, Education and Personal Care categories. Registered Nurses, Physical Therapists, Home Health Aids, Personal Care Aides and teachers at all levels are all projected to grow significantly over the next ten years. Office and Administrative Support, Management, Food Preparation & Serving, Business & Financial Operations, Construction & Extraction, and Sales occupations are all expected to add thousands of jobs over the next ten years.

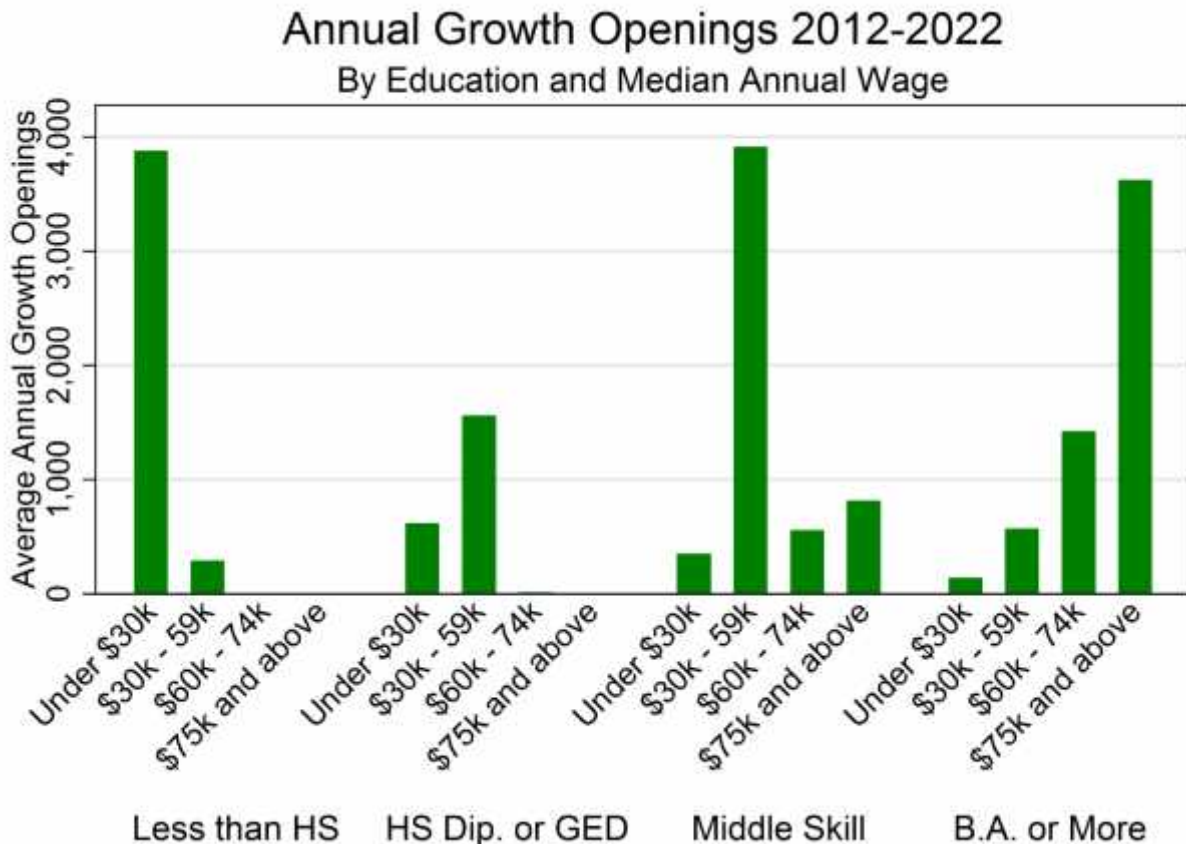
(iii) Employers' Employment Needs- With regard to the industry sectors and occupations identified in (1) and (2), provide an assessment of the employment needs of employers, including description of knowledge, skills and abilities required, including credentials and licenses.

In addition to growth, the projections include estimates of openings due to replacement needs as workers retire or move on to new occupations. The occupations with most openings (Retail Salespersons, Cashiers, Waiters & Waitresses, Food Prep & Serving workers) are those with high replacements needs. While some workers make their careers in these occupations, for many these are held for a few years before the worker moves on. Interestingly, the growth in demand for health care workers is such that Registered Nurses, a career-oriented occupation, is fifth in terms of total openings.

Education and Training: Each occupation is assigned a minimum education category based on our best knowledge of the minimum education required to enter the occupation. Particular jobs within an occupation may have different requirements but in most cases these requirements will be at or above the minimum for the occupation. In addition some occupations require work experience in a related occupation. Finally, some additional on-the-job training, an apprenticeship or an internship might be required to become proficient in the occupation. The projections show significant growth in many occupations that require a college or even a professional or advanced degree in fields from health care, education, finance, and information technology in addition to the need to replace many of these workers who will be retiring over the next decade. Occupations with a minimum education requirement beyond high school and less than a Bachelor's Degree, or those requiring a high school diploma plus an apprenticeship, internship, or moderate or long-term on-the-job training are classified as "Middle Skill" occupations. The largest occupation in the "middle skill" category is registered nurse because it's possible to become a registered nurse without a Bachelor's Degree (although many jobs within the nursing field may require a Bachelor's). Other middle skill occupations projected to grow over the next ten years cover a wide variety of fields in industries ranging from health care to education to construction to transportation. Less growth is expected in occupations that require only a high school diploma although there will be some growth in child care, security, and clerical occupations. Finally there will be growth in occupations that don't necessarily require a high school diploma to enter the occupation, such as Personal Care Aides, Retail Sales Clerk, or Waiter or Waitress. However, any particular job within an occupation may have additional requirements. An individual employer, for example, may decide to require a high school diploma or another credential for a particular position even if minimum to enter the occupation is lower.

Education and Wages: The projections suggest that education will remain valuable over the next ten years. While we are projecting thousands of annual openings in occupations that with a minimum education of less than a high school diploma, the current median wage for these occupations is less than \$30,000 per year (assuming full-year full-time work). On the other hand, most of the openings in high-paying occupations (those with a current median annual wage of \$75,000 or more) require a college degree or even a professional or advanced degree. Exhibit 8 shows the number of annual growth openings projected for occupations by current median annual wage and minimum education and training requirements. The chart shows that there will be opportunities for workers in low-skill low-paying jobs to increase their incomes by gaining a credential and entering a "Middle Skill" occupation while those who are able to graduate from college will greatly increase their chances of a high-paying career.

Exhibit 8



(B) Workforce Analysis: Unified State Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment. This population must include individuals with disabilities among other groups in CT and State-identified regions.

i. Employment and Unemployment – Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.

Connecticut’s Recovering Labor Market

Connecticut is now into its fifth year of recovery from the “great recession” that took its toll on the state from 2008 to 2010. Over the recession, Connecticut lost over 5% of its nonfarm employment, roughly 119,000 jobs based on the monthly current employment statistics from March 2008 to February 2010. The largest losses came from the construction, manufacturing, trade, transportation and utilities, and the professional and business services sectors. Those four sectors alone accounted for 79% of the lost

jobs. The lone sectors that were able to create jobs during the recession were education, which posted a small gain, and health care and social assistance, which continued to add jobs during the recession.

As of August 2015, Connecticut has yet to regain all of the nonfarm employment it lost in the recession. The 104,900 gain since February 2010 is 88% of the decline. All industry super sectors, except for manufacturing, financial activities and government, have added jobs since the recovery began. Manufacturing has dropped 2,400 jobs since February 2010, bringing the total loss to 27,300 jobs since the recession hit in March 2008. The financial activities sector has lost 6,600 jobs since the trough year, making a total loss of 14,800 jobs since the peak. Similarly, government has lost 6,300 jobs since the trough, creating a drop of 14,600 jobs since the peak.

Only three super sectors have been able to reach or exceed their 2008 level. The professional and business services sector lost 14,800 jobs during the recession, but has since gained 21,100 jobs to bring it 6,300 jobs higher than in 2008. Leisure and hospitality took a small dip of 3,800 jobs from 2008 to 2010, but is now 13,600 jobs greater than it was pre-recession. The sector that has grown the most in recent years is not surprisingly the one that didn't lose jobs during the recession- education and health services. Education and health services grew 10,100 jobs when the rest of the economy was in a downfall, and has grown by another 18,100 since 2010.

Exhibit 9 shows the annual averages of Connecticut nonfarm employment throughout the current cycle. The table compares the employment levels from the peak, trough and most recent complete year of data. It also shows the change in jobs from the peak to trough, trough to recent year, and peak to recent year. Exhibit 10 highlights the major industry sectors and shows how the job share of each has shifted throughout the cycle.

Exhibit 9 Nonfarm Employment through the Current Cycle (Annual Averages)

	Peak Year 2008	Low Year 2010	Recent Year 2014	Change in Jobs 2008-10	Change in Jobs 2010-14	Change in Jobs 2008-14
CONNECTICUT EMPLOYMENT						
TOTAL NONFARM EMPLOYMENT	1,699,000	1,608,000	1,666,100	-91,000	58,100	-32,900
TOTAL PRIVATE	1,446,500	1,363,800	1,428,200	-82,700	64,400	-18,300
GOODS PRODUCING INDUSTRIES	252,700	215,400	215,800	-37,300	400	-36,900
CONSTRUCTION, NAT. RES. & MINING	66,100	50,600	56,100	-15,500	5,500	-10,000
MANUFACTURING	186,700	164,800	159,700	-21,900	-5,100	-27,000
Durable Goods	143,500	127,300	124,300	-16,200	-3,000	-19,200
Fabricated Metal	33,100	28,100	29,800	-5,000	1,700	-3,300
Machinery	17,700	15,000	13,900	-2,700	-1,100	-3,800
Computer and Electronic Product	14,200	13,300	12,500	-900	-800	-1,700
Transportation Equipment	44,300	42,200	40,100	-2,100	-2,100	-4,200
Aerospace Product and Parts	32,400	30,500	27,700	-1,900	-2,800	-4,700
Non-Durable Goods	43,200	37,500	35,400	-5,700	-2,100	-7,800
Chemical	13,800	11,800	10,200	-2,000	-1,600	-3,600
SERVICE PROVIDING INDUSTRIES	1,446,300	1,392,600	1,450,300	-53,700	57,700	4,000
TRADE, TRANSPORTATION, UTILITIES	309,900	289,800	301,300	-20,100	11,500	-8,600
Wholesale Trade	69,200	62,700	63,000	-6,500	300	-6,200
Retail Trade	188,100	178,200	185,600	-9,900	7,400	-2,500
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	21,200	19,200	20,900	-2,000	1,700	-300
Building Material	15,600	14,100	15,300	-1,500	1,200	-300
Food and Beverage Stores	41,700	42,100	44,700	400	2,600	3,000
General Merchandise Stores	27,100	27,500	28,600	400	1,100	1,500
Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities	52,700	48,900	52,600	-3,800	3,700	-100
Utilities	8,700	7,900	7,400	-800	-500	-1,300
Transportation and Warehousing	44,000	41,000	45,300	-3,000	4,300	1,300
INFORMATION	37,800	31,700	31,800	-6,100	100	-6,000
Telecommunications	13,000	10,200	9,100	-2,800	-1,100	-3,900
FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES	143,400	135,200	128,600	-8,200	-6,600	-14,800
Finance and Insurance	122,900	116,300	109,400	-6,600	-6,900	-13,500
Credit Intermediation	29,700	27,000	26,300	-2,700	-700	-3,400
Securities and Commodity Contracts	26,500	26,300	25,400	-200	-900	-1,100
Insurance Carriers & Related Activities	65,500	61,700	57,700	-3,800	-4,000	-7,800
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	20,500	18,900	19,300	-1,600	400	-1,200
PROFESSIONAL & BUSINESS SERVICES	205,500	190,700	211,800	-14,800	21,100	6,300
Professional, Scientific	93,200	86,700	95,400	-6,500	8,700	2,200
Legal Services	14,000	13,100	13,000	-900	-100	-1,000
Computer Systems Design	22,000	21,100	25,600	-900	4,500	3,600
Management of Companies	26,700	26,300	30,600	-400	4,300	3,900
Administrative and Support	85,600	77,700	85,800	-7,900	8,100	200
Employment Services	28,800	24,700	28,100	-4,100	3,400	-700
EDUCATION AND HEALTH SERVICES	296,800	306,900	325,000	10,100	18,100	28,200
Educational Services	57,200	59,200	63,500	2,000	4,300	6,300
Health Care and Social Assistance	239,600	247,700	261,500	8,100	13,800	21,900
Hospitals	60,000	61,000	59,300	1,000	-1,700	-700
Nursing & Residential Care Facilities	60,000	61,300	62,700	1,300	1,400	2,700
Social Assistance	43,000	45,600	52,800	2,600	7,200	9,800
LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY	137,400	133,600	151,000	-3,800	17,400	13,600
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	24,200	23,600	26,600	-600	3,000	2,400
Accommodation and Food Services	113,200	110,000	124,400	-3,200	14,400	11,200
Food Serv., Restaurants, Drinking Places	100,900	99,200	112,700	-1,700	13,500	11,800
OTHER SERVICES	63,100	60,500	63,000	-2,600	2,500	-100
GOVERNMENT	252,500	244,200	237,900	-8,300	-6,300	-14,600
Federal Government	19,500	19,700	17,400	200	-2,300	-2,100
State Government	70,200	67,400	67,000	-2,800	-400	-3,200
Local Government**	162,800	157,100	153,400	-5,700	-3,700	-9,400

Exhibit 10

Nonfarm Employment through the Current Cycle by Major Sector (as percentages)

	Peak Year 2008	Low Year 2010	Recent Year 2014	Change in Job Share 2008-10	Change in Job Share 2010-14	Change in Job Share 2008-14
Connecticut Employment						
Total Nonfarm	100.0	100.0	100.0			
Goods Producing	14.9	13.4	13.0	-1.5	-0.4	-1.9
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	18.2	18.0	18.1	-0.2	0.1	-0.2
Information	2.2	2.0	1.9	-0.2	-0.1	-0.3
Financial Activities	8.4	8.4	7.7	0.0	-0.7	-0.7
Professional and Business Services	12.1	11.9	12.7	-0.2	0.8	0.6
Education and Health Services	17.5	19.1	19.5	1.6	0.4	2.0
Leisure and Hospitality	8.1	8.3	9.1	0.2	0.8	1.0
Other Services	3.7	3.8	3.8	0.1	0.0	0.1
Government	14.9	15.2	14.3	0.3	-0.9	-0.6

(ii) Labor Market Trends- Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.

Exhibit 11 below shows how the labor market has shifted throughout the past recession and recovery. The size of the bubble is representative of how large the industry is in Connecticut's current economy. The placement of the bubble along the y-axis indicates how the industry was impacted by the recession that lasted from 2008 to 2010. The placement of the bubble along the x-axis shows the employment change in the current recovery. Those industries placed in the top right quadrant have fared well throughout the recession and have continued to grow in the recovery phase. The industries in the bottom right quadrant lost employment during the recession, but have since gained jobs. The bottom left quadrant contains the industries that lost employment during the recession and continue to do so.

Exhibit 11

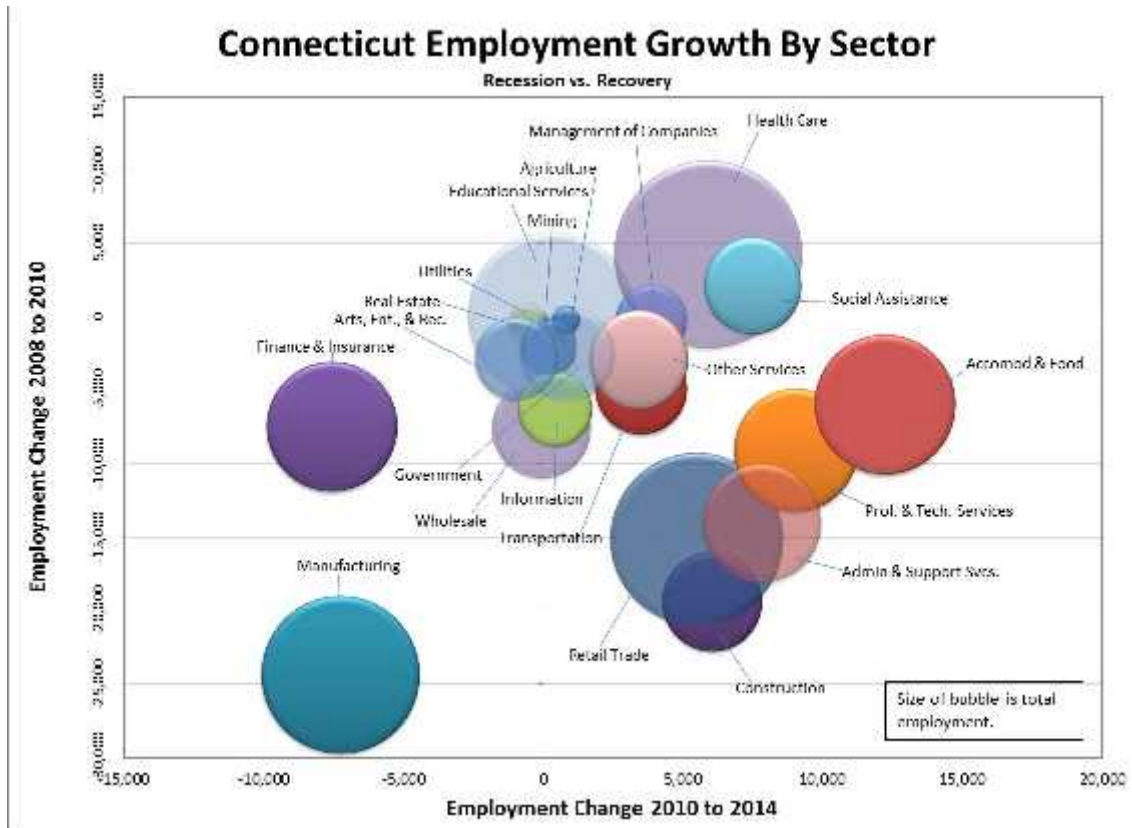
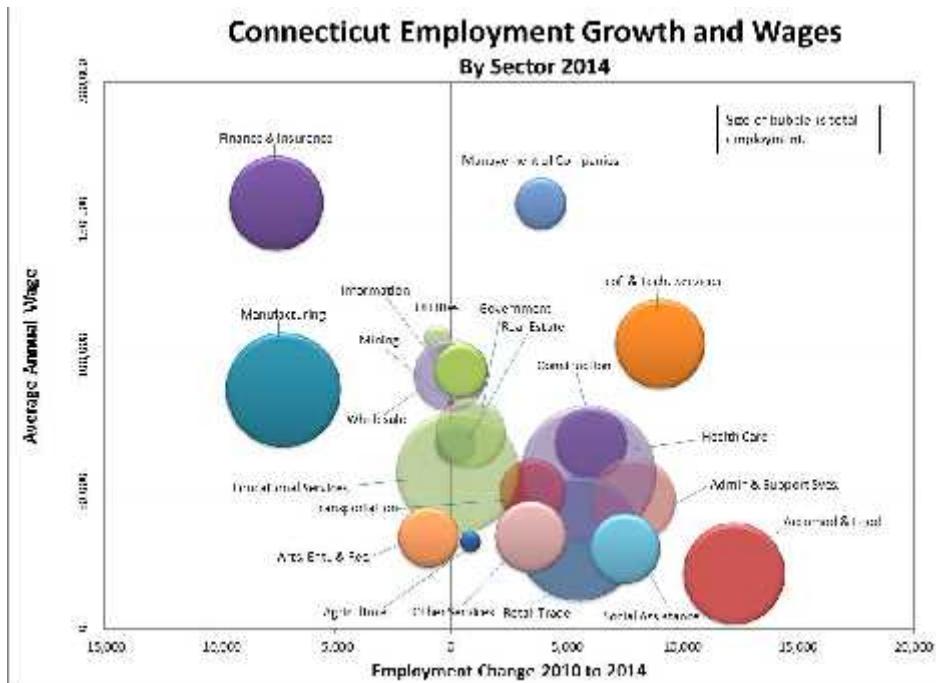


Exhibit 12 illustrates the employment growth throughout the current recovery and the industry's average annual wage.

Exhibit 12



The Shift in Employment Share

The steady growth of the education and health services sector has shifted its position in the state economy to the top-employing sector. It now accounts for 19.5% of the state's employment. That top spot had recently belonged to the trade, transportation, and utilities sector in 2008. The largest drop in job share came in the goods producing sector, dropping from a 14.9% share in 2008 to a 13.0% share in 2014.

Exhibits 13 and 14 present the major sector data from exhibits 9 and 10. They depict how the levels of nonfarm employment by major sector have changed since the annual average levels of 2008. The information in the graphs and tables can give us a better sense of how the recession affected the state's economy. Exhibit 15 shows the current structure of employment in Connecticut. Even after the declines described above, manufacturing is the fourth largest sector (after health care, retail, and education).

Exhibit 13

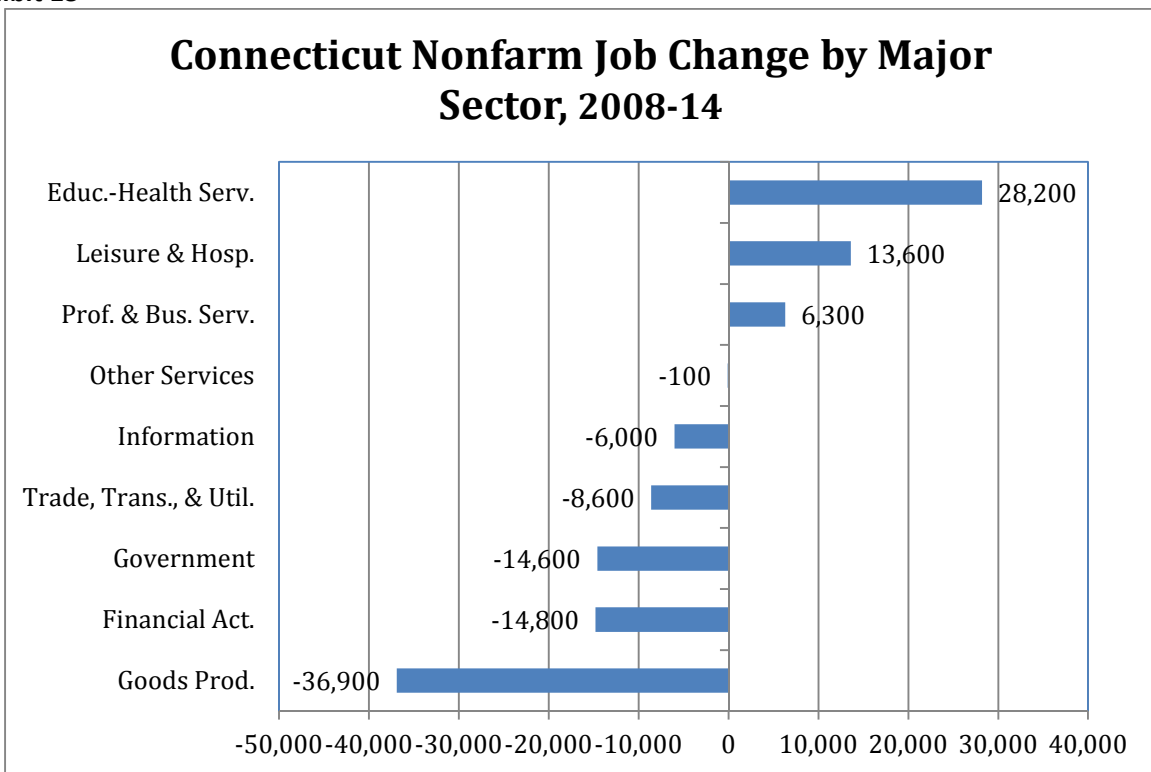


Exhibit 14

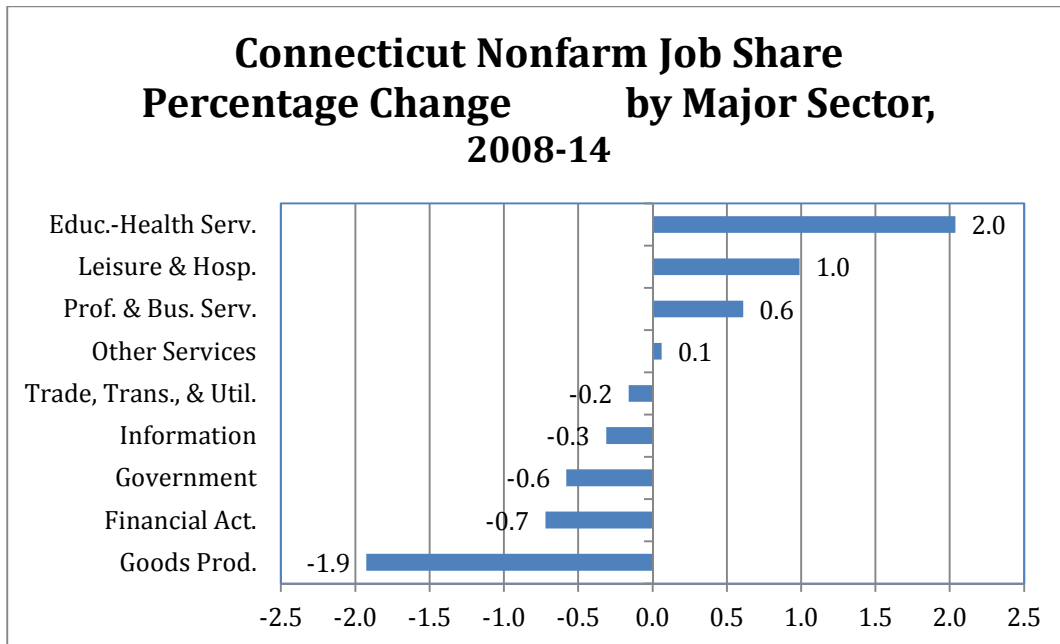
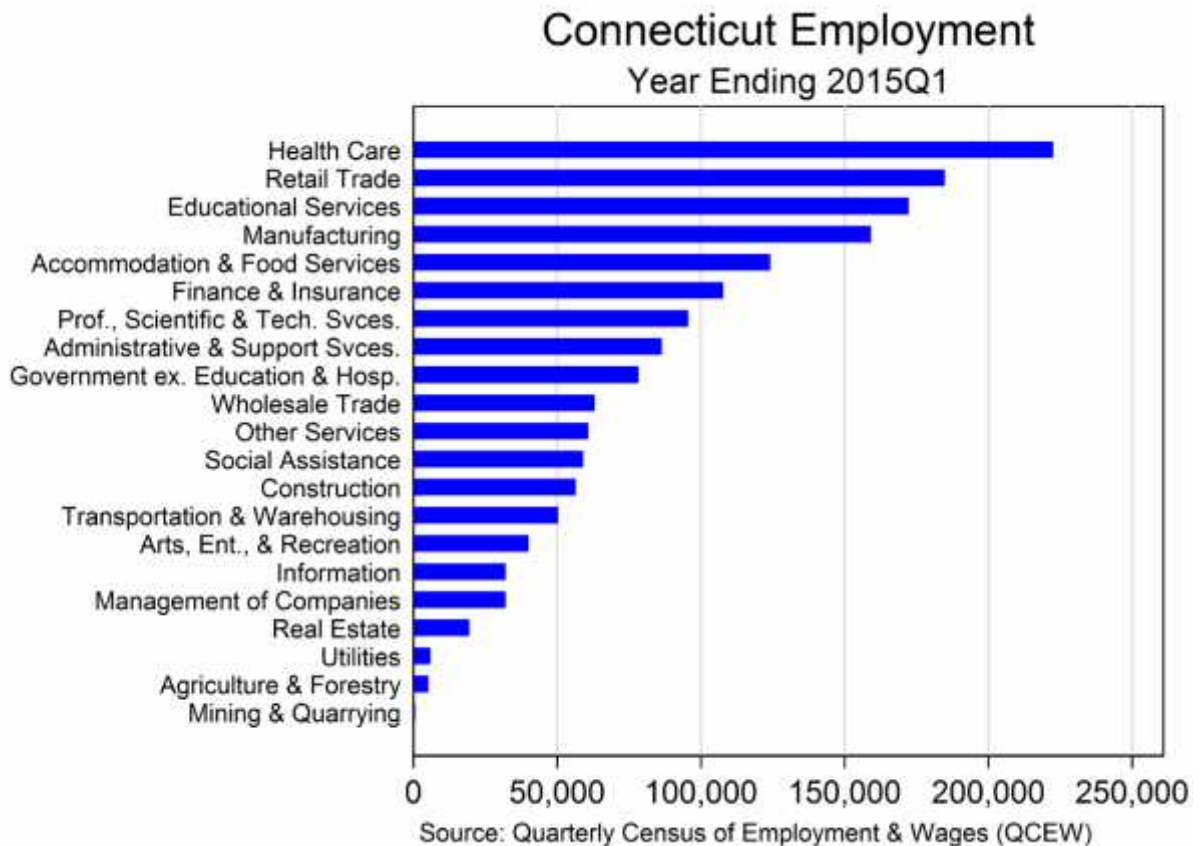


Exhibit 15



(iii) Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce- Provide an analysis of the educational and skill level of the workforce.

Connecticut's Workforce

Connecticut has an educated workforce. Thirty-eight percent of the population age 25 years of age and older has a college degree compared to just 30% for the nation as a whole. 90% have at least a high school diploma or a GED compared to 87% for the nation. However, there is an achievement gap between population groups. As shown in Exhibit 16, educational attainment is significantly lower for the African-American and Hispanic population than for the white non-Hispanic population. This gap is of particular concern giving the changing nature of Connecticut's workforce. As shown in Exhibit 17, approximately 16% of the Connecticut's labor force aged 45 and over is Black or Hispanic compared to more than 30% of the labor force aged 25 to 34.

Exhibit 16

Educational Attainment Connecticut Population age 25 and over	Total	White (Non- Hispanic)	Black/African- American	Hispanic or Latino
Less than high school	10%	6%	14%	28%
High school diploma or GED	28%	27%	33%	33%
Some college but less than Bachelor's	25%	25%	31%	22%
Bachelor's Degree or more	38%	42%	21%	17%

Source: American Community Survey 2014 one-year sample.

Exhibit 17

Labor Force By Age Group	Less than 25	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 and over	Total
White not Hispanic	63%	62%	64%	76%	83%	71%
Black	12%	12%	11%	9%	7%	10%
Hispanic	20%	19%	17%	10%	6%	13%
Other	6%	7%	8%	5%	4%	6%

Source: American Community Survey 2013. IPUMS-USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

Critical Workforce Segments

College Students: Connecticut's state colleges and universities (CSCU) system provides a high quality post-secondary education to over 92,000 students at its 17 campuses and annually graduates 15,000 who enter the job market to fill critical openings in the state's workforce. These individuals, who are critical to the talent pipeline, are engaged in college programs related to the state's high demand and emerging industries and occupations and often have the opportunity to pair this educational experience with internships in their chosen fields.

Incumbent Workers: Connecticut's incumbent workers – individuals presently employed – are an important resource for business success. Employers value highly the asset represented by their current employees. As they contemplate ways to increase productivity, assure profitability and grow their businesses, many Connecticut employers look to build the capacity of their current workers. Incumbent worker training is the most effective way to ensure that currently employed workers have the fast-changing skills they need to increase productivity and advance their careers.

Dislocated Workers: Workers at-risk in rapidly changing industries, many of whom are aging and/or have not kept up with increasing skills demands in new workplace technologies and processes valued by employers and essential to remaining productive and competitive. While the number of newly certified dislocated workers in Connecticut is comparably small (2180 in the second quarter of 2012), they are a significant pool of valuable talent – ideal for targeted training in the middle-skill occupations projecting large numbers of openings.

Veterans: Connecticut's recently returned military veterans are a pool of under-utilized talent whose skills and experience should contribute to state economic growth. The state's workforce/talent system has struggled to access these veterans, to assess their transferable skills and get them onto pathways that match them efficiently with viable job opportunities in Connecticut's labor market. Additional coordination among veteran-serving organizations will help to tap this talent pool. A state-level cross-agency plan is currently under development.

Undereducated Adults: Although Connecticut ranks high nationally on educational attainment, it still faces a significant challenge in meeting the needs of undereducated adults. According to the 2014 American Community Survey, Connecticut has a population of 3,596,677 with 2,821,801 adults over the age of eighteen. More than 288,478 individuals, or 9.9% of the adult population, do not have a high school diploma; 103,816 individuals have less than a ninth grade education; and 184,662 have some high school education, but no diploma. At a time when economic and labor trends all point to the importance of education and training for self-sufficiency, the number of undereducated adults in Connecticut approximates its entire K-12 population.

According to the Connecticut State Department of Education's *Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS)*, in 2014 adult education programs served 24,751 students (10,773 males and 13,978 females), or 11.9% of the total population 18 or older without a high school diploma and 4.4% of the population 18 or older who do not speak English very well. While performance indicators are positive for individuals who attend adult education programs, very few undereducated adults have enrolled in these programs. This disparity, mirrored on the national level, indicates that adult education is critically underutilized by undereducated adults.

According to *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce* (Report of the National Commission on Adult Literacy, June 2008), 70% of Connecticut jobs will require postsecondary education and training by the year 2020. The report states that to fill this gap, Connecticut will need 10,875 more people to receive postsecondary education and training. There are not enough high school graduates to fill that void – Connecticut must rely on getting older adults back into the classroom. Adults need to improve their literacy skills and earn degrees and/or certificates to be able to make family-sustaining wages, but the fact remains that a limited number of the most undereducated people in Connecticut are enrolling in programs geared to help them improve their skills, get a high school equivalency, and enroll in postsecondary education and training. In the *2007 State New Economy Index*, Atkinson and Nager stated that in today's New Economy, knowledge-based jobs are driving prosperity – jobs

held by individuals with at least two years of college. Although the 2014 report shows that the average educational attainment grade level for people in Connecticut is 14.6, that is not enough to fill the anticipated skills gap (Information Technology and Innovation Foundation).

Limited English Proficient: Approximately 50% of the two million immigrants who come to the U.S. each year have low literacy levels and lack high school education and English language skills, severely limiting their access to jobs and job training, college, and citizenship (*Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce*). Immigrants represent one-third of America’s low-skilled adults, more than in comparison countries that have fewer immigrants overall (PIAAC). Of 3,407,815 residents of Connecticut (aged 5 or older), 8.1% or 276,033 state they speak English less than “very well” and 21.8% or 742,903 speak a language other than English at home (2014 American Community Survey). The number of adults who are limited English proficient (LEP) is more prevalent in the larger metropolitan areas. The number of LEP adults in New Haven is 51,204 or 9% of the population; in Hartford, 61,152 or 7.6%; in Bridgeport- Stamford-Norwalk, 86,549 or 14.3%. Adult education programs in Connecticut served 120,195 adults, or 4.4% of the population 18 and older who do not speak English well, during the 2013- 2014 program year. Those lacking a high school diploma who speak English very well earn more than those with a high school diploma or some college who don’t speak English well or at all. Working-age LEP adults earn 25%-40% less than their English-proficient counterparts and are more concentrated in low-paying jobs and different industries than other workers (*“Investing in English Skills: The Limited English Proficient Workforce in U.S. Metropolitan Areas,”* Brookings Institute, September 24, 2014).

Individuals with Disabilities: According to the 2014 Census, 191,185 of Connecticut adults between the ages of 18-64 have a disability. The American Community Survey (ACS) of the U.S. Census analysis of employment and disability status reports 76,791 persons with a disability employed in Connecticut in 2014, and 13,116 unemployed. (Numbers not strictly comparable to the unemployment rates other tables as they come from a different survey with a different methodology.) Median earnings for people with disabilities in 2014 were \$21,756, while people without disabilities earned \$40,249. U.S. adults with a diagnosed learning disability are about twice as likely to have low skills as those without such disabilities (PIAAC).

Exhibit 18

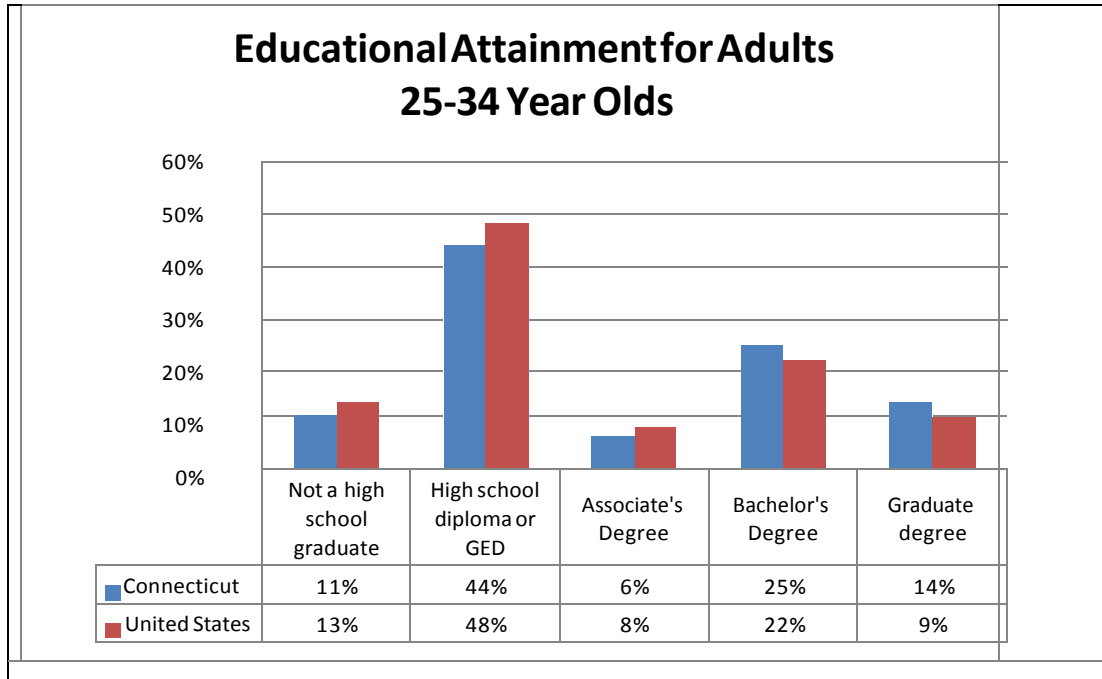
Employment Status by Type of Disability

Type of Difficulty	Number of Individuals Employed	Percent of Individuals with Specific Disabilities Employed
Hearing Difficulty	19,308	25%
Vision Difficulty	12,854	18%
Cognitive Difficulty	27,611	36%
Ambulatory Difficulty	24,431	32%
Self-Care Difficulty	5,858	8%
Independent Living Difficulty	14,691	19%

The Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), has projected their general and Blind VR programs will collectively assist 10,151 consumers with disabilities in FFY 2017.

Low-Skilled/Low-Income Individuals: A significant portion of Connecticut’s current labor force – more than 500,000 adults – lacks the essential skills needed to secure rewarding employment and/or pursue postsecondary education/training. As seen in Exhibit 19 55% of adults 25-34 years old have no more than a high school diploma, not enough to prepare them adequately for the middle skill jobs that are available. Given effective opportunities for education, training and other supports, many of these individuals can be more productive workers, a talent asset helping employers to meet their workforce needs.

Exhibit 19 Educational Attainment for 25-34 Year Old Adults



In the U.S., the odds of being low-skilled are ten times higher for low-educated adults born to low-educated parents than for higher-educated adults born to higher-educated parents, according to the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). According to the National Institute for Literacy, improving a mother’s literacy skills is the best way to ensure that children have higher skills (*Improving Mothers’ Literacy Skills May Be Best Way to Boost Children’s Achievement, 2010*).

Connecticut’s 2014 overall poverty rate was 10.8%, but 11.3% for women and 15% for children. The percent of single parent families with related children that are below poverty was 30% (*Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity, 2014*). The relationship between low skills and low wages is strong in the United States, pointing to a critical need to provide adult education and family literacy services to undereducated parents and their children, especially in urban areas, to address immediate health, education and economic challenges.

Accessing affordable efficient transportation to/from work is an obstacle to sustained, productive employability for many Connecticut workers. Public transportation services are inadequate for many

workers – particularly low-wage workers from urban communities – pursuing job opportunities outside of their local community, in the wider surrounding region. For many families, childcare also presents a significant barrier to employment. For example, according to the United Way’s ALICE Report, the average cost of attending a full-time, accredited childcare center in Connecticut is \$1,893 per month (\$1,038 per month for an infant and \$855 per month for a four year old). Childcare for two children is by far the greatest expense and accounts for 28% of United Way’s Household Survival Budget. While alternatives in Connecticut such as family daycare centers and state subsidized pre-school programs offer less expensive and more accessible childcare options, high occupancy rates limit their availability.

Funding and resources available to provide basic skills instruction and technical training is limited in the face of the legitimate level of need for those services. Most of the available resources come with individual eligibility requirements – such as public assistance participation or high school dropout – that limit access to services for many prospective participants. Non-credit community college courses, offering opportunity for short-term technical training leading to more immediate employment, are ineligible for federal or state financial aid, forcing (limited-income) students to pay the cost of those courses directly themselves. Duplicated annual Non-Credit Registrations for the community colleges were as follows: AY 2014-2015; 57,756 total seats; 7,852 were workforce development certificates; and 29,904 personal development.

Out-of-School Youth: Connecticut has one of the best high school graduation rates of all states for non-low-income students. The overall graduation rate has risen from 81.8% in 2010 to 87% in 2015. However, the dropout rate of Connecticut’s low-income youth is of critical concern. Connecticut has been one of the lowest states for graduation rates of low-income students, but is closing the gap. The 2011 gap between low-income students and their more affluent peers was 27 percentage points, but lessened to 21 percentage points in 2013 (*Connecticut’s Graduation Gap is Big, But Shrinking*, CT Mirror, May 2015). According to PIAAC, 15-year-old Americans have “mediocre” basic skills. Focusing on the challenge of educating and training to improve the skills of out-of-school youth is critical. Of Connecticut public high school students who graduated in 2010 and entered a CSCU institution within the first 16 months after graduation, a little under half (48.8%) were not ready for either college level math or English. More specifically, 54.3% of community college enrollees and 19.3% of state university enrollees from this cohort enrolled in at least one remedial course.

In FY 2013-2014, Connecticut adult education programs served 6,041 students under age twenty-two. Adult education programs currently target and reach some youth from Connecticut’s urban centers, but the majority of recent high school dropouts are not enrolling in education programs. These young adults face serious barriers to employment attempting to compete in a labor market demanding viable interpersonal, problem-solving and technical skills, even at the entry-level.

Ex-Offenders: One in every 100 U.S. adults 16 and older is incarcerated. Of 2.3 million individuals behind bars in state and federal prisons and local jails in 2005, about 43% of 18-60 year-olds lack a high school diploma or its equivalent. Further, the 2005 NAAL survey reported that 56% of inmates function at the two lowest levels of prose literacy (*National Adult Literacy Survey, 2005*), documenting the need for adult education programs for the incarcerated.

In Connecticut, 16,025 men and women were incarcerated in correctional facilities during 2015 – 14,941 male, 1,084 female. The Unified School District #1 – the Connecticut Department of Correction (DOC) – reported serving 2,669 students in ABE, GED, ESL, and Vocational Education instruction.

Performance reports indicate that student scores improved by an average of 2 years/3 months in reading; 2 years/1 month in math; and 2 years/7 months in language arts on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Five hundred and seventy-seven students earned the General Educational Development diploma (GED), 6 earned the External Diploma and 15 students were awarded the Credit Diploma Program (CDP) diploma. Despite this demonstrable success, these programs served only 17% of the total number of inmates.

TANF/TFA Recipients: The Connecticut Department of Social Services (CTDSS) operates the *Temporary Family Assistance Program (TFA)*, a program of the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant. CTDSS provides temporary assistance to families in need of and eligible for cash assistance. During state fiscal year 2015, the department's TFA average monthly caseload was 14,475 households. CTDSS partners with the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) to administer the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) program, which has been successful in helping thousands of parents move into the workforce and off welfare rolls.

TFA is a time-limited program that emphasizes case management intervention and participation in the labor market. TFA establishes a time limit of 21 months for families that contain an adult who is able to work. Extensions beyond 21 months may be available if the adult cannot find a job that makes the family financially independent. Able-bodied adults are referred to CTDOL's JFES program, administered by the Department of Labor and regional Workforce Development Boards, for help in finding work. During the 21 months, and during extensions, adults must cooperate with the JFES program and make a good-faith effort to find a job and keep working.

SNAP Recipients: As of January 4th, 2016 there were 232,937 households receiving nutrition assistance from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. These low income households include approximately 71,680 individuals who are not exempt from SNAP general work requirements. The Connecticut SNAP population is a diverse group with varying degrees of work readiness.

HUSKY Recipients: Connecticut's nation-leading implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) continued in SFY 2015, with CTDSS partnering with Access Health CT in a shared/integrated eligibility system encompassing HUSKY Health (Medicaid/Children's Health Insurance Program) and private qualified health plans offered through the exchange. As SFY 2015 ended, total enrollment was 747,735 of which approximately 460,000 are low- income adults.

Non-Custodial Parents: Non-custodial parents are individuals who do not have custody of their children, yet still have an obligation to provide necessary supports. Non-custodial parents are identified by the CTDSS Child Support division in partnership with the Judicial Support Enforcement Services Division. Together, both units will assist parents in securing financial and medical support for their children by providing quality services and information in a courteous, efficient, and effective manner. Non-custodial parents, in order to achieve economic stability, need education, employment services and various supports like affordable housing, transportation, nutritional assistance and child care to insure the well-being of their children. Annually, approximately 60,000 cases with court-ordered support are monitored. The two units are responsible for court enforcement and assist both parents with court modification process and collect about \$300 million in child support. Child support represents 45% of their family income. In addition, 188,000 children live in such families with 60% of parents receiving TANF or were former TANF recipients. In addition, 29% live below the federal poverty level.

Connecticut's Unemployed

Connecticut's unemployment rate has been falling since the recession ended and as of August 2015 was 5.3%, only slightly higher than the national average. The average unemployment rate for 2014 was 6.6%. The unemployment rate was higher for men than for women, and higher for Black and Hispanic workers than for whites, and was lower the higher the level of educational attainment. (See Exhibits 18 and 19.)

Exhibit 20

Unemployment Rates 2014 (%)	Men	Women	Total
Total	7.0	6.1	6.6
White	6.2	5.8	6.0
Black/African American	14.9	10.2	12.5
Asian	4.3	2.0	3.3
Hispanic or Latino	12.0	9.7	10.9

Exhibit 21

Educational Attainment	Unemployment Rates 2014 (%)
Less than a high school diploma	10.8
High school graduate, no college	8.7
Some college or associate's degree	6.1
Bachelor's degree and higher	3.1

The American Community Survey (ACS) of the U.S. Census reports employment status and disability status and reports that there were 76,791 persons with a disability employed in Connecticut in 2014 and 13,116 unemployed for an unemployment rate of 14.6%.¹

(iv) Skill Gaps: Describe apparent 'skill gaps'.

Skills gaps / workforce alignment in targeted industry sectors

There are no acceptable, direct objective measures of "skill gaps" currently available to LMI analysts. While there are a variety of resources that attempt to describe the knowledge, skills and abilities associated with various occupations there are no reliable ways to measure either the necessary quantity of these skills or the deficit if them in any particular occupation or industry.

The best proxy we can apply is using any apparent imbalances in the supply and demand for workers in occupation as a result of growth in the associated industry or the need for replacements to fill vacancies.

¹ These numbers are not strictly comparable to the unemployment rates in the tables because they come from a different survey with a different methodology.

The Office of research in CTDOL maintains the TEPS system (Training and Education Planning system) which attempts match the annual openings as determined by our long term occupational projections against education program completer data relevant to that occupation.

Within its limitations, the TEPS program will lend good insight into the supply and demand for entry level positions. However there is some anecdotal evidence that the nature of any skills gap may not be at the entry level. Conversations with some business leaders, particularly in manufacturing indicate that for them the skill gap is caused by the lack of sufficient mid-level workers to replace highly experienced senior workers at or near retirement. A fact of the recession is that if you did not hire a new employee five years ago you don't have an employee with mid-level experience now.

If we are to address this problem in workforce training, it suggests the need for longer term OJT subsidized training programs such as internships and apprentices.

Supply and Demand for Occupations in Targeted Sectors

The tables below show for the targeted industry sectors the “supply” of new entrants completing education and training programs relative to the estimated long-term “demand for openings in these occupations. Each occupation is designated in a workforce alignment category of “in balance” (BAL) if completers and estimated annual openings are within 20% of each other, “undersupplied” (UND) in the number of program completers is far less than the apparent need or “oversupplied” (OVR) of completers far exceed the apparent annual openings. A “?” appears next to the indication in cases where out of state markets may be able to absorb trained candidates. **Note that for a skills gap to exist at this level a workforce alignment designation of UND is indicated.**

Manufacturing Sector (Note: Occupations for which there have traditionally been no training programs available are not listed)

SOC Code	Occ Title	Est Hourly Wage	Minimum Education	Est Annual openings (1)	Program Completers	Workforce Alignment
51-4041 / 4011 / 4012	Machinists / CNC Operators	21.08 – 22.70	HS	446	486	BAL
51-9061	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	20.54	HS	243	3	UND
51-2011	Aircraft Structure, Surfaces, Rigging, and Systems Assemblers	30.31	HS	65	31	UND
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	19.51	HS	62	158	OVR
51-8031	Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant and System Operators	27.47	HS	46	18	UND

(1) From CTDOL Long Term Occupational Projections 2012 – 2022

(2) From HWOL Unique Job Ad Counts (Note: Job Ad Counts may not convert directly to job openings)

Health Care Sector: (Note: Diagnostic and Treatment professional occupations (e.g. MD’s, Pharmacists, Dentists, etc. are not included as the supply and demand for these occupations is national / international)

Health Care Sector – Diagnosing and Treating Occupations

SOC Code	Occ Title	Est Hourly Wage	Minimum Education	Est Annual openings (1)	Program Completers	Workforce Alignment
29-1141	Registered Nurses	36.50	Associate's degree	1,223	2505	OVR ?
29-1123	Physical Therapists	40.18	Doctoral or professional degree	214	188	BAL
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	45.45	Master's degree	129	118	BAL
29-1071	Physician Assistants	50.22	Master's degree	86	109	BAL
29-1122	Occupational Therapists	39.34	Master's degree	62	98	OVR
29-1127	Speech-Language Pathologists	39.79	Master's degree	53	98	OVR
29-1062	Respiratory Therapists	32.32	Associate's degree	36	89	OVR
29-1126	Dietitians and Nutritionists	31.35	Bachelor's degree	24	275	OVR
29-1125	Recreational Therapists	22.56	Bachelor's degree	10	36	OVR
29-1151	Nurse Anesthetists	81.99	Master's degree	17	38	OVR ?
29-1125	Radiation Therapists	46.25	Associate's degree	12	100	OVR
29-1011	Chiropractors	34.20	Doctoral or professional degree	9	37	OVR ?
29-1181	Audiologists	36.72	Doctoral or professional degree	7	104	OVR ?
29-1128	Exercise Physiologists	25.25	Bachelor's degree	3	66	OVR

(1) From CTDL Long Term Occupational Projections 2012 – 2022

(2) From HWOL Unique Job Ad Counts (Note: Job Ad Counts may not convert directly to job openings)

Health Technology Occupations

SOC Code	Occ Title	Est Hourly Wage	Minimum Education	Est Annual openings (1)	Program Completers	Workforce Alignment
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	26.64	Postsecondary non-degree award	374	789	OVR
29-2021	Dental Hygienists	40.14	Associate's degree	157	231	OVR
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists	30.61	Associate's degree	78	125	OVR

SOC Code	Occ Title	Est Hourly Wage	Minimum Education	Est Annual openings (1)	Program Completers	Workforce Alignment
29-2011	Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technologists	34.12	Bachelor's degree	76	20	UND
29-2012	Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technicians	23.44	Associate's degree	73	26	UND
29-2071	Medical Records and Health Information Technicians	19.77	Postsecondary non-degree award	62	314	OVR
29-2055	Surgical Technologists	26.27	Postsecondary non-degree award	41	77	OVR
29-2032	Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	37.91	Associate's degree	52	60	BAL
29-2053	Psychiatric Technicians	23.28	Postsecondary non-degree award	17	246	OVR
29-2033	Nuclear Medicine Technologists	40.89	Associate's degree	11	7	BAL
29-2051	Dietetic Technicians	15.61	Associate's degree	5	194	OVR
29-2091	Orthotists and Prosthetists	41.79	Master's degree	4	19	OVR?
29-2054	Respiratory Therapy Technicians	31.66	Associate's degree	2	89	OVR

(1) From CTDOL Long Term Occupational Projections 2012 – 2022

(2) From HWOL Unique Job Ad Counts (Note: Job Ad Counts may not convert directly to job openings)

Healthcare Support Occupations

SOC Code	Occ Title	Est Hourly Wage	Minimum Education	Est Annual openings (1)	Program Completers	Workforce Alignment
31-1013	Psychiatric Aides	16.02	High school diploma or equivalent	28	246	OVR
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	15.03	Postsecondary non-degree award	547	294	UND
31-2011	Occupational Therapy Assistants	28.47	Associate's degree	29	81	OVR
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	26.59	Associate's degree	32	42	BAL
31-9091	Dental Assistants	19.79	Postsecondary non-degree award	122	406	OVR
31-9092	Medical Assistants	16.09	Postsecondary non-degree award	340	1980	OVR
31-9097	Phlebotomists	17.40	Postsecondary non-degree award	53	53	BAL

(1) From CTDOL Long Term Occupational Projections 2012 – 2022

(2) From HWOL Unique Job Ad Counts (Note: Job Ad Counts may not convert directly to job openings)

Construction Sector

SOC Code	Occ Title	Est Hourly Wage	Minimum Education	Est Annual openings (1)	Program Completers	Workforce Alignment
47-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	33.10	High school diploma or equivalent	153	751	OVR?
47-2021	Brickmasons and Blockmasons	28.35	High school diploma or equivalent	22	10	UND
47-2022	Stonemasons	24.12	High school diploma or equivalent	6	10	BAL
47-2031	Carpenters	23.60	High school diploma or equivalent	268	81	UND
47-2044	Tile and Marble Setters	25.09	Less than high school	3	10	OVR
47-2111	Electricians	27.20	High school diploma or equivalent	241	545	OVR
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	28.39	High school diploma or equivalent	150	115	BAL
11-9021	Construction Managers	49.16	Bachelor's degree	146	60	UND
11-9041	Architectural and Engineering Managers	59.48	Bachelor's degree	117	116	BAL
17-3011	Architectural and Civil Drafters	27.68	Associate's degree	10	114	OVR
17-3022	Civil Engineering Technicians	30.01	Associate's degree	9	6	BAL
17-3024	Electro-Mechanical Technicians	24.40	Associate's degree	4	12	BAL
17-3025	Environmental Engineering Technicians	27.39	Associate's degree	5	25	OVR
17-3026	Industrial Engineering Technicians	30.45	Associate's degree	19	66	OVR
17-3027	Mechanical Engineering Technicians	26.73	Associate's degree	27	44	OVR

Finance and Insurance Sector

SOC Code	Occ Title	Est Hourly Wage	Minimum Education	Est Annual openings (1)	Program Completers	Workforce Alignment
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	37.55	Bachelor's degree	663	1015	OVR ?
12-2021	Appraisers and Assessors of Real Estate	40.81	Bachelor's degree	7	8	BAL
13-2031	Budget Analysts	38.28	Bachelor's degree	48	1514	OVR

13-1031	Claims Adjusters, Examiners, and Investigators	35.31	High school diploma or equivalent	108	14	UND
13-1051	Cost Estimators	36.36	Bachelor's degree	110	4135	OVR
13-2041	Credit Analysts	46.46	Bachelor's degree	42	1514	OVR
13-2071	Credit Counselors	23.88	Bachelor's degree	3	13	BAL
13-2051	Financial Analysts	48.64	Bachelor's degree	267	552	OVR
13-2061	Financial Examiners	42.5	Bachelor's degree	10	1015	OVR
13-2099	Financial Specialists, All Other	32.53	Bachelor's degree	20	552	OVR
131032	Insurance Appraisers, Auto Damage	30.49	Postsecondary non-degree award	4	108	OVR
132053	Insurance Underwriters	44.24	Bachelor's degree	114	66	UND
132072	Loan Officers	37.78	Bachelor's degree	40	509	OVR
131081	Logisticians	35.52	Bachelor's degree	36	32	BAL
132052	Personal Financial Advisors	65.6	Bachelor's degree	212	521	OVR
132081	Tax Examiners and Collectors, and Revenue Agents	38.03	Bachelor's degree	32	1015	OVR
132082	Tax Preparers	24.5	High school diploma or equivalent	27	321	OVR

Information Technology Sector

SOC Code	Occ Title	Est Hourly Wage	Minimum Education	Est Annual openings (1)	Program Completers	Workforce Alignment
152011	Actuaries	56.49	Bachelor's degree	65	177	OVR ?
151111	Computer and Information Research Scientists	55.98	PhD	7	563	OVR ?
113021	Computer and Information Systems Managers	67.1	Bachelor's degree	214	791	OVR
151143	Computer Network Architects	51.71	Bachelor's degree	24	510	OVR
151152	Computer Network Support	38.55	Associate's degree	27	254	OVR

Specialists						
151131	Computer Programmers	42.15	Bachelor's degree	131	377	OVR
151121	Computer Systems Analysts	45.82	Bachelor's degree	337	384	BAL
151151	Computer User Support Specialists	28.24	Some College	283	8	UND
151141	Database Administrators	42.99	Bachelor's degree	44	275	OVR
151122	Information Security Analysts	44.81	Bachelor's degree	26	284	OVR
151142	Network and Computer Systems Administrators	42.04	Bachelor's degree	91	277	OVR
152031	Operations Research Analysts	46.36	Bachelor's degree	44	87	OVR
151132	Software Developers, Applications	46.98	Bachelor's degree	255	361	BAL
151132	Software Developers, Systems Software	46.39	Bachelor's degree	159	441	OVR
152041	Statisticians	0	Master's degree	26	476	OVR
151134	Web Developers	33.49	Associate's degree	62	222	OVR

The Connecticut Department of Labor's Office of Research proactively shares its labor market data with Connecticut high schools and Community Colleges. Our Connecticut Career Resource Network produces a regular newsletter and "Connecticut Career Paths". Approximately 150,000 copies of "Connecticut Career Paths" are printed and distributed to high school guidance counselors and college career counselors throughout the state. Our annual conference "Connecticut Learns and Works" is attended by hundreds of educators from Connecticut high schools and community colleges. Economists from the Office of Research have made presentations regarding labor market information to guidance and career counselors at forums sponsored by the Connecticut State Department of Education and professional development days sponsored by local school districts. The Office of Research is in continual contact with the Board of Regents as well as the individual Community Colleges, which use labor market information for strategic planning as well as sharing it with students for career planning purposes.

(2) Workforce Development, Education and Training Activities Analysis The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the workforce development activities, including education

and training in the State, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, as identified in (a)(1)(B)(iii) above, and the employment needs of employers, as identified in (a)(1)(A)(iii) above.

The various entities, partners and stakeholders comprising Connecticut's extensive informal workforce development system have planned and implemented a broad array of innovative initiatives addressing Connecticut's workforce development priorities. Following is an illustrative sample of selected recent noteworthy efforts:

(A) The State's Workforce Development Activities

Provide an analysis of the State's workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop delivery system partners.

Supporting Business Growth

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 WDBs. 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, 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 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.

Connecticut Manufacturing Innovation Fund

In 2014 the General Assembly created a \$30 million Connecticut Manufacturing Fund to support innovation and growth in the state's advanced manufacturing sector. The fund assists manufacturers to develop or modernize critical equipment, support technological advancement, encourage research and development, and provide critical workforce training. The objective is to 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 from manufacturing companies. The Fund encourages company/university research efforts; creates a voucher program to support targeted business development and technical needs; provides access to training and educational programs to develop required workforce skills; provides matching funds for federal grants; and helps attract new

manufacturers to Connecticut. Funding is also provided to support incumbent worker training and Registered Apprenticeships as specified in the next two pages.

Incumbent Worker Training

In 2013 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 previously operated by the WDBs. 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 minimum match of 50%. 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 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 businesses 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.

The Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF) Incumbent Worker Training Program is administered by the Connecticut Department of Labor and funded through the Department of Economic and Community Development. The program provides financial assistance to Connecticut manufacturers for growing innovative and technology-based manufacturing business in Connecticut. The goals are:

- To support advanced manufacturing and innovative companies in their efforts to train incumbent workers in the appropriate skills to meet current and emerging market needs,
- To bring technological innovation to the market and help manufacturing companies leap ahead in productivity and efficiency by enhancing the skills of their current workforce and
- To maintain sales and grow revenue and profitability.

The MIF Incumbent Worker Training program is a matching fund program, designed to help manufacturing companies provide training for their workforce. It offers up to up to \$100,000 maximum per employer, per calendar year equal to the approved amount.

Apprenticeship

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 have been able to 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 new \$7.8 million Manufacturing Innovation Fund Apprenticeship Program was launched in July 2015.

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and its Office of Apprenticeship Training is lead applicant in Connecticut's successful bid to win a highly competitive American Apprenticeship Grant of \$5 million to fund the Connecticut American Apprenticeship Initiative. A key component of the initiative is introduction of Competency and Competency/Time-Based Hybrid models of apprenticeship. The initiative will enroll and serve 1,000 registered apprentices and 500 pre-apprentices statewide in high-demand Advance Manufacturing, Healthcare and Business Services occupations. Employers ranging from small machine shops to General Dynamics Electric Boat division, the regional WDBs, and the Board of Regents for Higher Education provided significant commitments for apprenticeship placements.

The Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF) Apprenticeship Program, funded through the Department of Economic and Community Development, is administered by the Connecticut Department of Labor. It provides financial assistance to Connecticut manufacturers that have a Registered Apprentice Program as well as, approved Apprentice Related Instruction Training Providers. The goals of the MIF Apprenticeship Program are: to support manufacturing companies in their efforts to train Registered Apprenticeship workers in the appropriate skills to meet current and emerging market needs and occupational skills; to provide real time demand driven registered apprenticeship program that combines a structured work schedule of on the job training together with related classroom instruction. The MIF Apprenticeship Program assists manufacturing companies to provide training for new apprentices that are registered on or after July 1, 2015.

The MIF Apprenticeship Program has three components:

Types of Assistance

- 1. Wage Subsidy Reimbursement:** The MIF Registered Apprenticeship funding per apprentice in manufacturing occupations is the "**lesser**" of the following: Funding of \$5 per hour multiplied by the total number of hours worked during the company's program per year by apprentice not to exceed more than 50% of the annual salary., or Funding of \$6,000 per qualified apprentice for year one and \$7,000 per qualified apprentice for year two.
- 2. Related Instruction Tuition Reimbursement:** Reimbursement of apprentice tuition/training costs or payments on behalf of an apprentice duly registered with a qualified Apprenticeship Sponsor to a Related Instruction Provider chosen by the sponsor company and approved by the Connecticut Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship Training shall not exceed \$2,500 in year one and \$1,250 in year two.
- 3. Competency/Performance Reimbursement:** Reimbursement of reasonable and customary costs for Competency/Performance registered apprenticeships that have interim credentials embedded in the work and related instruction schedules shall not exceed \$1,000 in year one and year two.

Applicants may seek assistance in the form of a wage subsidy, tuition and credentialing reimbursement. The funds do not need to be repaid by the applicant, provided the applicant meets the deliverables and complies with the terms and conditions of the agreement.

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

In 2011, the Department of Labor (DOL) and Department of Social Services (DSS) convened a workgroup to recommend strategies to help Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) program participants increase

competitiveness in the job market, while meeting the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) work participation requirements. JFES is a component of the State's TANF program.

As a result of these recommendations, the DOL allocated SFY14 and SFY15 funding for the "*Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)*" pilot program. This pilot was based on the state of Washington's nationally recognized model. I-BEST is an evidence-based model that provides vocational skills training simultaneously with adult basic education (ABE). The curriculum is designed jointly and classes are team taught by an adult education instructor and a specialist in the appropriate vocational field. The I-BEST model has proven to help participants improve their basic skills and/or achieve or progress towards a secondary education credential while attaining an industry-recognized credential.²

In State Fiscal Year 2013-2014 (SFY14), the Connecticut legislature designated \$1.7 million and in SFY15, \$1.5 million in funding to be used for "additional programming and evaluation" for JFES program participants. JFES is a component of the State's Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program that is funded, in part, by the federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant. JFES participants receive employment services from American Job Center (AJC) staff or through 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.

The JFES I-BEST pilots were administered by the DOL through the WDBs operating as regional intermediaries subcontracting with service providers. The primary goals set for the WDBs included the attainment of industry-recognized credentials and improved post-program employment for JFES participants thereby, creating incentives for the WDBs to develop training opportunities that met local labor market needs.

Additionally, classes were team taught with both a vocational instructor and an adult basic education instructor to address any learning remediation needed by program participants. Participants were screened on interest in the training programs available as well as employability and barrier assessment. The period of instruction for the courses varied from 4 to 16 weeks and included unpaid internships, paid internships or subsidized employment opportunities. Five basic education providers and 11 vocational education providers offered the following credentials: National Professional Certificate in Customer Service from NRF (National Retail Federation); Qualified Food Handler Certificate; OSHA Certificate; CPR/First Aid Certificate; Certified Nursing Assistant Certificate; American Hotel and Lodging and Customer Service Certificate; CT Asbestos License; CT Lead Supervisor License; Deconstruction Certificate; OSHA/HAZWOPER 40 Certificate; Microsoft Office (Outlook) Certificate; Microsoft Office (Word) Certificate; Microsoft Office (Excel) Certificate; Microsoft Office (PowerPoint) Certificate; Microsoft Technology Certificate.

In SFY15, one hundred forty-five (67%) of the training opportunities were used by JFES participants who had a high school credential and 79 (35%) of the JFES participants had less than a high school credential, consistent with program design. One hundred fifty-eight (71%) of the courses of study were completed. For the slots filled by those with a high school credential, 108 (74%) completed. Among the program offerings filled by a JFES participant with less than a high school education, 50 (63%) completed. Thus,

² For an example of these results please see the Community College Research Center's report on the Washington State's I-BEST program (Wachen, et. al. 2012) available at: http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/abepds/ibest_ccrc_report_december2012.pdf

the course completion rate was somewhat higher among JFES participants who held a high school credential.

Among the 145 training slots filled by JFES participants who held a high school credential, 108 (74%) completed and 75 (70%) of them earned a vocational credential. For the 79 training slots filled by JFES participants who did not have a high school credential, 50 (63%) completed the course and 40 (80%) took a certification exam. All 40 (or 100%) passed the exam.

Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Programs – Adult Education Programs

Since 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 Connecticut to accelerate basic skills learning and career enhancement for adult education learners. Initial grants provided two years of incentive funding. PIP grants are underwritten with 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 FY 2012-13 and FY 2014-15 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 offer 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.

Through the Accelerating Connections to Employment (ACE) Grant, which was a randomized study, Gateway Community College students had the opportunity to attend career preparation programs at Gateway and move quickly into employment. ACE was funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and Annie E. Casey Foundation. The college offered no cost training programs for Community Health Worker, Culinary In-Front of the House, IT Help Desk, Patient Care Technician and Small Engine Repair through the (ACE) Grant. All of these Gateway students improved their basic skills while participating in lecture and work experience. Each student was assigned an internship experience and completed mock interviews before being placed in a job. Gateway had 190 students, 74% of the enrollees completed the program and 63% are employed.

Jobs Funnel

The Jobs Funnel was launched as a pilot in Hartford to provide qualified workers opportunities to pursue careers in the construction trades. Jobs Funnels programs now operate in two local workforce areas – north central and northwest – under the aegis of the respective regional WDBs. State-level coordination is provided through the Office of Workforce Competitiveness. State general fund dollars help support Jobs Funnel efforts. 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.

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.

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 – approximately 65,000 individuals in Connecticut. The initiative provides up to nine (9) free credits towards degree completion, via courses offered in a classroom setting or online, at the seventeen (17) institutions of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system. As of January 2016, a total of 1,085 individuals are enrolled in *Go Back to Get Ahead with 540 at the community colleges, 232 at the state universities and 313 at Charter Oak State College.*

Platform to Employment

The Platform to Employment program – P2E – was launched by The WorkPlace, the regional WDB 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 in 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. 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 2014. P2E operates as a partnership of the Connecticut Department of Labor, the Department of Rehabilitation Services and the five regional WDBs, managed statewide by The Workplace, Inc.

Eastern Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative

The U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) supports projects that promote workforce investment system reforms and innovations to facilitate cooperation across programs to improve employment outcomes, cost effectiveness, and delivery of customer-centered services to job seekers and employers. The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL), in partnership with the Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board (EWIB), is one of six states that successfully applied for a Round 3 Workforce Innovation Fund grant. In October 2015 CTDOL was awarded \$6 million in WIF grant funds from USDOL to implement the four-year Eastern Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative. The project seeks to address a massive need for skilled trade workers at Electric Boat (EB) and other business members of the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance (EAMA) by providing short-term training to unemployed and underemployed workers unable to attend longer-term training. EB

expects to hire 350 participants who complete the program, with EAMA members hiring most of the additional 75 completers.

The Pipeline Initiative enhances strategic collaboration and alignment of workforce development and partner programs and strengthens the quality of American Job Center services, representing a cornerstone of Connecticut's federally designated Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership strategy. The project will be operated locally by EWIB, partnering with CTDOL, EB, EAMA employers, CT Department of Rehabilitation Services, CT Board of Regents for Higher Education, Quinebaug Valley Community College, CT Department of Economic and Community Development, Three Rivers Community College, CT Technical High Schools, EASTCONN, and Employment & Training Institute.

The Eastern Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative aligns with the intent of the Workforce Innovation Fund to: 1) enhance strategic collaboration and alignment of workforce development and partner programs by targeting the identified needs of regional employers through customized training, aligning training and employment services with available jobs, and expanding employer commitments to hire program completers; and 2) strengthen the quality of American Job Center services by increasing use of high-quality skills assessment tools and case management methods, and working directly with employers to identify training needs in growing industry sectors, aligning with WIOA priorities.

Advanced Manufacturing 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). Graduates can acquire a minimum of 4 National Institute of Metal Skills (NIMS), towards the 11-credential Machine Level I NIMS certificate. Recent enrollment data shows 323 students had enrolled across the four Centers in Fall 2013; 213 had graduated by June 2014; 86 students 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 2014 the US Department of Labor awarded a \$15 million grant to implement the Connecticut Advanced Manufacturing Initiative (CAMI) across the 12 community colleges and Charter Oak State College. CAMI builds on the foundation of the nationally recognized Advanced Manufacturing Technology Centers, and expands post-secondary manufacturing education to every community college in Connecticut. Grant funds pay for capital equipment to construct labs, purchase equipment, develop curricula, provide hands-on training, hire new teachers and educational assistants, and the development of new registered apprenticeships for high-demand manufacturing jobs. Manchester Community College serves as lead college of the multi-college CAMI consortium.

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 build 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, WDBs 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 needed to perform gas conversion work under Federal operator qualification (OQ) regulations. These efforts led to development of a covered task list for OQ in Connecticut (and also in New York, New Jersey and the rest of New England).

This initiative contributes 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 ensure that Connecticut companies have the skilled and qualified workers needed to perform the pipeline expansion as it comes on line over the next decade.

Energy Management

Tunxis Community College's (TxCC) Energy Management program is a unique, career-oriented two-year Associate of Applied Science degree that trains students to evaluate energy use patterns; develop, implement, market and maintain conservation programs; perform public outreach; recommend energy efficiency techniques; integrate alternative energy sources; and perform systems analysis to solve problems. Students learn to apply basic physics and analytical techniques to measure and define energy use of today's building systems with the goal of evaluating and recommending alternative energy solutions that will result in greater energy efficiency and lower energy costs. The program prepares undergraduate students and working age adults for energy analysis jobs in the commercial and industrial (C&I) energy sector. Students need no prior experience to succeed in the program. The program will help meet the need for well-trained commercial energy conservation workers in CT and in the Northeast US. TxCC's commercial energy program is modeled after Lane Community College's Energy Management Program, in Eugene, OR. Lane's program is internationally known, attracts undergraduate students and adult students from across the US, and has been running since 1980. Lane's Director of Energy and Water Programs provided program development assistance for the TxCC program.

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 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.

Connecticut Health and Life Sciences Career Initiative

In Connecticut, the health and life sciences represent an area of significant strategic growth supported by both public and private investment. The Connecticut Health and Life Sciences Career Initiative (HL-SCI) is designed to prepare workers to take on these new jobs with a particular focus in recruitment on veterans, TAA-eligible workers (those displaced by foreign trade), dislocated, unemployed and under-employed workers. Through a consortium of five community colleges (Norwalk, Capital, Gateway, Manchester and Middlesex), nineteen (19) new Certificate and Associate Degree programs have been established and forty-four (44) existing programs have been revised with industry support to ensure that students have the skills needed to succeed and that jobs will be waiting for graduates. Sixty (60) new online/hybrid courses have been created to increase flexibility and access for students and speed acceleration to graduation. Partnerships with employers for student internships and placement services provide a competitive edge for HL-SCI graduates who complete programs with hands-on experience and an understanding of workplace expectations.

The initiative also includes a commitment to stacked and latticed credentials to maximize options for students. Eastern Connecticut State University is part of the consortium to ensure that graduates of HL-SCI programs have pathways to 4-year institutions – both public and private – and to create new articulation agreements between consortium community colleges and Eastern Connecticut State University.

Regional Economic Development Forums

The CT Department of Economic and Community Development and The CT Economic Resource Center will conduct ten (10) Regional economic Development Forums throughout the State during the spring. Commissioner Catherine Smith will introduce the regional point of contact from DECD and discuss the state's new initiatives to fuel job growth – while CERC will present an overview of new business and municipal resources for economic growth. These events will also provide an opportunity for Q&A and a discussion on how we can further work together to foster economic development success.

Developing Future Talent

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 16-24 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. This 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.

Success indicators are post-secondary credentials and/or two- and four-year degrees obtained, and securing employment in 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 youth 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 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. Currently JAG is being operated in six CT high schools serving 208 students.

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 continued potential for replication include: Connecticut Early College Opportunities CT-ECO) programs including at the Norwalk Early College Academy; Danbury Early College Academy; Windham Early College Opportunities; New London Early College Opportunities program; 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.

CT- ECO Programs

In February 2014 in the State of the State address, Governor Malloy highlighted the IBM P-TECH model by name as an example of effective career education and a promising new model of high school and postsecondary education. In April, 2014 Governor Malloy announced collaboration with IBM to launch the state's first P-TECH model school in Norwalk, Connecticut. This partnership includes Norwalk High School, Norwalk Community College and IBM who developed a new 9-14 school that would provide students with an enriched curriculum to complete both a high school diploma and a cost-free AAS degree, aligned with actual employment opportunities at IBM. Students would have professional mentors, substantive workplace experiences and internships. Graduates would be first in line for job openings at IBM.

Three additional CT-ECO programs opened their doors in the Fall of 2015: Danbury ECO is a partnership between Danbury Public Schools, Naugatuck Valley Community College, and NewOak and Pitney Bows and the Eastern CT-ECO Programs. The Eastern CT-ECO programs are part of a region effort in the eastern portion of the state aimed at creating a pipeline of talented workers for the many manufacturers in the region. As such, both programs share the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance (EAMA) with General Dynamic Electric Boat serving as the lead as an industry partner. The Eastern CT-ECO programs were a key component in the successful Federal ICMP designation application. The two Eastern Connecticut programs are: New London ECO which is a partnership with New London Public Schools and Three Rivers Community College; and Windham ECO which is a partnership with Windham Public Schools and Quinebaug Valley Community College.

CT-ECO offers participating students an integrated high school and college program that aims for each student to graduate with an AAS or AS degree at no-cost to them. CT-ECO programs further prepare students with the skills and knowledge necessary to step seamlessly into well paying, high potential jobs in STEM fields.

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 public high school with a curriculum intended to address the workforce priorities of industry in Waterbury and surrounding municipalities for talented, educated, skilled future employees. The Academy operates within the Waterbury Public Schools system. Responding to 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 helped to establish and serve on 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. 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 eight (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 WDBs strive to offer youth aged 14-20 meaningful employment experiences. Various national studies document the positive impact 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 WDBs. In FY 2015, the Summer Youth Employment program was supported by \$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 2015 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 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.

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. PA 12-40 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.

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 Connecticut's twelve community colleges, to help more 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 Norwalk Community College, the Student Success Center serves as a statewide hub to support access to, retention in, and graduation from college, promoting effective strategies to encourage persistence and degree completion. The Center has access to cutting edge strategies across the country and 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.

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

The Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) statewide system of 16 diploma-granting technical high schools and one technical education center serves approximately 10,800 full-time high school students annually, offering education and training in 36 occupational areas. CTHSS also serves approximately 5,500 part-time adult students annually 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 occupational areas of need.

Connecticut's 2012 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* addressing the CTHSS mission of providing a world class career technical and academic education to prepare 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 Center for Arts & Technology (ConnCAT)

The Connecticut Center for Arts and Technology (ConnCAT), is modeled after Pittsburgh's highly successful Manchester Bidwell Corporation – an internationally recognized arts and education center founded by the renowned innovator and MacArthur Fellow, Bill Strickland. The mission of ConnCAT is to inspire, motivate, and prepare youth and adults for educational and career advancement, through after-school arts, and job training programming. Training opportunities are available to all people, without regard for race, religion, ancestry or national origin. ConnCAT provides job training programs designed to give unemployed and under-employed adults the skills needed to secure meaningful, well-paying jobs in health sciences and culinary professions, and the academic support required for success in those programs. ConnCAT career preparation links adult learners with local corporate partners in healthcare and hospitality services who assist in curriculum design and encourage entry level employment for adult learners upon program completion.

Cradle to Career – Collective Impact Movement to Strengthen Outcomes for Children and Families

Across the country, local stakeholders, practitioners, policy makers and funders are recognizing the need to work in new ways to solve complex social issues. This new way of working, coined "Collective Impact"

is rooted in broad and authentic, cross-sector, community engagement and the idea that local stakeholders need to be part of the solution.

In Connecticut, four urban communities (Stamford, Norwalk, Bridgeport and Waterbury) have launched Cradle to Career movements using the nationally recognized, evidenced-based **StriveTogether Collective Impact** framework.

The conditions of Collective Impact include:

- Development of Common Agenda/Community Vision that Encourages Alignment
- Evidenced-based/Data Driven Decision Making
- Collaborative Action with Commitment to Continuous Improvement
- Advocating for, and Investing in, What Works
- Sufficient, Dedicated Backbone Support

Each StriveTogether Cradle to Career Collective Impact community in Connecticut has determined specific outcomes their community would like to work to improve. These outcome areas include; Infant Health, Kindergarten Readiness, Third Grade Reading, Middle Grade Reading and Math, High School Completion, Reduced Exposure to Violence, Post-secondary Enrollment and Completion, and Youth Jobs/Employment.

Jobs Corps

Job Corps is a national, federally funded educational and vocational training program administered by USDOL, that helps low income youth (ages 16-24) gain workplace skills, train for high-demand occupations, and become independent and self-sufficient. With centers in Hartford and New Haven, more than 400 students enroll each year to earn a high school diploma or GED, learn a trade, obtain third party certifications and receive assistance finding a job. CTDOL has an assigned staff member who provides on-site support to the Hartford and New Haven Job Corp Centers.

Transforming System Capacity

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 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 two of Connecticut's workforce regions. Two participating WDBs employ Disability Resource Coordinators to implement project activities and coordinate services. Integrated Resource Teams address individual needs and provide increased support for jobseekers with disabilities. Partners include CTDOL's Office for Veterans Workforce Development and the Departments of Rehabilitative Services, Labor, Education, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Social Services, Transportation, and various other public and private sector representatives.

DEI efforts focus on:

- Promoting inclusiveness of individuals with disabilities 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-Stop system; increased number of participants earning industry-recognized credentials; and, increased number of individuals with disabilities co-enrolled with One-Stop partners.

Senior Community Service Employment Program

A Senior Community Service Employment Program funded under Title V of the Older Americans Act through the U.S. Department of Labor enables us to provide job skills training to low-income Individuals, age 55 and older in Connecticut. Ready to Work participants are placed in temporary training assignments where they gain valuable on-the-job work experience and training needed to gain meaningful employment. Participants will work 20 hours a week at the training sites for which they will be paid minimum wage.

Goals

- To assist participants in acquiring marketable jobs skills and
- To help participants secure meaningful unsubsidized employment

Program Objectives

- Participate in community service assignments to learn new skills in on the job training
- Assistance in resume development
- Assistance in developing job search skills
- Increase opportunities to obtain jobs in the private sector
- Referrals to supportive services as needed
- Change stereotypes about older workers through public education and demonstrated success

Workforce

18.9 percent of the civilian workforce in Connecticut consists of residents, age 65 and older (US Bureau of Labor Statistics: 2010). The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) assists workers age 55 years and older prepare for today's job market and re-enter the workforce through on-the-job training at local non-profit agencies and classroom training, including, but not limited to, Dress for Success, assistive technology and transportation.

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 to understand patterns over time and inform policy and strategy decisions to improve outcomes of education and training

programs for Connecticut students. With P20 WIN, Connecticut can evaluate how well 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), the University of Connecticut (UCONN), the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC) and Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) are the State entities actively participating in P20 WIN. An inter-agency data governance structure and data sharing agreements support collaborative decision-making about data access and use. P20 WIN provides 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.

Workforce Development Boards’ Initiatives

The following demonstrates Connecticut’s Workforce Development Boards leadership in attracting funds to support Connecticut’s workforce development efforts across the education and training continuum and the willingness of the WDBs to play a critical intermediary role in the efforts led by higher education and workforce system partners.

Illustrative List of Connecticut WDB Discretionary Fund Projects – 2009-2016

Funding Source	Funding Program	# of Awards	Grantee(s)*	Total Grant Amount (millions)	WDB Funding Amount (millions)
US DOL	IT-ED	4	WFA, NRWIB, WPI, CWP	\$32.33	\$12.33
HHS	Health Professions Opportunity Grant (HPOG)	3	FWIR, WPI	\$10.75	\$10.75
US DOL	State Energy Sector Partnership	1	CTDOL	\$3.35	\$0.56
US DOL	TAACCCT	2	BOR	\$27.10	\$2.52
US DOL	Workforce Innovation Fund	7	CTDOL, Baltimore	\$17.83	\$5.74
US DOL	WIRED	1	WPI	\$5.14	\$5.14
US DOL	YouthBuild	2	WPI, CWP	\$1.70	\$1.70
US DOL	STEM Opportunities in the Workforce System	1	FWIR	\$7.00	\$7.00
EPA	Brownfield Job Training	3	NRWIB, WPI	\$0.65	\$0.65
US DOL	Insurance & Financial Services	1	WPI	\$2.75	\$2.75
US DOL	Pathways Out of Poverty	1	WPI	\$4.00	\$4.00
US DOL	Community Based Job Training Grants	2	BOR	\$1.23	\$0.72
USDOL	All Other Programs (e.g., NEG, LEAP, others)	14	CTDOL, EWIB, WFA, WPI	\$16.30	\$16.30
Others	Various	14	Various	\$18.78	\$18.78
TOTAL				\$149.99	\$103.95

The following bullets highlight just a few of the projects that have achieved national recognition and/or replication and involved a high level of collaboration among multiple Connecticut WDBs.

- The \$2 million **CT STEM Jobs** grant project, one of only five USDOL “STEM Opportunities in the Workforce System” pilot grants nationally, was the first federal grant project that involved all five Connecticut WDBs, along with higher education, economic development, and industry partners. CT STEM Jobs earned national recognition for innovative approaches that placed 758 unemployed workers into jobs despite occurring during a period in which Connecticut lost close to 60,000 jobs.
- The five Connecticut WDBs led the on-the-ground implementation of the \$5.8 million USDOL **Connecticut Green Jobs Funnel Initiative** (CGJFI) received by the CTDOL Office of Workforce Competitiveness. The CGJFI involved the replication of Capital Workforce Partners’ nationally-recognized Jobs Funnel model to all five Connecticut workforce areas.

The CGJFI trained 1,390 people (154% of goal) and placed 887 people in employment (154% of goal).

- The WorkPlace Inc.'s **Platform to Employment** (P2E) program began in Southwest Connecticut in 2011 with private funding as an innovative solution to help the long-term unemployed get back to work. Based on the success of P2E in Southwest Connecticut, the Connecticut General Assembly appropriated \$3.6 million in 2014 to create the first statewide P2E program in the nation. Nearly 80% of Connecticut participants who complete the preparatory program take the next step into a work experience at a local company. Of this population, nearly 90% have moved to employer payrolls. Based on this success, P2E has expanded to several national markets.
- The **Eastern Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative** utilizes a \$6 million USDOL Workforce Innovation Fund award to implement and bring to scale a demand-driven, customized training program recognized by U.S. Labor Secretary Thomas Perez as an innovative model ripe for national replication. The recently-launched Pipeline Initiative will help to address a massive need for skilled tradesworkers at Electric Boat and other members of the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance by providing a short-term training option to unemployed and underemployed workers unable to attend longer-term training.
- **Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program** In November 2015, Connecticut was one of four states selected to participate as a Core State in the 2016 Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP) offered through the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).

Connecticut was chosen through an application process to become an EFSLMP Core State. Connecticut committed to a cross-system, cross-disability effort to promote Employment First, a national movement in both philosophy and policy stating that employment is the first priority and preferred outcome of individuals with disabilities.

Two workgroups were formed, comprised of leadership representing six state agencies including the Departments of Labor, Developmental Services, Rehabilitation Services, Education, Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Social Services, as well as key stakeholders including the CT Council on Developmental Disabilities and the CT Business Leadership Network. These workgroups receive a combination of virtual and onsite mentoring, intensive technical assistance, and training from a national pool of subject matter experts under the program. One workgroup is focused on coordinating and streamlining business engagement and outreach strategies across government agencies and providers. A second workgroup required under the program called Vision Quest, is charged developing and implementing policy to support the state's Employment First systems change efforts.

(B) The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities identified in (A)

The preceding discussion of Connecticut's workforce development activities (pages 26-38) addresses an inventory of selected noteworthy initiatives, programs, and services responsive to the goals that serve

as the focus for this Unified State Plan: Supporting Business Growth; Strengthening the Current Workforce; Developing Future Talent; and Transforming System Capacity.

The process of developing Connecticut's Unified State Plan included review of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats: Aerospace and Marine Shipbuilding in Connecticut's Advanced Manufacturing Communities Region prepared by the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, as well as several other information sources summarized below.

In 2014 OWC engaged members of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) Career Advancement and Youth Employment committees to review statewide efforts to develop the coordinated career pathways system collectively envisioned by USDOL, the US Department of Education and HHS. Committee members participated in a joint working session to share insights. An information session was held with officials coordinating workforce initiatives in the state's public college and university system. A survey was disseminated to key stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities associated with career pathway strategies and similar efforts. Collectively, the knowledgeable individuals engaged in this information review process represented employers, Workforce Development Boards, key state agencies, community colleges, adult education providers, Regional Education Service Centers, community-based service providers and philanthropy. The assessment they produced informs this Unified State Plan, as it examines workforce activities relevant to the objective of building a career pathways system as a key feature of State workforce strategy under WIOA.

Additional information on perceived strengths and weaknesses was derived from the "State Plan Addressing Contextualized Learning, Early College and Career Certificate Programs" produced by CETC in 2015. In addition to the information generated by these CETC-sanctioned analyses, OWC staff reviewed the output produced by the various WIOA Transition Work Groups during the recent state planning process to extract insights concerning workforce development activities.

The following summary addresses perceived strengths and opportunities for improvement:

Strengths

Given the knowledge, experience and expertise of its key partners and stakeholders, Connecticut's workforce system is well positioned to implement innovative workforce and talent development strategies.

Connecticut's workforce development efforts are supported and encouraged by the strong relationships among executive leadership in key State agencies and key administrative and program staff in each organization.

State, regional and local partners have a demonstrable track record of successful collaboration on applying for and winning significant national competitive grant awards that address strategic priorities, developing innovative partnerships responsive to employer priorities, and effective sharing of information and best practices, i.e. the Disability Employment Initiative and The American Apprenticeship Initiative.

The role of the local workforce Development Boards (WDBs) – collaborating with CTDOL, other key State agencies and numerous local partners and stakeholders – is a key asset in Connecticut's ability to develop innovative strategies, programs and services responsive to the needs of jobseekers, workers

and employers. The WDBs and their partners have developed numerous effective programs, shared successful efforts and adjusted strategies as results dictate.

Connecticut has been generating increasingly useful labor market information and program outcome data emerging from the *Preschool Through Twenty and Workforce Information Network (P20WIN)* system and associated working groups and partnerships among key state agencies.

Connecticut's workforce system enjoys a range of positive experiences in working closely with employers – large and small – as partners and customers in key industries/sectors at both the State and local level.

The business community and employers play a strong role in providing leadership to the local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) and the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC).

Connecticut is blessed with a diverse array of public and private postsecondary/higher education institutions that serve as a foundation for numerous workforce/career development initiatives responsive to the needs and priorities of Connecticut businesses and employers.

Connecticut has an extensive network of committed, mission-driven, effective community-based organizations and non-profit service providers delivering effective on workforce programs and services accessible to key target populations.

Connecticut has an active philanthropic sector that is increasingly engaged in supporting workforce development-related initiatives, including local community foundations, local United Ways and corporate foundations.

Our ability to provide effective innovative workforce development services depends on continuing effective communication among State and local partners and stakeholders, including those who will serve together as members of the CETC Committees and Work Groups going forward.

Continuing effective communication between CETC and the local Workforce Development Boards will be essential to ensure a process is in place to refine and adjust strategy towards continuous improvement and enhanced system performance.

Across Connecticut are numerous examples of workforce programs that strive to address the essential components of a comprehensive approach to career pathways responsive to employer needs and focused on good career opportunities: alignment across program and “sub-system” silos; rigorous, sequential coursework integrating education and work-based training; flexible entry/exit; comprehensive support services; financial support; engagement with targeted businesses and industry sectors; credit for prior learning and opportunity for accelerated advancement; flexible scheduling; innovative use of technology; attainment of industry-recognized credentials; industry sector focus and advancement opportunities; and, creative collaboration among stakeholders to achieve results.

Improvement Opportunities

One of the challenges to building and sustaining effective workforce development strategies that Connecticut has faced is an over-reliance on individual leaders at all levels of the state workforce

system. There is a need to institutionalize effective practices that can persist despite inevitable administrative, managerial, and political leadership changes.

Too often “partnership” in the past has been on paper, more rhetorical than practiced in reality. Partnership efforts have often lacked the necessary resources and time to build deep relationships between organizations targeted to a common outcome. The fact that programs and providers often operate under different funding mechanisms and with different eligibility requirements and outcome measurements also has made innovative workforce partnerships difficult.

Resource Challenges

Insufficient funding (from all sources) has limited the ability to take effective practices to scale and sustain them. Prospective participants’ needs and demands for services have overwhelmed available resources and capacity of workforce programs and services across the state workforce the system.

Most program funding has categorical strings limiting flexibility, innovation and responsiveness. As a result, many programs have been unable to adjust as circumstances warrant.

Effective strategies – particularly contextualized learning programs – can be expensive on a unit cost basis and therefore have limited potential impact, given constrained funding realities.

Participant Challenges

The very low literacy levels of many prospective participants of workforce programs – compounded by lack of work-readiness (“soft”) skills – limit their prospects for career advancement and tax the capabilities of programs with limited resources.

Many young people involved with the juvenile justice system are at-risk of future involvement with criminal justice system as adults. Criminal records are a practical impediment to employment for many individuals who aspire to productive careers.

System Challenges

Currently used assessment tools and strategies have been inadequate. In order to match participants to effective service strategies, more detailed information is needed. Clinical assessments of prospective candidates would be helpful, but prohibitively expensive, and well beyond available resources of most programs.

There has been a lack of consistent quality program standards to drive funding decisions (i.e., invest in effective programs). As a result limited available resources are not systematically invested in programs that achieve results or industries that have real job opportunities.

Many programs and service providers report to different agencies, accountable for differing outcome measures. For maximum impact, the various components of a career pathways system need to share commitment to and be accountable for achieving shared outcomes.

Fragmented, inconsistent staffing – due to low wages and unpredictable funding – has been a major program quality barrier for many nonprofit organizations providing employment-related services.

The system needs to utilize better assessments of employers' needs, map out a realistic progression from job-to-job along career pathways, and clarify employer commitment to support workers' efforts to pursue a career advancement strategy.

Many effective workforce initiatives depend too heavily on individual leadership at the agency or program-level, rather than as a systemic imperative.

The capacity of many organizations providing workforce services to respond to the complexity of braiding funds – including reporting, procurement, etc. – is inadequate.

CETC plans to conduct a more deliberate analysis of workforce system strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities, and conduct value stream mapping of the workforce system as a key activity of its next annual plan, due for submission to the Governor and General Assembly in January 2017.

(C) State Workforce Development Capacity

Provide an analysis of the capacity of State entities to provide the workforce development activities identified in (A), above.

Connecticut's capacity to implement proposed workforce development activities and provide coordinated, aligned, integrated, comprehensive workforce development programs and services to jobseekers, workers and employers is strong, and improving.

Over the past five years Governor Malloy has supported a series of initiatives and investments to address Connecticut'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. Many of these workforce development activities are described in the preceding section. Connecticut businesses and employers have increased their active support for and participation in numerous practical partnerships to help build the skills of the workers they need for their companies to prosper.

The capacity of Connecticut's workforce system to meet the challenges ahead is manifest in numerous examples. At both State and regional/local levels, an array of sector-specific workforce partnerships are in place to prepare targeted jobseekers and incumbent workers to meet employers' needs. The statewide network of comprehensive One-Stop Centers and satellite offices provides accessible facilities and presence in key communities. The P20WIN longitudinal data system provides increasingly useful information to guide system investment strategies.

The Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC), the State Workforce Board, Office of Workforce Competitiveness(OWC), and key system partners worked diligently to develop this Unified State Plan and prepare for continuous system improvements and effective service delivery. Guided by business leader Donald Shubert and Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman, CETC has a business sector majority, and includes the Commissioners of State agencies responsible for core WIOA programs (Labor, Education, Rehabilitation Services), plus key State agencies responsible for other elements of the larger system – including the Department of Social Services (TANF and SNAP E&T), Department of Economic and Community Development, and Board of Regents for Higher Education (community colleges and

public universities). Partnerships reinforced through CETC at the State-level will help drive implementation of the Unified State Plan system-wide.

Connecticut's workforce system has the capacity to implement the various strategies described in the next section of this Unified State Plan across the four goals of supporting business growth, strengthening Connecticut's current workforce, building the future workforce, and transforming system capacity. Strategies to be pursued specifically to improve system capacity (identified and discussed on pages 43-45) include:

- Re-imagining delivery of customer services
- Cross-entity/cross-program functional partnerships
- Regional collaboration between regional workforce boards and community colleges
- Transparent performance system
- Emphasis on system continuous improvement
- State-of-the-art technology to improve cost-effective service delivery

Recent State investments in a portfolio of education, workforce development, job training, adult literacy and youth development strategies to build critical system capacity include:

- Advanced Manufacturing Technology Centers **\$17.8 million**
- CT Manufacturing Innovation Fund **\$70 million**
- Incumbent Worker Training **\$7.6 million**
- Apprenticeship **\$7 million**
- Platform to Employment **\$3.6 million**
- STEP-UP **\$5 million**
- I-BEST Adult Education Programs **\$1.5 million**
- Second Chance Initiative **\$1.5 million**
- CT's Youth Employment Program **\$18.5 million**

Anticipated challenges that lie ahead and are likely to test system capacity, reinforcing the importance of continuous system improvement, include:

- Ongoing State budget pressures and likely reductions in funding to support programs, services and system infrastructure, including a physical presence in key communities.
- Service needs of a significant number of young adults entering the workforce lacking the education and skills to compete in the workforce.
- The significant number of low-skill/low-wage adults struggling to meet employers' needs and expectations to be able to compete successfully in the workforce.
- Efficient coordination of effective employer outreach and engagement strategies.

Connecticut has the key components of an effective workforce system in place – among State agencies, regional/local partners, businesses and employers and system infrastructure – to do the important work that lies ahead. We have longstanding experience with creative partnerships to achieve shared outcomes. We have a culture of innovation and shared expectations to constantly be doing better – a collective continuous improvement mindset. And now, we have a Unified State Plan serving as a blueprint for collective effort to increase the capacity of our collaborative system to achieve our common vision.

(b) State Strategic Vision and Goals

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategic vision and goals for developing its workforce and meeting employer needs in order to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency.

(1) Vision: Describe the State's strategic vision for its workforce development system.

Upon taking office in January 2011, Governor Dannel Malloy asserted as a policy priority the **VISION** that, building on its proud heritage, **Connecticut will create and sustain the global economy's best-educated, most-skilled, highest-productive workforce, capable of pursuing rewarding careers, such that every Connecticut business has access to a qualified, skilled, job-ready workforce.** In the ensuing five years the Governor and Connecticut General Assembly have partnered effectively to embrace the critical importance of skilled talent as the essential resource in efforts to grow Connecticut's economy, create and retain rewarding jobs, and increase opportunities for financial success through productive employment. Over the past four years the fundamental importance of this workforce agenda and vision has gained attention and support across a broad spectrum of state business leaders and policymakers.

From the outset of his administration, Governor Malloy rolled-out a series of wide-ranging initiatives and investments focusing on various aspects of the state's broad workforce challenges, encompassing early childhood development, strengthened career and technical education, industry-driven enhancements in higher education, innovative apprenticeships, and specialized 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. With the Governor's encouragement, the General Assembly adopted several major, innovative, structural policy initiatives that, taken together, create a strong foundation from which to pursue the Governor's vision. Connecticut businesses have increased their active support and participation in numerous partnerships and initiatives to build the skills of the workers they need for their companies to prosper.

Connecticut's challenge – and the opportunity WIOA offers – is to ensure that a comprehensive, aligned, integrated workforce development system is in place and sustained into the future to achieve this vision of developing and maintaining the best-educated, most-skilled, highest-productive workforce in the increasingly competitive global economy. This Connecticut Unified State Plan establishes the framework to achieve the vision.

(2) Goals: Describe the goals for achieving this vision based on the analysis in (a) above of the State's economic conditions, workforce, and workforce development activities. This must include:

(A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment⁸ and other populations.⁹

(B) Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

To bring focus to the Governor's broad vision, the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission – CETC, the State Workforce Board – has adopted four overarching and complementary goals, as a policy

and strategic framework for the numerous business sector, government, labor, community-based and non-profit partners and stakeholders engaged in Connecticut's innovative workforce efforts:

- **Support Business Growth:** Connecticut businesses – particularly those in key industry sectors that drive economic growth – will have access to the skilled, talented employees they need to compete effectively, prosper and create new and rewarding jobs and career opportunities for Connecticut workers.
- **Strengthen Current Workforce:** Connecticut workers will possess the critical skills and credentials needed to prosper and advance in careers that pay well and allow them to support their families.
- **Develop Future Talent:** Connecticut's young people will be equipped and ready for career and postsecondary success as productive contributors to a vibrant and competitive state economy and in their communities.
- **Transform System Capacity:** Connecticut's multi-faceted workforce/talent-development system will integrate and align goals, strategies, policies, investments, services, infrastructure and technology for effective, accountable performance.

To accomplish the Governor's vision and meet these goals, CETC endorses a set of guiding principles for Connecticut's workforce system, calling on all stakeholders to embrace these principles in the work they do:

- Connecticut's efforts must be business-driven and customer-focused.
- Collaboration among partners and stakeholders is essential.
- Innovation is crucial, including use of technology and new approaches.
- Data and evidence must be used to shape strategy.
- Continuous improvement must be a way of life.

The CETC committee that will be responsible for system performance will develop a corresponding set of objectives and measures for ongoing review to support effective system performance and continuous improvement.

DORS Vocational Rehabilitation Services

In addition to the overarching goals for Connecticut's workforce system (outlined above) and the implementation of WIOA-specific goals, the vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs will focus on the goals listed below collectively. These goals have been developed with the full participation and guidance of the State Rehabilitation Councils for both VR programs. Details on these goals are available in the BESB and BRS state plans for vocational rehabilitation and supported employment services included in this Unified State Plan.

Goal A: Increase employment opportunities for eligible individuals of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Goal B: Provide coordinated services to students with disabilities to prepare for careers and postsecondary education after exit from high school.

Goal C: Utilize Innovation and Expansion authority to identify services that can benefit groups of individuals with disabilities to increase access to career information, adaptive technology, and credential attainment.

Board of Regents for Higher Education

The vision for the Connecticut State Colleges and University System is that a continually increasing share of Connecticut's population will have a high quality post-secondary education that enables

them to achieve their life and career goals and makes Connecticut a place of engaged, globally competitive communities. This vision and the goals stated below align well with the CETC goals including:

Goal 1: A Successful First Year: Increase the number of students who successfully complete a first year of college.

Goal 2: Student Success: Graduate more students with the knowledge and skills to achieve their life and career goal.

Goal 3: Affordability and Sustainability: Maximize access to higher education by making attendance affordable and our institutions financially sustainable.

Goal 4: Innovation and Economic Growth: Create educational environments that cultivate innovation and prepare students for successful careers in a fast changing world.

Goal 5: Equity: Eliminate achievement disparities among different ethnic/racial, economic and gender groups.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

In addition to the overarching goals for Connecticut's workforce system, the following goals are specific to the TANF and the JFES program:

TANF Goals

Goal 1: Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or the homes of relatives.

Goal 2: End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and marriage.

Goal 3: Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies.

Goal 4: Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

JFES Goals

Goal 1: Enable participants, through employment, to become independent from cash assistance by the end of the 21-month time limit established by state law;

Goal 2: Enable participants who become independent from cash assistance to remain employed and independent of cash assistance; and

Goal 3: Ensure that federally established TANF Work Participation rates are met through employment of participants and engagement of participants in other allowable TANF work activities based on the regional and individual assessments of participants' needs.

SNAP E & T

In addition to the overarching goals for Connecticut's workforce system, the SNAP E&T program's primary goal is to assist SNAP E&T participants with work-related activities that will lead to paid employment. SNAP E&T is a voluntary, skills based program with a focus on vocational training. Successful students gain skills needed to find employment or improve employment in the current job market. The resulting outcome is increased self-sufficiency and decreased dependence on public assistance.

(3) Performance Goals

Using the table provided in Appendix 1, include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA. (This Strategic Planning element only applies to core programs.)

Refer to Appendix 1.

Assessment

Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the State in relation to the strategic vision and goals stated above in sections (b)(1), (2), and (3) and how it will use the results of this assessment and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements.

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) Performance and Accountability Unit and WIOA Administration Unit, in collaboration with colleagues in comparable functions at DORS and CSDE, will develop and maintain a dashboard tool to capture and summarize selected data concerning program effectiveness and the aggregate impact of Connecticut's workforce system in addressing the vision, goals, and principles described above.

The dashboard will be reviewed quarterly by the CETC committee responsible for performance evaluation. This committee will identify opportunities for improvement and convene system partners and stakeholders to share information and develop strategies to rectify identified challenges. Broad measures to be reviewed regularly will include:

1. Business engagement and delivering value to business/employer customers.
2. Measurable skills development in terms of educational attainment and workforce credentials that matter to Connecticut businesses.
3. Securing jobs in demand occupations showing promise for long-term growth in industry sectors valuable to Connecticut's economic expansion.
4. Earned wages that help jobseekers and workers attain financial security and demonstrate career advancement.
5. Workforce system investments that generate a quality return.

(c) State Strategy

The Unified State Plan must include the State's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies must take into account the State's economic, workforce, and workforce development, education and training activities and analysis provided in Section (a) above. Include discussion of specific strategies to address the needs of populations provided in Section (a).

Economic development is most effective when approached with a clear vision, an eye for long-term stability and growth, and a strong plan of execution. While the state needs to continue to manage its finances responsibly and to streamline government, it must also make the required investments to move our economy forward and innovate in ways that will benefit all Connecticut residents.

The Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC – the State Workforce Board), the State agencies responsible for administration of the core WIOA programs encompassed by this Unified State Plan (Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL), Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE),

and Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)), the Connecticut Department of Social Services (CTDSS) and the five Workforce Development Boards – propose and will support a set of broadly-conceived strategies intended to achieve the vision and goals outlined above. These strategies will serve as a framework for Connecticut’s implementation efforts, with corresponding detailed State and local implementing actions to be developed.

(1) Describe the strategies the State will implement, including industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations and career pathways, as required by WIOA section 101(d)(3)(B), (D). “Career pathway” is defined at WIOA section 3(7). “In- demand industry sector or occupation” is defined at WIOA section 3(23).

Support Business Growth:

- Promote implementation of **business/employer-led industry partnerships** at both State and regional/local levels, focusing on targeted sectors. Consistent with principles and criteria developed by the WIOA Transition Business Engagement Work Group. Focus of these partnerships will be on high-priority, high-value, high-demand sectors and occupations.
- Promote effective implementation of **regional/local sector-based initiatives** in targeted sectors, consistent with principles and criteria developed by the WIOA Transition Business Engagement Work Group, intended to address employers’ priority needs, building on the achievements of existing successful regional sector initiatives. Strategically connect qualified jobseekers produced by the workforce system to job opportunities with businesses/employers benefitting from public investments, to strengthen the link between workforce development and economic development strategy.
- Implement a **coordinated business/employer services model** through the American Job Center One-Stop system, engaging coordinated participation by a broad array of partners and stakeholders, to address business/employer customers’ workforce needs, consistent with the “single point of contact” model principles and criteria developed by the WIOA Transition Business Engagement Work Group.
- Promote implementation of a **robust labor market information system** to buttress effective workforce system planning at State and regional/local levels, engaging the analytic capabilities of workforce system partners, including insight and intelligence from businesses and employers, to promote data-informed and data-driven decisions about program strategy and related investments. Build on and maximize the capabilities of CTDOL’s Training and Education Planning System (TEPS) tool to improve capabilities to analyze labor demand and supply, to help focus workforce development strategy. Develop and utilize a dashboard tool to capture, distill and analyze data on critical indicators to inform workforce planning and strategy. Strengthen the capabilities of the P20-WIN longitudinal data system.
- **Support local sector partnerships** through ongoing funding, technical assistance, program initiatives, and the development of statewide policies related to sector partnerships. WIOA requires sector partnerships as a local workforce activity, and requires states to use of a portion of statewide discretionary funds to support local areas in the development, convening, and implementation of industry/sector partnerships.

- **Provide high-quality labor market information and planning tools** through the CTDOL Office of Research. The WDBs will continue to rely on the CTDOL Office of Research to provide updated data (e.g., occupational projections) to help inform demand-driven workforce development activities that train people for jobs that exist (as opposed to the old “train and pray” approach). The Office of Research should build upon its annual “Information for Workforce Investment Planning” document for each workforce development region, which proves invaluable to WDB planning and fund development efforts. The Office of Research should expand this document to reflect a more regional approach, particularly with respect to sectors. CTDOL should also explore the possibility of collaborating with DECD to utilize DECD supplementary demand data to enable the document to better inform demand-driven workforce development approaches.
- **Share promising practices across regions** to promote the replication of effective employer engagement strategies statewide. While the CWDC provides a mechanism for cross-regional information sharing among the WDBs, CTDOL and the CETC represent platforms for the development of statewide workforce development policies and practices.
- **Support Workforce Development Board efforts** as incubators of innovative, effective sector partnerships. For example:
 - Capital Workforce Partners (CWP), together with Connecticut Women’s Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF), convenes the ***Metro Hartford Alliance for Careers in Healthcare (MACH)***, an employer-led network whose purpose is to identify and respond to workforce development and policy issues for entry-level and middle-skill positions in the healthcare industry. MACH convenes working committees to address issues such as identifying the needs for entry-level and middle-skilled workers in various segments of the healthcare industry. Working committees are chaired by an employer partner, and staffed by CWP and CWEALF. MACH hosts workforce events such as an informational career fair, a job fair, and a symposium where workforce development issues affecting the industry are explored, and employers and employees who participate in and advance workplace learning are recognized in an awards ceremony.
 - The Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB) convenes the ***Eastern Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative***, a sector partnership lauded by U.S. Labor Secretary Thomas Perez as a national model for industry-driven partnerships among employers, education/training, and workforce development partners. This partnership has developed over seven years to ensure that education and training activities respond to the needs of manufacturers and other employers dependent on workers with STEM competencies. In response to a projected spike in employer hiring and a gap in the regional training infrastructure, EWIB formally re-convened the partnership in January 2015. This planning effort involving employers, community colleges, technical high schools, and other workforce development stakeholders resulted in a \$6 million USDOL Workforce Innovation Fund award to implement and bring to scale a demand-driven, customized training program.
 - Over the past five years, the WorkPlace, Inc. has utilized HHS and USDOL funding to implement the ***Southwestern Connecticut Health CareRx Academy***, a regional partnership of hospitals, colleges, businesses, business groups, labor and CBO's. The Academy addresses two major needs of the region: providing low-income populations with core skills and supports to obtain employment, and helping ameliorate healthcare industry workforce shortages. The Academy

provides no-cost training and support to help participants get a career in the growing healthcare field.

Strengthen Current Workforce:

- Promote expanded implementation of **effective incumbent worker training programs and services**, focusing on targeted industry sectors, maximizing opportunities for business/employer participation, consistent with administrative criteria and principles established by the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL).
- Promote expanded implementation of **effective integrated employment and training/contextualized learning strategies** to improve skills acquisition and employment outcomes for targeted low-skill jobseekers, including adult education students and participants in time-limited public assistance. Expand proven best practices as feasible to include additional prospective participants, working closely with businesses/employers in key sectors seeking qualified skilled workers. Maintain fidelity to rigorous program standards. Use the recommendations of CETC's 2015 State Plan Addressing Contextualized Learning, Early College and Career Certificate Programs as a framework.
- Promote development and implementation of **aligned career pathways strategies** as an integral feature of industry partnerships and sector-based initiatives, with multiple on-off ramps for participants of varying skills and abilities, leading to employer-valued/validated credentials and certifications, consistent with principles and criteria developed by the WIOA Transition Business Engagement Work Group. Career pathways are equally valuable for adult jobseekers and young people, including students and out-of-school youth.
- Maximize **opportunities for success for all individual jobseekers and workers** in Connecticut's talent pool, promoting innovation, effective coordination, resource alignment and integrated service delivery to advance the employability and career prospects for the broadest possible range of customers, including (but not limited to) veterans, the long-term unemployed, public assistance participants, individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders, homeless individuals, out-of-school youth, low-skilled adults, limited English proficient, etc.
- Promote and maximize opportunities to fulfill WIOA statutory language that adults receiving public assistance benefits receive priority access to services.

Develop Future Talent:

- Build Connecticut's **K-16 talent pipeline**, engaging a broad spectrum of education, higher education, workforce system and business partners and stakeholders, to prepare Connecticut youth with work and career readiness skills. Focus on regional/local sector-based initiatives, emphasizing career pathways approaches. Integrate a strengthened and expanded Summer Youth Employment Program into a comprehensive youth career pathways strategy. Expand early college programs, consistent with recommendations of CETC's 2015 *State Plan Addressing Contextualized Learning, Early College and Career Certificate Programs*.
- Promote implementation of effective **developmental/transitional instruction and learning strategies** to ensure that recent Connecticut high school graduates are qualified for credit-bearing courses level upon college matriculation, or can quickly get up to speed.

- Develop **pathways for academically low-performing at-risk students and out-of-school youth** leading to certifications and credentials that enhance their viability in the job market. Build on and expand the Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG) program model to prepare academically at-risk high school students for college success. Build on and expand the opportunity youth coordinated career pathways model to help targeted out-of-school youth acquire valuable post-secondary credentials and get a job.
- Promote the strengthening of articulation agreements between vocational technical high schools and community college credit and non-credit certificate programs, especially in expanding employment sectors.

Transform System Capacity:

- **Re-imagine delivery of customer services** to individual jobseekers and workers in the American Job Center One-Stop system. Develop and implement streamlined service flow with efficiently aligned and integrated processes implemented by coordinated service teams representing the full range of contributions from system partners and stakeholders, consistent with principles and criteria developed by the WIOA Transition Service Design and Delivery Work Group. Build on lessons learned from implementation of the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) and Secure Jobs pilots as models for innovative and effective multi-partner service coordination.
- Develop and implement strong, effective **cross-entity/cross-program functional partnerships** to enhance efficient delivery of effective customer services. Develop shared governance structure with clear policies and procedures. Develop consensus on unified consistent messaging and communications to key audiences/market segments. Pursue critical resources collaboratively. Braid and leverage available resources strategically. Implement consistent cross-agency/cross-program staff training on shared/common functions and responsibilities.
- Strengthen **regional collaboration between WDBs and Community Colleges** to focus strategy and align program design responsive to business/employer demand to develop students/customers qualified for good jobs in the local labor market.
- Implement a **transparent performance system** for all WIOA core programs, expandable as feasible over time to include informative performance-related data from relevant programs not specifically included in this Unified State Plan. This strategy will build on the successful foundation of the *CETC Legislative Report Card* produced annually by the CTDOL Office of Research, to review labor market data and outcomes for recent graduates of the public higher education system and participants in key job training programs and services. Utilize and analyze cross-program performance measures. Use the performance accountability process to regularly review, monitor, assess and report on the impact of workforce system programs and related investments. Align technology systems and data platforms across agencies and programs as feasible to maximize efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
- Conduct ongoing research and analysis to **identify opportunities for system continuous improvement** and maximize system capacity, making strategic use of data to focus training efforts and align resources. Develop, maintain, analyze and report on an updated statewide inventory of workforce-related programs, to inform strategy and as a source of information to help the American

Job Center One-Stop system apprise customers of opportunities. Focus training investments and advocacy on clearly identified best practices for each targeted sector and each customer segment.

- Invest in **state-of-the-art technology to improve cost-effective service delivery**, including technology-based instruction and e-learning, efficient access to employment opportunities, integrated across agencies to enhance general accessibility to programs and services for all customers irrespective of barriers and/or disabilities, etc.
- Strengthen regional collaboration among the employment and training system planning and operational entities and the social/health service systems in order to insure public assistance recipients receive priority access to WIOA resources/services.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services at the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)

In addition to the broad system-wide goals discussed above, DORS has adopted a complementary set of strategies reflecting a commitment to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities through the provision of vocational rehabilitation and supported employment services. Adopted strategies focus on: methods to expand and improve services; how a broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided at each stage of the rehabilitation process; outreach procedures to identify and serve Individuals with Disabilities from un-served and underserved populations; methods to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities; strategies to improve performance accountability measures; strategies to assist other components of the statewide workforce development system; and how these strategies will be used to achieve goals and priorities consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment and support innovation and expansion activity. Details are available in the distinct plans for each of the Department's Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment programs included in this Unified State Plan.

(2) Describe the strategies the State will use to align core programs, any Combined State Plan partner programs included in this Plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs, and any other resources available to the State to achieve fully integrated customer services consistent with the strategic vision and goals described above. Also describe the strategies to strengthen workforce development activities in regard to weaknesses identified in section (II)(a)(2).

Representatives of State agencies responsible for administering core WIOA programs (CTDOL, DORS and CSDE) and CTSS joined by representatives of other critical workforce system collaborators and stakeholders, will participate in ongoing integrated State and local-level monitoring and oversight to identify gaps to be addressed and opportunities for effective program and resource alignment.

Lead responsibility to review and assure alignment of programs and resources falls to the CETC Executive Committee, which includes senior representatives of the core WIOA agencies and leaders of CETC committees and work groups. Regular input from the committee overseeing performance will inform the Executive Committee's focus on program alignment. This Committee will be supported by the CTDOL Performance and Accountability Unit and Office of Research and will be charged to: review system performance to ensure value and productivity of investments; analyze labor market information to identify gaps, needs and opportunities for innovation and improvement; and provide insight and guidance to the Executive Committee and CETC on appropriate actions.

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

(a) State Strategy Implementation

(1) State Board Functions

Describe how the State board will implement its functions under section 101(d) of WIOA (i.e., provide a description of Board operational structures and decision making processes to ensure such functions are carried out).

The Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) serves as Connecticut’s State Workforce Development Board. Originally established under the former Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), CETC was authorized in 1998 as the State Board under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and in July 2015 Governor Malloy designated CETC to serve as the State Workforce Development Board consistent with “alternative entity” provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The United States Department of Labor (USDOL) subsequently approved that designation.

Governor Malloy designated the Connecticut Department of Labor Office of Workforce Competitiveness to coordinate WIOA implementation efforts in Connecticut in its capacity as a workforce development policy advisor to the Governor and staff to CETC. With CETC’s endorsement, OWC established four Work Groups in spring 2015 to prepare for the implementation of WIOA:

- Service Design and Delivery Work Group – Focusing on the effective and efficient operations of Connecticut’s American Jobs Centers One-Stop career system.
- Technology, Data, Outcomes Work Group – Addressing the collection and reporting of data across core WIOA programs to support transparent performance accountability.
- Business Engagement Work Group – Proposing actions to promote strong employer-led industry partnerships, sector strategies and career pathways initiatives.
- Administration/Governance Work Group – Responsible for ensuring that requisite administrative policies, agreements, procedures and structures are in place to support and sustain an aligned and integrated statewide workforce system.

Moving forward into 2016, it is anticipated that CETC will revise its organizational structure to be able to address the priorities identified in this Unified State Plan and to satisfy its functional responsibilities as the State Board under WIOA. That organizational structure will be consistent with WIOA requirements while also reflecting CETC’s unique history and experience.

As CETC’s revised organizational structure evolves, it is likely that the Service Design, Business Engagement and Outcomes Work Groups described above – or similar in form and function – will remain in existence at least through calendar year 2016, to provide operational guidance and direction to Connecticut’s WIOA implementation efforts. CETC members, WDBs, and partner agencies will be invited and encouraged to participate on these groups. During this ongoing transition period, the committee structure of the CETC will be formed that will focus on the following:

- Business Partnership and Engagement
- Service Coordination amongst State agency partners and the WDBs
- Workforce Education and Young Adults
- Performance Accountability and Continuous Improvement

There will be opportunities for partners, WDBs and all workforce development stakeholders to participate in the new committee structure once formalized.

The CETC and/or its Executive Committee will carry out the State Board functions under Section 101(d) of the WIOA for the present time.

Within available resources, CTDOL's Office of Workforce Competitiveness will coordinate professional staff support and technical assistance for CETC's efforts to meet its obligations as the State Workforce Development Board.

(2) Implementation of State Strategy

Describe how the lead State agency with responsibility for the administration of each core program or a Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan will implement the State's Strategies identified in II(c) above.

(A) Core Program Activities to Implement the State's Strategy

Describe the activities the entities carrying out the respective core programs will fund to implement the State's strategies. Also describe how such activities will be aligned across the core programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan and among the entities administering the programs, including using co-enrollment and other strategies, as appropriate.

Core WIOA program activities in Connecticut will be aligned as partners build upon existing inter-agency relationships and program collaborations.

American Job Centers (AJC) Customer Flow:

- Walk-in customers at comprehensive American Job Centers (with exception of Hamden/New Haven) will be greeted at main reception desk by a team of CTDOL and WIB partner staff, as front desk coverage will be a shared responsibility between the two partners.
- CTDOL will provide a full time Unemployment Insurance staff expert at the front desk of the Hartford, Bridgeport, New London, Waterbury and Hamden offices to answer any Unemployment Insurance-related inquiries from customers.
- The Career Centers in each comprehensive American Job Center will be staffed jointly by CTDOL and WIB staff (With the exception of New Haven), with each partner committed to assigning a minimum of one staff member on a full time basis.
- When a job seeker enters an American Job center seeking services, the American Job center staff will first determine whether or not the customer is registered in to the new CTHires system used to track the services provided to each job seeker. If the customer is not registered, they will be guided to a computer and asked to complete the CTHires customer registration. If the customer needs assistance in completing the registration process, staff assistance will be provided to them.
- All American Job Center customers will be provided with some form of orientation to the employment services that are available to them through all of the various partners. Job Center staff will discuss the customer's job search plans to steer her/him in the right direction. Customers will get the opportunity to sign up for a number of free employment readiness workshops, such as Job

Search Strategies, Job Interviewing Techniques, Resume Preparation and many others. If the customer needs one-on-one job search assistance, career counseling, or a resume critique, every effort will be made to provide that service. If the customer is interested in self-service activities, s/he can utilize the Career Center computers, fax machines, copiers, resume paper, free postage for applications and resumes, etc. Customers will also be informed about the various services available under WIOA.

- Customers who self-identify as Veterans will complete a Veterans Triage form to determine if they have a significant barrier to employment and qualify for one-on-one job search assistance from a CTDOL Veterans Representative. Jobseekers with a self-disclosed disability may be referred to either a Disability Program Navigator or Disability Employment Initiative representative (depending on region). Jobseekers with disabilities may also be referred to DORS for service. All customers have the option of accessing the universal services available to everyone in the center.
- Two full-time staff will be assigned to each of the career centers in the comprehensive American Job Centers to support and assist jobseekers in whatever way needed. Jobseekers needing to improve computer skills will be referred to a computer skills workshop or drop-in computer skills classroom to work on developing or enhancing their computer skills.
- Customers interested in WIOA services will be connected to the appropriate WIOA representative or WIOA information session.
- All American Job Center (AJC) customers will be asked if they are receiving public assistance benefits (i.e. TANF, SNAP, HUSKY, Care 4 Kids) and referred to the appropriate WIOA service entity to assist with any special needs beyond those offered by the AJC. Such referrals will be documented and outcomes noted.

Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) services and WDB Title I services will be co-located wherever/whenever possible with Title II/Adult Education and Title IV/Vocational Rehabilitation Services. It is understood that space availability and cost may be barriers to achieving the objective of co-location with Adult Education and DORS, but that remains the objective. If/where co-location is not feasible, all staff in each of the comprehensive American Job Centers will be trained to become familiar with services provided by Adult Education and DORS and be able to make an intelligent, informed decision about when to refer a customer to one of these agencies. In turn, all staff at Adult Education and DORS will be trained to become familiar with the services available at the American Job Centers across Connecticut, capable of making referrals to those Job Centers for any customer.

The American Job Centers will be hubs from which jobseekers can be referred to sector-focused programs in targeted sectors such as Manufacturing, Health Care or Construction. Job Developers from organizations like DORS may choose to join the Regional Business Service teams in each region. American Job Center staff will be familiar with these targeted sector grants and programs in each region and capable of making informed referrals to them. In some situations, targeted sector programs may be co-located at an American Job Center. Accessible printed information will be available to jobseekers concerning these programs.

The regional WDBs deliver Adult and Dislocated Worker program activities through the American Job Center system via comprehensive and affiliate centers. Career services are provided to a wide range of jobseekers, with specialty programs directed to returning veterans and individuals with disabilities. Services include career coaching, guidance on job search techniques, skill and interest assessments, advice and support through peer groups, individual employment planning, and job development and placement. Occupational training is provided through access to Individual Training Accounts (ITAs).

Business Services Teams engage employers and provide recruitment and hiring assistance, as well as access to an array of training resources for incumbent workers and new hires.

Priority of Service

Section 134(c)(3)(E) of WIOA establishes a priority requirement with respect to funds allocated to a local area for adult employment and training activities. Under this section, one-stop center staff responsible for these funds must give priority to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient in the provision of individualized career services and training services. Under WIA, priority was required to be given to public assistance recipients and low-income individuals when States and local areas determined that allocated funds were limited. Under WIOA, priority must be provided regardless of the level of funds. WIOA also expanded the priority to include individuals who are basic skills deficient as defined in WIOA section 3(5).

Veterans and eligible spouses continue to receive priority of service for all DOL-funded training programs, which include WIOA programs. However, when programs are statutorily required to provide priority for a particular group of individuals, such as the WIOA priority described above, priority must be provided in the following order:

- First, to veterans and eligible spouses who are also included in the groups given statutory priority for WIOA adult formula funds. This means that veterans and eligible spouses who are also recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient would receive first priority for services provided with WIOA adult formula funds.
- Second, to non-covered persons (that is, individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses) who are included in the groups given priority for WIOA adult formula funds.
- Third, to veterans and eligible spouses who are not included in WIOA's priority groups.
- Last, to non-covered persons outside the groups given priority under WIOA.

Local areas will establish written policies and procedures to ensure priority for the populations described above for participants served in the WIOA Adult program.

CTDOL-Administered Services

WIOA Title 1 and Wagner-Peyser services will be available through four of Connecticut's comprehensive American Job Centers. The one exception is the south central local workforce area where CTDOL devotes considerable Wagner-Peyser resources to support an office in Hamden and the WDB, Workforce Alliance, devotes considerable resources to support an office in New Haven. Ultimately these offices will merge into a single, affordable, comprehensive center, preferably in New Haven, in a site that meets customers' needs of our customers, is on a public bus line, has adequate parking, and is ADA compliant.

In four of Connecticut's five comprehensive AJC s – Hartford, Waterbury, New London, Bridgeport – and also in Hamden, CTDOL will provide the following services:

Wagner-Peyser Labor Exchange: Under the Wagner-Peyser Act, CTDOL Employment Services (ES) receives federal funding to provide universal access to an integrated array of employment-related labor exchange services, including job search assistance, job referral, and placement assistance for jobseekers, reemployment services to unemployment insurance claimants, and recruitment services to businesses with posted job openings. During the last full program year a total of 28,668 Wagner-Peyser customers

benefitted from employment services, including: assistance with career choices and job searches; job search resources (i.e., fax machines and computers with Internet connection); workshops on résumé writing, interviewing, and career exploration; information about specific companies and labor market trends; and, one-on-one career counseling. An additional 9,042 individuals received résumé services at CTDOL-sponsored events and in the AJC centers. Staff with board-certified credentials from the Professional Association of Résumé Writers provided resume preparation services.

Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA): The Unemployment Insurance (UI) program delivers a key service in the integrated workforce system by providing temporary financial assistance to eligible workers during periods of unemployment. The reemployment needs of UI claimants and the prevention and detection of UI improper payments are addressed through the UI Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment program (REA), providing claimants an entry point to a full array of services available at the American Job Centers, ensuring that claimants comply with all UI eligibility requirements. Recent studies have concluded that REA has helped other states accelerate the time it takes the unemployed to return to the workforce.

Connecticut's UI REA program will be implemented statewide in five American Job Centers and will target claimants with higher weekly benefit rates who are least likely to exhaust their unemployment benefits and thus, return to work quicker. CTDOL will conduct one UI REA per selected claimant for a total of 7,500 UI REAs in the program's first year (2016). UI REA appointments will be conducted in the Bridgeport, Hartford, Hamden, New London, and Waterbury offices. All claimants selected to participate will be required to report in-person to receive the mandated services listed below. Each claimant will be referred to appropriate service(s) and/or training consistent with a reemployment plan.

Required REA Services

- UI eligibility assessment and referral to adjudication, as appropriate, if a potential issue is identified
- Provision of labor market and career information that is specific to the claimant's needs.
- Registration with the state's job bank.
- Orientation to AJC services.
- Development and review of an individualized reemployment plan that includes work search activities, accessing services provided through an AJC or using self-service tools, and/or approved training.
- Referral to at least one reemployment service and/or training based on an assessment of the claimant's most critical need identified in the individualized reemployment plan.

The Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program will replace UI Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) program. Once CTDOL transitions to the RESEA program, the target population served will be UCX claimants and those claimants most likely to exhaust their UI benefits. Under WIOA, the UI program is a vital workforce system service and mandatory One-Stop partner in the American Job Centers. UI claimants continue to be priority customers. Both reemployment programs require the leveraging of partner programs to meet the needs of UI claimants in order to expedite their return to work.

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA): Trade Adjustment Assistance helps individuals belonging to worker groups certified by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) whose jobs have been affected by increased imports or production shift to a foreign country. To assist eligible workers return to suitable employment as quickly as possible, benefits include training; job search, relocation and readjustment

allowances; health coverage tax credit; and wage subsidies for individuals 50 and older who return to lower-paying work. TAA activity during the 2014-15 program year included:

- *Worker group certifications*: Petitions filed on behalf of workers from 11 companies were approved this past program year, with the workers determined by USDOL to be adversely affected by foreign trade and certified as eligible to apply for TAA; petitions filed on behalf of workers from five companies were denied.
- *Individual applications*: 432 individuals were identified by USDOL as potentially eligible to apply for TAA benefits and 286 eligibility determinations were issued in response to submitted applications.
- *Training*: 252 individuals entered TAA-approved training programs and 548 individuals were active in training. Training payments totaled \$2,649,822.
- *Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA)*: A total of \$5,418,267 was paid for 11,124 weekly TRA claims, representing 3,581 weeks of basic TRA, 6,980 weeks of additional TRA, 246 weeks of remedial TRA and 317 weeks of completion TRA. Individuals who satisfy applicable program requirements may receive one or more types of TRA income support: up to 26 weeks of basic TRA; up to 52, 65, or 78 weeks of additional TRA, depending on the Trade Act petition number; and up to 26 weeks of remedial/completion TRA.
- *Reemployment/Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance (R/ATAA)*: A total of \$294,860 in payments was issued to eligible workers.
- *Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC)*: HCTC tax credit covered 72.5% of qualified health insurance premiums for eligible individuals and their families. This IRS program expired January 1, 2014, and the credit was not available during this program year.

Customer Co-Enrollment into TAA and WIOA: In June 2015, CTDOL implemented a policy in coordination with the five WDBs to ensure that all TAA-eligible customers are referred to the WIOA provider in each region for co-enrollment into WIOA, thereby enabling TAA participants to take maximum advantage of benefits available through both programs.

Enhanced Reemployment Services (ERS): CTDOL staff will continue to prioritize Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants served by the Enhanced Reemployment Services (ERS) program. ERS identifies UI claimants likely to exhaust their benefits, unlikely to return to their previous occupation, and in need of job search assistance services to make a successful transition to a new job. In the 2014-15 program year, orientation sessions were conducted for 7,434 ERS participants. Sessions included provision of labor market information, career guidance, information about CT jobs, overview of American Job Center services, and details on UI benefit rights and responsibilities. Many ERS participants also benefited from direct, individual employment services and training to facilitate their return to work, resulting in 20,803 additional reemployment services provided to facilitate their return to work.

Veterans Services: Connecticut's 300,000 veterans represent 9% of the state's population. The CTDOL Office for Veterans Workforce Development advocates for and assists Connecticut veterans and Covered Persons with their employment and training needs through job service assistance, referral to supportive services, intensive career services (case management), State and federal program information/referral, insuring priority of services for veterans and encouraging the use of all American Job Center resources. One-on-one job search assistance will be available to veterans in all of the six American Job Centers in Connecticut either on a walk in basis or by appointment. Veterans qualifying for one-on-one services include: Military members who have separated within the past 36 months; Service connected disabled veterans; Campaign badge veterans; Veterans with non-service disabilities; Veterans with 180 consecutive days active duty, not serving in support of any conflict; National Guard/Reserves members

(Title 10); Homeless veterans; and other Covered Persons. Several outstations also provide veterans services including: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs-Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Office; Connecticut State Colleges and Universities; VA Medical Centers; US Veterans Affairs Veterans Centers; and local homeless shelters. During the last full program year, a total of 5,660 Veterans were served by all staff in the American Job Centers. A total of 1,985 Veterans were served by CTDOL Veterans Workforce Development staff.

TANF/JFES: Connecticut's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) program is co-administered by the CTDSS and CTDOL. TANF/JFES provides assistance to needy families and pregnant women meeting eligibility criteria in all political subdivisions of the state. Assistance for basic needs is provided to needy families through the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) component administered by CTDSS and the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) program is administered by CTDOL in partnership with the Workforce Development Boards (WDBs). The ultimate goal of Connecticut's TANF/JFES program is to provide assistance to needy families to enable them to move out of poverty and into self-sufficiency.

The TANF/JFES program is a time limited assistance program based on the assumption that welfare should be a temporary program of assistance and it is better to work than to be on welfare. Recipients are encouraged to assume personal responsibility for their economic self-sufficiency. Unless they meet exemption criteria, adults are required to seek and retain employment if it is available. Recipients unable to secure employment without intervention from the state will receive services, including education and training that will assist them in becoming employed. Applicants must attend the initial employment services assessment intake session for further employment assessment/plan development before TFA benefits are granted.

The TFA program attempts to direct participants to employment sufficient to move them off assistance within twenty-one months. The program contains many features that support this objective. The asset limit is \$3,000 so families may set aside money for emergencies. Families are allowed to own a reliable car to seek employment, to travel to and from work, or to transport a handicapped family member. To be excluded, the family's equity in the vehicle must not exceed \$9,500 or the vehicle must be used to transport a handicapped family member. Earned income of recipients is totally excluded up to the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Once earnings reach the FPL, the family becomes ineligible for assistance. Up to \$50 per month of current child support is passed through to the family each month and excluded as income. Childcare and transportation benefits are provided in order to enable individuals to prepare for, obtain and retain employment.

If a family member refuses to participate in Employment Services activities, the family is penalized through grant reduction. If the family has made a good faith effort to comply with the employment activities but still has income below the payment standard at the end of twenty-one months of assistance, a six-month extension of benefits may be given. Extensions may also be given to families who have encountered circumstances beyond their control such as domestic violence. To qualify for an extension the family's income cannot exceed the payment standard corresponding to the size of the family.

Following are the array of available Work Related Activities for TANF recipients:

1. Unsubsidized Employment
2. Subsidized Private Sector Employment
3. Subsidized Public Sector Employment

4. On-the-Job Training
5. Job Search and Job Readiness Assistance
6. Work Experience
7. Community Service Programs
8. Vocational Educational Training Not to Exceed 12 Months
9. Child Care for an Individual Participating in a Community Service Program
10. Job Skills Training Directly Related to Employment
11. Education Directly Related to Employment
12. Satisfactory Attendance at Secondary School or in a GED program

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) administers core programs and services listed in the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (WIOA Title II). Each local and regional board of education must establish and maintain a program of adult classes or provide for the participation in a program of adult classes for its adult residents (Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-69).

CSDE-Administered Activities

- To support shared governance structure, CSDE will participate in shared governance with regard to WIOA Unified Plan programs through the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC), the State Workforce Investment Board.
- To strengthen interagency partnerships, CSDE will:
 - ✓ Share system infrastructure costs.
 - ✓ Provide services through the One-Stop system.
 - ✓ Make funding available to each of Connecticut's five designated local workforce areas.
 - ✓ Review and evaluate proposals with a team including representatives of the WDBs and One-Stop system partners.
 - ✓ Assess local workforce areas' needs and WDBs' goals in conjunction with each WDB.
 - ✓ Refer students to One-Stop Centers, monitor, act on referrals from One-Stop Centers.
 - ✓ Provide appropriate training for One-Stop partners.
- To strengthen coordination and collaboration with key educational sectors and employers, CSDE will:
 - ✓ Align Integrated Basic Education and Training (I-BEST) training curriculum with employer/labor market needs. (I-BEST is Connecticut's contextualized integrated education and training program strategy.)
 - ✓ Partner with community colleges to assist adults' transition to postsecondary education and training.
 - ✓ Work with the One-Stop system to address the needs of local customers and employers and link adult education strategically to other employment and training services.
- Work with the State's longitudinal data system and use a common intake form to provide consistently defined and applied data from adult education programs.
- To continue to invest in integrated technology to meet the unified technology requirements of WIOA and other Federal initiatives, CSDE will work to interface the Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS) with the State's common intake and reporting system.
- To support engagement in continuous research and analysis to realize the potential of state's workforce programs and delivery systems, CSDE will continue to offer the I-BEST program and ensure that it is aligned with labor market needs.

- To assist the entire WIOA partnership deliver a unified message, CSDE will participate in coordinated system-wide efforts to increase awareness of the Connecticut workforce system.

DORS Administered Activities

The department's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment (SE) programs will assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in or regain employment.

Connecticut Department of Social Services Administered Activities

SNAP E&T: SNAP Employment and Training is administered by the CT Department of Social Services (CTDSS). The primary goal is to assist SNAP E&T participants with work-related activities that will lead to paid employment. Short-term vocational programs are job focused and employer driven. The SNAP E&T Program is currently in transition. As a way to better serve low-income SNAP recipients, all future partnerships will operate under a 50% reimbursement model. This allows CTDSS to use federal funds to leverage nonfederal funds already being invested in employment activities.

The components of Connecticut's SNAP E&T program are currently delivered through six nonprofit organizations, four community colleges, and one private college. Expansion efforts are underway. FNS approval will be sought before the department adds additional SNAP E&T 50% reimbursement partners. Our current 50% partners are Capital Community College (CCC) located in Hartford, Gateway Community College (GCC) located in New Haven, Asnuntuck Community College (ACC) located in Enfield, Goodwin College located in East Hartford, Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) located in New London, and Northwestern Connecticut Community College (NCCC) in Winsted. Our 100% contractors are Community Renewal Team (CRT) located in Hartford, The Kennedy Center located in Waterbury, Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board in Franklin, Career Resources in Bridgeport, and Workforce Alliance in New Haven.

Case management activities include conducting assessments; developing employment plans; making referrals as appropriate to education, vocational training and community service; conducting or making referrals to structured job search training; and career placement. Case management services can also include referrals for support services such as child care, transportation and other services required to enable the participant to remain engaged in his or her activity.

Our current contractors provide case management services that are unique to their SNAP participants and above and beyond what they provide to their other non-SNAP clients. A key piece of their case management is ensuring that the SNAP recipients comply with all SNAP requirements, such as completing the recertification process by reminding them that they will not be eligible to participate in SNAP E&T if they fail to meet all of the SNAP requirements.

For participants who already have skills that are marketable in the current economy, the first component will be structured job search training. For participants without marketable skills, the first component will be vocational/occupational skills training, educational programs, or self-initiated workfare.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG): CTDSS administers the CSBG federal block grant (approx. \$8M annually) with assistance from the CT community action agency network. The purpose of CSBG is the reduction of poverty, revitalization of low-income communities, and empowerment of low-income families and individuals to become fully self-sufficient.

CSBG can provide an array of services - employment work supports, child and family development, community empowerment, independent living. CSBG has identified the following national performance indicators for states to follow: # persons employed; # maintain job for at least 90 days; # achieve a “living” wage; # receive employment supports such as skills/competencies; and completion of ABE/GED.

Child Support

CTDSS administers the statewide child support program. The goals of the child support programs are to assist families in reaching independence through increased financial and medical support, establish paternity for children born out of wedlock, and connect non-custodial parents with the Fatherhood Initiative.

(B) Alignment with Activities outside the Plan

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be aligned with programs and activities provided by required one-stop partners and other optional one-stop partners and activities provided under employment, training (including Registered Apprenticeships), education (including career and technical education), human services and other programs not covered by the plan, as appropriate, assuring coordination of, and avoiding duplication among these activities.

Activities conducted for and services provided to jobseekers, workers and employers through the core WIOA programs covered by this Unified State Plan represent a significant portion of Connecticut’s larger informal workforce development system. Other vital entities and stakeholders in the broadly conceived workforce system include the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS), Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), Board of Regents for Higher Education/Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (BoR/CSCU); Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) K-12 comprehensive schools system, Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS), Office of Early Childhood (OEC), an extensive network of private colleges and universities represented by the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), proprietary schools, regional/local Chambers of Commerce, sector-focused business associations, organized labor, community-based organizations (CBOs) and non-profit service providers.

Collectively this spectrum of stakeholders represents more workforce development-related resources and programs, serving more participants, than do the core WIOA programs covered by this Unified State Plan. The stakeholders in Connecticut’s broad and informal workforce system identified above have an impressive history and track record of collaboration in developing effective strategies and minimizing duplication. The broad objective of the WIOA Transition Work Groups is to share and review timely information about relevant programs and services offered among all pertinent workforce stakeholders, to identify opportunities for alignment and coordination, and to minimize unintended duplication of effort. Similar regional partner transition teams may be established by each regional WDB to develop and share comparable information among workforce stakeholders at the local/regional level.

OWC will update CT’s inventory of workforce development programs and services, built on the information generated by these teams, to help target opportunities for coordination and to minimize the likelihood of duplication. The inventory will be a valuable resource for the CETC and the workforce system.

CSDE: Alignment with Activities Outside of the Plan

CSDE will work in conjunction with Unified State Plan partners through ongoing participation in the efforts of CETC (the State Workforce Investment Board) to align activities with other agencies that operate outside scope of this Unified State Plan.

DORS: Alignment with Activities Outside of the Plan

The Department of Rehabilitation (DORS) will collaborate and cooperate in a coordinated manner through a set of specific agreements with a wide array of organizations, entities and programs among workforce-related partners and stakeholders not specifically covered by this Unified State Plan, to pursue and achieve their respective objectives. Details are available in the state plan for vocational rehabilitation and supported employment services incorporated in this Unified State Plan.

OEC: Alignment with Activities Outside of the Plan

The OEC will be an engaged partner with respective entities that prepare and provide training for individuals seeking and currently working with young children in families across any setting. The OEC will partner with workforce entities to ensure individuals entering and re-entering the workforce have access to high-quality and stable child care through our School Readiness program, Child Day Care Centers, Smart Start, Preschool Development Grant program, and Care4Kids child care subsidy program.

The child care subsidy program is an integral partner within Connecticut’s workforce system. Funded by the federal Child Care Development Block Grant Act, Care4Kids provide a child care subsidy to parents who are either enrolled in TFA, enrolled in an approved education and training program, or who are employed. The childcare subsidy is intended to make child care more affordable, therefore, allowing parents to enter the workforce and stay employed. The child care subsidy can be used for all types of early childhood settings, including licensed centers and family child care homes, and unlicensed family, friend and neighbor. The CCDBG reauthorization of 2014 is requiring states to implement significant policy shifts that address continuity of care and quality of care for the child. The focus on continuity provides more child care stability for working parents.

The OEC will be available to provide information to the Workforce Investment Boards and other workforce partners about the importance of high-quality childcare and early childhood resources. Specifically, the OEC can provide information and training on our Child Care Resource and Referral service and Child Care 211 Infoline. The OEC can also make OEC and 211 Child Care materials available at WIB offices.

(C) Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Individuals

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high- quality, customer-centered services, including supportive services to individuals including those populations identified in section II (a)(1)(B). The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

Key State agency and local WDB partners have all been directly engaged in the statewide process of planning for WIOA implementation at State and local levels, emphasizing coordination of services and resources to provide high quality customer services and requisite support services. The Commissioners

of CTDOL, DORS, CSDE, and CTSS serve as members of the CETC, the entity responsible for review, endorsement and modification of the Unified State Plan to ensure coordination objectives are met. Senior staff members from each agency are active participants in the WIOA Transition Work Groups established to develop cross-program/cross-agency strategies to coordinate service delivery efficiently for individual workforce system customers and jobseekers.

Staff from these agencies played major roles in developing proposals reached by these Work Groups (addressing: data collection and reporting for performance accountability, effective engagement with businesses partners, and service design and delivery through the One-Stop system) that form the core of this Unified State Plan, much of which describes the commitment to planned coordination. Commitments to service and resource coordination among these State agencies are captured in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) executed by the respective State agency Commissioners.

Similarly, at the regional/local level, representatives of these State agencies participated in the planning efforts of each of Connecticut's five WDBs to develop local WIOA plans, emphasizing cross-agency/cross-program coordination consistent with provisions described in the endorsed Unified State Plan.

Connecticut will establish a coordinated State/local process that enables the key State agencies responsible for core and required WIOA programs - Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL), Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, and Connecticut Department of Social Services – and other relevant and appropriate partners and stakeholders to make informed, collaborative decisions concerning how the workforce system responds to the needs of the jobseekers and employers.

At the State-level, it is anticipated that the WIOA Transition Work Groups (which will include CETC members) will be operational through 2016. Their term beyond 2016 will be determined based on need. The Office of Workforce Competitiveness will provide support and technical assistance.

At the local level, Regional Partner Transition Teams will be convened and organized as necessary in each of Connecticut's five local workforce areas by the local WDBs. The WDBs and regional CTDOL staff will collaborate to ensure that each team receives requisite support – convening and facilitating meetings communicating among participants, etc., necessary to function effectively. Each Regional Partner Transition Team will consist of well-informed and empowered regional representatives of the core WIOA State agencies (as feasible) and selected regional partners and stakeholders, including representatives from private philanthropy. The WDBs and CTDOL will identify and reach out to prospective participating entities, which will select their own representatives to participate. The objective is to be inclusive while maintaining a group of manageable size.

Regional Partner Transition Teams will meet on a bi-monthly basis to review and discuss the status of service delivery efforts for individuals and jobseekers served by the integrated regional workforce system, identify service delivery gaps, and consider improvement opportunities for coordinated service delivery. Each team will serve as a forum where regional partners can raise concerns to the attention of the others, clarify the resources at their disposal to help address shared challenges, strategize as a team and problem-solve collectively. This approach is similar to the Consortium model currently operating in the North Central local workforce area, where partner organizations meet on a regular basis to provide

oversight and guidance to the regional One-Stop system. Regional Partner Transition Teams will include stakeholders from organizations representing individuals with disabilities, ex-offenders, homeless people, low-literate individuals, older individuals, TANF participants, etc., to ensure that needs are met.

The Administration WIOA Transition Work-Group staffed by OWC, will receive regular updates and information from the Regional Partner Transition Teams on how WIOA implementation efforts are progressing within each of Connecticut's five workforce areas, and will be responsible for providing guidance and direction to the five Regional Partner Transition Teams. The work group will be both receiver and disseminator of information to ensure that there is a consistent approach and realistic transition strategy throughout Connecticut that all key partners understand and support. It is anticipated that CETC will develop and embrace performance benchmarks focusing on effective cross-agency/cross-program partnership and coordination in delivering effective services that achieve results for individuals and jobseeker customers of the workforce system.

CETC will adopt One-Stop certification criteria emphasizing resource and service coordination. CETC will adopt benchmarks that measure the effectiveness of service and resource coordination. The CETC committee overseeing performance will monitor and report regularly on the status of this priority objective.

Connecticut's American Job Center (AJC) One-Stop system is the vehicle through which service delivery and targeting, leveraging and braiding of available resources is coordinated. Connecticut has a history and tradition of innovative collaboration among multiple partners and stakeholders to coordinate services and resources at the local level through its One-Stop system. To establish an overarching framework for consistent service and resource coordination going forward, CETC adopted a vision and guiding principles for Connecticut's AJC One-Stop system, based on proposals developed by the Service Design and Delivery Work Group, comprising experienced staff from key workforce system partners.

Vision: Comprehensive American Job Centers in Connecticut will provide excellent customer service to jobseekers, workers and businesses, in Centers that reflect innovative and effective service design, operated with integrated management systems and high-quality staffing, to achieve desired outcomes.

Guiding Principles: Connecticut's AJC One-Stop system will operate in a manner consistent with the following guiding principles.

Customer Service:

- Comprehensive Centers provide a welcoming environment to all customer groups served, by courteous, polite, responsive and helpful staff.
- The One-Stop system strives to improve the skills of jobseekers and worker customers, using labor market information to focus training efforts on genuine career opportunities, offering access to training that develops skills leading to industry-validated credentials, and placing customers into productive employment.
- The One-Stop system pursues opportunities for individual jobseekers and workers at all levels of experience.
- One-Stop system offers career services that motivate, support and empower customers.
- The One-Stop system emphasizes the importance of demonstrable skill development, through effective assessment and training services.

- Comprehensive Centers develop, offer and deliver quality services to business customers. Business Services staff members understand their customers' needs and priorities, identify and develop effective strategies, and align available services among partners.

Service Design:

- Comprehensive Centers utilize an integrated intake process, coordinated by effective, expert front line staff for all customers.
- The One-Stop system connects business customers to practices and strategies that actively engage industry partnerships, making effective use of timely economic and labor market information, linked to sector strategies and career pathways efforts.
- The One-Stop system strikes a balance between its traditional labor exchange role and the need for strategic talent development targeting employers' priorities, emphasizing the importance of regional approaches.
- One-Stop system facilities, programs and services are physically and programmatically accessible to all customers.
- The One-Stop system includes both Center-based service delivery and through virtual alternative sites, including public libraries, community-based organizations, etc.)
- The One-Stop system incorporates and values innovative evidence-based service and effective delivery strategies.

Management and Staffing:

- Regular operations of comprehensive Centers reflect robust partnerships, with integrated staff offering seamless services.
- One-Stop system staff are all properly trained and equipped to do their job. Staff members are also cross-trained by function.
- One-Stop system services are organized and integrated by function, rather than by program, relying on effective, cross-agency/cross-program functional teams.
- The One-Stop system employs an efficient, integrated case management strategy.
- Comprehensive Centers are staffed with experienced, effective, trained career counselors.
- One-Stop system activities are guided by explicit set of operational policies/procedures.
- The One-Stop system uses common performance measures.

Services for Jobseekers:

One-Stop system services generally available to jobseekers (including military veterans, individuals with disabilities, mature/older workers, etc.) in comprehensive AJC Centers include: common intake (CTHires); access to labor market information; skills assessments; Dislocated Worker certification; Workshops; resume development/interviewing assistance (group/individual); access to support services (e.g., transportation assistance, child care, etc.); job postings; access to copier/fax/phones; computer access; job search assistance; access to Trade Adjustment Act services; career counseling; job placement services; Unemployment Insurance access assistance; case management; referrals to occupational skills training; access to adult education services (ABE/GED); linkage to SNAP E&T; Jobs First Employment Services (JFES); and benefits counseling; linkage to CTDSS regional offices to insure public assistance is confirmed for mutual applicants; linkages to TANF/ JFES case management entities; linkages to SNAP E&T programs; linkages to judicial system to support needs of non-custodial parents.

CSDE: Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Individuals

Through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, CSDE will solicit eligible agencies to provide services to eligible individuals who are 17 years old or older, are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under Connecticut law, are basic skills deficient, do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or are English language learners. Adult education programs will serve as the major Unified Plan Partner entry point for individuals who lack basic skills. Once a participant has enrolled, adult education provider staff will refer participants to a One-Stop Center or Youth Provider to conduct a workforce assessment and develop an educational/career plan. Once participants meet adult education exit criteria, they will be sent back to a One-Stop Center for re-evaluation. A unified referral management system will help local programs track participants as they move from agency-to-agency. This system will allow programs to give timely assistance to participants if they get stuck or seem to be dropping out. Information will be shared with adult education partners about adult education eligibility requirements, as well as dates, times, and locations of sites where adult education is offered.

DORS: Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Individuals

The Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs offer a wide range of services to eligible individuals, including guidance and counseling, mobility training, rehabilitation technology, adaptive equipment, rehabilitation teaching, job coaching, on-the-job training, low vision services, as well as a variety of skills assessments, are among the services provided.

DORS/BRS provides services in 16 offices across Connecticut where consumers may apply for assistance. In three of these locations, BRS is co-located with at least one core partner program. In several other locations, offices are in close physical proximity to partners. As long-term lease obligations and other logistical issues prevent movement toward increasing the number of co-locations, it is believed that formalizing referral processes and creating a service delivery structure that encourages partner collaborations will lead to improved coordination in services. BRS intends to assign staff specifically to each American Job Center (AJC) to act as a dedicated liaison. In addition, he/she will be expected to serve on all relevant committees and work groups at the AJC. This will allow partner agencies to easily direct AJC customers who have disabilities to BRS, and BRS staff to connect consumers to appropriate AJC partners directly. BRS will continue these relationships in the places where they exist and create them in all other AJCs.

DORS/BESB provides services on a statewide itinerant basis through its office location in Windsor.

(D) Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Employers

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, any Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to employers to meet their current and projected workforce needs and to achieve the goals of industry or sector partners in the state. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

Connecticut’s One-Stop workforce system has a strong tradition of cooperation among partners and coordination of effort across agencies in providing services to business customers. Each comprehensive American Job Center features a distinct Business Services Team comprising designated professional staff

from the CTDOL, the regional WDB in that local workforce area, and/or the entity contracting with the WDB to provide business services, and other stakeholders and partners, the mix varying by region and local circumstances. Going forward, central to the efforts to serve employer customers framed in this Unified State Plan, Connecticut has adopted a set of criteria to serve as a framework guiding the efforts of partners in providing comprehensive high-quality services to address business' workforce priorities. The Business Engagement Work Group developed these criteria, comprising expert staff, experienced in and knowledgeable about working directly with business customers, and reflect lessons learned from effective practice in Connecticut.

Each comprehensive American Job Center will organize Business Services functions to serve business customers in a single, unified, coordinated team structure. Participants will include: regional staff of CTDOL, the local WDB, contractual operators of the business services function in the Center, representatives of the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD); Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) Vocational Rehabilitation programs, Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Bureau of Adult Education (and/or designated local adult education providers), regional community colleges, representatives of the TANF/JFES case management entities and CTSS partner entities as appropriate and other stakeholders that may be invited to participate, including representatives of the Technical High Schools, etc. The Business Services Teams will be encouraged to reach out proactively to engage and communicate with regional/local economic development officials to share intelligence, identify job-matching opportunities, etc. As feasible, these economic development professionals will be encouraged to participate on the regional teams.

Each regional Business Services Team will strive to operate as a "single point of contact" in dealing with business customers to ensure efficiency in delivering effective services that meet their needs. Each Business Services Team will attempt to manage and limit the number and frequency of contacts with individual businesses, assuming responsibility to collaborate in coordinating services from among a broad range of options available across programs and across agencies, to provide each business customer a set of services options and strategies, and to communicate consistently and easily. What happens among workforce system partners "behind the curtain" of the system is and should be irrelevant to business customers and the quality of service they receive.

The guiding principles that frame this unified, coordinated Business Services Team structure are adopted from standards developed and used successfully in the North Central workforce area:

- It's not about us – It's all about the Business!
- We are committed to providing service to Business customers that is seamless.
- Business customers in the CTHires databank must post all job openings for which recruitment support is provided.
- All posted job openings will be communicated/accessible to the full network of prospective jobseekers.
- All job openings and recruitment efforts will be communicated to all Business Services Team members within 24 hours of becoming known.

Business Services Team participants will use one common information system – CTHires. The Business Services Team will schedule regular working meetings among all participating partners to share information and coordinate strategy. Participants on the regional Business Service Teams will be cross-trained on an ongoing basis to ensure consistency of effective practice in serving employer customers.

Recruitment efforts with business customers will be scheduled collectively among partners, to maximize impact. Businesses seeking services and support from the Business Services Team will be vetted to ensure their eligibility and appropriateness. While it is understood that job opportunities identified and developed by the publicly funded workforce system are accessible to all prospective jobseekers, the Business Services Team will conduct a responsible level of pre-screening of candidates to promote an opportunity for satisfactory job matches. It is anticipated that efforts to match qualified jobseekers with vetted job openings will be a key feature of customized regional sector strategy initiatives.

Information developed to describe the programs and services available to business customers will be consistent, addressing the full range of options available in the local area. Efforts to promote available business services will be marketed extensively, consistent with a focused customer outreach strategy in each region. Effective use of social media will be promoted as a priority tool to drive customer traffic and communicate about service options, including Facebook and Linked-In.

CSDE: Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Employers

CSDE promotes workforce preparation skills including literacy instruction, employability skills, career exploration and development, and links to employment, employment services and other options to respond to the evolving workforce needs of Connecticut's business community and promote individual self-sufficiency. Providers develop partnerships with local businesses for on-site workforce education classes to assist employees perform specific job tasks and increase productivity.

DORS: Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Employers

A "Team CT" model of cross-agency collaboration in serving businesses/employers will be established, providing a full range of available services through coordinated points of contact. What happens among system partners should be seamless for business/employer customers.

One "Team" in each region should include (at minimum) knowledgeable, empowered representatives of: CTDOL, WDBs, One-Stop operator/contractor, DORS, Adult Education (mix of CSDE staff and/or rotating local adult education entities), Community Colleges (rotating among regional colleges), local economic development officials...plus any other relevant entities, to be determined/customized to meet regional/local realities (e.g., DECD, Technical High School, independent colleges, etc.)

Business participants need some "training" from system reps about what system has to offer, to help business partners become more effective in that role.

Co-location of Business Team partner staff is an aspirational ideal. Space availability, staffing limitations, etc. may limit feasibility, but still to strive for if/as/when feasible.

From the perspective of the DORS VR programs, the primary goal of coordinated activities with employers is to establish long-term partnerships that foster a mutually beneficial relationship for both the employer and VR consumers. A key component of the Department's strategy is working with employers to develop long-standing relationships built on genuine interest in the work of each employer, their needs and their priorities. This could mean that an actual job opening for a particular client may not come along for some time, but the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is nonetheless a resource employers can turn to for information, referrals to other service providers, and to learn about job site accommodations and provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

With these relationships, even when employers may not be immediately hiring, they can offer other valuable services such as informational interviews, job shadowing opportunities and work assessment

site hosting. Company tours can further be arranged for consumers to learn about a wide variety of careers, particularly important to transition-age youth clients who may otherwise have very limited exposure to actual job sites.

DORS is enthusiastic about participating actively in a strong and collaborative strategy with the other workforce partners who engage in employer outreach, with a focus on offering employers a seamless and coordinated team approach to job order placing and matching candidates from participating programs to the needs of the employers.

(E) Partner Engagement with Educational Institutions

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's community colleges and area career and technical education schools, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system. WIOA section 102(b)(2)(B)(iv).

Connecticut education leaders and their key staff participate in decision-making processes defining and driving workforce system policy and strategy at both State and local levels.

At the State level, Connecticut's Commissioner of Education (executive leader of Connecticut's K-12 public schools system), and the President of the Board of Regents for Higher Education/Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (executive leader of a system of public 4-year universities and 2-year community colleges) sit as voting members of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC), the State Workforce Board, and are thereby directly engaged in all phases of workforce development planning, strategy design, oversight and coordination. In addition, the Director of the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) participates as an ex-officio CETC member, ensuring that the contributions of CTHSS are included, critical information is shared, and opportunities for coordination of programs and services are pursued, addressing the shared goal of ensuring that youths and adults (students) are ready for productive work in Connecticut's key industry sectors.

Representatives of the Connecticut State Department (CSDE) Bureau of Adult Education are active participants in the Work Groups charged to develop Connecticut's WIOA transition strategy, and will continue to participate on these partnership teams as the focus turns to the realities of coordinated implementation in the months ahead. It is also anticipated that key representatives of the K-12 system, CTHSS and the CSCU / community colleges will participate on relevant CETC committees and ad hoc work teams going forward with the WIOA implementation process in the weeks and months ahead.

As senior managers in the Executive Branch, the Commissioner of Education meets on a regular basis with the Commissioner of Labor, Commissioner of Economic and Community Development, and the Academic Dean of the University of Connecticut as an executive working group, reporting to Governor Malloy, to share information and coordinate strategy on integration of workforce development, educational strategy and economic development efforts to promote Connecticut's broad talent development efforts.

At the local level, selected leaders and representatives of local school districts in the K-12 system, CTHSS and community colleges, respectively, have served – and will continue to engage – both as members of Connecticut's five local WDBs and as active participants on the respective WDBs' various standing committees and work groups, thereby assuring that educational leaders are directly connected to

critical workforce development planning and strategy design with other key system representatives close to where most program-level decisions get made.

Connecticut's *Preschool through Twenty and Workforce Information Network* – P20 WIN – is 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 education, training and employment outcomes for Connecticut students. This new system allows Connecticut to evaluate how well our public education and training programs prepare students for additional education and careers in Connecticut. Executive leadership and senior research staff from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR), the University of Connecticut (UConn), the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC) and Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) actively participate in P20 WIN. An inter-agency data governance structure and data-sharing agreements support collaborative decision-making. Going forward, P20 WIN provides a systematic, secure and repeatable process to gather and analyze critical data to understand the impact of investments in education and workforce training programs, supporting coordination, alignment and integration consistent with WIOA principles, leading to better outcomes.

Connecticut's P20 WIN longitudinal data analysis capability will allow for improved understanding of how Connecticut's various education and training providers and programs – including K-12, CTHSS, Community colleges – perform in helping students complete programs of study and perform in the workforce.

CSDE: Partner Alignment with Educational Institutions

CSDE will promote partnerships among local adult education providers and institutions of higher education, especially community colleges, to promote the successful transition of participants to postsecondary education and training. CSDE will rely on information from the workforce development system to track the progress of participants who have exited from their programs and have entered postsecondary education and training.

DORS: Partner Alignment with Educational Institutions

Both Vocational Rehabilitation Programs at DORS are actively involved in a variety of transition school-to-work initiatives, with extensive collaboration and coordination at the administrative and service delivery levels of the organization. Through a cooperative agreement with the State Department of Education, the roles and responsibilities of the VR programs and the public educational system are clearly defined, including financial responsibilities and coordination of services and staff training. Representatives from both VR programs serve on an interagency transition task force and appointed representatives from the Connecticut State Department of Education serves on the State Rehabilitation Council to BESB and to BRS. VR program information is presented at in-service training programs for public school teachers and guidance counselors on issues affecting students who have disabilities.

Regarding higher education, the Council of Regents has a cooperative agreement addressing services available in the university setting for students with disabilities. This agreement is with both VR programs and describes responsibilities to ensure that students with disabilities achieve equal access to classroom instruction, internships, and school-sponsored activities.

VR Program staff members participate and present information at BESB-organized in-service training programs for public school teachers and guidance counselors on issues affecting students who are

blind or visually impaired. BESB Children’s Services Program provides a comprehensive training series every year for school district staff about low vision aids and adaptive technology, braille instruction, expanded core curriculum activities and resources that are available to facilitate the education and transition of students served by BESB.

(F) Partner Engagement with other Education and Training Providers

Describe how the state’s Strategies will engage the State’s other education and training providers, including providers on the state’s eligible training provider list, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training.

Collectively, the twenty (20) strategies outlined above, addressing the Unified State Plan’s four (4) broad goals, are intended to build Connecticut’s statewide job-driven education and training system. It is essential that all effective Connecticut education and training providers, including entities on the State’s Eligible Training Providers List, have the opportunity to engage productively in supporting implementation of those strategies. The Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) and Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) will systematically communicate with and reach out to key partners, stakeholders and education and training providers beyond the State agencies responsible for core WIOA programs and the Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) – including the Board of Regents for Higher Education, Departments of Social Services, Economic and Community Development, Corrections, etc., and to their respective networks of contractual program operators and service providers – to communicate about opportunities for participation in workforce development planning, strategy design and implementation, through participation on various CETC committees and work groups, and similar opportunities at the local level in comparable activities coordinated by the various Workforce Development Boards (WDBs). CETC and OWC will monitor, report on and – as necessary – encourage and adjust that participation activity. To the extent feasible CETC, OWC and the WDBs will encourage and promote opportunities for the broadest possible range of education and training providers to participate in the design and submission of relevant workforce development-related competitive grant proposals at both state- and local-levels.

DORS has liaison counselors who work closely with the American Job Centers, which enables staff to make referrals for services within each agency’s programs. When appropriate, DORS consumers may be eligible for training offered on DOL’s eligible training provider list. Consumers take an active role in the process of pursuing these trainings, and VR Counselors are available to provide assistance. If there is a barrier to the DORS consumer accessing the trainings as a similar benefit to what DORS offers, the DORS counselor can approve payment to fund the DOL training. When DORS consumers access these DOL services, their names are automatically entered into the CTHires database.

The CSDE will work with other core programs and One-Stop partners to ensure that adult education and literacy activities are in alignment and to develop career pathways which provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities. The CSDE will collaborate with the DOL to assist local providers in partnering with One-Stop Centers to develop career pathways and provide access to employment and training services. Professional development will be provided to local programs, including orientation to adult education programs and services for One-Stop partners and other agencies. Local adult education providers will refer adult learners to the Workforce Development Boards’ Eligible Training Providers Lists for information about training opportunities in their region.

(G) Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access

Describe how the State's strategies will enable the State to leverage other Federal, State, and local investments that have enhanced access to workforce development programs at the above institutions, described in section (E).

In 2013 the OWC produced a comprehensive inventory and analysis of funding and investments that support Connecticut's workforce development system. This was one effort in OWC's continued work to advance the workforce system, to ensure it is responsive to jobseekers and businesses, and positions the state for economic growth. The inventory identified resources, sources of funds, targeted populations and services reported through an online survey. In gathering data OWC confirmed the complexity of the programs, number of relevant State agencies, identified hundreds of agencies involved in providing relevant services. Data was derived from reports and information from State agencies receiving and/or providing workforce-related funding, including the Departments of Labor, Education, Economic and Community Development Social Services, Developmental Services, and Children and Families. An online survey of one hundred agencies and providers across Connecticut yielded a 73% response rate.

Information concerning relevant funding and resources was reviewed and updated during the process of developing Connecticut's Unified State Plan. It is anticipated that in 2016 OWC will refresh this information, again working directly with designated staff in key State agencies and from the local WDBs (and their regional networks of local stakeholders). The inventory will be updated regularly and shared with key partners and stakeholders to identify opportunities to leverage resources to achieve maximum impact. Information will be shared with and reviewed by CETC.

In recent months, key Connecticut workforce development stakeholders have been notably successful in winning grant awards. This provides opportunities for innovative leveraging of resources across institutions and programs to improve access to training and education opportunities to build the skills and capabilities needed for employment success. Recent examples include the Health Opportunity Grants awarded to Connecticut Workforce Development Boards; American Apprenticeship Grant awarded to CTDOL, CTDOL's Second Chance grant, CTDOL's 2 Generation grant, and CTDOL's Manufacturing Innovation Fund Apprenticeship program.

CETC and OWC will work particularly closely with executive leadership of CTDOL, DECD, BOR/CSCU, CSDE, DORS, DSS, CWDC and Connecticut Council on Philanthropy to identify relevant investments, identify prospective grants/funding opportunities and grant awards, share that information among these parties and convene/facilitate discussions to explore and pursue leveraging opportunities with a shared/common goal of increasing opportunities to increase access to education and training programs and services for more individuals.

CSDE: Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access

CSDE provides funding to local workforce areas for literacy programs, using a competitive RFP process to distribute funding provided by the United States Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. Grantees will be required to align with system-wide goals and the labor market needs of local workforce areas.

(H) Improving Access to Postsecondary Credentials

Describe how the State's strategies will improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including Registered Apprenticeship certificates. This includes credentials that are industry-recognized certificates, licenses or certifications, and that are portable and stackable.

Connecticut recognizes the value and importance of postsecondary credentials and certificates to workers and businesses, and that they vary significantly by industry sector and specific occupation. As described earlier in this Unified State Plan, Connecticut has identified six sectors that are likely to be the focus of workforce development efforts at both State and local levels: Manufacturing, Healthcare, Construction/Energy/Green Technology, Insurance/Financial Services, Information Technology, and Tourism. A variety of sector-specific initiatives will be supported and implemented within each of Connecticut's five designated local workforce areas, most in conjunction with the appropriate local WDB.

It is anticipated that the CTDOL Office of Research will analyze labor market information to help identify relevant credentials and licenses that are legally required and/or desirable for key in-demand occupations by targeted sectors in each region. WDBs and their business partners (including business associations such as the New Haven Manufacturers Association, Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Association, Aerospace Components Manufacturers, Connecticut Tooling and Machining Association, Connecticut Construction Industries Association, Connecticut Hospital Association, Connecticut Insurance and Financial Services Cluster, and regional Chambers of Commerce, etc.) will reach out to employers through existing business-led sector initiatives to identify and verify the credentials employers value and that actually contribute to hiring, productivity and opportunity for career advancement.

The sector initiatives will identify programs where relevant credentials and certifications can be acquired and will develop specific strategies and pathways to improve access and acquisition, customized to the requirements of each target sector and occupations. To the extent feasible these efforts will build on and expand proven effective models, including the State's Incumbent Worker Training program, STEP-UP, the community colleges' Advanced Manufacturing Centers and new manufacturing programs, Integrated Basic Education Skills Training programs (I-BEST), Job Funnels, Connecticut Technical High Schools focused education and training, etc.

Efforts will be pursued to expand apprenticeship opportunities in key sectors. In July CTDOL's Office of Apprenticeship Training was awarded \$7.8 million state funds from the DECD's Manufacturing Innovation Fund to significantly expand the number of registered apprentices pursuing careers in Connecticut's advanced manufacturing sector. In addition, CTDOL and the Office of Apprenticeship Training received a highly competitive American Apprenticeship Grant of \$5 million from USDOL to fund the Connecticut American Apprenticeship Initiative (CT-AAI). A key component of this five-year initiative is the introduction of Competency and Competency/Time-Based Hybrid apprenticeship models. CT-AAI will enroll and serve 1,000 registered apprentices and 500 pre-apprentices statewide in high-demand Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare and Business Services occupations. Employers ranging from small machine shops to General Dynamics Electric Boat, the various regional WDBs, and the Board of Regents for Higher Education provided significant commitments for apprenticeship placement.

CSDE: Improving Access to Postsecondary Credentials

CSDE offers the three programs leading to a high school equivalency diploma: Adult High School Credit Diploma (AHSCD), General Educational Development (GED), and the National External Diploma Program (NEDP). Local adult education programs also provide basic skills and workforce education through its highly successful contextualized integrated education and training program, I-BEST. All participants in adult education, including those in Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language, will learn about career pathways and will be taught the skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education and training. Participants who earn the high school equivalency diploma will be referred to community colleges and other institutions of higher education to transition to postsecondary education and training.

Prior Learning Assessments

One of the key strategies of the CT Health and Life Sciences Career Initiative (HL-SCI) centers on increasing awareness of prior learning and developing standardized tools for use in assessing such learning to accelerate, wherever possible, a student’s path to completion. Toward that end, Charter Oak State College developed a number of tools for use by colleges in advising students to explore all possible avenues of prior learning. A reference guide and questionnaire are among those tools. Charter Oak also produced a series of short informational videos on the various types of prior learning that can lead to credit (those videos can be accessed at www.charteroak.edu). As administrator of the Connecticut Credit Assessment Program (CCAP), Charter Oak has also reviewed fifty-seven (57) non-credit courses at community colleges and work place training programs. That review has resulted in seven hundred nineteen (719) credits recognized. These credits can be accessed by students who completed the program up to five (5) years prior to the review and five (5) years from the date of the review. Not only do these credits assist students in completing their programs more rapidly, but they serve as an incentive for students who take non-credit programs at community colleges to apply those credits to further education in a for-credit program.

(I) Coordinating with Economic Development Strategies

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be coordinated with economic development entities, strategies, and activities in the State.
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Connecticut recognizes the critical value and importance of coordinating workforce development and economic development strategy, investments, programs and services at the State and local levels. The Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) is a voting member of the CETC. In that role she participates in the review and oversight of Connecticut’s integrated workforce development system, helping to identify and promote integration and alignment of workforce development and economic development efforts statewide. The need for skilled talent in critical occupations in key industry sectors has been identified as a critical strategic priority by DECD, providing an incentive for continuing close cooperation and coordination of workforce development and economic development efforts going forward. Key elements of DECD’s Economic Development Plan concerning the needs and priorities of Connecticut’s in-demand and emerging industries and businesses have been integrated into strategies described in this Unified State Plan.

As senior managers in the Executive Branch, the Commissioners of Economic and Community Development, Labor, and Education, respectively meet on a regular basis, along with the Academic Dean of the University of Connecticut as an executive working group, reporting to Governor Malloy, to share

information and coordinate integration of workforce development, economic development and educational strategy and promote Connecticut's broad talent development efforts. These Commissioners will continue to have input and participation in the review of Connecticut's Unified State Plan to ensure that opportunities for coordination are identified and developed.

In addition, leaders of the state's largest business membership organization – the Connecticut Business and Industry Association – and several prominent regional/local Chambers of Commerce – Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce, Business Council of Fairfield County, Bridgeport Regional Growth Council, Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce – serve as active members of CETC, collectively representing the interests of thousands of Connecticut businesses, large and small, providing insight and guidance on industry's views on the convergence of economic development and workforce development policy and strategy.

Designated DECD staff participate on the WIOA Transition Business Engagement Work Group, providing intelligence and insight to inform strategies – concerning business-led industry partnerships, sector strategies, and career pathways initiatives – included in this Unified State Plan. DECD representatives will continue to play a valuable role at the State level as participants in the CETC committees and work groups that will promote coordination of workforce and economic development efforts statewide going forward. It is anticipated that State and local economic development experts will play a key role in the efforts of the CETC committee overseeing business partnerships and engagement.

At the local level, representatives of DECD, regional/municipal economic development agencies, regional/local Chambers of Commerce and various business associations serve as members of Connecticut's WDBs and participate on key local WDB committees and work groups to ensure workforce development and economic development strategic coordination customized to local conditions, priorities and opportunities. These strong existing working relationships will be fostered as WIOA implementation proceeds.

The Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) Executive Director and staff will continue to work closely with designated senior staff colleagues from DECD to develop future opportunities for collaboration and coordination. Recent examples of OWC/CTDOL/DECD coordination include: Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF) Registered Apprenticeship Program and MIF Incumbent Worker Training Program, Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership (IMCP) Designation, etc.

Connecticut's recently earned designation as a Manufacturing Community under the federal Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership (IMCP) program provides an opportunity and a vehicle to increase the level of coordination between workforce development and economic development activities. Connecticut's IMCP plan, led by DECD, supports Connecticut's manufacturing sector, with a strong focus on shipbuilding and aerospace. Connecticut has cultivated all the components of a strong manufacturing ecosystem. IMCP efforts will connect disparate components to create a cohesive and powerful tool to promote economic growth and synergies. Connecticut's workforce development, education, and training systems work together to respond to employers' education and training needs related to new technologies, materials and processes such as Pratt and Whitney's development of the F-135 aircraft engine and Electric Boat's Virginia Class submarine program. Connecticut's IMCP workforce strategies build on a regional track record of successful cross-systems collaboration to accelerate the development of the human capital needed to support integrated industry clusters in aerospace and shipbuilding. The ongoing development of a regional workforce that meets industry demands will

support the continued growth of these and other large companies, contributing to the attraction and expansion of small- and medium-sized enterprises and increasing Connecticut’s economic vitality and stability. Connecticut has built a robust platform on which to continue the development of its skilled labor pool, and has developed aggressive plans to stimulate growth in the region. The IMCP effort will help Connecticut’s workforce match industry demand, leading to economic power, stability and quality of life.

These efforts exemplify the kinds of workforce development/economic development collaboration that will be pursued as Connecticut transitions to active implementation of WIOA.

CSDE: Coordinating with Economic Development Strategies

CSDE will participate in and support efforts of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC – State Workforce Board) to assist Connecticut business employers by continuing to develop and implement contextualized integrated education and training I-BEST programs that address the workforce needs of those businesses.

(b) State Operating Systems and Policies

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the State operating systems and policies that will support the implementation of the State strategy described in section II **Strategic Elements**. This includes:

(1) The State Operating Systems that will support the implementation of the State’s strategies. This must include a description of:

(A) State operating systems that support coordinated implementation of State strategies (e.g., labor market information systems, data systems, communication systems, case-management systems, job banks, etc.).

As administrative entity for WIOA implementation in Connecticut, CTDOL has lead responsibility to ensure that appropriate operating systems are in place and used effectively by all WIOA and workforce system partners, with appropriate oversight by CETC. CTDOL is currently working to refine the details of these necessary operational systems, including the state-level labor market information system, communication system, case- management system, job bank, and data/reporting systems. This process will continue in the weeks and months ahead, with key roles to be played by the various WIOA transitional work groups described earlier. Descriptions of key operating systems will be included in the final version of this Unified Plan for submission to USDOL. Meanwhile, a description of Data Collection and Reporting elements is included below.

(B) Data Collection and Reporting Processes used for all programs and activities, including those present in one-stop centers

Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL)

Data collection for the six core WIOA programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education and Literacy Activities, and Title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) will occur within separate

case management systems located at each of three State agencies including the Connecticut Departments of Labor (CTDOL), Education (CSDE), and Rehabilitation Services (DORS).

CTDOL has contracted with Geographic Solutions to implement a web-based case management system – CTHires – by the close of December 2015, to provide virtual services to individual jobseekers and employers, and to collect data required by WIOA for reporting on self-services and staff-assisted services for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) programs. The CTHires system is planned for expansion in 2016 to incorporate the TANF/Jobs First Employment Services Program, Foreign Labor Certification Program, and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Program. CTDOL will explore data collection opportunities with CTDSS to determine data collection and reporting needs between WIOA, TANF, HUSKY and SNAP E&T.

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

All adult education providers funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, collect and report through the Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS). The data entered in CARS are used by CSDE to meet reporting requirements at the Federal and State levels. CARS data are the basis for completing the Federal reporting requirements of the National Reporting System (NRS).

CARS is a longitudinal database containing student information. The Student ID created for each new student in CARS is unique to that student across adult education providers and fiscal years. Students returning to adult education in a future fiscal year maintain the same CARS Student ID. Students who transfer from one adult education provider to another, or prepare in adult education and then register for the GED test are also able to utilize the same CARS student ID.

Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)

DORS has a contract with a software provider to maintain a case management system for the vocational rehabilitation programs. This system runs locally on servers housed within DORS and contains case information relevant to individual consumers and reportable data. The vendor has maintained an active relationship with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) who governs data collection for public vocational rehabilitation programs. Modifications to the system are currently being planned to manage the upcoming changes in data collection required by WIOA. RSA data elements will be adjusted to be compatible with the WIOA-Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) document.

WIOA Annual State and Local Area Reporting

Reporting processes for the WIOA Annual State Performance Report will involve CTDOL obtaining electronic files for each report period from the three Connecticut State agencies for each of the six WIOA core programs. The WIOA Annual Local Area Performance Report is a subset of the WIOA Annual State Performance Report, covering only the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. Individual records in each of these electronic program files will be matched against the CTDOL database that stores the WIOA unique identifiers to determine if such identifier already exists. If it exists, the unique identifier will be appended to the record. If it does not exist, CTDOL will assign a unique identifier for each participant and will append it to the participant record. This process will ensure a common unique identifier across the six WIOA core programs, and will ensure that this unique identifier will be the same for every period of participation.

These same electronic files will be matched to each of the electronic files for each of the six WIOA core programs to determine if an individual was co-enrolled in one or more of those programs. If the participant was co-enrolled in another core program, the specific code value identified in the WIOA Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) that applies to those services will be appended to the participant record.

These same electronic files will be used to obtain employment information for each program participant who has a social security number and an exit date from one or more of the six WIOA core programs. CTDOL currently is responsible for reporting wages, entered employment rates, and employment retention rates for individuals who exit the Wagner-Peyser, Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs. CTDOL's responsibilities will expand to include individuals who exit from all six WIOA core programs, thereby appending wage and employment information to each individual exiter's record.

Each program's electronic file containing the assigned WIOA unique identifier, co-enrollment data, wages, and employment information will be returned to each of the three State agencies for use in their Federal report submissions.

Eligible Training Provider (ETP) Performance Report

CTDOL will use the new CTHires case management system to collect data and generate the Eligible Training Provider Performance Report on all students in programs, and on WIOA participants, as required under WIOA.

(2) State Workforce System Policies

The State policies that will support the implementation of the State's strategies: (e.g., co-enrollment policies and universal intake processes where appropriate). In addition, describe the State's process for developing guidelines for State-administered one-stop partner programs' contributions to a one-stop delivery system, including benchmarks, and its guidance to assist local boards, chief elected officials, and local one-stop partners in determining equitable and stable methods of funding infrastructure in accordance with sec. 121(h)(1)(B). Beginning with the State plan modification in 2018 and for subsequent state plans and state plan modifications, the State must also include some guidelines.

As lead administrative entity for WIOA implementation in Connecticut, CTDOL has responsibility to ensure that an appropriate and comprehensive set of state workforce system policies is established and are in place to guide effective WIOA implementation. CTDOL has demonstrable experience and expertise in this role, having been responsible for administrative oversight and direction of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) implementation in Connecticut for the past 16 years. Building on a foundation of administrative policy developed during that time, CTDOL Administration is systematically drafting and developing the necessary inventory of WIOA-related workforce system policies. This is a work-in-progress that will continue through the weeks and months ahead. The policies generated by this process may be generated and/or reviewed by a transitional steering committee or CETC as appropriate. Key workforce strategies will include industry partnerships, sector-focused initiatives and career pathways projects.

CETC in partnership with CTDOL is currently developing a policy regarding partner programs' contributions to the One-Stop delivery system including methods of funding the One-Stop infrastructure.

Data Collection and Reporting

Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) maintains and operates an automated Workforce Development Business System to support the operational and management needs of the State of Connecticut's One-Stop employment service delivery system under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). To address these operational, management, and reporting needs, CTDOL requires that state and contractor staff funded under the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Wagner-Peyser programs enter data into the new CTHires system. Staff delivering services under the Trade Adjustment Assistance program also record data for this federal program into the new CTHires system. Current plans are to incorporate the Jobs First Employment Services program into the new CTHires system in 2016. JFES-funded staff currently record data in the CTDOL CTWBS legacy system.

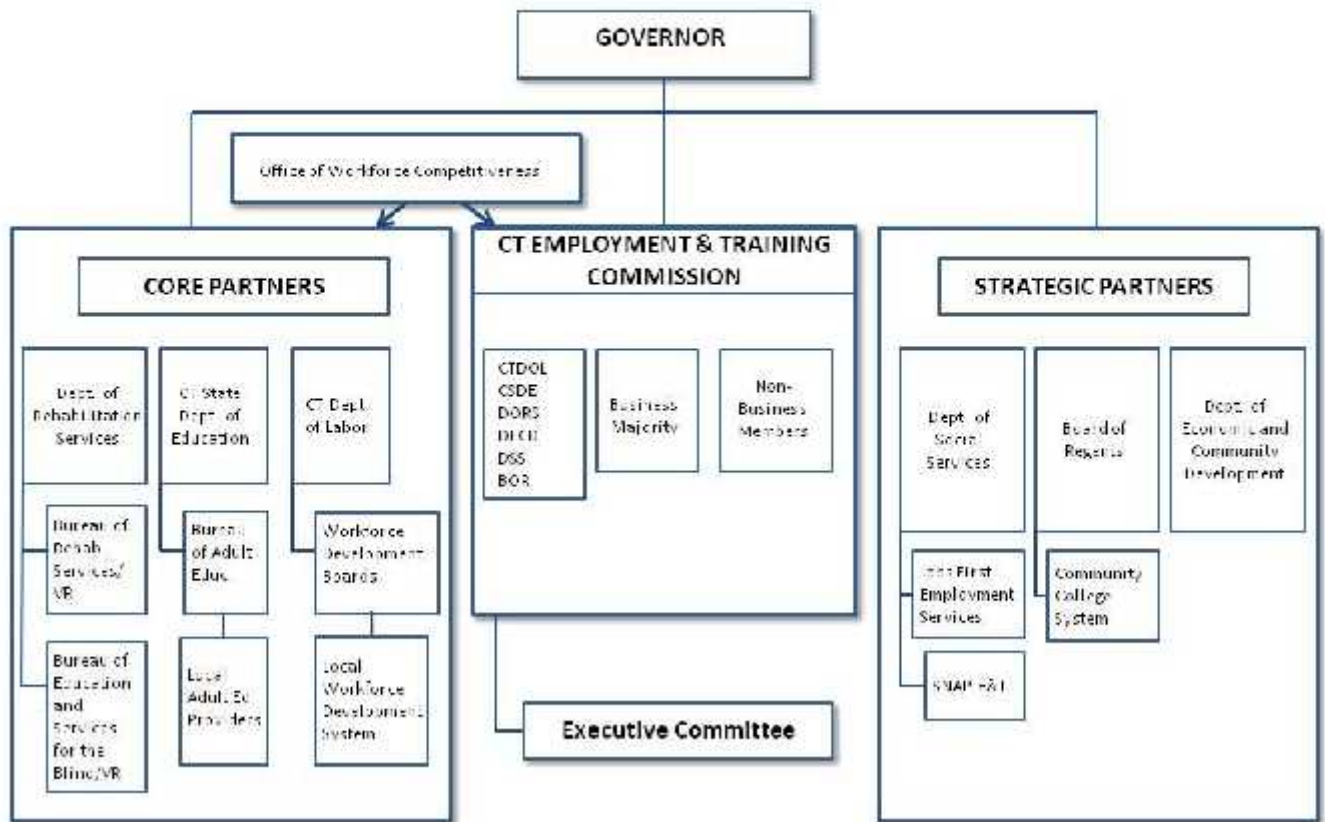
CTDOL also requires authorized representatives of contractor agencies funded under WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs to sign a Data Access Agreement, to ensure the protection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in their possession. United States Department of Labor (USDOL), Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) No. 39.11 is appended to the Data Access Agreement. In addition, staff members of these agencies that will access the new CTHires system are required to sign a form entitled *Acknowledgment of Receipt of Confidential Information* to advise them of responsibilities with respect to confidential information.

(3) STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

(A) State Agency Organization

Describe the organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organizational structure. Include an organizational chart.

STATE AGENCY WIOA ORGANIZATION



Department of Rehabilitation Services

The Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) provides a wide range of services to individuals with disabilities, children and families who need assistance in maintaining or achieving their full potential for self-direction, self-reliance and independent living. The primary customers of the agency are individuals with disabilities. In the employment-based programs, business/employers are a dual customer. The DORS mission is to maximize opportunities for people in Connecticut with disabilities to live learn and work independently.

DORS is divided into four major bureaus:

1. The Bureau of Disability Determination;

2. The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind;
3. The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services; and
4. The Bureau of Organizational Support.

DORS is the designated state agency for the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) and the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS).

Consumers with disabilities who need help finding employment may apply for assistance at the applicable DORS offices. They may seek help with their job search when their disability poses a barrier **and** when they need VR services to help them prepare for, enter into or maintain gainful employment in a competitive setting. Services may include vocational counseling, benefits counseling, job search assistance, skill training and career education, school-to-work transition services, on-the-job training in business and industry, assistive technology services for mobility, communication and work activities, vehicle and home modifications, supported employment services, restoration services for a physical or mental condition and assistance accessing transportation options. Once eligibility has been determined, consumers work with a VR counselor to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) to identify the target employment goal and the services that DORS can provide to assist them in reaching that goal. The IPE also identifies the consumer's responsibilities to help reach the desired job goal.

CT Department of Education

The Connecticut State Department of Education is committed to quality adult education programs which are accessible to all Connecticut adults and lead to mastery of the essential proficiencies needed to function as productive citizens in work, family and community environments.

Connecticut's adult education programs are governed by Connecticut General Statutes, which require local school districts to offer education programs necessary to acquire basic literacy skills, elementary education, English language proficiency, secondary school completion and/or preparation for equivalency or proficiency examinations. Local school districts and other eligible agencies providing mandated adult education programs are reimbursed by the Connecticut State Department of Education on a cost-sharing, sliding scale based on the relative wealth of a district.

By supplementing Connecticut's commitment of state and local adult education dollars with WIA Title II dollars, Connecticut expands its provider network while enhancing and supporting programs and services that are more comprehensive, cost-effective and responsive to community needs. In addition to the local school districts, volunteer programs, community based organizations and other agencies provide adult education services in Connecticut by recruiting and retaining educationally and economically disadvantaged adults. By focusing on the needs of learners, families, communities and employers, adult education programs succeed in improving the skills of Connecticut's learners, enabling thousands of residents to attain a secondary school diploma, helping to close the skills gap in the workplace, assisting non-English speakers to learn English, easing the transition to post-secondary education, preparing residents to attain U.S. citizenship and helping families to break the intergenerational cycle of illiteracy.

CT Department of Labor

The Connecticut Department of Labor is committed to protecting and promoting the interests of Connecticut workers. In order to accomplish this in an ever-changing environment, we assist workers and employers to become competitive in the global economy. We take a comprehensive approach to

meeting the needs of workers and employers, and the other agencies that serve them. We ensure the supply of high-quality integrated services that serve the needs of our customers.

The CT Department of Labor's Employment and Training Division is comprised of four units including Employment Services Operations, Quality Program Review, Welfare-to-Work, and Performance and Accountability. Administrative responsibilities for the programs that reside in this division include but are not limited to policy and procedure development, monitoring, development of grants and contracts, reporting, and management information system support. This division administers four of the six core programs including: Wagner-Peyser, and the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. This division also administers the Trade Adjustment Assistance program, WIOA National Emergency Grants (NEGs), Foreign Labor Certification/Migrant Seasonal Farmworker, Work Opportunity Tax Credit program, the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) program, and various other state and federally funded employment and training programs. This division also collaborates primarily with the Unemployment Operations Division to administer and deliver services under the Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services also referred to as Enhanced Reemployment Services, and UI Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) which is replacing UIREA.

CT Department of Labor (CTDOL) Employment and Training Division central office also directly delivers employment and training services under several of these programs including but not limited to: Wagner-Peyser centralized job bank, Foreign Labor Certification/Migrant Seasonal Farmworker, and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit programs.

CTDOL local office staff members deliver direct services within American Job Centers under the Wagner-Peyser, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Unemployment Insurance, and Veterans programs. Examples of services provided under these programs include: assessment of skills, vocational counseling, provision of labor market and other information, provision of referrals to employment and to supportive services for individuals, recruitment services for employers, unemployment insurance, and rapid response assistance for employers and their employees. These services are designed to assist individuals to obtain employment to ultimately achieve self-sufficiency, and to assist employers to secure qualified employees to assist them to become competitive.

CTDOL's Unemployment Insurance (UI) Operations, UI Tax, and ES Board of Review are separate divisions within CTDOL. These divisions work closely with the Employment and Training Division and the local American Job Centers to provide seamless customer services.

CT Department of Social Services

CTDSS provides a wide range of services to children, families, older adults, persons with disabilities, and other individuals who need assistance in maintaining or achieving their full potential for self-direction, self-reliance and independent living. CTDSS delivers a wide variety of services to children, families, adults, people with disabilities and the elderly, including health care coverage, food and nutrition assistance, child support services, independent living services, energy assistance, and program grants. CTDSS administers Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program; the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, among others. With a staff of about 1,900, the department provides services to more than 1 million Connecticut residents of all ages.

Refer to Attachment 1 for State Agency Organizational Charts. The CT DOL organizational chart is in the process of being updated.

(B) State Board

Provide a description of the State Board including membership roster and Board activities.

(i) Membership Roster and Affiliations

The twenty-four voting members of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC), the State Workforce Board under WIOA, and their professional affiliations, include:

- Donald Shubert, CETC Chair/Connecticut Construction Industries Association
- Roderick Bremby/Connecticut Department of Social Services
- Christopher Bruhl/Business Council of Fairfield County
- Andrea Comer/Connecticut Business and Industry Association Education Foundation
- Chris DiPentima/Pegasus Manufacturing
- Elliot Ginsberg/Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology
- Mark Ojakian/Board of Regents for Higher Education
- John Harrity/Connecticut State Council of Machinists
- Carlton Highsmith/SPG PaperWorks (Retired)
- Lawrence McHugh/Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce
- Deborah Monahan/Thames Valley Council for Community Action
- Raymond Oneglia/O&G Industries
- Norma Ortega/Travelers Companies
- Scott Jackson/Connecticut Department of Labor
- Lori Pelletier/Connecticut AFL-CIO
- Amy Porter/Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services
- Stuart Rosenberg/St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center/Johnson Memorial Hospital
- JoAnn Ryan/Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce
- Catherine Smith/Connecticut Department of Community and Economic Development
- Jeff Smith/Pratt and Whitney
- Paul Timpanelli/Bridgeport Regional Business Council
- Dianna Wentzell/Connecticut State Department of Education
- Lyle Wray/Capitol Region Council of Governments
- Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman/State of Connecticut

(ii) Board Activities

The organizational structure of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) – the State Workforce Board is described above. Leadership of CETC in conducting its business as the State Board is provided by Chairman Donald J. Shubert, President of the Connecticut Construction Industries Association (CCIA). Mr. Shubert has served as CETC Chair since his appointment by Governor Malloy in August 2011. A respected business leader in Connecticut, providing expert knowledge about and representing the crucial construction industry sector, Mr. Shubert is an experienced and effective leader of CETC. Mr. Shubert is well aware of CETC's statutory obligations, and demonstrably capable of working effectively with members from business, labor and government to achieve consensus in meeting CETC's strategic and operational responsibilities.

CETC's organizational structure described above is intended to be flexible, adjustable as necessary to meet changing circumstances. The CETC's committee structure will ensure that CETC is prepared to meet its State Board functions and accountabilities. Committees are constructed to engage individual CETC members in working on topics and in areas to which they bring relevant professional experience and expertise, to contribute productively in meeting each committee's responsibilities and deliverables. To supplement the work of CETC's committees, Chairman Shubert may appoint additional, time limited, CETC work teams on an as-needed basis.

The Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) provides professional staff expertise and technical assistance to support the Governor and CETC's efforts in meeting its Federal and State statutory responsibilities. OWC is housed in the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and has ready access to their workforce, research and legal experts.

OWC and CETC act as workforce development policy advisors to the Governor. OWC collaborates with multiple partners and workforce system stakeholders to help align resources, coordinate strategy, promote policy and synchronize employment, education and training programs and services to address industry's job growth needs and achieve the vision and goals discussed previously in this Unified State Plan. OWC's Executive Director works closely with the CETC Chair to ensure that State Workforce Board functions are implemented consistently, effectively and efficiently. CTDOL is committed to support the efforts of OWC and CETC by offering additional professional expertise and support from other units as appropriate and as necessary. Staff expertise from other State agency partners is also solicited when necessary.

(4) Assessment and Evaluation of Programs and One-Stop Program Partners **(A) Assessment of Core Programs**

Describe how the core programs will be assessed each year based on State performance accountability measures described in section 16(b) of WIOA. This State assessment must include the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider, and take into account local and regional planning goals.

The Connecticut Departments of Labor (CTDOL), Education (CSDE), and Rehabilitation Services (DORS), will use the primary indicators of performance specified in section 116(b) of WIOA and contained in State Performance Reports to assess the performance of the six core programs. Each program's actual performance will be assessed in relation to the State adjusted levels of performance and revised State adjusted levels of performance. Connecticut does not have any additional indicators of performance referenced in section 116(b)(2)(B) as part of this Unified State Plan.

This State assessment will utilize quarterly wage records to determine program quality and effectiveness with respect to outcomes including employment rates and median earnings for participants with a social security number that exited from one or more of the six core programs. Also, the average cost of those participants who received career and training services, respectively, during the most recent program year and the 3 preceding program years will be assessed, while considering relevant economic conditions e.g., unemployment rates and characteristics of participants.

Additionally, CTDOL will use the Local Area Performance Report broken down by local area for the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs to determine each local area's performance on the

primary indicators with respect to local performance targets. This local area data will be used to identify best practices and opportunities for improvement.

(B) Assessment of One-Stop Program Partner Programs

Describe how other one-stop delivery system partner program services and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan will be assessed each year. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

Connecticut’s Unified State Plan outlines a four-year strategy for the six core programs:

- The Adult Program (Title 1 of WIOA)
- The Dislocated Worker Program (Title 1)
- The Youth Program (Title 1)
- The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (Title II),
- The Vocational Rehabilitation Program – BESB (Title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV,) and
- The Vocational Rehabilitation Program – BRS (Title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV.)

Assessment of these core programs will be done by the respective administrative State agency. Other One-Stop delivery system partner program services included in the Workforce Performance Accountability, Information, and Reporting System that are reportable to USDOL will be assessed annually using outcome measures on the Program Performance Scorecard e.g., employment rate, and median earnings.

CTDOL will explore assessment for performance accountability with CTDSS to determine application and feasibility between WIOA, TANF and SNAP E&T.

(C) Previous Assessment Results (Prior 2 years)

Beginning with the state plan modification in 2018 and for subsequent state plans and state plan modifications, provide the results of an assessment of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the Unified or Combined State plan during the preceding 2-year period (i.e. the 2-year period of the plan modification cycle). Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

[Note: Information to be provided in the future as it becomes available]

(D) Describe how the State will conduct Evaluations and Research Projects

Describe how the state will conduct evaluations and research projects on activities under WIOA core programs; how such projects will be coordinated with, and designed in conjunction with, State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, how the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA.

The State intends to examine potential subject areas to conduct evaluations or research. Any projects will be conducted in collaboration with WIOA partners, including the local workforce development boards. Consideration will be given to past evaluations to ensure that future ones are valuable use of State and local resources. The nature and type of these projects will unfold throughout WIOA implementation and will at a minimum focus on factors effecting program outcomes. Evaluations provided by Federal agencies will also guide the direction of State efforts.

The CETC currently develops an annual report card on employment and training programs considering an array of programs that are related to one or more of the following four results:

- CT adults who are financially self-sufficient
- CT students ready for work and post-secondary education following high school graduation
- A competitive 21st century CT economy
- A highly skilled, competitive 21st century CT workforce

The production of this report card informs the workforce system so that workforce-related policies, investments, strategies and programs contribute measurably to one or more of the above results.

(5) Distribution of Funds for Core Programs

Describe the methods and factors the State will use in distributing funds under the core programs in accordance with the provisions authorizing such distributions.

(A) Title I

Provide a description of the written policies that establish the State's methods and factors used to distribute funds to local areas for:

- (i) Youth activities in accordance with WIOA section 128(b)(2) or (b)(3),
- (ii) Adult and training activities in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) or (b)(3),
- (iii) Dislocated worker employment and training activities in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) and based on data and weights assigned.

As noted above, CTDOL is in the process of drafting policy concerning methods/factors to distribute funds to local areas for Youth activities, Adult and training activities, Dislocated Worker employment and training activities. Proposed methods and factors will be reviewed with and approved by for CETC.

(B) Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy

- (i) Describe how the eligible agency will award multi-year grants or contracts on a competitive basis to eligible providers in the State, including how eligible agencies will establish that eligible providers are organizations of demonstrated effectiveness.

Through CSDE, the State of Connecticut will award one-year grants to eligible providers through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to enable providers to develop, implement and improve adult education and literacy activities. Grantees will have the opportunity to continue for a second year depending upon satisfactory performance and funding from Congress.

The following agencies are eligible for funding through the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE):

- a. A local educational agency;
- b. A community-based organization or faith-based organization;
- c. A volunteer literacy organization;
- d. An institution of higher education;
- e. A public or private nonprofit agency;
- f. A library;
- g. A public housing authority;
- h. Other nonprofit institutions that have the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals;
- i. A consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above;
- j. A partnership between an employer and an entity described above.

CSDE will make funding available in each of Connecticut’s five designated local workforce areas. In conjunction with each WDB, CSDE will help to assess local area needs and WIB goals. In each local area, funds will be divided among defined priorities on a percentage basis. Eligible providers will select the appropriate priority area when drafting and submitting the proposal to CSDE.

CSDE will use the 13 WIOA considerations for funding to award grants, including the following consideration: “past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State-adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance”, described in WIOA section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy. Past effectiveness will be evidenced by meeting or exceeding performance measures based on documentation from the Connecticut Adult Reporting System database and annual reviews of previously funded providers, and evidenced by comparable objective performance measures demonstrating successful student outcomes for new eligible providers.

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| <p>(ii) Describe how the eligible agency will ensure direct and equitable access to all eligible providers to apply and compete for funds and how the eligible agency will ensure that it is using the same grant or contract announcement and application procedure for all eligible providers.</p> |
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To ensure direct and equitable access for all eligible providers, the Connecticut State Department of Education will publish a *Notice of Availability* in all major newspapers throughout Connecticut and post the notice on the CSDE’s web page. The RFP will be mailed to all local education agencies and higher education institutions; to a master list of current and past providers including community-based organizations, regional education service centers, housing authorities, volunteer organizations, Department of Correction, other correctional facilities and institutions; and to all current providers and WDBs. A Bidder’s Conference will be publicly advertised with the *Notice of Availability* and held at a central location to provide answers to questions regarding appropriateness of proposed projects and application procedures.

(C) Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation

In the case of a State that, under section 101(a)(2)(A)(i) of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.

Under the Rehabilitation Act, the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) provides vocational services to individuals seeking employment through the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and the Bureau of Education and Services to the Blind (BESB).

6. Program Data

(A) Data Alignment and Integration

Describe the plans of the lead State agencies with responsibility for the administration of the core programs, along with the State Board, to align and integrate available workforce and education data systems for the core programs, unemployment insurance programs, and education through postsecondary education, and to the extent possible, the Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan. The description of the State's plan for integrating data systems should include the State's goals for achieving integration and any progress to date.

(i) Interoperable MIS:

Describe the State's plans to make the management information systems for the core programs interoperable to maximize the efficient exchange of common data elements to support assessment and evaluation

Connecticut has a plan under consideration to ultimately make the management information systems for the core programs interoperable. CTDOL's new web-based CTHires system has four of the six core programs resident within it, including: WIOA Adult, WIOA Dislocated Worker, WIOA Youth, and Wagner-Peyser programs. This system also currently has resident within it the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program. This central database is contracted to expand in 2016 to include the Jobs First Employment Services welfare-to-work program, Foreign Labor Certification program, and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program. CTHires also has the capability to add programs through a generic programs module.

Currently the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) collects data and reports through the Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS) for the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program. Also, the Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) has a case management system for the Vocational Rehabilitation programs within DORS. Long-term plans under consideration by the three State agencies include development of an interface among these separate systems to exchange common data elements efficiently. In the interim, batch processes are planned across the six core programs to enable each agency and program to generate required federal reports.

(ii) Data Systems Integration

Describe the State's plans to integrate data systems to facilitate streamlined intake and service delivery to track participation across all programs included in this plan.

Connecticut currently has an integrated web-based data system for four of the six core programs and includes the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program. Connecticut is looking for integrated system options as they become available in the near future.

(iii) Technology and Data Systems Alignment

Explain how the State board will assist the governor in aligning technology and data systems across required one-stop partner programs (including design and implementation of common intake, data collection, etc.) and how such alignment will improve service delivery to individuals, including unemployed individuals.

Connecticut is hopeful of funding to enable alignment of technology and data systems across mandatory One-Stop partner programs. This future system would provide for a common intake and data collection across multiple agencies and programs. This alignment would improve service delivery to individuals by enabling data to be collected once and shared by service providers within the system, resulting in efficiencies. This common system would also foster communication and collaboration among service providers to ensure optimum service delivery using a variety of funding and resources while minimizing duplication of services. The Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) will assist the Governor align technology and data systems to improve service delivery by participating on interagency work groups to identify financial and other resources necessary to accomplish this work.

(iv) Performance Reports

Describe the State's plans to develop and produce the reports required under section 116, performance accountability system (WIOA section 116(d)(2)).

Connecticut has formed a WIOA transition interagency work group on Technology, Data and Outcomes. The work group and its technology subcommittee met several times to develop various options to enable reporting for the six (6) core programs across three state agencies – the Connecticut Departments of Labor (CTDOL), Education (CSDE), and Rehabilitation Services (DORS). Data collection for the six core programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education and Literacy Activities, and Title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) will occur within separate case management systems located at each of three State agencies. CTDOL will explore assessment for performance reporting with CTDSS to determine application and feasibility between WIOA, TANF and SNAP E&T.

Reporting processes for the WIOA Annual State Performance Report will involve CTDOL obtaining electronic files for each report period from the three State agencies for each of the six core programs. The WIOA Annual Local Area Performance Report is a subset of the WIOA Annual State Performance Report, only for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. Individual records in each of these electronic program files will be matched against the CTDOL database that stores the WIOA unique identifiers to determine if such identifier already exists. If it does exist, the unique identifier will be

appended to the record. If it does not exist, CTDOL will assign a unique identifier for each participant and will append it to the participant record. This process will ensure a common unique identifier across the six core programs, and that this identifier will be the same for every period of participation.

These same electronic files will be matched to each of the electronic files for each of the six core programs to determine if an individual was co-enrolled in one or more of the six core programs. If the participant was co-enrolled in another core program, the specific code value identified in the WIOA Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) that applies to those services will be appended to the participant record.

Also, these same electronic files will be used to obtain employment information for each program participant who has a social security number and an exit date from one or more of the six core programs. CTDOL currently is responsible for reporting wages, entered employment rates, and employment retention rates for individuals who exit in the Wagner-Peyser, Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs. CTDOL will continue this work and expand its responsibilities to include individuals who exit from all six core programs. Therefore, CTDOL will append wages and employment information to each exiter's record.

Each program's electronic file containing the assigned WIOA unique identifier, co-enrollment data, wages, and employment information will be returned to each of the three State agencies to use in their federal report submissions.

Eligible Training Provider (ETP) Performance Report

CTDOL will use the new CTHires case management system to collect data and generate the Eligible Training Provider Performance Report on all students in programs, and on WIOA participants as required under WIOA.

(B) Assessment of Participants' Post-Program Success

Describe how lead State agencies will use the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional indicators of performance.

CT Department of Labor (CTDOL) will use the program performance scorecard and the WIOA Annual Statewide Performance Report Template to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Wagner-Peyser programs in entering or remaining in employment. The state assessment will use quarterly wage records to determine entered employment rates in the second and fourth quarters after exit for program individuals who exit with social security numbers to determine their success in entering or remaining in employment. Median earnings will also be considered to determine progress towards self-sufficiency. Local Workforce Development Boards will be responsible for following up with participants exiting from the WIOA Youth program to assess enrollment in, persistence in, and completion of postsecondary education.

Connecticut has not set any additional indicators of performance.

(C) Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data

Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information, consistent with Federal and State law. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs.)

The electronic files containing records for the six core programs will be used to obtain employment information using Unemployment Insurance Wage Record data for each program participant that has a social security number and an exit date from one or more of the six core programs. CTDOL is currently responsible for reporting wages, entered employment rates, and employment retention rates for individuals who exit in the Wagner-Peyser, Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs. CTDOL will continue this work and expand its responsibilities to include individuals who exit from all six core programs. Therefore, CTDOL will append wages and employment information to each exiter's record.

Each program's electronic file containing the assigned WIOA unique identifier, co-enrollment data, wages, and employment information will be returned to each of the three State agencies for use in their federal report submissions.

Also, CTDOL will use the new CTHires case management system to collect data and generate the Eligible Training Provider Performance Report on all students in program and on WIOA participants, as required under WIOA. CTDOL will use Unemployment Insurance Wage data for employment rates, median earnings, and credential rates for all students in a program on the Eligible Training Provider Performance Report.

Unemployment Insurance Wage Record data will also be used to comply with federal evaluation requirements, and to inform workforce and labor market information available to customers.

(D) Privacy Standards

Describe the privacy safeguards incorporated in the State's workforce development system, including safeguards required by section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.

Connecticut Department of Labor

- Information on individuals referenced for purposes of the WIOA Core Programs in the Connecticut Department of Labor's automated One-Stop Career-Center system (CTHIREs) is considered confidential Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and may not be released or used for any purpose other than one directly connected with the administration of the programs. Information may also be released when the participant authorizes disclosure.
- Access to the system is provided upon an entity's entrance into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Connecticut Department of Labor, which acknowledges the confidentiality and security requirements associated with the system. Moreover, every individual accessing the system must first sign an Acknowledgment of Confidential Information form, to ensure each individual is aware of such requirements.

- Finally, access to network components comprising the System is limited to authorized administrators, to ensure no unauthorized disclosure of PII. The system itself is configured to comply with Federal and State of Connecticut laws and regulations regarding the protection of confidential and PII, including but not limited to all sections of NIST SP 800-53 and IRS Publication 1075.

CT State Department of Education

CSDE will ensure that program providers are compliant with all applicable laws and RFP guidelines including ADA 504 and Section 427 GEPA.

7. Priority of Service for Veterans

Describe how the State will implement and monitor the priority of service provisions for veterans in accordance with the requirements of the Jobs for Veterans Act, codified at section 4215 of 38 U.S.C., which applies to all employment and training programs funded in whole or in part by the Department of Labor. States should also describe the referral process for veterans determined to have a significant barrier to employment to receive services from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist.

Veterans and eligible spouses (Covered Persons) are given priority of service for receipt of employment, training and placement services provided under all US Department of Labor-funded programs. Veterans and eligible spouses are entitled to precedence for such services. This means that a Veteran or eligible spouse either receives access to a service earlier than others, or if resources are limited, the Veteran or eligible spouse receives access to the service instead of others. Veterans or eligible spouses should identify themselves as such when inquiring about any Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) programs or services to take full advantage of this priority. The following definitions apply to CTDOL programs.

Intensive Services are available to maximize job training opportunities for Veterans with the following Serious Barriers to Employment (SBEs) as defined by VPL 03-14:

1. A special disabled or disabled veteran, as defined in 38 U.S.C. § 4211 (1) and (3) are those:
 - A. Entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs; or,
 - B. Discharged or released from active duty because of a service connected disability;
2. Homeless, as defined in Section 103(a) of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302(a));
3. A recently-separated service member, as defined in 38 U.S.C. § 4211(6), who at any point in the previous 12 months has been unemployed for 27 or more consecutive weeks;
4. An offender, as defined by WIA Section 101(27), released from incarceration within the last 12 months;
5. Lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate; or
6. Low-income (as defined by WIA at Sec. 101(25)(B)).

And those barriers amended by the Secretary to be identified as priority veterans.

Assessment and Management of Veteran Customers

During the initial intake or registration, information will be solicited via Veterans Triage Form to determine the level of services needed. A specific criterion has been established to assess the veteran's need for intensive or case management services. Such established criteria will include those outlined in CTDOL Memorandum 770 and Veterans Program Letter 03-14.

Once potential SBEs are identified, the veteran will be contacted by DVOP Specialists to setup an appointment to further assess the level of intensive services or if case management is necessary, as well as other supportive services available through the CTDOL or WIOA partners. Veterans with SBEs will be classified as job-ready or not job-ready. Veterans deemed not job-ready will receive intensive services from the DVOP Specialist, CTDOL Career Development Specialist, VA staff professionals, other WIOA partners, or supportive services to assist in resolving issues that hinder gainful employment. Services will include job search planning or employment development plan, career planning, resume writing assistance, professional counseling services, and any other supportive service to assist the veteran attain job-ready status.

Once the veteran is determined to be job-ready, the DVOP Specialist will work with the LVER to make employment connections while DVOP will continue to provide case management and providing other intensive services as appropriate. Career guidance, educational employment assistance workshops or seminars, employment planning, specialized counseling services will all become an integral part of this process. CTDOL Career Development Specialists, VA and State of Connecticut Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, and other social service case managers will be partners to assist the veteran overcome these barriers to employment.

Homeless Veterans

The existing networks of LVER and DVOP Specialists and homeless shelters within the workforce development areas will continue to be used to make services available to homeless veterans. Services to homeless veterans will be coordinated with the Homeless Veteran's Reintegration Project (HVRP), Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF), and Veterans' Outreach Pilot Program (VOPP) through grants from the U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and the State of Connecticut.

VA Vocational Rehabilitation Participants

CTDOL has a long history of collaborating with state and federal agencies to provide services to veterans who may benefit from vocational rehabilitation. CTDOL continues to maintain those relationships and explore new approaches to improve effectiveness. An updated addendum to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be established between CTDOL and the Hartford Regional Office of the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services (VR&E) of the (USDVA) and the Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS). This MOU will redefine the Partnership between those named, to assist veterans being served under the auspices of Title 38, Chapter 31 of the United States Code.

8. Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals with Disabilities

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable
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provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) with regard to the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

Connecticut's One-Stop system currently provides and will continue to ensure physical and programmatic access to facilities, programs, services technology and materials for individuals with disabilities in a variety of ways. With respect to physical accessibility, all five of Connecticut's comprehensive One-Stop American Job Centers, along with the Danielson American Job Center, are designated ADA-compliant. All five comprehensive American Job Centers provide adequate public parking for individuals seeking to use the facilities and have been determined to provide adequate accessible parking options for jobseekers with disabilities. Each of the comprehensive American Job Centers is located on a public bus route. Four of the five comprehensive American Job Centers feature power-assisted front doors. The CTDOL Facilities Unit is committed to pursue installation of power-assisted doors for the fifth office, in New London, when its current lease expires.

Assistive technology is available to assist jobseekers with disabilities in each of the comprehensive American Job Centers. These technologies include electric adjustable workstations, large screen visual magnifiers, TTY lines for deaf or hard of hearing customers, and large-font computer keyboards in the Career Center.

Individuals seeking unemployment-related information or services will be assisted by a full-time CTDOL Unemployment Insurance staff expert located at and providing service from the front desk in each of the five comprehensive American Job Centers. These staff unemployment experts will be able to process paper unemployment claims directly, in-person, for jobseekers with disabilities who may have difficulty filing applications over the phone or via the Internet.

In October 2013, Connecticut was one of eight states to receive a grant under USDOL's Disability Employment Initiative (DEI). Awarded to OWC, the three-year \$3,058,706 grant promotes strategic approaches to enhance employment services for individuals with disabilities served by the public workforce investment system.

As a critical innovative feature of this grant, Disability Resource Coordinators establish key partnerships across multiple workforce and disability service systems, coordinate services, and leverage funding to meet the needs of jobseekers with disabilities in the American Job Centers, assess and recommend solutions to physical, programmatic or communications accessibility workplace barriers. Working with DEI Case Managers, jobseekers with disabilities gain access to a wide range of employment assistance, including assessments, career readiness skills, training and education services. As required by DEI, two local WDBs – Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board and Capital Workforce Partners (North Central area) – became active Employment Networks (ENs) in the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work Program, thereby expanding the Connecticut workforce system's capacity to serve eligible beneficiaries. DEI also requires the State's participation in an evaluation process to measure the project's impact on outcomes for jobseekers with disabilities.

The DEI grant provides for extensive staff training to build the capacity of Connecticut's One-Stop system to serve jobseekers with disabilities. In PY 2014, American Job Center staff received training on disability awareness and etiquette, universal design, cognitive limitations, mental health, American Sign Language, deafness and deaf culture. This common, cross-agency staff training will be continued as a key feature of Connecticut's coordinated workforce system efforts going forward. Up-to-date assistive technology has been purchased and installed for the American Job Centers. Through DEI, CTDOL has collaborated successfully with several State agencies and community organizations to plan four regional Diverse Ability Career Fairs across Connecticut. The first was held in Rocky Hill in April 2015. Forty-eight employers participated, seeking to fill entry-level to advanced positions in a variety of industries including manufacturing, finance, healthcare, transportation, distribution, and education. More than 600 job seekers attended the event. The second Diverse Ability Career Fair took place in Waterbury in October 2015. Two remaining career fairs are planned for 2016.

The DEI experience in Connecticut is consistent with the long-established commitment of the state's One-Stop system to recognize and meet the rights and needs of individuals with disabilities to access the facilities, programs and services of the workforce system. CTDOL, the Department of Rehabilitation Services (Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, and Bureau of Education and Services to the Blind) and the local WDBs have partnered together effectively for years to address the challenges confronting these valued customers. Lessons learned from these agency-to-agency, staff-to-staff shared experiences, and from the formal evaluation of the DEI experience, will be used to inform effective collaboration among key partners going forward in each local area to meet the objective of accessibility for all individuals and jobseekers.

9. Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for English Language Learners

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners) will ensure that each one-stop center is able to meet the needs of English language learners, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and other materials

As one component of the process of establishing certification criteria for One-Stop centers statewide, the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC), supported by the Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC), will require the Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) to document that each One-Stop center in their respective regions meets the service needs of English language learners. It is anticipated that overall certification criteria will be developed and proposed by the CETC committee overseeing service coordination for use by the WDBs, including an analysis of state-of-the-art best practices to ensure that LEP customer service needs are met. In reviewing the prospective certification of One-Stop centers, WDBs (in collaboration with the CTDOL WIOA Performance Administration Unit) will be expected to conduct an assessment of each One-Stop center's capacity to address customers' needs, assess and identify relevant assets in each center and the surrounding region, and map out a strategy identifying how the requisite staff, processes, technology, materials, resources and cross-program/cross-agency training will be provided to meet this service priority, for review and monitoring by the CETC committee overseeing service coordination.

The principle of ensuring accessibility will be a priority focus in CETC's oversight of the statewide workforce system. CETC will establish specific accessibility criteria as a key feature of formal State administrative policy concerning the certification of One-Stop Centers in Connecticut.

IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination among the core programs, and with the required one-stop partner programs and other programs and activities included in the Unified or Combined State Plan.

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) has lead responsibility for coordinating production of Connecticut's WIOA Unified State Plan, including support and facilitation of the various WIOA Transition Work Groups (described on page 45) assigned to address specific required elements of the Plan and to assure alignment and integration of strategies and resulting workforce development activities across the various WIOA titles into a coherent document.

Key senior staff from State agencies responsible for all four WIOA core programs participated the WIOA Transition Work Groups – Service Design and Delivery; Business Engagement; Technology, Data and Outcomes; and Administration/Governance. Senior administrators from CTDOL (Title I and Title III lead administrative agency) were co-leaders of each Work Group. Work Groups included representatives from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, and the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB), who participated and contributed content developed by each group, to address actions to enhance coordination of services across programs throughout the State's workforce development system. In addition, senior CTDOL administrators/managers from Unemployment Insurance Program Operations and the Employment and Training Division responsible for oversight and administration of Wagner-Peyser program employment services, participated on the Work Groups.

While OWC is responsible for overall coordination in developing a single, coherent, comprehensive Unified State Plan, State agencies responsible for each core WIOA program had lead responsibility for managing a planning development process to address specific plan requirements for their assigned WIOA programs.

CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education has lead responsibility for developing the Title II Adult Education Program plan content of Connecticut's Unified State Plan. OWC staff worked directly with designated CSDE staff to assess the Unified State Plan production schedule, clarify content requirements and map out steps to align and integrate planning efforts. Designated CSDE staff participated as active members of the several WIOA Transition Work Groups. At CSDE's invitation, OWC's Executive Director reached out and participated at the September 2015 statewide Adult Education Policy Forum of local directors of adult education to review WIOA requirements, the planning process and opportunities for innovative collaboration of adult education and workforce development efforts at State and local levels.

CSDE engaged the services of an expert consultant to help produce the Title II/Adult Education and Literacy program content. CSDE conducted a needs assessment survey with local adult education program directors to develop key findings and identify trends, needs and priorities. This information was incorporated into the Unified State Plan. CSDE and OWC staff met and conferred on several occasions to coordinate and align the Unified State Plan drafting and Title II planning processes. The Title II program portion of the Unified State Plan was received and reviewed by OWC in early December. A joint effort

was conducted to integrate the Title II content into the Unified State Plan draft, including intended coordination of implementation among WIOA partners and across core programs, specifically addressing service coordination for individuals and employers, engagement with the broader education system, and coordination with economic development.

CSDE will participate in ongoing efforts to coordinate program efforts covered by the Unified State Plan (including Title II) going forward. Education Commissioner Wentzell sits as a member of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC), the State Workforce Board, to promote coordination among programs at the state level. Designated CSDE staff will continue to serve on various CETC Committees and Work Groups – partnering with colleagues from other State agencies with administrative responsibility for core WIOA programs (CTDOL and DORS) to promote coordination in implementation at system and program levels.

CTDOL's Employment and Training Division has lead responsibility for developing the Title III Wagner-Peyser Program content of Connecticut's Unified State Plan. Staff participated actively on the WIOA Transition Work Groups to inform development of plan content, to ensure coordination of planning for implementation of WIOA and related employment services, to make certain that Wagner-Peyser program services "fit" into the larger services coordination strategy contained in the Unified State Plan. Employment and Training Division staff developed the Title III plan content that was integrated into the Unified State Plan. Designated staff will continue to serve on and provide support to the various CETC committees and work groups – partnering with colleagues from CSDE, DORS and other State agencies to promote effective service coordination across programs.

The Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and Bureau of Education and Services to the Blind (BESB) have lead responsibility for developing the Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Program content for Connecticut's Unified State Plan. Designated BRS and BESB staff served on each of the WIOA Transition Work Groups, charged to collaborate with partners from other agencies in developing strategies to promote effective coordination of programs and services. OWC staff met and conferred with BRS and BESB staff on several occasions to review the status of Unified State Plan drafting and Title IV planning, to ensure alignment of focus and content during the drafting and production process. At the invitation of DORS Commissioner Porter, OWC staff attended the 2016 DORS/BRS Annual Meeting in October to provide information about WIOA, the Unified State Plan and planning process, local planning, opportunities for innovation and coordination, etc.

DORS posted a draft of its Title IV plans for public comment. The State Rehabilitation Councils and Advisory Board and Advisory Board approved those sections of the plan, which was then received and reviewed by OWC. A joint effort between OWC and DORS staff integrated the Title IV content into the Unified State Plan draft, including intended coordination of implementation efforts going forward. As with the Title II program, the Unified State Plan specifically addresses coordination of Vocational Rehabilitation Program services for individuals and employers, and coordinated engagement with the education system and economic development efforts.

Key administrators and staff from BRS and BESB will continue to participate in ongoing efforts to coordinate program efforts covered by the Unified State Plan going forward. DORS Commissioner Porter sits as a CETC member to promote coordination among programs at the state level. Designated DORS staff will continue to serve on and support the various CETC Committees and Work Groups – partnering

with colleagues from CTDOL, CSDE and other key State agencies and stakeholders to promote/ensure coordination in implementing at the program level.

Details concerning coordination among the agencies and partners responsible for administration of core WIOA programs are provided in the appropriate sections of this Unified State Plan, including specific descriptions where required in the Adult Education and Literacy Act Program, Wagner-Peyser Act Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation Program sections, respectively.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (for all WIOA core programs)

1	The State of Connecticut has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a CETC or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;
2	State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of CETC and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;
3	Lead State agencies with responsibility for administration of core programs reviewed and commented on appropriate operational planning elements of Unified State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of populations served by such programs;
4	(a) State obtained input into development of Unified State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administrating the core programs and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, and general public, and that Unified State Plan is available and accessible to general public; SRC helps to develop the State Plan and will co-host the public meetings with BRS to review the State Plan. (b) State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by CETC, including State agency official(s) for Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a CETC member;
6	State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs to carry out workforce investment activities under chapters 2 and 3 of subtitle B;
7	State has taken appropriate action to comply with WIOA section 188, as applicable;
8	Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;
9	State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by CETC) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;
10	State has a One-Stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all One-Stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);
11	Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate;
12	State will conduct evaluations and research projects on activities under WIOA core

programs; such projects will be coordinated and designed in conjunction with State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, that the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA.

IV. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

The State must address all program-specific requirements in this section for the WIOA core programs regardless of whether the State submits either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities under Title I-B. The State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B:

- (a) General Requirements
 - (1) *Regions and Local Workforce Development Areas.*

(A) Identify the regions and the local workforce development areas designated in the State.



(B) Describe the process used for designating local areas, including procedures for determining whether the local area met the criteria for “performed successfully” and “sustained fiscal integrity” in accordance with 106(b)(2) and (3) of WIOA. Describe the process used for identifying regions and planning regions under section 106(a) of WIOA. This must include a description of how the State consulted with the local boards and chief elected officials in identifying the regions.

In May, 2015, the Office of Workforce Competitiveness issued policy and procedures to chief elected officials for the initial designation of local workforce development areas, including the requirements of “performed successfully” and “sustained fiscal integrity” as defined in WIOA.

Requests for designation were required to be submitted by the existing local areas’ chief elected official on behalf of the area’s local elected officials. CT DOL staff subsequently reviewed requests and chief elected officials were notified of designation by OWC, on behalf of Governor Malloy.

At this time, Connecticut is examining the identification of planning regions.

(C) Provide the appeals process referred to in section 106(b)(5) of WIOA relating to designation of local areas.

An appeals process was available but unnecessary as all five regions were granted designation. An appeals process will be developed for post initial two year designation.

(D) Provide the appeals process referred to in relating to determinations for infrastructure funding.

The appeals process will be developed once the policy to determine shared infrastructure costs is developed.

(2) *Statewide Activities.*

(A) Provide State policies or guidance for the statewide workforce development system and for use of State funds for workforce investment activities.

The CT Employment and Training Commission as well as WIOA Administration issue state policies on workforce development and statewide workforce development through Administrative Policy memos. They can be found at: <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/memos/policy/admin.htm>

(B) Describe how the State intends to use Governor’s set aside funding. Describe how the State will utilize Rapid Response funds to respond to layoffs and plant closings and coordinate services to quickly aid companies and their affected workers. States also should describe any layoff aversion strategies they have implemented to address at risk companies and workers.

Governor’s Set Aside Funding: USDOL Training and Employment Guidance Letters issue allocations for WIOA funding each year including the percentages and mandatory activities under the Governor’s

Reserve. The current set-aside is 15% of Connecticut’s funding, while for Rapid Response activities, it is 25% of the total allocation. WIOA Administration uses these funds to support Central Office staff that administer, manage and oversee the program, contracts, performance management and finances for Connecticut’s WIOA program. Once the PY allocations are determined, the CT Employment and Training Commission approves the plan. CT DOL grants flexibility and funding, using the Governor’s set aside, to the Workforce Development Boards to conduct experimental pilot programs that meet the regional needs of employers and the workforce. For example, such funds have been used to provide additional services to ex-offenders; for transportation subsidies in the Eastern WDB; and Emergency NEG-like services.

Rapid Response: For companies and their workers, the effects of a plant closing or layoff can be devastating. In Connecticut, neither companies nor workers and their unions are alone in facing these changes. Connecticut’s Rapid Response Team, headed by the State Department of Labor, (CT DOL) exists to ease the impact of layoffs and to assure that workers are offered a full range of benefits and services. The Team is made up of representatives from the CT DOL and the local Workforce Development Boards. Support is also available from the Department of Economic & Community Development and the Department of Social Services.

The Rapid Response Team is available to conduct, prior to layoffs, “Early Intervention” sessions where employees can learn about unemployment benefits, job search assistance, and training opportunities. Information is also made available on health insurance options, community services, and local agencies that provide help, advocacy, and support to dislocated workers and their families. All services provided by the team are free.

Layoff Aversion: the state of Connecticut has established the **Shared Work program** to enable employers to keep skilled employees working during slow-downs. In these instances, CT DOL pays partial unemployment benefits for reduced hours. This limits the impact of layoffs on employer unemployment taxes. Employee hours and wages cannot be reduced by less than 10 percent or more than 60 percent.

(C) In addition, describe the State policies and procedures to provide Rapid Responses in cases of natural disasters including coordination with FEMA and other entities.

In cases involving natural disasters, rapid response activities are coordinated with CT’s Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection and the local Workforce Development Boards and other state and community agencies.

(E) Describe how the State provides early intervention (e.g., Rapid Response) to worker groups on whose behalf a Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) petition has been filed. (Section 134(a)(2)(A).) This description must include how the State disseminates benefit information to provide trade-affected workers in the groups identified in the TAA petitions with an accurate understanding of the provision of TAA benefits and services in such a way that they are transparent to the trade-affected dislocated worker applying for them (Trade Act Sec. 221(a)(2)(A) and Sec. 225; Governor-Secretary Agreement).

Describe how the State will use funds that have been reserved for Rapid Response to provide services for every worker group that files a TAA petition.

In Connecticut, many TAA petitions are filed by Rapid Response staff members. In such cases, Rapid Response staffers have contacted the company regarding all reemployment and supportive services, including TAA. In most cases, Rapid Response staff members provide Early Intervention services at the employment site prior to layoff. Early intervention services include an overview of unemployment, job search assistance, health insurance options and possible training and employment services through both WIOA and TAA. If worker orientations are provided prior to a TAA certification, workers are given an overview of the possible benefits that may become available should the company and/or unit of the company become certified. Workers are advised as to how workers would be notified of their eligibility under TAA if the company becomes TAA certified.

In cases where an employer does not allow Rapid Response on-site to provide information on re-employment and possible TAA services prior to layoff, or where a TAA petition has been filed without prior Rapid Response knowledge, Rapid Response staff contact the employer officials listed on the TAA petition to explain Rapid Response services and to request a list of potential TAA-impacted workers' names and addresses. Rapid Response staff members send a TAA-outreach letter to potentially impacted workers. The outreach letter advises the individual that a TAA petition has been filed, provides the US DOL TAA website where additional information on the program can be found, and describes the re-employment services that are available through our American Job Centers. Additionally, the outreach letter provides workers who would like to hear additional information to participate in a webinar on available resources. Rapid Response staff members conduct weekly webinars on available transition services, and a description of the TAA program is discussed during the presentation.

Information about TAA is available on CT DOL's website, is disseminated by Rapid Response Teams and a detailed fact sheet on TAA benefits and terms for workers is available at:
<http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/TradeAct/>

(c) Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Requirements

(1) Work-Based Training Models If the State is utilizing work-based training models (e.g. on- the-job training, incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, and customized training) as part of its training strategy and these strategies are not already discussed in other sections of the plan, describe the State's strategies for how these models ensure high quality training for both the participant and the employer.

Training grants are available to help companies grow and maintain competitiveness by investing in training of their existing workforce. CT DOL Business Services Consultants work directly with companies to design, develop, and provide funding for projects and can help businesses locate appropriate training providers Incumbent Worker Training grants are structured to be flexible to meet the business's training objectives. Customized training is also available as administered by the Workforce Development Boards.

(2) Registered Apprenticeship. Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy and services.

The state's workforce system challenge is to identify effective workforce solutions and collaborative approaches that benefit both job seeker and employer customers. The Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship Training works collaboratively with business and industry, economic development, education, training providers, and other partners on talent development strategies and workforce solutions to provide workers with the skills businesses need. Registered apprenticeship is a workforce solution that contributes to the development of industry-defined competencies needed by employers in the state, and serves as a proven industry-driven workforce education and preparation strategy for workers.

The Office of Apprenticeship Training invested in an aggressive training and outreach initiative to integrate registered apprenticeship into the career guidance and career exploration services offered through the American Job Center system, both virtually and as part of staff-assisted services. Through the *Sector Partnership National Emergency Grant*, the Office of Apprenticeship Training provides apprenticeship awareness workshops to the adult and dislocated worker customers of the *American Job Centers*. This is an effort to ensure that apprenticeship is included as part of the full complement of education and training services the workforce system provides to its job seeker and employer customers. Department of Labor Business Services Consultants and American Job Center partners promote the integration of apprenticeship into business engagement strategies by encouraging the development of apprenticeship programs as a solution to meet business customer needs.

While most registered apprenticeship programs are funded by program sponsors, the Office of Apprenticeship Training workforce system is strategically leveraging state and federal funds to offset training costs for employers and to develop and advance worker pipelines for both emerging and established employers and regional industry sectors. As part of the *Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative*, the Office of Apprenticeship Training and the *Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB)* are working together to implement registered apprenticeship as a pipeline for customized training programs in manufacturing at *General Dynamics/Electric Boat* and members of the *Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance (EAMA)*. The *American Apprenticeship Initiative (AAI)* enables the Office of Apprenticeship Training to expand apprenticeship programs in new and growing industries as diverse as healthcare, Information Technology, and advanced manufacturing. While similar in purpose, the Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF), which is a partnership with the state's Department of Economic and Community Development to support manufacturing companies in their efforts to implement real time, demand-driven registered apprenticeships. Lastly, Connecticut's Apprenticeship Subsidized Training and Employment Program assists small businesses and manufacturers by offering wage subsidies for high school and college students interested in becoming an apprentice.

The strategic partnerships in Connecticut's workforce system ensure a clearer path for participants to succeed with the job-driven opportunities that registered apprenticeship programs offer. Apprenticeship provides a flexible training delivery option and when used in the context of economic development strategies, creates a seamless pipeline of skilled workers and flexible career pathways to meet current and future workforce demands.

(3) Training Provider Eligibility Procedure. Provide the procedure for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs (WIOA Section 122).

CT DOL conducts the ETPL application process on a rolling basis. An original ETPL Pre-Application must be completed and submitted to the Lead WDB and a copy to the appropriate Secondary WDB(s)...After receiving and reviewing the Pre-Application, the Lead WDB will direct the provider to complete Application A or B and submit it for review. After this point, we anticipate the WIOA process will remain largely the same as it has been under WIA. That is, once the provider completes and submits either App. A or B, the board reviews the application and decides whether to approve the application or not. If it is approved by the board(s), the provider information will be submitted by the lead board to CT DOL for various employer checks (OSHA, Tax, Wage). If approved, CT DOL informs the board that the provider may be added to CTHires. If it cannot be approved, the provider will have the opportunity to resolve the OSHA, Tax, or Wage issues and the board may request another review for approval. Additional procedures for ETPL eligibility can be found at <http://www/wia/wioa-trngproviderapps.htm> The WIA process is further described in policies: <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/memos/policy/memos-ETPL.htm>

Post secondary and educational institutions carrying out programs under the Higher Education Act of 1965 and entities carrying out Apprenticeship programs under the National Apprenticeship Act are automatically granted initial eligibility upon receipt of a completed application. Other apprenticeship provider eligibility procedures are an important WIOA requirement that have not yet been established.

(4) Describe how the State will implement and monitor the priority for public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, or individuals who are basic skills deficient in accordance with the requirements of WIOA sec. 134(c)(3)(E), which applies to individualized career services and training services funded by the Adult Formula program.

The state of Connecticut has and will continue to issue Administrative Policy Memos to set forth appropriate use and definitions of priority of service for WIOA.
<http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/memos/policy/admin.htm>

Several methods are used to comprehensively implement and monitor priority of service including data validation, program compliance monitoring, file case review and electronic case management systems. CT DOL uses the new CT HIREs automated case management services. This database includes fields to designate basic skills deficiency, public assistance receipt, and low-income status.

(5) Describe the State's criteria regarding local area transfer of funds between the adult and dislocated worker programs.

In the past, our **AP 01 04 Change 1**: allowed a board to transfer not more than 30% of allocated funds between Adult employment and training and Dislocated Worker employment and training, if approved by the Governor. See <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/memos/2001/ap01-04chg1.pdf> for more information. Under WIOA, greater transfer authority is permitted. We will develop a policy to allow 100% of allocated funds between adult and dislocated worker employment and training to be transferred.

(d) **Youth Program Requirements.** With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA –

(1) **Identify the State-developed criteria to be used by local boards in awarding grants for youth workforce investment activities** and describe how the local boards will take into consideration the ability of the providers to meet performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance for the youth program as described in section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) of WIOA in awarding such grants.¹¹

Out of School Youth ages 16 to 24 and In School Youth 14-21 that meet specific eligibility requirements, may qualify for the following Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act services.

- Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to completion of secondary school diploma or equivalent
- Alternative Secondary school; drop out recovery
- Education concurrent with workforce preparation and training for specific occupation
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling services incl. drug and alcohol
- Financial literacy
- Entrepreneurial skills training
- Adult Mentoring
- Paid and unpaid work experience (such as internships, apprenticeships, and job shadowing)
- Leadership development
- Supportive services
- Follow-up services
- Career exploration; services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industries or occupations
- Services to help youth transition to postsecondary education and training

CT DOL has issued a policy which incorporates US DOL's guidance regarding administrative procurement procedures and the extent to which providers of youth services, such as the program design framework component, the ten program elements, and youth services delivered in a One-Stop setting, must be selected. The State of Connecticut adopted all such guidance and directed each area comply with these policies. See TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE LETTER NO. 9-00 <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/tegl.pdf> The youth policies of the five workforce boards were reviewed in Summer 2015.

The five workforce development boards understand *Job Corps* to be a viable option and include it on the roster of service providers to whom they refer young people. In addition, nearby *CTWorks* One-Stop centers provide workshops for *Job Corps* student employees, introducing them to a variety of job search resources and other services. In addition, state monitoring, file review and data validation evaluate local area youth policy comprehensively. Following program monitoring, best practices and areas for corrective action are identified. CT DOL will also offer technical assistance to the WDBs to assist them in meeting youth performance measures. Related youth policies can be found at: <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/memos/policy/memos-youth.htm>

(2) Describe the strategies the State will use to achieve improved outcomes for out-of-school youth as described in 129(a)(1)(B), including how it will leverage and align the core programs, any Combined State Plan partner programs included in this Plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs, and any other resources available.

In a previous comment, we discussed Connecticut's plan to resolve issues between WIOA policy and our state Department of Education policy on school attendance. (See also proposed AP on Youth Policy)

We propose to develop and emphasize career pathways by emphasizing the connection to career ladders as part of an Out of School Youth's individual service strategy -- an educational path along with occupational training for high-demand jobs, as defined by LMI and the LWDB.

For Out of School Youth, engagement, financial literacy, adult mentoring will be critical pieces. In addition, CT DOL will encourage the WDBs and subrecipients to develop plans which pay special attention to services which engage and attract:

- English language learners (working closely with Adult ED/ESL partners and contextualized learning opportunities including IBEST models)
- Youth involved with the justice system (working closely with Court Support Services Division and community partners to support reduced recidivism and improved outcomes for such youth)
- Homeless, pregnant or parenting or youth (linking youth with housing and child care as available in the community, to stabilize pathways to self-sufficiency)
- Youth with disabilities (working closely with Vocational Rehabilitation partners to serve these youth in more seamless ways)

Performance Indicators for OSY effective July, 2016:

1. Placement in Employment/Education 2nd Qtr. after exit
2. Placement in Employment/Education 4th Qtr. after exit
3. Median Earnings 2nd Qtr. after exit
4. Credential Attainment (up to 1 year after exit)
5. **Measurable Skills Gains**
6. Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Connecticut seeks to define measurable skill gains in terms of gains on standardized tests for reading, math and ELL assessments; completing part or all of a GED course; earning GED credential; completion of one or more developmental education courses, passing a credit bearing; completing a designated number of higher education credits; objective demonstration of competencies related to work-based training. Again these indicators will be designed to emphasize career pathways.

Connecticut will leverage and align core programs through the CETC and WIOA implementation work groups. WIOA, Adult Education, Wagner Peyser and Vocational Rehab have been working with CETC work groups to create stronger linkages among partners.

A high-quality, comprehensive career pathway system will be developed and implemented that includes multiple entry and exit points that meets learners where they are, provides education, training and

support services needed for career advancement, and ensures a skilled workforce that meets Connecticut's talent needs.

USDOL and other federal administrative entities are expected to provide additional guidance to the states regarding this issue in early 2016. Actions and methods supporting the state's implementation efforts include:

- Unified State Plan
- Statewide MOU
- WIOA Administrative policy
- Ongoing program reviews by the implementation team
- New performance oriented data system CT HIRES

(3) Describe how the state will ensure that all 14 program elements described in WIOA section 129(c)(2) are made available and effectively implemented.¹²

CT DOL will ensure that youth services for both out of school and in-school youth are effectively implemented through contract management and oversight, administrative policy, data validation, monitoring and technical assistance. Our updated policies will prioritize out of school youth; drop out recovery and post-secondary credentials. In anticipation of the WIOA transition and changes in youth policy, our staff reviewed WDB youth services and policies last summer. After these monitoring visits, we provided the WDBs with verbal and written feedback on strengthening their policies and services as well.

(4) Provide the language contained in the State policy for "requiring additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment" criterion for out-of-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and for "requiring additional assistance to complete an education program, or to secure and hold employment" criterion for in-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII).

CT DOL has a draft policy. An excerpt includes:

For youth who require additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment, additional assistance may be defined to include youth who are/have:

- Emancipated
- Aged out of foster care
- Previous dropouts or have been suspended five or more times or have been expelled
- Court/agency referrals mandating school attendance
- At risk of dropping out of school by a school official
- Never held a job
- Been fired from a job within the twelve months prior to application (applies to out of school youth); and
- Never held a full-time job for more than thirteen consecutive weeks (applies to out of school youth).
- Migrant Youth
- Incarcerated Parent/Guardian
- Behavior Problems at School

- Serious emotional, medical or psychological problems;
- Chronic Health Conditions including addictions
- Family Literacy Problems
- Domestic, Sexual Violence or other Trauma Survivor or reside in abusive environment
- One or more grade levels below appropriate for age
- Repeated at least one secondary grade level
- Core grade point average of less than 1.5;
- For each year of secondary education, are at least two semester credits behind the rate required to graduate from high school;
- Cultural barriers that may be a hindrance to employment
- American Indian, Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian
- Refugee
- Homeless
- Eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch;
- A foster child on behalf of whom State or local government payments are made
- Locally defined “additional assistance”

Under WIOA, local areas may define additional criterion for a youth who “requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment” however under WIOA local areas may no longer define *local* barriers.

(5) Include the State definition, as defined in law, for not attending school and attending school as specified in WIOA Section 129(a)(1)(B)(i) and Section 129(a)(1)(C)(i). If State law does not define “not attending school” or “attending school,” indicate that is the case.

Connecticut’s policies on youth are complicated by discrepancies between the state education statutes and WIOA. Connecticut General Statutes, Sec. 10-184 says if a student has withdrawn from high school, he/she is considered an “out of school youth.”

“Not attending school” language has not been defined by our state Department of Education, which challenges our coordination with our adult education partner. What defines “out of school” is whether the youth/family has officially withdrawn in writing or not. Further, Connecticut youth must be 17 or older to withdraw and it requires parent or guardian’s permission. (At the time of written withdrawal, parents/guardians/students MUST be apprised of adult education and other option for child.)

SDE provides transition and supportive services for students with special needs up to age 21. At 18 a student doesn’t need to officially withdraw in writing, but it is the policy of our Education Dept. to require 18 year olds to get a written withdrawal form. (This is because it forces the system to apprise the family that if they have an IEP and withdraw, they lose all entitlements to IEP services. 17 year olds can return to school, and reinstate IEP within 90 days. Those who withdraw from school in writing are only eligible for services under ADA, not other special education services. There are exceptions to this policy for certain students.)

Until our draft policy is adopted and there is a clarification, CT DOL is using these definitions used for purposes of unemployment benefits:

"School" means an established institution of vocational, academic or technical instruction or education, other than a college or university.

"Regularly enrolled student" means an individual who has completed all forms and processes required to attend a school, college or university and who will attend prescribed classes at the times they are offered.

CT DOL will develop a policy that directs that students who withdraw from high school and submit notification in writing are to be considered "Out of School Youth;" and that participating in adult education is NOT considered to be attending school.

(6) If utilizing the portion of the basic skills deficient definition contained in WIOA Section 3 (5)(B), include the specific State definition.

AP 11-06 will be updated. It currently states: *The U.S. Department of Labor defines "basic skills deficient" as follows:*

The individual computes or solves problems, reads, writes, or speaks English at or below the eighth grade level or is unable to compute or solve problems, read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society. For the purpose of WIA administration in Connecticut, "basic skills deficient" is defined as scoring below 236 in reading and/or math on a Connecticut Competency System (CCS) pretest assessment.

Appraisal results (i.e., results from the ESC 130 and/or CCS 50 tools) may not be used to determine basic skills deficiency.

This policy will be modified to state: The U.S. Department of Labor defines "basic skills deficient" as follows:

(A) Who is a youth, that the individual has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; *or*

(B) Who is a youth or adult, that the individual is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

For the purpose of WIOA administration in Connecticut, "basic skills deficient" is defined as scoring below 236 in reading and/or math on a Connecticut Competency System (CCS) pretest assessment. Appraisal results (i.e., results from the ESC 130 and/or CCS 50 tools) are not considered generally accepted standardized tests for determining basic skills deficiency.

(d) **Single-area State requirements.** In States where there is only one local workforce investment area, the governor serves as both the State and local chief elected official. In such cases, the State must submit any information required in the local plan (WIOA section 106(d)(2)). States with a single workforce area must also include:

(1) Any comments from the public comment period that represent disagreement with the Plan. (WIOA section 108(d)(3).)

(2) The entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds, as determined by the governor, if different from that for the State. (WIOA section 108(b)(15).)

(4) The type and availability of WIOA title I Youth activities, including an identification of successful providers of such activities. (WIOA section 108(b)(9).)

Connecticut is not a single-area state.

(e) Waiver Requests (optional)

States wanting to request waivers as part of their title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:

(1) Identifies the statutory or regulatory requirements for which a waiver is requested and the goals that the State or local area, as appropriate, intends to achieve as a result of the waiver and how those goals relate to the Unified or Combined State Plan;

(2) Describes the actions that the State or local area, as appropriate, has undertaken to remove State or local statutory or regulatory barriers;

(3) Describes the goals of the waiver and the expected programmatic outcomes if the request is granted;

(4) Describes how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:
(A) Supporting employer engagement;
(B) Connecting education strategies;
(C) Supporting work-based learning;
(D) Improving job and career results, and
(E) Other guidance issued by the Department.

(5) Describes the individuals affected by the waiver, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations or individuals with multiple barriers to employment; and

(6) Describes the processes used to:
(A) Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;
(B) Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;
(C) Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;
(D) Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.
(E) Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report.

(7) The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

Since the section describing WIOA waiver requests is optional, Connecticut is describing the present status of our waivers. It is anticipated that there will be changes once further guidance is issued. The State Board (CETC) reviews recommendations included in the State Plan and the recommendations made by its Ad Hoc Committees to determine if waivers are necessary to implement changes in the State's Workforce system. Local areas may also apply for waivers based upon local need.

Our goal is to use waivers to continuously improve the WIOA program in Connecticut. The position of the Office for Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) at the Connecticut Department of Labor positioned the Agency to transform the state's Workforce Development System. The transition process from WIA to WIOA has involved the memberships of the State Workforce Investment board (SWIB), the OWC and Connecticut's Employment Services Division.

The Connecticut Department of Labor will likely requests extensions for these existing WIA waivers into WIOA waivers for Program Year 2016 (July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017). Before the request, we will disseminate the proposals to the WDBs for input as well.

1. Waiver of the requirement for a 50 percent employer contribution for customized training, to permit a sliding scale contribution for small and medium sized businesses

Under this waiver, the following sliding scale is permitted based on the size of the business:

1. No less than 10 percent match for employers with 50 or fewer employees,
2. No less than 25 percent match for employers with 51 – 250 employees, and
3. No less than 50 percent match for employers with more than 250 employees.

Regulation/Part of the Law being waived: WIA Section 101(8)(C)

The waiver will be monitored and reviewed by: The CT DOL as the state administrator of WIOA, will monitor implementation of this waiver and work with the 5 local workforce boards to assess the range of benefits that have accrued.

Performance measures associated or improved performance:

This waiver provides a valuable tool for the Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) in their support of Connecticut's small businesses and their employees. The sliding scale for employer match provides flexibility for businesses to participate in customized training programs and encourages greater participation from businesses throughout the state.

Connecticut's struggling economy and lack of confidence in a quick rebound continues to hinder state businesses' ability to hire workers and increase payroll. However, this has placed more demand on existing worker training and/or re-training workers to remain competitive in the marketplace. This waiver has benefitted Connecticut's businesses by providing increased access to customized training programs for their existing workers at reduced cost. Affordable, customized training options have also given the state's businesses a tool to address the possibility of expansion.

Public Comment: Waiver requests will be included in the public notice of Connecticut's DRAFT State Plan for the current period. Additionally, notice will be posted on the CTDOL website.

2. Waiver to increase the employer reimbursement for on-the-job training (OJT) for small and medium sized businesses

Under this waiver, the following reimbursement amounts are permitted:

- A. Up to 90 percent reimbursement for employers with 50 or fewer employees,
- B. Up to 75 percent reimbursement for employers with 51 – 250 employees, and
- C. Up to 50 percent reimbursement for employers with more than 250 employees.

Regulation/Part of the Law being waived: WIA Section 101(31)(B)/WIOA Section 3(44)(B), TEGL 01-15 indicates this authority will likely continue.

The waiver will be monitored and reviewed by: The CT DOL, as the state administrator of WIOA, will monitor the implementation of this waiver and work with the 5 local workforce boards to assess the range of benefits that have accrued.

Performance measures associated or improved performance:

This waiver provides a valuable tool for the Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) in their support of Connecticut's small businesses and their employees. The sliding scale for employer match provides the flexibility for businesses to participate in the customized training program and encourages greater participation from businesses throughout the state.

This waiver is a necessary tool that will benefit Connecticut's businesses by providing increased access to on-the-job training programs for their existing workers at a reduced cost. Affordable, customized training options have also given the state's businesses a tool to address the possibility of expansion.

Public Comment: Waiver requests will be included in the public notice of Connecticut's DRAFT State Plan for the current period. Additionally, notice will be posted on the CTDOL website.

3. Waiver to permit the use of a portion of local area formula allocation funds to provide incumbent worker training (IWT)

Regulation/Part of the Law being waived: WIA Section 134(a)/WIOA Section 134 (a), TEGL 01-15 indicates this authority will likely continue.

State and local areas must continue to conduct the required local employment and training activities at WIA Section 134(d), and the State is required to report performance outcomes for any individual served under this waiver in the Workforce Investment Standardized Record Data system (WIASRD). Information regarding individuals served under this waiver must be entered into CT HIRES by local Boards and are subject to local performance measures.

Performance measures associated or improved performance

Under this waiver, local areas are allowed to use up to 10 percent of local Adult and 10 percent of Dislocated Worker funds for IWT only as part of a lay-off aversion strategy. This waiver allows the local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) to leverage limited state funds to develop training services through innovative projects that address the needs of the existing workforce. The waiver also enables the LWDBs to develop services that address a number of different causes that contribute to projected labor shortages in specific occupations, and has created greater participation from local businesses.

Public Comment: Waiver requests will be included in the public notice of Connecticut's DRAFT State Plan for the current period. Additionally, notice will be posted on the CTDOL website.

4. Waiver of the prohibition on use of ITAs for youth -- allow flexibility in provision of training services to youth

Regulation/Part of the Law being waived: 20 CFR 664.510. While WIOA rules have not yet been issued, TEGL 01-15 indicates this authority will likely continue.

The CT DOL, as the state administrator of WIOA, will monitor the implementation of this waiver and work with the 5 local workforce boards to assess the range of benefits that have accrued.

Performance measures associated or improved performance:

Under this waiver, the LWDBs can use ITAs for older and out-of school youth program participants. This waiver assists the LWDBs in enhancing service delivery to WIOA older youth by allowing youth who are not on an academic track to focus on employment. Skill training is an important component for older youth particularly if they are going to achieve suitable wages. This is used sporadically however the LWDBs welcome it as another option to strengthen the Youth's ability to secure employment.

Public Comment: Waiver requests will be included in the public notice of Connecticut's DRAFT State Plan for the current period. Additionally, notice will be posted on the CTDOL website.

5. Waiver of the requirement for competitive procurement of service providers for up to three youth elements (work experience, support services, and follow-up services) to ensure continuity of youth services

Regulation/Part of the Law being waived: WIA Section 123, WIA Section 117(h)(4)(B)(i), and 20 CFR Part 664.405(4)/ WIOA Section 107 - TEGL 01-15 indicates this authority will likely continue.

The waiver will be monitored and reviewed by: The CT DOL, as the state administrator of WIOA, will monitor the implementation of this waiver and work with the 5 local workforce boards to assess the range of benefits that have accrued.

Performance measures associated or improved performance:

Under this waiver, the State was permitted to allow the *CTWorks* One-Stop Career Centers or partner agencies to directly provide youth program elements. This waiver allowed the State and

WDBs to quickly procure youth services needed to administer a summer employment component. The most immediate outcome of this waiver was to increase the number of youth in employment. This waiver also enabled Connecticut and the WDBs to allocate the funds quickly to the participating training providers. This waiver has been an important driver of economic health of the state and had numerous positive impacts on youth, local workforce areas, and businesses.

Public Comment: Waiver requests will be included in the public notice of Connecticut’s DRAFT State Plan for the current period. Additionally, notice will be posted on the CTDOL website.

Additional information about CT DOL waivers can be found at:

<http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/memos/2013/ap13-07.pdf>

TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

State Plan must include assurances that:

1	The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of career and training services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients or basic skills deficient;
2	The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program’s Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;
3	State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for appointment of local workforce investment board members;
4	The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);
5	Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;
6	The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;
7	The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);
8	The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;
9	If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;
10	Priority of Service for covered persons is provided for each of the Title I programs; and
11	The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.

12	The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);
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WAGNER-PEYSER ACT PROGRAM (Employment Services)

(a) Employment Services Professional Staff Development

(1) Professional Development Activities for Employment Service staff

Describe how the State will utilize professional development activities for Employment Service staff to ensure staff is able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers.

As funding allows, the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) will continue to promote the professional development of its staff, leveraging state, agency, and, as applicable, federal grant funds to enhance the skills of its workforce. CTDOL will continue to pursue professional résumé writer certification for all appropriate American Job Center staff utilizing agency staff for training and test preparation. Employment Service staff, including Business Services staff, will continue to have the opportunity to attend annual workforce development conferences such as the CT Learns and Works Conference and the Conference on Serving Adults with Disabilities. To build capacity, CTDOL will train American Job Center staff to facilitate a variety of job readiness workshops. In addition, in-service training courses offered each fall and spring by the Department of Administrative Services may be made available to Employment Service staff to enhance computer, communication, writing, public speaking, presentation and supervisory skills.

(2) Strategies to support training and awareness across core programs and the Unemployment Insurance Program

Describe strategies developed to support training and awareness across core programs and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and the training provided for Employment Services and WIOA staff on identification of UI eligibility issues and referral to UI staff for adjudication.

The agency will increase capacity and staff knowledge through cross-agency staff training consistent with Connecticut’s coordinated workforce system efforts to ensure AJC customers are properly referred to appropriate services. CTDOL Adjudications and Program Policy staff will provide training to Employment Services and WIOA staff regarding the identification and referral of UI eligibility issues. This training will include the use of curriculum and other materials developed by, or in consultation with, UI staff, and regular meetings and roundtable discussions attended by UI, ES and WIOA staff.

(b) Providing information and meaningful assistance to individuals requesting assistance in filing claim for unemployment compensation through One-Stop centers

Explain how the State will provide information and meaningful assistance to individuals requesting assistance in filing a claim for unemployment compensation through one-stop centers, as required by WIOA as a career service.

A full-time Unemployment Insurance (UI) expert will be stationed at the front desk of the Hartford, Waterbury, Bridgeport, New London and Hamden Job American Job Centers to assist customers with unemployment- related inquiries. This assistance may include processing continued claims; releasing payments when appropriate; processing address changes; assisting claimants with filing appeals; providing identity verifications, printouts or status letters; and supplying information on the Shared Work program and Rapid Response services. The UI experts will also provide handouts or desk aids to customers with questions that can be answered via the web (www.filectui.com) and inform claimants of other services provided by the American Job Centers. These UI experts can also grant requests for a reasonable accommodation by taking initial and/or additional unemployment claims for claimants that experience physical and/or cognitive limitations that make it difficult to file their claims over the telephone or on the internet. UI experts in the American Job Centers will also have access to Language Line services to accommodate customers with limited English proficiency.

(f) State’s strategy to provide reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals.

Describe the State’s strategy for providing reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals.

Connecticut’s strategy to provide reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals is multi-faceted. First, CTDOL implemented the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) program in October 2015. UI REA helps meet the reemployment needs of UI claimants by providing an entry point to the full array of services available at the American Job Centers. Recent studies conclude that REA has helped other states accelerate the time it takes the unemployed to return to the workforce.

Connecticut’s UI REA program, which targets claimants with the highest weekly benefit rates, will serve 7,500 during the program’s first year, October 13, 2015 – September 30, 2016. UI REA appointments are conducted in the Bridgeport, Hartford, Hamden, New London, and Waterbury offices. All claimants selected to participate are required to report in-person to receive the following reemployment-related services.

- Provision of labor market and career information specific to the claimant’s needs;
- Registration with the State’s job bank;
- Orientation to AJC services;
- Development and review of an individualized reemployment plan that includes work search activities, accessing services provided through an AJC or using self-service tools, and/or approved training; and
- Referral to at least one reemployment service and/or training based on an assessment of the claimant’s most critical need identified in the individualized reemployment plan.

Enhanced Reemployment Services Program

CTDOL staff will continue to serve UI claimants under the Enhanced Reemployment Services (ERS) program, which identifies UI claimants most likely to exhaust their benefits, claimants who are unlikely to return to their previous occupations, and are in need of job search assistance services to make a successful transition to a new job. In Program Year 2014 - 2015, orientation sessions were conducted for 7,434 ERS participants. Sessions included the provision of labor market information, career guidance, information about CT.jobs (the former state job bank), an overview of American Job Center services, and details on UI benefit rights and responsibilities. Many ERS participants also benefited from

direct, individual employment services and training to facilitate their return to work, resulting in 20,803 additional reemployment services provided.

The Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Program
In October of 2016, CTDOL will transition from UI REA to the Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program, a similar program for a different target population. RESEA will serve Unemployment Compensation for Ex-service members (UCX) claimants and other claimants who are determined most likely to exhaust their UI benefits. As such, the ERS program will be discontinued. Under WIOA, the UI program is a vital workforce system service and mandatory One-Stop partner in the American Job Centers. UI claimants and other unemployed individuals will continue to be priority customers. CTDOL will provide reemployment services to these individuals by leveraging partner programs to meet their needs and expedite their return to work.

(g) State use of W-P funds to support UI claimants, and other communication between W-P and UI, including:

- (1) Coordination and provision of labor exchange services for UI claimants as required by the Wagner-Peyser Act;
- (2) Registration of UI claimants with State's employment service;
- (3) Administration of the work test for State unemployment compensation system, including eligibility assessments and job-finding and placement services for UI claimants; and
- (4) Provision of referrals-to and application assistance for training and education programs and resources.

CTDOL mails a Claimant's Guide to Unemployment Benefits to all initial unemployment claim filers. This booklet contains all necessary information related to a person's eligibility for unemployment benefits as well as a listing of the American Job Centers throughout Connecticut and information about the employment services they provide to job seekers. As a result of filing for Unemployment Insurance, UI claimants are registered with the State's employment service in the form of a registration in CTHires, the state's web-based workforce development system that provides case management and labor exchange services and the state job bank. Claimants will receive a welcome email from CTHires after filing which explains the services available and encourages them to utilize the system for their job search.

CTDOL administers the work test for UI claimants through the UI REA program and RESEA programs. All claimants selected to participate will report to an American Job Center for a review of their UI eligibility and efforts to find work. Any claimant determined to have an eligibility issue or insufficient work search efforts will have a stop entered on his or her unemployment claim and be referred to the CTDOL Adjudications unit for action. The process for referring claimants to Adjudications is already in place, as is the feedback loop, which includes advising Employment Service staff about the outcome of the referral and the need for rescheduling. All claimants who attend the initial one-on-one REA appointment will receive a customized reemployment plan, jointly developed with the REA/RESEA representative, and be required to participate in at least one additional mandatory employment service activity. Services include referrals to employment readiness workshops, résumé critiques, career counseling, WIOA orientation sessions, or any other service available in the American Job Center.

State agency merit-based public employees will continue to provide Wagner-Peyser Act funded labor exchange activities in accordance with Department of Labor regulations at the American Job Centers in

Hartford, Bridgeport, Hamden, Waterbury, New London and Danielson. These services include job readiness workshops on topics such as Job Search Strategies, Résumé Preparation and Interviewing Techniques; one-on-one career counseling, résumé critiques; employer recruitments; job readiness assessments; and Career Center services. In the Career Centers located in the American Job Centers, jobseekers will be able to work on their résumés and cover letters, complete online job applications, research companies, review job postings and conduct any other business related to their job search. They will have access to copy machines, fax machines, free postage for mailing résumés and applications to employers and, most importantly, in-person support from CTDOL and Workforce Development Board contractor staff who will provide whatever guidance and support might be needed. Career Center customers with disabilities will have access to accessible technology, such as large screen computer monitors and visual magnifiers, TTY machines, and computer keyboards with enhanced lettering and any other reasonable accommodation the customer might need. Labor exchange services detailed above will be available to all jobseekers at any time regardless of the order in which they are seeking services. All American Job Centers will have a process in-place that allows staff to refer customers to education and training programs as well as other resources and supportive services. Some referrals will be made “in-house” to other partner agencies under the roof of the American Job Center while others may be to organizations that are located in separate venues. Trade Act clients will be co-enrolled into WIOA as a standard operating procedure.

CTDOL will continue to deploy a team of Business Services Specialists across Connecticut whose sole focus is working with employers. Business Services Specialists identify employers interested in scheduling recruitment events in the American Job Centers and coordinate those events around the state. They ask employers to post job openings into the new CTHires system to generate employment opportunities for UI claimants. Business Services Specialists also write Incumbent Worker Training contracts with employers, provide business consultations to identify the company’s needs, promote tax credit and wage reimbursement programs such as WOTC and STEP-UP, and provide customized labor market and UI information. UI claimants typically benefit from these initiatives.

WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

State Plan must include assurances that:

1	The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time. (Sec 121(e)(3));
2	The State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111 (State agency staffing requirements) if the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers;
3	If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and
4	State agency merit-based public employees provide Wagner-Peyser Act-funded labor exchange activities in accordance with Department of Labor regulations.

- 1) Four out of five workforce regions have a comprehensive One-Stop center that provides access to the physical services of the core programs and other required partners. These regions include the Eastern, North Central, Northwest and Southwest regions. Wagner-Peyser Employment Service is presently co-located in the Bridgeport, Hartford, New London and Waterbury American Job

Centers. The partners in the South Central region are working towards the co-location of the Wagner-Peyser Employment Service.

- 2) Connecticut does not have significant MSFW one-stop centers.
- 3) Wagner-Peyser Employment Service will collaborate with Vocational Rehabilitation in providing labor exchange activities to persons with disabilities.
- 4) State agency merit-based public employees will continue to provide Wagner-Peyser Act-funded labor exchange activities in accordance with Department of Labor regulations at the American Job Centers in Hartford, Bridgeport, Hamden, Waterbury, New London and Danielson.

(e) Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP)

Each State agency must develop an AOP every four years as part of Unified State Plan required under sections 102 or 103 of WIOA. AOP must include:

(1) Assessment of Need

Provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers in the area based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State. Such needs may include but are not limited to: employment, training, and housing.

Review of the previous year's agricultural activity in the State

In PY 2014, there was no change from PY 2013, in the estimated number of farms or MSFWs working in Connecticut. Approximately 4,900 farms are located in Connecticut with a total of 400,000 acres dedicated to farming based on census data. CTDOL estimates 5,920 farm workers present in the state, based on Connecticut's Labor Market Information. Connecticut is not a significant state in regards to MSFWs.

During PY 2014, agricultural employers in Connecticut continued to seek qualified U.S. workers through the placement of job orders with CTDOL. Several employers were allowed to recruit foreign labor due to a shortage of U.S. workers available for agricultural positions. The majority of growers continued to recruit on their own through word of mouth, while others obtained workers through Farm Labor Contractors.

In PY 2014, 36 agricultural employers participated in the H-2A program. These employers placed 58 job orders and requested a total of 506 workers. Approximately 44 referrals were made to these positions. Referrals included both local workers and workers from Puerto Rico, Connecticut's primary supply state. The SMA performed 22 peak-harvest field checks/visits on agricultural worksites to which JS placements were made, and 7 peak-harvest migrant housing inspections. During these visits, the SMA verified field sanitation standards, general working conditions, and housing conditions. All housing checks were in compliance and no deficiencies were found. A few employers were found in possible violation of field sanitation standards, but these employers took corrective action and the apparent violations were resolved through informal resolution, eliminating the need to elevate or notify U.S. Wage & Hour. CTDOL records also indicate that in PY 2014, approximately 7,040 non-agricultural job orders with entry-level experience and less than high school educational requirements were placed in Connecticut's job bank, CT.Jobs. These counts do not reflect job orders placed by employers through indexing.

Projected level of agricultural activity in the State for the coming year

Connecticut Labor Market indicators, as calculated by the CTDOL Office of Research, project an increase in agricultural related employment by 11.2 % from 2012 to 2022. During this period, employment growth across all industries is projected at 9.4 %, with sectors such as construction and manufacturing growing by 22.8 % and 0.8 % respectively. For PY 2015, agricultural employment levels are expected to increase by less than 30 positions.

(A) An assessment of the agricultural activity in the State means:

- 1) **Identifying the top five labor-intensive crops**, the months of heavy activity, and the geographic area of prime activity.

Review of the previous year’s MSFW activity in the State

Major Crop Activity in Connecticut PY 2014		
<i>Crop</i>	<i>Months of Heavy Agricultural Activity</i>	<i>Primary Region</i>
Tobacco (Shade & Broadleaf)	June through September	North Central
Fruit (Apples, Peaches, Pears)	July through October	Central
Nursery	February through July	South Central
Greenhouse	March – June, and October - December	South Central

Review of Previous Year’s MSFW Activity in Connecticut (Estimates from Connecticut’s Labor Market Information) PY 2014		
<i>Crop</i>	<i>MSFWs Employed</i>	<i>Labor Shortage</i>
Tobacco (Shade & Broadleaf)	1000	Yes
Fruit (Apples, Peaches, Pears)	350	Yes
Nursery	550	Yes
Greenhouse	800	Yes
Other	760	Yes

Crop activity and the projected number of MSFWs in each crop activity are projected to remain the same for PY 2015:

Estimated Major Crop Activity in Connecticut PY 2015		
<i>Crop</i>	<i>Months of Heavy Agricultural Activity</i>	<i>Primary Region</i>
Tobacco (Shade & Broadleaf)	June through September	North Central
Fruit (Apples, Peaches, Pears)	July through October	Central
Nursery	February through July	South Central
Greenhouse	March – June, and October - December	South Central

Estimated MSFW Activity in Connecticut (Estimates from Connecticut’s Labor Market Information) PY 2015		
<i>Crop</i>	<i>MSFWs Employed</i>	<i>Labor Shortage</i>
Tobacco (Shade & Broadleaf)	1000	Yes
Fruit (Apples, Peaches, Pears)	350	Yes
Nursery	550	Yes
Greenhouse	800	Yes
Other	760	Yes

2) **Summarize the agricultural employers’ needs in the State** (i.e. are they predominantly hiring local or foreign workers, are they expressing that there is a scarcity in the agricultural workforce);

Currently all employers utilizing Connecticut’s Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) are participants of the H-2A program. The larger operations taking part in the H-2A program employ a combination of foreign workers, migrant workers, and local seasonal workers, with the latter being the largest contingent of this population. Smaller participants of the H-2A program almost exclusively employ foreign workers. All employers utilizing the ARS agree that the demographics of the former “U.S. worker” have drastically changed over time as the majority of the local seasonal workforce is comprised of immigrants.

3) **Identifying any economic, natural, or other factors that are affecting agriculture in the State** or any projected factors that will affect agriculture in the State.

Tobacco crops in Connecticut have experienced a steady decline in recent times, due in part to foreign competition from Central America, whose production costs are lower than those found here.

(B) An assessment of the unique needs of Farmworkers means summarizing:

Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) characteristics (including if they are predominantly from certain countries, what languages they speak, the approximate number of MSFWs in the State during peak season and during low season, and whether they tend to be migrant, seasonal, or year-round farmworkers). This information must take into account data supplied by WIOA Section 167 National Farmworker Job Program (NFJP) grantees, other MSFW organizations, employer organizations, and State

and/or federal agency data such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration.

Connecticut's Labor Market Information and CTDOL outreach efforts estimates there were 3,460 MSFWs in PY2014. Approximately 70 were migrant workers. The majority of the farm workers in Connecticut are from Mexico, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Central America, and Haiti. Many farm workers including MSFWs in Connecticut experience challenges with language barriers, lack of education, and insufficient knowledge of worker's rights, health care options, legal status, and self-sustainability.

(2) Outreach Activities

The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of the MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through the normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

(A) Contacting Farmworkers who are not being reached by normal intake activities conducted by the employment service offices.

The SMA will continue to explain to farmworkers the services available to them at local one-stop centers and other entities through his farm visits, as well as his visits to meetings held at New England Farm Workers Council (NEFWC.)

To augment CTDOL's outreach efforts, the SMA continues a cooperative agreement with the NEFWC, in an effort to integrate the employment and training services of both agencies and avoid the duplication of services to MSFWs. This partnership also enhances CTDOL's ability to achieve maximum penetration into the farm worker population by reaching seasonal as well as migrant workers. The SMA has also developed additional strategic partnerships with community based organizations to maximize resources and provide support services to MSFWs as well as agricultural employers.

Written and oral presentations to MSFWs, in both Spanish and English, at their living quarters and in common gathering areas will continue to be delivered by the SMA. The information presented will include the following:

- Agricultural and non-agricultural job openings
- Training options
- Support services (Statewide Legal Services of CT, Migrant Health programs)
- Vocational testing
- Career counseling
- Job development
- Information on the Job Service Complaint System
- Farm worker rights (Federal and State Law, employment related protections)
- Terms and conditions of employment
- Unemployment Compensation Insurance Information
- Services provided by the New England Farm Workers' Council (NEFWC)

The SMA will also provide workers with wallet-sized cards that include his contact information as well as the names and phone numbers of other organizations offering support services, such as U.S. Wage &

Hour, ConnectiCOSH (CT OSHA), NEFWC, Statewide Legal Services, and a number of Community Health Centers. Other outreach material that may be distributed to the workers includes information on Migrant Clinics (administered by the CT River Valley Farmworkers' Health Program), pamphlets on a number of CTDOL's own programs/services, Unemployment Compensation Filing, and the addresses and phone numbers of all of the American Job Centers throughout the state.

The SMA also provides MSFWs with information on seasonal or short-term non-agricultural job openings, as well as agricultural opportunities in other states, that they may transition to when their agricultural contract has ended.

(B) Providing technical assistance to outreach workers

Technical assistance must include trainings, conferences, additional resources, and increased collaboration with other organizations on topics such as one-stop center services, (i.e. availability of referrals to training, supportive services, and career services, as well as specific employment opportunities), the employment services complaint system, information on the other organizations serving MSFWs in the area, and basic summary of farmworker rights, including their rights with respect to the terms and conditions of employment.

Connecticut is currently not classified as a significant MSFW state and has its SMA conduct all outreach activities and efforts. The SMA had attended various training conferences to stay up to date on best practices and to disseminate information on services available through the One-Stop Career Centers, the Job Services Complaint System, and information on the entities serving MSFWs in Connecticut. The SMA also provides information on farmworker rights.

(C) Increasing outreach worker training and awareness across core programs

Include the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and the training on the identification of UI eligibility issues.

Since the SMA handles all the outreach activities, he has established a relationship with both the CTDOL UI division as well as the USDOL Wage and Hour unit. This collaboration with USDOL Wage and Hour staff and participation in the Winter Connecticut Nursery & Landscaping Association field day, introduces him to agricultural employers and helps establish a pathway for future farm visits. These farm visits assist agricultural employers as well as farmworkers in understanding unemployment eligibility and other labor laws.

(D) Professional development Activities

Providing State merit staff outreach workers professional development activities to ensure they are able to provide high quality services to both job seekers and employers.

Only the SMA provides outreach, training and other materials on farmworkers and agricultural employers for those staff members that are in the local offices or work with assisting farmworkers with UI eligibility. These materials can be found on the CTDOL internal network site for all CTDOL staff to access.

(E) Outreach Efforts

Coordinating outreach efforts with NFJP grantees as well as with public and private community service agencies and MSFW groups.

In addition to collaborating and working closely with our NFJP grantee, the SMA also has established relationships with various entities across the region such as:

- Partnerships with community based organizations such as University of Connecticut School of Medicine, Connecticut River Valley Farmworker’s Health Program (CRVFHP), Statewide Legal Services of CT, and Community Health Service providers;
- Distribution of informational brochures and posters on Pesticide Safety and Heat Stroke Prevention to all growers participating in the H-2A program;
- Partnering with the NEFWC to provide other support services to local farm workers in need;
- Presentation to students at the University of Connecticut on a field trip for a class titled “Migrant Workers In Connecticut”;
- Participation in the University of Connecticut Migrant Farm Worker Clinic Symposium by presenting information about MSFWs to medical students who visit farms and conduct free medical screenings for farm workers; and
- Presenting information on MSPA and H-2A regulations to agricultural employers.

(3) Services provided to farmworkers and agricultural employers through the one-stop delivery system

(A) Describe the State agency’s proposed strategies for:

Providing the full range of employment and training services to the agricultural community, both farmworkers and agricultural employers, through the one-stop delivery system. This includes:

i. How career and training services required under WIOA Title I will be provided to MSFWs through the one-stop centers

American Job Centers (AJCs) offer integrated and universally accessible employment services that effectively and efficiently meet the needs of all customers, including MSFWs. Through existing partnerships in the AJCs, MSFWs and agricultural employers have access to the following services through a single delivery system which include: Wagner-Peyser labor exchange services such as recruitment assistance, career counseling, vocational testing, veterans employment and training services, resume writing, job search assistance, reemployment work-shops, and job referrals. Other American Job Center Network programs, agencies and services include Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth activities under WIOA, Adult Education, Apprenticeship Training, Vocational Rehabilitation Training under DORS (Department of Rehabilitation Services) and BESB (Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind), Unemployment Insurance, Jobs First Employment Services, and referrals to supportive services. This universal access to career services guarantees barrier-free admission to all

seekers of employment and training services, including individuals with disabilities. Many of CTDOL's partners working under the American Job Center Network are co-located in our AJCs, which allows for a seamless delivery of services to job seekers. Once registered into CTDOL's database, all information and referrals are maintained electronically.

Training programs available through the American Job Centers are comprehensive and flexible in meeting the diverse needs of Connecticut's population. This allows job seekers with varying levels of education and experience the opportunity to upgrade their skills in order to meet the competitive needs of employers.

Staff encourages non-English speaking customers to take advantage of the cost-free ESL classes offered through Adult Education or CTDOL's WIOA Section 167 Grantee. This is a critical component of promoting life-long learning as well as developing the basic skills needed to secure employment and pursue career growth.

Staff in the American Job Centers have been trained in the proper identification and coding of MSFWs and are well educated on the multiple barriers of employment this population may encounter. The SMA will continue on-site monitoring of the AJCs to ensure compliance with the Job Service regulations, and will offer technical assistance to staff as needed.

ii. How the State serves agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such services.

The SMA maintains frequent contact with growers in the H-2A program in an effort to respond quickly to their labor needs.

The SMA will continue to reinforce positive relationships with farm workers, agricultural employers, and other non-profit organizations while conducting outreach activities. During the next year CTDOL plans to continue outreach to local workers as a means of informing them of the full range of services offered in the American Job Centers Network.

The SMA maintains frequent contact with growers in the H-2A program in an effort to respond quickly to their labor needs.

In PY 2015, CTDOL will continue to offer the following services to agricultural employers and MSFWs:

- Assistance with the placement of local and interstate job orders
- Assistance in the recruitment of qualified workers
- Dissemination of information on, and referral to organizations that assist MSFWs including New England Farm Workers' Council, CT Migrant Health Network, CT River Valley Farm workers Health Program, ConnectiCOSH, University of Connecticut Medical School, Statewide Legal Services of CT, and Board of Education Migratory Program
- Mediation and Interpretation services
- Complaint assistance
- Technical assistance to ensure that housing requirements meet Federal standards
- As needed, assist in making appointments for individual MSFWs or members of their family with appropriate agencies

- Technical assistance on compliance with employment services regulations and all other Federal and State laws

(B) Marketing the Complaint System

Marketing the employment services complaint system to farmworkers and other farmworker advocacy groups.

CTDOL will continue to rely on its SMA to distribute employment service complaint system material and information to farmworkers and advocacy groups through his farm visits and networking activities.

(C) Marketing the Agricultural Recruitment System

Marketing the Agricultural Recruitment System to agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such publicity.

The CTDOL will continue to promote recruitment assistance, available through the Department of Labor in outreach contacts, to agricultural employers throughout the state. CTDOL’s Alien Labor Certification staff, in collaboration with the State Monitor Advocate (SMA), continues a screening process for job seekers interested in agricultural job openings. This screening process not only ensures that qualified applicants are referred but also allows the prospective applicant to gain a thorough understanding of the terms and conditions of each job opening. Carefully matching job seekers with prospective employers proves to be instrumental in establishing credibility with our agricultural employers.

(4) Other requirements

(A) Collaboration

Describe any collaborative agreements the state workforce agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and in establishing new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

As stated earlier, we have established a close working relationship with our NFJP grantee, the New England Farm Workers Council (NEFWC), the SMA also has established relationships with various entities across the region such as: community based organizations such as University of Connecticut School of Medicine, Connecticut River Valley Farmworker’s Health Program (CRVFHP), Statewide Legal Services of CT, and Community Health Service providers. We continue to collaborate in outreach efforts as well as educational and training opportunities.

As such, CTDOL has also started dialog with those entities that serve the farmworker population in bordering states as well as supply states to develop relationships. This is important since many of these farmworkers cross state lines. In the next four years, it is expected that we will continue to work together and refer MSFWs and agricultural employers appropriately to each entity in order to coordinate efforts for success in the program. The SMA has also established pathways for Connecticut MSFWs to transition to other states after the term of the contract in Connecticut is completed. This

effort of developing relationships with other SMAs will continue as we serve the MSFWs and agricultural employers.

(B) Review and Public Comment

In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.

(i.) The AOP must include a statement confirming the NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

The WIOA section 167 NFJP Grantee, the New England Farm Worker’s Council (NEFWC) has been afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the State Agricultural Outreach Plan. No comments or additional recommendations were received.

(C) Data Assessment

Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.

CTDOL is committed to achieving full compliance with the federally mandated minimum equity indicator requirements for service to MSFWs. Connecticut has achieved federal mandated standards for the MSFW programs.

(D) Assessment of Progress

The plan must also include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.

PY 2014 Plan versus PY 2014 Actual

Comparison Chart – Program Year		Goal	Actual	+/-
1	Number of MSFWs contacts by ES staff	400	512	+112

2	Number of MSFWs contacts by 167 grantee	216	411	+195
3	Number of MSFWs employers contacted for obtaining Job orders	65	36	-29
4	Number of job orders cleared	75	58	-17
5	Number of job orders on which field checks were conducted	28	25	-3
6	Total number of MSFW formal complaints received	0	0	0

In addition, the CTDOL has also recorded a 55% increase of MSFWs receiving career guidance, job development and staff assisted services from PY 2013 to PY 2014.

Due to shifts in agricultural trends in Connecticut, we did not receive the amount of job orders we had anticipated. According to the annual Agricultural Wage Survey conducted in Connecticut, the Agricultural employers utilized more family workers instead of MSFWs in PY 2014.

CTDOL's PY 2015 goal is to reach 400 MSFWs. The majority of contacts with MSFWs will be conducted between June and October. The SMA will conduct visits to agricultural employers between November and May for recruiting assistance.

The level of Wagner-Peyser funding in Connecticut, specific to outreach activity, has not changed. CTDOL will continue to provide services and outreach to MSFWs at the same levels as previous years.

(E) State Monitor Advocate

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed the AOP.

The SMA has been afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the State Agricultural Outreach Plan.

WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

State Plan must include assurances that:

1	The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time. (Sec 121(e)(3));
2	The State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111 (State agency staffing requirements) if the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers;
3	If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and
4	State agency merit-based public employees provide Wagner-Peyser Act-funded labor exchange activities in accordance with Department of Labor regulations.

ADULT EDUCATION LITERACY PROGRAMS

State Plan must include description of following as it pertains to Adult Education and Literacy programs under Title II, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).

(a) Aligning of Content Standards

Describe how the eligible agency will, by July 1, 2016, align its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).

With adoption of the Common Core State Standards in Connecticut, the new GED test and the new web-based National External Diploma Program, CSDE recognized the need to support a set of standards relevant to adult learners. Connecticut adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education released by the United States Department of Education Office of Career and Technical and Adult Education. These content standards align closely with the Common Core State Standards in Connecticut.

In 2011 CSDE partnered with the Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education (CAACE) to conduct an introductory session on the Common Core State Standards pertaining to adult education. The session included a presentation by Susan Pimentel, one of the lead writers of the national standards for English Language Arts and Literacy. State staff participated in the National Adult Education Professional Development Council's training on the standards in 2013. The state then developed a plan to build state trainers' capacity and adult education providers/educators "awareness" of the standards. More training continued in August 2013 with a two-day summer institute that gave participants the opportunity to discuss the standards and implications for local programming. Two programs were identified to pilot the implementation utilizing the Standards in Action process to unpack and create lessons. These programs and Connecticut training staff participated in a regional training coordinated by the New England Literacy Resource Center. While continuing to work closely with the pilot programs, trainers provided overview sessions across Connecticut to increase awareness and knowledge. The standards were incorporated into all workshops in math, reading, and writing.

Connecticut applied to OCTAE and was selected in December 2014 for participation in the College and Career Readiness Standards-in-Action project. Trainers participated in two workshops in Washington, DC, to be trained in the statewide implementation of standards. Beginning in the fall of 2015 state educators have received intensive Advanced Level College and Career Readiness for Adult Education standards implementation training. This training and technical assistance will enable the state to continue implementation of CCR standards and prepare for total alignment by July 1, 2017 by reaching all programs, adult education staff and students.

(b) Local Activities

Describe how the State will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide adult education and literacy activities, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of these local activities.

Through CSDE, the State of Connecticut will award one-year grants to eligible providers through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to enable providers to develop, implement and improve adult education and literacy activities. To ensure direct and equitable access for all eligible providers, CSDE will publish a *Notice of Availability* in all major Connecticut newspapers and post the notice on the CSDE's web page. The RFP will be mailed to: all local education agencies and higher education

institutions; a master list of current and past providers including community-based organizations, regional education service centers, housing authorities, volunteer organizations, the Connecticut Department of Correction (DOC), other correctional facilities and institutions; and to all current providers and WDBs. A Bidders' Conference will be publicly advertised with the *Notice of Availability* and will be held at a central location to provide answers to questions regarding appropriateness of proposed projects and application procedures.

The following agencies are eligible for funding through the Connecticut State Department of Education:

- a) A local educational agency;
- b) A community-based organization or faith-based organization;
- c) A volunteer literacy organization;
- d) An institution of higher education;
- e) A public or private nonprofit agency;
- f) A library;
- g) A public housing authority;
- h) Other nonprofit institutions that have the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals;
- i) A consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above;
- j) A partnership between an employer and an entity described above.

Grants will be awarded to agencies to provide adult education and literacy activities to individuals who:

- a) Have attained 17 years of age;
- b) Are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under Connecticut state law; and
- c) Are basic skills deficient;
- d) Do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education; or
- e) Are English language learners.

Local grants will be distributed based on the ability to meet the requirements of AEFLA Purposes outlined in WIOA: (1) Assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency; (2) Assist adults who are parents or family members become a full partner in the education development of their children; (3) Assist adults in completing high school; (3) Promote transitions from adult education to postsecondary education and training through career pathways; (4) Assist immigrants and English language learners improve reading, writing, math, speaking, and comprehending the English language and acquire understanding of American government, individual freedom, and responsibilities of citizenship.

CSDE will make funding available to each of Connecticut's five designated local workforce areas. In conjunction with each WDB, CSDE will help to assess local area needs and WIB goals. Eligible providers will select the appropriate priority area when drafting and submitting their proposals to CSDE.

The RFP will establish a minimum six-week turnaround time between RFP distribution and proposal submission to CSDE. A review team comprised of inter-agency staff and experts in each priority area will evaluate proposals responding to the RFP. Interagency participants will include representatives of CSDE, the WDB and One-Stop partners. The review team will evaluate each proposal using a

standardized evaluation form based on required Federal, State and regional criteria published in the RFP (including the considerations listed in Section 232).

CSDE staff will conduct an internal credit check to ensure compliance with the requirements of Title II of WIOA, all applicable laws, and RFP criteria.

CSDE will use following process to distribute funds to approved applicants:

- 1) Not less than 82.5% of the grant funds to award grants and contacts under section 231 and to carry out section 225, Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals, of which not more than 20% of such amount shall be available to carry out section 225;
- 2) Shall not use more than 12.5% of the grant funds to carry out State leadership activities under section 223; and
- 3) Shall use not more than 5% of the grant funds, or \$85,000, whichever is greater, for administrative expenses of the eligible agency.

All allowable costs for the federally funded Adult Basic Education program are defined in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-87. This document will be used to determine whether costs are reasonable, allowable and allocable. All costs must be supported by source documentation.

Using the evaluation criteria published in the RFP, proposal reviews will involve a standardized evaluation process including the following items: the eligible provider's response to RFP requirements, the accuracy of the itemized budget in meeting line item limits and definitions, and the considerations listed in Section 232. The weight of each consideration in the evaluation process will be defined in the RFP. Evidence required supporting each consideration listed below has been defined and is printed in *Italics* with the corresponding consideration.

Considerations:

(1) The degree to which the eligible provider would be responsive to:

- (A) Regional needs as identified in the local plan under section 108 (*as evidenced by a description of regional needs and how the applicant will be responsive to those needs*); and
- (B) Serving individuals in the community who were identified as most in need of adult education and literacy activities, including individuals who have low levels of literacy skills or who are English language learners (*as evidenced by an objective statement of need accompanied by a recruitment and retention plan which targets these individuals*);

(2) The ability of the eligible provider to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including eligible individuals with learning disabilities (*as evidenced by an objective statement of need accompanied by a recruitment and retention plan which targets these individuals*);

(3) Past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State-adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance described in section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy (*as evidenced by meeting or exceeding performance measures based on documentation from the Connecticut Adult Reporting System and annual reviews for previously funded providers and as evidenced by comparable objective performance measures which demonstrate successful student outcomes for new eligible providers*);

(4) The extent to which the eligible provider demonstrates alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan under section 108, as well as the activities and services of the one-stop partners *(as evidenced by description of proposed activities and strategies and goals and how the provider plans to align them)*;

(5) Whether the eligible provider's program is of sufficient intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains; and uses instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction *(as evidenced by a program design suitable to achieve applicable performance measures – appropriateness of program design may be demonstrated by past performance of successful outcomes or documentation of a similar program design and associated outcomes)*;

(6) Whether the eligible provider's activities, including reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction delivered by the eligible provider, are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice *(as evidenced by program design and /or curriculum)*;

(7) Whether the eligible provider's activities effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and system lead to improved performance *(as evidenced by program design and/or curriculum and the accessibility of hardware and software applications as appropriate)*;

(8) Whether the eligible provider's activities provide learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship *(as evidenced by program design and/or curriculum which focus on skills needed for postsecondary education and training, the workplace, and citizenship)*;

(9) Whether the eligible provider's activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, and administrators who meet any minimum qualifications established by the State, where applicable, and who have access to high quality professional development, including through electronic means *(as evidenced by appropriate degrees, certifications, and trainings)*;

(10) Whether the eligible provider's activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local WDBs, One-Stop Centers, job training programs, social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways *(as evidenced by formal collaborations and the commitment of the provider to assess and address the literacy and non-literacy support services of participants)*;

(11) Whether the eligible provider's activities offer flexible schedules and coordination with Federal, State, and local support services (such as child care, transportation, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special

needs, to attend and complete programs *(as evidenced by program schedules and documentation of support services available)*;

(12) Whether the eligible provider maintains a high-quality information management system that has the capacity to report measurable participant outcomes (consistent with section 116) and to monitor program performance *(as evidenced by prior participation in or a commitment to participate in the eligible agency's Connecticut Competency System and Connecticut Adult Reporting System, and to submit comprehensive, timely, and accurate data)*; and

(13) Whether the local areas in which the eligible provider is located have a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs *(as evidenced by area demographic data)*.

(c) Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals

Describe how the State will establish and operate programs under section 225 of WIOA for corrections education and education of other institutionalized individuals, including how it will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II subtitle C, any of the following academic programs

Adult Education and Literacy Activities (Section 203 of WIOA)

CSDE will require eligible providers receiving grant funding to carry out corrections education or education for other institutionalized individuals and use the grant funds to operate the following adult education programs/activities:

Adult Basic Education (ABE)

ABE instruction is designed for adults seeking a high school diploma who function below the secondary school level and lack basic reading, writing and numeracy skills necessary to function effectively as workers, parents and citizens. Instruction can be individualized or offered in a classroom, or a learning lab. Persons completing ABE are prepared to benefit from secondary level instruction. ABE educational functioning levels are as follows:

- a. Beginning ABE Literacy (Grade Levels 0-1.9)
- b. Beginning Basic Education (Grade Levels 2.0-3.9)
- c. Low Intermediate Basic Education (Grade Levels 4.0-5.9)
- d. High Intermediate Basic Education (Grade Levels 6.0-8.9)

Adult Secondary Education (ASE)

Connecticut Adult Education offers three distinct pathways for adults to attain a high school diploma.

(1) Adult High School Credit Diploma (AHSCD):

The Adult High School Credit Diploma program is a prescribed plan, process and structure for earning a required number of academic and elective credits. The provider must be a local education agency (LEA) or Regional Education Service Center (RESC). Credits toward a local diploma must be obtained through a prescribed plan. Each provider/town can enhance the basic AHSCD program but must adhere to the minimum state requirements: 1) use certified teachers and counselors; 2) adhere to CSDE requirements regarding assessment, enrollment, and accountability and reporting; 3) meet required credit standards; and 4) ensure that a one credit course offers a minimum of 48 instructional hours. An adult who successfully completes the required credits of the AHSCD program is awarded a high school diploma by the providing LEA or RESC.

(2) General Educational Development (GED):

Adults who have not completed high school must demonstrate, through an examination, the attainment of academic skills and concepts normally acquired through completion of a high school program. Applicants for this examination must be at least 17 years of age and officially withdrawn from school for at least six months. Individuals who pass the GED Tests are awarded a Connecticut State High School Diploma. GED instructional programs, provided throughout the state in local school districts and a variety of other instructional sites, help individuals to prepare for this rigorous examination.

(3) National External Diploma Program (NEDP):

This program provides a secondary school credential designed for adults who have gained skills through life experiences and demonstrated competence in a particular job, talent or academic area. The NEDP is an online portfolio assessment program that offers no classroom instruction. An adult who successfully completes the portfolio assessment, as required, is awarded a high school diploma by the providing LEA or RESC.

Adult Secondary Education (ASE) programs must integrate functional life and employability skills into the curriculum, incorporate technology into the instructional process, and provide comprehensive counseling, transition and support services in collaboration with other community or human services organizations. ASE educational functioning levels are as follows:

- a. Low Adult Secondary Education (Grade Levels 9.0-10.9)
- b. High Adult Secondary Education (Grade Levels 11.0-12.9)

Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities

(1) Workforce Education Services

Programs will provide workforce preparation skills including literacy instruction, employability skills, career exploration and development, and links to employment, employment services and other options in order to respond to the evolving workforce needs of business and promote individual self-sufficiency. Workforce readiness programs offer instruction to support transition to work, entry-level employment, and reentry into the workforce for unemployed individuals.

Family Literacy Activities

Family literacy activities are services that make sustainable improvements in the economic prospects for a family and better enable parents or family members to support their children's learning needs. Activities include the following: parent or family adult education and literacy activities that lead to readiness for postsecondary education or training, career advancement, and economic self-sufficiency; interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children; training for parents or family members regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children; parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency; and, age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences. Family Literacy Services are intended to benefit the child, parent and community. Program services will focus on enabling parents to become full partners in the education of their children. Services will be of sufficient intensity and duration to make positive sustainable changes in the family.

English Language Acquisition Activities

English language acquisition activities include programs of instruction designed to help eligible individuals who are English language learners achieve competence in reading, writing, speaking, and

English language comprehension; and that lead to (1) the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; and (2) transition to postsecondary education and training; or employment.

(1) Americanization/Citizenship

Americanization/Citizenship programs include instruction designed for foreign-born adults who wish to become United States citizens. Persons completing this program are prepared to pursue citizenship through the prescribed process of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

(2) English as a Second Language (ESL)

English as a Second Language instruction is designed for adults who have limited proficiency in the English language or whose native language is not English. ESL programs assist individuals to improve their English skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing in order to find or maintain employment, attain citizenship, become more involved with their children's schooling and make greater use of community resources. Instruction is provided in English as a unifying means of serving the broad ethnic diversity of limited-English-speaking adults.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (EL/Civics) programs must contain the following:

- Contextualized instruction in literacy and English language acquisition, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation and U.S. history and government.
- Program design and goals that focus on preparing adults for employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency
- Curriculum focus on skills that will provide information and support in the skills necessary for the workplace
- Coordination with the local workforce system, and activities provided in combination with integrated education/training (IET) activities.
- Improvement of literacy skills including speaking, reading, writing and numeracy in order to provide learners with the skills to apply English and mathematics accurately and appropriately in a variety of home, community, workplace and academic settings.
- Opportunities for experiential learning in which participants are actively engaged in community pursuits are included in the program design.
- Utilization of research-based instructional models that have proven effective in teaching individuals to read, write and speak English effectively.
- Collaboration with community agencies that offer services to limited English proficient populations.
- Embedding of technology literacy into the core curriculum.

Additional program activities directly related to the use of these funds include:

- Participation in career pathways exploration and distance learning activities that impact competence in the workplace;
- Integration of various hand-held technologies into classroom work including tablets, smart phones and I Pads;
- Creation of video oral histories;
- Exposure to basic math vocabulary and interpretation of charts, tables and graphs;
- Knowledge of the American education system with special focus on addressing the needs of families new to the U.S. school system; and
- Cross cultural perspectives, civic responsibility, democracy topics and independent

projects.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education also provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

Workforce Preparation Activities or Integrated Education and Training

CSDE will continue to assist the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) expand the development and implementation of the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) delivery model offering industry-recognized credentials. Adult Education programs will collaborate with WDBs in local workforce areas to provide I-BEST training to Jobs First Employment Service (JFES) clients who receive Temporary Family Assistance.

Programs must demonstrate a commitment to provide appropriate support services to students enrolled in the integrated pathway program. These services may include, but are not limited to tutoring or other academic supports, college navigation support, career planning, transportation assistance, and/or childcare.

Special Rule: Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

(c) Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals

Describe how the State will establish and operate programs under section 225 of WIOA for corrections education and education of other institutionalized individuals, including how it will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II subtitle C, any of the following academic programs:

Adult education and literacy activities; Special education, as determined by the eligible agency; Secondary school credit; Integrated education and training; Career pathways; Concurrent enrollment; Peer tutoring; and Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

CSDE will reserve no more than 20% of its Federal grant received under WIOA to provide programs for corrections education and education for other institutionalized individuals as described in Section 225 of the Act. Funding under Section 225 will include the following correctional institutionalized settings: prison, jail reformatory, work farm, detention center, halfway house, community based rehabilitation

center or other similar institution designed for the confinement or rehabilitation of criminal offenders. CSDE shall also require that each eligible provider using grant funds under Section 225 to carry out a program for criminal offenders in a correctional institution shall give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

CSDE shall require that each eligible provider use the grant funds to operate education programs as follows:

1. Adult Basic Education (ABE)
2. English literacy acquisition (ELA)
3. Secondary-school completion (Adult High School Diploma)

(d) Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program

Describe how the State will establish and operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs under Section 243 of WIOA, for English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries.

CSDE will establish and operate English Literacy and Civics Education programs as a part of its adult education program. Since the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires an intentional connection to the workplace, to careers and to the workforce system (employers, Workforce Investment Boards, Chambers of Commerce, etc.) for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs, CSDE will work with the Connecticut Department of Labor to expand its Integrated education and training delivery model (I-BEST) offering industry-recognized credentials to Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs. Adult Education programs will work with WDBs in local workforce areas to provide assistance to local programs. CSDE will hold meetings with grantees regarding the requirements of the program and provide mandatory professional development sessions for EL/Civics instructors and staff on integrating career awareness, workforce skills, and career pathways.

Describe how the State will fund, in accordance with the requirements of Title II, subtitle C, an Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program and how the funds will be used for the program.

CSDE will issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education. The RFP requires the following for funded programs: program design and goals that focus on preparing adults for employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency; curriculum focus on skills that will provide information and support in the skills necessary for the workplace; coordination with the local workforce system; and activities provided in combination with integrated education/training (IET) activities. Funds will be specifically allocated for teacher professional development. Funds will be used for instructional costs (instructional pay, curriculum materials, and software that connects to career pathways) for ESL teachers. Funds will be used to serve those individuals who are most in need of the program. Funds will be distributed on an as-needed basis for programs that request an ESL program.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program will be delivered in combination with integrated education and training activities.

CSDE will use its highly successful integrated education and training program, I-BEST, with English Literacy and Civics Education students.

Describe how the program is designed to (1) prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency and (2) integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

CSDE will assist local adult education programs in working with WDBs in local workforce areas to determine in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency, and design I-BEST programs based on those industries and occupations. CSDE will also expand activities to coordinate needs-assessments and provide services through the Connecticut One-Stop system in order to address the needs of customers and employers and to link adult education to other employment and training services.

(e) State Leadership

Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out the required State Leadership activities under section 223 of WIOA.

CSDE sent a survey via Survey Monkey to all local program directors as well as all WIA-funded providers on October 22, 2015, to obtain their input on the state plan. The survey listed 17 WIOA requirements for funding local programs and state leadership activities. Participants were asked to rate the areas according to need on the following scale:

1. We feel confident in this area.
2. Our program could use a little assistance in this.
3. Some components are in place, but our program needs more assistance.
4. This is one of our program's biggest needs.

A weighted average of 1-4 was given to all questions. Any question with a score of 2.00 or higher indicates that the programs need a little assistance to a lot of assistance in the area listed. Five areas received scores below 2.00; two areas scored 2.00; and ten areas received scores above 2.00.

The three most identified areas of need were: (1) meeting regional needs as identified in the local plan and demonstrating alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan as well as the activities and services of the one-stop partners, (2) assisting adults in the transition to postsecondary education and training, including through career pathways, and (3) providing activities for the integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skills training, including promoting linkages with employers. The three areas that were identified as being of the least concern were: (1) ensuring that activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, and administrators, (2) serving individuals who have low levels of literacy skills or who are English language learners or individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities, and (3) using instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction and using reading writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction that are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research.

Participant comments about each section were collected and analyzed to determine which state leadership activities are most needed. CSDE will use survey results to determine types of training and technical assistance to provide.

Description of Required Activities

(1) CSDE will work with other core programs and One-Stop partners to ensure that adult education and literacy activities are in alignment and to help develop career pathways that provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities. CSDE will partner with CTDOL to assist local providers in partnering with One-Stops to develop career pathways and provide access to employment and training services. Professional development will be provided to local program staff, including orientation to adult education programs and services for One-Stop partners and other agencies.

Since the greatest need identified from the survey of local programs was meeting regional needs and demonstrating alignment between proposed activities and services with core partners, CSDE will ensure that training and technical assistance will address these two issues. It will also assist local programs in becoming familiar with the regional/state plan to determine how it affects their programs. CSDE will also work with local programs to establish stronger linkages with partners such as local schools, WDBs, one stop centers, and job training programs.

(2) CSDE has instituted high quality professional development programs to improve instruction. Training will be provided related to the specific needs of adult learners and information about models and promising practices will be disseminated.

To enhance program quality and assure continued progress in meeting the Core and Additional Indicators of Performance, CSDE shall award grants to eligible providers to deliver state leadership activities, primarily professional development activities, with funds made available under this subtitle. In order to meet the various needs of our state, CSDE may enter into partnerships with other states and/or the federal government to collaboratively fund projects that will meet individual needs and accomplish common goals. CSDE shall not use more than 12.5% of the funds awarded under this subtitle for state leadership activities.

CSDE will deliver a majority of its state leadership and professional development services through the Adult Training and Development Network (ATDN). CSDE's professional development model supports the implementation of the goals of the Connecticut Unified State Plan and consists of professional development basics and activities related to the implementation of career pathways.

(3) CSDE will provide technical assistance to local grantees in:

- i. Development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on the most rigorous or scientifically valid research available and appropriate, in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition programs, distance education, and staff training;
- ii. Role of eligible providers as a One-Stop partner to provide access to employment, education, and training services;
- iii. Assistance in the use of technology, including for staff training, to eligible providers, especially the use of technology to improve system efficiencies.

Serving students with low literacy skills or who are English language learners or individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities, was not rated by most local programs as being one of their strongest needs. Providers did express that they need assistance with curriculum materials and teaching strategies/best practices for students who are non-literate in their native language and with developing a scope and sequence curriculum for low level literacy skills and individuals with disabilities.

Another area identified on the survey as a need is technical assistance in helping local programs identify instructional practices which will enable students to pass the new GED test. Most programs felt confident in teaching reading, writing, speaking and English language acquisition, but one program stated they need help in ways to improve the depth of math instruction.

CSDE will also provide technical assistance in serving adults with special learning needs and disabilities including disability awareness sessions, resource and instructional materials, accommodation and instruction planning workshops, train-the-trainer sessions, referral information and telephone consultation concerning program issues.

(4) CSDE will conduct program monitoring and evaluation to ensure compliance with Federal and State funding requirements and to determine the effectiveness of programs in meeting the needs of the adult population and will disseminate information about models and proven or promising practices within Connecticut.

CSDE has in place a data reporting system for each local provider – Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS) – that can measure performance outcomes. CSDE has developed a formalized follow-up and reporting process to report on the core indicators of obtaining or retaining employment and entering post-secondary education according to National Reporting System requirements. The follow-up and reporting process includes data sharing with other State agencies, including the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) wage information system. CSDE will participate in the statewide data system that will assist CSDE to work seamlessly with other partners while protecting the privacy rights of individuals.

To provide the core service of performance and cost information for WIOA section 231 providers to the One-Stop system, CSDE will develop a report that includes each program’s success in meeting State-adjusted levels of performance. This data will assist potential clients to identify an appropriate adult education or literacy program in the local area.

Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out permissible State Leadership Activities under section 223 of WIOA, if applicable.
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Description of Permissible Activities

- 1) CSDE will provide training and technical assistance to local programs in technology applications, translation technology, and distance education, including professional development to support the use of instructional technology. Training and technology assistance to local programs in technology applications was identified as a need, especially in the area of web-based communication (social media, phone apps, etc.). Assistance also needs to be provided in finding access to computers.
- 2) CSDE will develop and disseminate curricula including literacy curricula, which uses instructional practices such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency and reading comprehension that research has proven effective for adults.

- 3) CSDE will develop content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways. Connecticut Competency System (CCS) training sessions will be offered from both adult education and the workforce development community. CCS is an integral part of the CSDE's career pathways, standards-based framework utilizing the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) to connect curriculum assessment and instruction that is able to capture progress made by adult education learners.
- 4) CSDE will provide assistance to eligible providers in developing and implementing programs that achieve the objectives of this title including meeting the State adjusted levels of performance.
- 5) CSDE will provide technical assistance in implementing the Connecticut Competency System (CCS) for appraisal, instruction and assessment in a life-skills and an employability context, including new teacher training, CCS Facilitator training, and One-Stop partner staff training as well as the ordering and dissemination of CASAS curricula materials used in conjunction with the Connecticut Competency System.

The Connecticut Adult Reporting System (CARS) will collect student demographic, attendance, assessment and outcome information for *each* student in the adult education program. CARS generates statewide and local demographic and performance assessment reports used for program planning, management and accountability. Data from the system allows CSDE to assess the effectiveness of local programs by measuring performance outcomes.

- 6) CSDE will continue to partner with community colleges and other institutions of higher learning to assist adults to transition to postsecondary education and training. Training and technical assistance will be provided on effective methods of transitioning students.

Assisting adults in the transition to postsecondary education and training was the second greatest need expressed by local providers in the survey. CSDE will ensure that training and technical assistance will be provided, especially in areas such as employer engagement, the institution of career counselor positions, and enhanced job responsibilities for current staff emphasizing transitions. CSDE will also provide assistance in the implementation of training programs that assist adults in obtaining economic self-sufficiency.

- 7) CSDE will work with CTDOL to expand its Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) delivery model offering industry-recognized credentials to Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs. Training and technical assistance will be provided to local grantees for integration of literacy and English language instruction.

The third greatest need identified on the survey was providing activities for the integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skill training, including promoting linkages with employers. CSDE will assist local programs by sharing effective models, assisting local programs in engaging employers, and how to partner successfully with other agencies to place students in employment.

- 8) CSDE will provide technical assistance and training to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities by identifying curriculum frameworks and aligning rigorous content standards that

specify what adult learners should know and be able to do in the areas of reading and language arts, mathematics, and English language acquisition, taking the following into consideration:

- i. State adopted academic standards.
- ii. Current adult skills and literacy assessments used in the State or outlying area.
- iii. Primary indicators of performance described in section 116.
- iv. Standards and academic requirements for enrollment in non-remedial, for-credit courses in postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education supported by the State or outlying area.

Connecticut training staff will continue to work closely with the pilot programs and will provide overview sessions throughout the state to increase awareness and knowledge. Also, CCRS were incorporated into all workshops in math, reading, and writing. Working with ELA students in the area of workplace training was identified on the survey as a need. Therefore CSDE will work with local programs to identify a variety of curricula for workplace training.

- 9) CSDE will develop and pilot strategies to improve teacher quality and retention. Training staff will provide sessions on learning styles and needs, facilitating adult learning, planning for instruction, and monitoring student progress.

CSDE will assist in developing and implementing programs and services to meet the needs of adult learners with learning disabilities or English language learners.

(f) Assessing Quality

Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II and take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA.

Performance Accountability

Performance Accountability assesses the effectiveness of grantees in achieving continuous improvement of adult education and literacy activities. The performance outcome measures shall consist of the following core indicators:

1. The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
2. The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program;
3. The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;
4. The percentage of program participants who obtain either a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year of exit from program;
5. The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains towards such a credential or employment; and
6. The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers established pursuant to clause (iv).

Setting Targets

Each fiscal year CSDE negotiates proposed target percentages for each of the core indicators of performance with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE). Each local eligible program is responsible for meeting or exceeding the negotiated performance targets. Each program shall analyze progress towards meeting the targets on an ongoing basis. Each program must utilize the approved standardized assessments that provide the framework needed to measure program effectiveness.

Central to the evaluation process is an assessment of Performance Measures established by CSDE to focus on continual progress, successful completion of the program area, and successful transition to a next step of employment, postsecondary education, or occupational training. For example, CSDE's performance measures for secondary completion programs focus on interim student progress by requiring providers to report on the number of students who pass one or more subsections of the GED practice test or earn one or more credits toward an adult high school diploma, and requiring them to report on number of students who earn a diploma or its recognized equivalent. Incorporating this performance measure into the evaluation process will ensure that the eligible agency and local provider assess each student's progress toward program completion and analyze significant changes indicated by this interim progress indicator.

CSDE has also developed four Additional Indicators of Program Performance that require providers to address all aspects of program operation: recruitment, curriculum and instruction, support services and professional development. These additional indicators assure that programs will focus on long-term planning for program development and community responsiveness rather than focusing solely on current year issues and achievements. These indicators also assure that adult education providers develop learner and community-responsive programs and curricula so they can become an integral part of the local education system as it works toward lifelong learning and self-sufficiency for all community members, especially those most in need of literacy services. Core and additional Indicators of Performance will become a focal point for annual and on-site monitoring reviews and the basis for formative evaluation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To improve the quality and effectiveness of adult education programs, CSDE will conduct two evaluation processes: an annual desk-audit for all providers, and an on-site monitoring evaluation for selected providers.

On-Site Monitoring

An on-site monitoring evaluation will be conducted for a minimum of 25% of Federally funded adult education programs each year to determine the effectiveness of adult education and literacy programs and activities. All newly funded programs will be monitored, as will all programs that had non-compliance or RFP Requirement issues during previous year's monitoring. These evaluations shall, at a minimum, consist of assessing the following areas:

- a) Compliance with all applicable laws and RFP guidelines, including ADA 504 and Section 427 GEPA;
- b) Program management and operations including scheduling and locations as well as staff credentials;
- c) Outreach, recruitment and retention practices including individuals with multiple barriers to education;
- d) Curriculum and instruction and use of technology;

- e) Support services including counseling and transition services;
- f) Professional development opportunities;
- g) Student intake, assessment and documentation procedures;
- h) Documentation of the program’s ability to assist adults in gaining employment, achieving self-sufficiency, and/or developing family literacy practices;
- i) Documentation of the program’s progress in meeting the Performance Measures set for each applicable Core Indicator of Performance;
- j) Documentation of the program’s ability to meet the Additional Indicators of Program Quality.

Desk Monitoring

For the annual desk audit review, each provider will submit an assessment of Performance Measures and individual program goals as well as an annual expenditure report including all relevant fiscal records to facilitate an effective audit. Each program will also be required to submit data containing all program and student information stored in its Connecticut Adult Reporting System, including demographic, assessment and outcome data for each student enrolled. If a local program does not meet its outcome measures, it must complete a corrective action plan outlining how to make necessary improvements.

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAMS CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

State must provide written and signed certifications that: [FROM CSDE]

1	The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;
2	The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;
3	The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;
4	All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;
5	A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;
6	The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;
7	Agency submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and
8	The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;

State Plan must include assurances that: [FROM CSDE]

1	The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding supplement and not supplant provisions);
2	The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;
3	The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA; and
4	Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.

1. SF424B - Assurances – Non-Construction Programs
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)

2. [Grants.gov - Certification Regarding Lobbying](http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)
3. [SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities \(required, only if applicable\)](http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html)
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)

Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)

Vocational Rehabilitation Programs

Housed within DORS are two Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs. The general VR program, situated within the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), serves individuals with all types of disabilities except those with the primary disability of legal blindness. The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) serve consumers that are legally blind, as well as current or former transition-age consumers with visual impairments. Consumers who are legally blind and deaf or hard of hearing are served by either BRS or BESB.

The distinct and separate State Plans for each of these programs are below:

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan³ must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA:

(a) Input of State Rehabilitation Council

All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commission, must describe the following:

(1) Input of the State Rehabilitation Council

Input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council's report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as a part of the Council's functions;

The mission of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is to provide assessment, advice and recommendations to the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS or the bureau) and others regarding coordination and effectiveness of programs and strategies that promote community-based competitive employment for persons with disabilities.

The SRC maintains an ongoing collaboration with BRS. The SRC is comprised of volunteers, many of whom are current or former vocational rehabilitation (VR) consumers or family members of VR consumers. They are appointed by the Governor to review and assess the effectiveness and delivery of vocational rehabilitation services provided for individuals with disabilities who are seeking employment. The SRC has participated in the following endeavors in FY 2015:

1. Development of the BRS 2017 State Plan;
2. Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) Annual Meeting;
3. National Council of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) Conferences in Bethesda, MD and Miami, FL and Teleconferences (six);

³ Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(iii) of WIOA

4. The Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Conferences in Bethesda, MD and Miami, FL;
5. SRC Meetings (six per year);
6. Review of the 722 Report regarding Administrative Hearing Outcomes; and
7. Updates of Corrective Action Plans resulting from the Rehabilitation Services Administration 2013 Monitoring.

WIOA

In July, 2014, Congress passed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to unify the state programs that provide employment services. This bill established some significant changes to the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. At the May 2015 SRC meeting, Acting BRS Director, Amy Porter, reviewed the changes that will impact the VR program and plans the agency has undertaken to prepare to adapt to these new requirements and partner with new entities to provide cohesive employment and training programs for all of Connecticut's residents. These changes will be reported in the upcoming Unified State Plan due March 3, 2016. The SRC worked to better understand WIOA requirements and the desired outcomes that would improve employment services for people with disabilities. The SRC also began to assess how BRS could incorporate changes that would help the VR program successfully meet these new goals

Agency Update

David Doukas became the new Director for BRS on August 21, 2015. He will attend SRC meetings and provide members with information and updates about the VR program. The SRC looks forward to working with Mr. Doukas to continue to improve the quality of services for people in the program.

BRS Public Meetings

Due to WIOA, the deadline for the submission of the next State Plan was changed to March, 2016. As part of the focus for the public meeting is to review the State Plan, BRS and the SRC will host public meetings in January/February. Consumers, their families, and others interested in the VR program will be invited to review the draft of the 2017 Unified State Plan that features VR program specific information and employment information and goals among the state partners, as established by WIOA. Their feedback will inform the final version of the Unified State Plan.

Consumer Survey

In response to the SRC's goal to assess the effectiveness and delivery of VR services provided by BRS, the SRC collaborated with BRS to commission the Center for Public Policy and Social Research (CPPSR) at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) to conduct a consumer satisfaction survey of VR recipients for fiscal year 2015. The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the job search services that consumers/participants received from the VR program at BRS.

Two hundred and three consumer interviews were conducted from August 10th through September 24th, 2015. The construction of the survey instrument was a collaborative effort between the SRC, BRS and CPPSR. The list of consumers from which this survey data is drawn was provided by BRS. That list of 600 individuals represents a small sampling of the 8,672 current and former VR consumers that BRS served in fiscal year 2015. Consumer names were pulled from all regions.

Of the 600 consumer names provided for the survey, 75 individuals chose not to respond to the survey and 88 individuals could not be reached due to an out-of-service number, an inaccurate number, or use

of a privacy device. Three individuals were either deceased or incarcerated, while six others had language barriers. The remaining 225 consumers did not answer the phone following numerous attempts, throughout multiple days and evenings. CPPSR called each consumer a minimum of seven times, though in most cases, attempts reached upwards of ten calls.

Out of the respondents who CPPSR was able to reach, this survey has a 6% margin of error at the 95% confidence interval. This means that statistical differences outside of the +/- 6% margin of error will only exist approximately 5% of the time.

CPPSR conducted the survey over the phone and recorded consumer answers exactly as stated. The CPPSR collected two forms of data:

- *Qualitative*: Participant comments, recorded and reported verbatim.
- *Quantitative*: Participant responses utilizing one of the provided answer options.

You may go to the BRS Website <http://www.ct.gov/brs/site/default.asp> to see the full report. Based on the SRC review of the consumer survey, the SRC recommends that BRS strengthen communication between counselors and consumers, especially when consumer cases are being transferred to another counselor. It also recommends that BRS increase engagement with businesses to increase hiring of VR consumers.

(2) SRC Recommendations to BRS

The Designated State unit's response to the Council's input and recommendations

Several of these recommendations appeared last year, but the SRC believes they are ongoing issues that warrant continued attention this year.

Recommendation 1 –

We support BRS as it seeks new locations to better serve VR consumers. We applaud efforts to insure better visibility of BRS offices. We continue to recommend that signage to enable optimum visibility be a priority of all offices. The SRC is requesting that updates on signage and access to all buildings continue to be provided at SRC meetings.

BRS Response: The bureau continues to be very active in its endeavor to improve the physical locations of our offices. We have completed two critical re-location projects in the first quarter of FFY 2016 and are planning additional moves within this year. We agree that both exterior and interior signage at our offices could be improved and have been systematically working toward addressing this. In many locations municipal building codes, landlord issues and physical space itself limits our signage options, but efforts to maximize our visibility are to be made wherever possible.

Recommendation 2 –

The accessible parking in the Waterbury office is on a grade that makes it difficult for consumers who use wheelchairs to transfer out of and into vehicles. The SRC recommends that when the parking lines are repainted, the accessible spaces be moved further right where the grade is not difficult to maneuver.

BRS Response: The bureau has been and will continue to work closely with the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services and the lessor of our Waterbury office related to the re-grading and expansion of the parking lot. We will continue to pursue improvement at this location, insure no issues

are present at newly established locations and also address any additional issue that are identified at other existing office locations.

Recommendation 3 –

Some consumers are still confused upon arrival at offices shared with DSS. It would be beneficial to consumers and families if BRS expands the website to include pictures of offices and perhaps a virtual tour of each office so consumers will know where to park and what to expect when entering into the building.

BRS Response: BRS continually updates website content, including information related to BRS offices. We will look into providing pictures of the locations. We will also update the directions to include parking and building entrance instructions.

The state of Connecticut is implementing a new website portal that we hope will be functional in 2016. Once this website is implemented we plan to provide user friendly and accessible information for the general public, which will include BRS office information in detail.

In addition, we will continue to utilize social media to provide outreach to consumers and the public to increase awareness of office locations and services.

Recommendation 4 –

The SRC recommends BRS strengthen communication between counselors and consumers, especially when consumer cases are being transferred to another counselor. We would like to know what BRS expects of staff regarding response time to consumer telephone calls and emails. We would also like to have reports on how staff is meeting that expectation. Also, what is the procedure to ensure consumer contact is not lost when cases are transferred to new counselors?

BRS Response: The VR Supervisors oversee case transfers and will continue working on a resolution to this concern. Going forward, consumers can expect that within two weeks of requesting a transfer to another counselor and/or office they will be contacted by the new counselor, (or his/her designee) to schedule an appointment. In the case of case transfers happening due to a caseload vacancy, consumers receive a letter as soon as the vacancy occurs with contact information to be used until the position is filled. Mechanisms for formally tracking transfer cases and yielding metrics related to response times will be investigated and, to the extent possible, developed.

Recommendation 5 –

The SRC has a continued interest in all of the state agency collaborative projects including the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)/BRS Agency Collaborative regarding services and employment options for consumers with psychiatric issues, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS)/BRS agency collaborative and the Bureau of Education Services for the Blind (BESB) and BRS collaborative. Please provide updates at the SRC meetings about any achievements that have been attained, the strategies that have been developed to improve outcomes, the training that is available to staff, and any activity that will occur as a result of BRS' attendance at the CSAVR conference.

BRS Response: BRS continues to maintain Memoranda of Understanding/Agreement and active, robust partnerships with various state agencies. We are committed to routinely sharing information about these collaborations and will continue to do so.

Recommendation 6 –

The Business Committee will continue efforts to make presentations about BRS to businesses and chambers of commerce to help publicize the VR program. The committee would like to work closely with BRS to develop a brochure to distribute on these occasions. The SRC requests regular updates regarding new projects and initiatives that will benefit the business community.

BRS Response: BRS supports the SRC in their reaching out to businesses and chambers of commerce to market our services. We have a variety of materials developed that are geared toward highlighting the benefits of employers working with the VR program. We would be interested in presenting these materials to the SRC and developing any additional brochures that are determined necessary.

The bureau will also offer regular updates regarding initiatives and projects with the employment community at SRC meetings.

Recommendation 7 –

The SRC recommends that BRS increase engagement with businesses to increase hiring of VR consumers.

BRS Response: BRS remains very committed to engaging with businesses. This is evident in BRS housing a business services unit, Connect-Ability Staffing, which is responsible for business outreach and development throughout Connecticut. BRS plans on expanding Connect-Ability Staffing’s capacity for outreach in order to facilitate more connections with businesses and, ultimately, more employment opportunities for VR consumers.

(b) Request for Waiver of Statewideness

When requesting a waiver of the statewide service requirement, the designated State unit must identify the types of services to be provided by the program on a non-statewide basis. The waiver request must also include written assurances that:

- (1) A local public agency will provide the non-Federal share of costs associated with the services to be provided in accordance with the waiver request;
- (2) The designated State unit will approve each proposed service before it is put into effect; and
- (3) Requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the Services approved under the waiver.

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services is not requesting a Waiver of Statewideness.

(c) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system with respect to:

- (1) Federal, State, and local agencies and programs;
- (2) State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;
- (3) Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture;
- (4) Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth; and
- (5) State use contracting programs

BRS has Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) and Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the following entities:

(1) Federal, State, and local agencies and programs:

- a) Social Security Administration: Information Exchange Agreement to receive data regarding consumers' work history.
- b) The Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs MOU enables collaboration of services for veterans.
- c) The Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium MOA enables BRS to create and host the Connect-Ability Distance Learning Initiative (DLI) which are free online e-learning modules for job seekers with disabilities, employers, Community Rehabilitation Providers, vocational rehabilitation staff and others. Modules are accessible and some are available in Spanish or American Sign Language. BRS also uses the DLI as a training registration platform for staff trainings.
- d) The Department of Social Services (DSS) MOA enables DORS/BRS to receive select administrative supports and access to information systems, applications and networks from DSS. It also formalizes the transfer of funding to conduct Learning Disability evaluation services related to the collaboration in serving potentially eligible consumers receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
- e) The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (MPTN) MOU enables collaboration and coordination of vocational rehabilitation services.
- f) Through the Secure Jobs Connecticut Pilot, a Letter of Agreement enables BRS and the Departments of Education (SDE), Housing (DOH), Labor (DOL), and Social Services (DSS) to collaborate with the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund, Fairfield County's Community Foundation, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the Liberty Bank Foundation, the Melville Charitable Trust, the Office of Early Childhood, the Partnership for Strong Communities, the United Way of Greater New Haven, and the United Way of CT to end homelessness by 2015 for Veterans, 2016 for those experiencing chronic homelessness, and by 2022 for families with children and youth.
- g) BRS also has agreements with Central Connecticut State University and the University of Maine, Farmington to train student interns.

(2) State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998:

The Connecticut Assistive Technology (AT) Act Program is housed within DORS along with BRS, therefore an MOA is not needed. The Program Director for the AT Act program serves in the role of AT Consultant to the VR program and a strong relationship has been established. The AT Act program operates an AT device lending service specifically for VR consumers. The Program Director provides AT demonstrations when needed and assists VR consumers in participating in reuse activities. Additionally, VR consumers are able to utilize the alternate financing program operated by the AT Act program to assist in paying for needed devices that the VR program may not be able to provide, such as vehicles, which can then be modified by the VR program.

The following are formal agreements that have been established to provide activities under section 4 of the AT Act:

- a) The State Education Resource Center (SERC) MOU enables SERC to expand newly established Assistive Technology (AT) Device Demonstration Center to primarily show educators and other school personnel about various AT devices.
- b) The Southern Connecticut State University MOA enables laptops and iPads with specific software to be loaned to CT K-12 schools for up to four months to allow students to try devices before they are purchased.

(3) Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture:

None.

(4) Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth:

None.

(5) State use contracting programs:

- a) The Office of the Attorney General MOA enables review and approval of Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) contracts and legal representation at Administrative Hearings for consumers.
- b) The Office of the State Comptroller MOU provides approval and processing of expenses for consumers and staff.

(c) Coordination with Education Officials

- (1) The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of student with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.
- (2) Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to:

- (A) consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;
- (B) transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs;
- (C) roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
- (D) procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

With the passage of WIOA, the BRS Transition Committee has collaborated with the State Department of Education (SDE) and a number of entities to implement pre-employment transition services including the Connecticut Transition Community of Practice, the North East Transition Group, Regional Transition Committee, Transition Task Force, Collaboration Across the Life Span, Education Transition Liaisons,

Southern Connecticut State University Career Advisory Committee, CT-AHEAD/Higher Education Schools, the Department of Labor, and the WDBs.

Prior to initiation of pre-employment transition efforts, BRS had liaison counselors assigned to each high school to work directly with students and collaborate with education administrators to sign a referral protocol yearly. With implementation of WIOA, 10 VR counselors have been assigned to work exclusively with students with disabilities.

SDE and BRS have staff that serve on each other's advisory committees (Transition Task Force and BRS Transition Committee). Program staff attends common training regarding the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), secondary transition services and WIOA. SDE and BRS collaborated to develop a statewide CT Transition Community of Practice (COP) with a broad stakeholder base as a single portal for transition resource development, professional development, and interagency collaboration. SDE and BRS initiated statewide strategic planning with agencies, school districts, families and other stakeholders.

Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State Department of Education (SDE) includes the following:

- a) A Transition Coordinator position is co-funded to provide one-on-one meetings between students, VR counselors, secondary staff, and families. This coordinator also attends group meetings, transition fairs and trainings including Community of Practice (COP) and Education Transition Liaison meetings. She provides consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services.
- b) BRS and SDE jointly collaborate with school liaisons and secondary staff, students and families.
- c) The VR counselors assigned to provide pre-employment transition services will spend 100% of their time delivering these services; 100% of their salaries will be committed as well.
- d) Procedures for outreach will be identified and implemented through a comprehensive marketing and communication plan. The primary focus will be on marketing and promoting BRS pre-employment transition services to help implement WIOA changes in the VR program. This statewide approach will communicate a consistent VR message.

(e) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations.

Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.

BRS has partnership agreements with several Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP); we procure CRP services through Purchase of Service (POS) contracts.

Through a POS contract with the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS), consumers who are 18 or older **and** are eligible for Social Security Benefits receive Individualized Financial Capability Coaching to improve their knowledge of finances.

(f) Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services.

Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

The bureau provides supported employment and extended services to consumers with significant disabilities, as appropriate. Bureau counselors work with each individual consumer to identify necessary services. In the process of developing an Individual Plan for Employment, the counselor and consumer make decisions about the need for supported employment or extended services. When the services are deemed necessary, the counselor and consumer identify a source of long-term funding and meet with a representative case manager, if appropriate. Once long-term supports are obtained, the plan can be executed. Supported employment and extended services are provided in partnership with our statewide network of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP). These arrangements are based on fee-for-service contracts. We use a series of strategies to accomplish the goals of supported or extended employment, including the following:

- The statewide Ongoing Employment Supports Committee is a resource for identifying supported employment funding opportunities on a case by case basis;
- Cooperative agreements with CRPs, One-Stop Centers and Independent Living Centers (ILCs) allow for additional employment supports through the Ticket to Work program; and
- The Interagency Employment Practice Improvement Collaborative for staff in BRS, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), and CRPs is designed to increase successful employment outcomes to an underserved target population.

(g) Coordination with Employers

Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR Services and Transition Services.

(1) VR Services

VR Services: BRS employs a Business Services Unit, Connect-Ability (CA) Staffing Employment Consultants, which is responsible for employer outreach efforts across Connecticut. The CA Staffing Employment Consultants build relationships with employers to identify their workforce development needs. Through these mutually beneficial relationships, CA Staffing offers business services such as disability awareness trainings, candidate pre-screening, Working Interviews, On-the-Job Trainings and Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs. In turn, the CA Staffing Employment Consultants obtain real-time labor market information that is shared with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and

participants of the vocational rehabilitation program as part of their career path exploration and decision making process. This dual-customer approach allows BRS to prepare VR consumers for long-term, sustained employment in a constantly evolving labor market.

(2) Transition Services, including pre-employment transition services, for student and youth with disabilities

Transition Services: BRS will procure transition services for students with disabilities that include placement with employers to participate in work-based learning experiences and work place readiness training, as defined in WIOA. The scope of services will include social skill development, independent living, and instruction in self-advocacy, peer mentoring and assistive technology. Upon graduation, Youth will benefit from transition services to prepare for, seek and maintain employment and secure supports needed to be successful.

(h) Interagency Cooperation

Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:

- (1) The State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act;**
- (2) The State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and**
- (3) The State agency responsible for providing mental health services.**

The State Medicaid plan under Title XIX of the Social Security Act is a program operated by the Department of Social Services (DSS). For over 20 years until 2014, BRS functioned as a Designated State Unit with DSS serving as its Designated State Agency. As a result of this long-term relationship, BRS has a close working relationship with DSS programs such as TANF, the Medicaid Buy-In, and Money Follows the Person. We offer technical assistance through our Vocational Rehabilitation and Benefits Counseling programs. BRS intends to work with DSS to develop an agreement that formalizes these referral and service processes.

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) MOU enables coordinated vocational employment services for people with intellectual disabilities to minimize overlap of resources.

The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) MOU enables BRS to staff counselors at Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA) locations.

The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) MOA enables BRS to partially fund a shared position to improve service delivery and collaboration for consumers of both programs.

(i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

(1) Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

- (A) **Qualified Personnel Needs.** Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:
- (i) The number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
 - (ii) The number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and
 - (iii) projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

BRS maintains a computerized record system for personnel needs, resources, and training. In addition to this information, the bureau annually uses a caseload management program called System 7 and results of ongoing needs assessments to analyze personnel needs.

BRS assisted 8,672 consumers in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015. With 77 VR counselors, the ratio of VR counselors to all consumers is 1:113; the ratio of VR supervisors to consumers is 1:964. The ratio of all staff to consumers is 1:65. Of the 8,672 total annual consumers, 3,002 developed an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Based on the same number of VR counselors, the ratio of staff to all consumers with an IPE is 1:39; VR supervisors to consumers with an IPE is 1:334; and all staff to consumers with an IPE is 1:22.

The current and future personnel needs by personnel category are noted in the following chart:

Personnel Category	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
Support (Administrative Assistant, Fiscal, Secretary)	34	2	6
Central Office Consultants	11	0	4
District Directors	3	1	1
Managers	3	0	0
VR Supervisors	9	0	2
VR Counselors	88	11	25

(B) Personnel Development

Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

- (i) A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;
- (ii) The number of students enrolled at each of those institution, broken down by type of program; and
- (iii) The number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

We analyze the graduate information from the regional Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE)-accredited universities to find schools that offer required courses or graduate degrees in rehabilitation counseling. We also check with local CORE schools for the availability of distance learning opportunities for the required CSPD courses.

In the state of Connecticut, there is one CORE-accredited institution of higher education that is preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals: Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). All rehabilitation counseling graduates from this college will be eligible to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) exam. Currently, there are 91 students enrolled in the CCSU program. There are 11 RSA scholars, with six expected to graduate. Last year, there were 25 graduates from the CCSU program.

(2) Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

BRS sends announcements for Counselor positions to all CORE-accredited institutions of higher education that train VR Counselors in the United States. We have initiated contacts with all CORE-accredited universities so that we can continue to find well-qualified staff for the vacancies we anticipate in the future. In addition to the Connecticut-based CORE institution listed above, we are in close contact with the regional institutions from which we have traditionally found Counselor applicants (Assumption and Springfield Colleges in MA, and Salve Regina in RI); we have staff that serve on advisory boards or teach at these institutions.

The bureau has recruited qualified staff representative of the population of Connecticut: the 32% diversity of our staff exceeds the 22% diversity of our state. We have recruited 11% of our staff from individuals that have disabilities. Our primary challenge has been finding Master's level counselors who are proficient with Spanish or American Sign Language (ASL). We will continue the following steps to ensure there is a sufficient pool of qualified counselors for future openings:

- Increase our on-campus college recruitments;
- Increase presentations to high school students. Inner-city high schools with increased percentages of minority students will be targeted to generate interest in rehabilitation counseling as a vocation;
- Increase the number of consumers we help to go into the rehabilitation counseling profession; and
- Increase recruitment, including media that serve diverse populations, and continue online nationwide recruitment.

In Connecticut, there are several factors that ensure retention of staff. The majority of staff leaves because of retirement or choosing to stay home with children rather than leaving for another position. BRS attributes the reasons for retention success as follows:

- BRS recruits staff that is committed to the importance of VR work;
- In-service training is available to staff at all levels;
- Staff may give input into decisions that affect the way they work; and
- Staff can participate in ongoing committees: Staff Training, Regional Training, Community Rehabilitation Providers, Transition, Autism Spectrum, and the BRS Annual Meeting.

The committees ensure that staff have input into the work of the bureau. The committees also give staff opportunities for leadership experiences that will help them prepare for other positions in BRS.

BRS offers staff an opportunity to create Individual Staff Development Plans (ISDP) to identify areas of an employee's current job that need further development, areas that could be developed to prepare for a future job in the agency, and training needed for either. ISDPs encourage staff to pursue areas of their strength and interest. This activity helps to identify staff training needs and prepares staff for growth needed to meet future succession challenges.

(3) Personnel Standards

Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) and to ensure that designated state unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared.

- (A) Standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or – recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and
- (B) The establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

The current requirements for CSPD are based on the national standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. The National Standard is determined by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC). BRS hires counselors that meet the following:

1. Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling from a CORE-accredited institution; or
2. Master's and current Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) certification; or

3. Master's in Counseling with one integrated or two separate graduate level courses with the primary focus on the Theories and Techniques of Counseling course (-s) as part of the required curriculum; or
4. Master's, Specialist, or Doctoral degree in one of 13 qualifying majors (as specified by CRCC) granted from a college or university accredited by a recognized regional accrediting body at the time the degree was conferred.

BRS will pay for and require the following graduate courses for new counselors in permanent positions with a Master's in Counseling as described in 3 or 4 above. The number of additional required courses will depend on the previous education of the new employee as well as total months of vocational rehabilitation counseling experience. The bureau's definition of education, course curriculum, and experience is based on current standards for the national Certified Rehabilitation Counselor certification:

- 60 months of vocational counseling experience accepted by the credentialing committee - no additional courses are required. CSPD requirements are met.
- Individuals with less than 60 months of vocational counseling experience will be required to take up to nine additional courses, based on a review of the graduate transcript. These specific required courses are determined by CRCC as Theories of Counseling, Techniques of Counseling, Foundations of Rehabilitation Counseling, Assessment, Occupational Information or Job Placement, Medical Aspects of Disability, Psychosocial Aspects of Disability, Multicultural Issues, and Case Management and Rehabilitation Services.

Even though BRS bases its educational standards for VR Counselors on the national standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, it does not require counselors to have CRC certification. However, applicants with a CORE-accredited rehabilitation Master's degree should be able to sit for the CRC exam.

BRS employees interested in CRC certification are encouraged to contact the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification at the following website: <http://www.crc certification.com/> for more specific information on their credentials and experience. BRS does not guarantee that the above criteria will entitle a counselor to sit for the CRC exam. The bureau provides training at no cost, and offers Continuing Education Units (CEU's), which will count toward the ongoing training requirements by CRC.

In addition to education requirements, BRS encourages staff to pursue certification in their field. The bureau embraces the CSPD process to ensure a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities; continuous organizational development, and, continuous improvement of the competencies of all staff.

BRS also seeks continuous improvements in service delivery, the continuation of a professional level VR staff that can consistently achieve quality employment outcomes as specified in the Rehabilitation Act and promised in the Americans with Disabilities Act. In addition, we continually seek ways to meet the needs of our consumers and deliver a complete array of services based on the goals of employment, community participation, and informed consumer choice. The bureau has hired a qualified, diverse, flexible and progressive rehabilitation staff to serve our current and future consumers. BRS strives

toward the continuous development of desired consumer outcomes: sustained jobs, jobs with future growth, and jobs with sufficient earnings.

(4) Staff Development

Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section 101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training.

- (A) A system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and
- (B) Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.

BRS systematically provides adequate and ongoing training to staff. In-service training addresses assessment, vocational counseling, and job placement. All staff development activities support the bureau's mission to increase the quality of services and the number and quality of employment outcomes for people with disabilities. In-service training is available to all staff.

The bureau bases its plan for staff development on a multi-faceted comprehensive needs survey. BRS uses all available information for ongoing analysis of training needs including the following:

- Public Meetings (most recent data);
- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment results;
- Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) 107 Review;
- Key training personnel collaboration with TACE (Technical Assistance and Continuing Education), Region 1 staff;
- Management reports; and
- Manager, district director, consultant, and supervisor feedback.

In addition to ensuring that staff meets CSPD requirements, BRS provides Foundations of CT VR, a year-long series of in-service training that is mandatory for new staff and available for staff that need refresher training. This includes a broad array of topics pertaining to VR such as: core BRS policies and practices, trainings on the specific populations, independent living, transition, and community rehabilitation services. A variety of training methods are utilized to assure that training activities are diverse enough to address individual learning styles.

Training is provided on assistive technology. BRS helped create and is a member of the NEAT (New England Assistive Technology) Center at Oak Hill. The Center is the largest assistive technology (AT) center in Connecticut where one can try AT devices for personal use, observe AT device demonstrations, donate or buy used equipment that is refurbished and recycled, obtain loans of AT devices and receive training on the latest adaptive equipment.

The Connecticut Tech Act Project director provides training and consultation for BRS staff. Other in-service trainings on specific disability populations contain information on technological solutions for consumers.

BRS continually analyzes all consumer data to identify areas where it needs to increase training or vary approaches. Acquired updated information and research is disseminated to all BRS staff by Central Office staff.

(5) Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

Describe how the designated State Unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking-ability.

BRS addresses individual communication needs of applicants for, and recipients of, vocational rehabilitation through the services of others able to communicate in alternate languages, appropriate modes, or in native languages. Approximately 10% of the current staff is bilingual in English and Spanish. The bureau employs staff who speak other languages as well as staff who use both American Sign Language (ASL) and English. The BRS website publishes all languages that staff speaks in all three regions. The list below indicates the languages spoken by current staff and the regions in which they work:

- American Sign Language (ASL) – Northern, Southern, Western
- French – Northern
- French Italian – Southern
- Polish – Northern
- Portuguese – Northern
- Spanish – Northern, Southern, Western

BRS can also hire interpreters in most languages and can access interpreter services over the phone for all languages.

Each district has Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD) on staff to work with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. These counselors are equipped with videophones. The bureau hires full-time Interpreter Assistants for its RCDs who are in need of this accommodation. BRS also contracts interpreter services through the DORS Interpreting Unit and LifeBridge Community Services.

The bureau does not serve many consumers who use Braille since there is a public Vocational Rehabilitation program through the Connecticut Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) that serves the majority of consumers who have visual disabilities. When needed, BRS can provide Braille materials for consumers or staff. The bureau's goal is to provide any communication support necessary for staff or consumers with disabilities.

(6) Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Act.

BRS co-funds an Education Consultant position with the Connecticut State Department of Education's Bureau of Special Education who has been active in the Department of Education's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Council. The bureau routinely plans training with input from the Consultant in the co-funded position. This Consultant provides annual training for all bureau professional staff on Transition and other provisions of the IDEA. The Consultant also meets with the management team of BRS semi-annually to review current collaborative training and other provisions of the IDEA. This collaboration allows for coordination of the bureau's human resource plan and personnel development under the IDEA.

(j) Statewide Assessment

- (1) Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the VR services needs of those:
 - (A) with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
 - (B) who are minorities;
 - (C) who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;
 - (D) who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and
 - (E) who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services.
- (2) Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and
- (3) Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

In 2013, BRS completed a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) that examined the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, who are minorities, who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program and who are served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system. The CSNA also assessed the need to improve community rehabilitation programs within the state. To complete the CSNA, community rehabilitation providers (CRPs), BRS counselors, consumers and key informants were surveyed. BRS also surveyed staff in 2013 to examine cultural competence as it relates to service delivery to minority consumers as an unserved/underserved population. In addition, relevant findings from the 2011 Medicaid Infrastructure Grant Needs Assessment including an employer survey were also reviewed.

The results of this review led to the following recommendations:

- Increase system efficiency and effectiveness;
- Increase communication and education about the nature and availability of vocational rehabilitation services;
- Focus attention on underserved consumers with hearing disabilities or autism;
- Improve cultural competency among BRS counselors and CRPs;
- Develop more effective relationships with employers; and
- Identify sources to overcome transportation barriers.

In 2015, the SRC and BRS collaborated to conduct a small survey to assess consumer satisfaction with job search services VR recipients had received during the year. As a result of this survey, the SRC recommends that BRS strengthen communication between counselors and consumers, especially when consumer cases are being transferred to another counselor. It also recommends that BRS increase engagement with businesses to increase hiring of VR consumers.

While BRS has accomplished great strides in delivering VR services effectively, the recommendations identified in these assessments offer additional goals that support the VR program as it continues helping individuals with disabilities achieve optimal employment outcomes.

There are several areas of need to improve CRP services:

- Capacity to serve underserved populations;
- Quality of CRP staff; and
- Quality of service delivery.

BRS continually seeks CRP agencies that are able to meet the demand of serving the underserved populations, specifically Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Spanish speaking individuals. In the past, several attempts were made to encourage agencies to hire staff that is qualified to serve these individuals. The bureau created a rate differential and offered technical assistance to CRPs who wanted to expand services to these populations. Although a small number of agencies utilized these incentives, the attempt did not increase enough to meet the bureau's needs.

Additionally, the CRP agencies continue to be challenged with hiring and retaining experienced staff to perform the core services. The bureau has put substantial emphasis on training opportunities for CRPs to help them and to strengthen the relationship with the VR counselors and the CRP staff.

BRS is currently focusing on improving its ability to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for transition students within the 90-day deadline set by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). WIOA has established new requirements for transition services. BRS has assessed and determined the following needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services which include coordination with transition services under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):

- (1) Continue to focus on decreasing the time in which IPEs are developed for transition students.
- (2) Improve post-secondary school outcomes for students with disabilities ages 16-21.
- (3) Maintain a Memorandum of Agreement that enables joint funding for SDE/BRS consultant position to coordinate transition services as outlined under IDEA.
- (4) Design and implement a pre-employment transition service delivery model to meet the WIOA requirements.
- (5) Educate community rehabilitation providers and school systems regarding pre-employment transition services.
- (6) Strengthen partnerships with education stakeholders.
- (7) Improve outreach to students, their families and school systems.
- (8) Update and expand website resources and information.

(k) Annual Estimates

Describe:

1. The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services.
2. The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under
The VR Program;
The Supported Employment Program; and
each priority category, if under an order of selection.
3. The number of individuals who are eligible for VR services, but are not receiving such services due to an order of selection; and
4. The cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.

According to the most recent US Census Bureau American Community Survey, Connecticut had 3,526,628 residents who were non-institutionalized in 2013. There were 2,226,234 persons between 18-64 years of age. 8.2% or 182,889 of these individuals had a disability (+/- 0.3 margin of error). Data from the 2013 Census also shows that Connecticut had 350,537 non-institutionalized persons with disabilities ages 16 and over, and of that number 24.5% were employed. The remaining 75.5% were unemployed.

These statistics indicate that a considerable number of persons with disabilities in the State of Connecticut are not working. A measurable number of these individuals may be transition-aged youth. In addition, a portion of 24.5% of persons with disabilities who are employed may be underemployed. Some of these individuals may also require services to attain or retain employment consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. BRS is not currently in an Order of Selection. Potentially, the vocational rehabilitation program would be available to all consumers with disabilities.

These statistics make it difficult, if not impossible, to accurately estimate the number of potentially eligible consumers of VR services. That number is many times more than BRS has historically served or has the resources to serve.

State Estimate of the Number of Individuals to be Served Under this Plan

For Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015, BRS has served 5,443 eligible consumers in Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act. This is a 12.6% increase from FFY 2014, when 4,834 consumers received services in IPEs under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

BRS has remained committed to the ongoing recruitment, retention, and development of its counseling staff with qualified professionals. In FFY 2013 and 2014, BRS experienced an unexpected increase of short-term vacancies that directly impacted its ability to serve consumers. In 2014 the total number of consumers served was down 3.1% from FFY 2013. During FFY 2015 BRS enjoyed a somewhat healthier staffing pattern despite some continued attrition and short-term leaves. This improvement in staffing along with the agency's focus on training and development has resulted in increased caseload sizes as well as an overall increased capacity to serve consumers in Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs).

BRS has also been engaged in a statewide effort to improve the timeliness of plan development for its transition-aged youth. This has included training, guidance, increased monitoring, as well as a quality assurance review process for transition cases. With these efforts, the bureau has realized improvements in the number of transition plans written as well as a reduction in the timeframes for plan development. For FFY 2015, BRS was able to write 70% of plans for transition-age youth in three months or less.

As BRS begins to implement new policies and procedures related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) legislation, it is anticipated that counseling staff will experience increased referrals of Pre-Employment Transition Service (PETS) consumers, transition-age youth, and consumers from our partner programs. Based on these projected increases, the bureau expects to serve 5,944 eligible consumers in Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act in FFY 2017; an increase of 9% above FFY 2015.

Supported Employment

During FFY 2014, BRS purchased services for 142 consumers eligible for Supported Employment funding under Title VI-B of the Rehabilitation Act, utilizing \$301,706. It was projected that BRS would serve 84 consumers with Title VI-B funds with an estimated expenditure of \$204,980. The significant increase from projections was the result of the agency’s continued focus on proper identification of supported employment cases and a commitment to properly expend funding.

In FFY 2015, BRS has purchased services for 136 individuals, expending \$278,551 in Title VI-B funds. These numbers are consistent with FFY 2014 performance. In combination with the 5,443 individuals who received services under Title I, BRS served a total of 5,579 individuals in FFY 2015.

For FFY 2017, the bureau anticipates that 150 individuals could potentially receive services funded under Title VI-B. In combination with the 5,944 individuals projected to receive services under Title I, the total number of individuals who could be served in IPE’s during FFY 2017 is 6,094.

Costs of Services

Total Title I purchase of services (POS) costs for all eligible consumers in FFY 2015 was \$14 million. This figure represents a \$2.2M increase over FFY 2014 expenditures. The bureau believes that two key contributing factors exist. First, BRS saw significant increases with the number of consumers applying for services, going into Individualized Employment Plans (IPEs), and receiving paid services in FFY 2015. Secondly, a significant number of transition-aged youth were funded to participate in a Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). The utilization of the SYEP was expanded to allow increased access with emphasis on Pre-Employment Transition (PET) consumers.

Upon examining expenditure trends in POS for non-Pre-Employment Transition consumers determined to be Priority 1 and Priority 2, as well as allowing for a potentially modest expansion of costs in providing services for individuals of Priority 3 status, BRS projects to expend approximately \$11.5 million in FFY 2017 on this group of consumers. In addition, BRS will expend a minimum of \$2.5 million purchasing Pre-Employment Transition Services. Thus the total POS projection for FFY 2017 is \$14 million.

With respect to the 150 consumers projected to receive services under Title VI-B during FFY 2017, the bureau forecasts an expenditure of \$269,167 in Supported Employment funding.

Category	Title I or Title VI	Estimated Funds	Estimated Number to be Served	Average Cost of Services
All Eligible Consumers	Title I	\$14,000,000	5,944	\$2,355
Most Significant	Title VI	\$269,167	150	\$1,794
				—

				—
Totals		\$14,269,167	6,094	\$2,342

(I) State Goals and Priorities

The designated State unit must:

- (1) Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.
- (2) Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.
- (3) Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:
 - (A) the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;
 - (B) the State’s performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and
 - (C) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

Goals and Priorities

The bureau, in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), conducted a comprehensive assessment of the rehabilitation needs of people with disabilities and identified four major goal areas. These goals and priorities will be used to carry out the Supported Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation programs. The SRC jointly agrees with BRS on these goals and priorities for the coming year.

Each of the goal areas contains a set of priority areas that the bureau could address in the coming year. We cannot address every issue identified as a need, but attempted to build goals broad enough to address the major themes. Four priority areas were chosen based on their frequency of occurrence in the assessment. One additional goal was developed to address implementation of WIOA.

Goal 1: To implement the provisions of WIOA specific to the VR program.

Priority areas:

- Pre-employment transition services
- Employer services
- Service delivery
- Performance accountability measures
- Subminimum wage

Goal 2: To improve the quality of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities.

Priority areas:

- Customer service and provision of information
- Ongoing skill development
- Use of social media
- Provision of information on resources, labor market information and training/education programs

Goal 3: To increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, particularly those individuals from unserved or underserved populations.

Priority areas:

- Individuals from minority backgrounds
- Young adults with disabilities
- Individuals with psychiatric disability
- Individuals with autism spectrum disorders

Goal 4: To increase access to services for all individuals with disabilities.

Priority areas:

- Services for individuals who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- Services for individuals whose primary language is Spanish
- Cultural competencies for staff

Goal 5: To create effective partnerships designed to advance employment for Connecticut citizens with disabilities.

Priority areas:

- Businesses
- Community Rehabilitation Providers
- State agencies with a specific emphasis on core WIOA partners

These broad goals are intended to be five-year goals, with the priority areas being flexible enough to change from year to year if necessary.

(m) Order of Selection

Describe:

- (1) The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services.
- (2) The justification for the order.
- (3) The service and outcome goals.
- (4) The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
- (5) How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and
- (6) If the designated State unit has elected to serve eligible individuals, regardless of any established order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

BRS is not currently in an Order of Selection.

(n) Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds

(1) State's goals and priorities for funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.

BRS will continue to use supported employment Title VI, Part B funds to allow maximum options in providing services to meet individual consumer needs. The bureau will target service to those persons who are presently not served or are underserved, and who:

- Are individuals with the most significant disabilities and who have previously been unable to maintain competitive employment due to the severity of their disabilities;
- Are in need of ongoing support for the duration of their employment; and
- Will have extended support services available beyond BRS time-limited services.

(2) Describe the activities to be conducted, with funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities, including :

- (A) the provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and
- (B) how the State will leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.

BRS maintains that given the proper supports, the majority of persons with disabilities, including those individuals with the most significant disabilities, are capable of maintaining competitive employment. Supported employment services are available to individuals with the most significant disabilities who have been unable to maintain competitive employment because of the severity of their disabilities. The goal is to assist these individuals to achieve employment in the most integrated setting possible. Services will be provided on an individual case basis with emphasis on methods that provide maximum integration and consumer-informed choice. Therefore, BRS will continue to focus on placing consumers in individual placements with maximum integration.

The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 Supported Employment definition emphasizes “competitive work in an integrated employment setting for persons with the most severe disabilities for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred or for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability and who, because of the severity of the disability, need intensive support services or extended services in order to perform such work, inclusive of transitional employment for persons with the most severe disabilities due to mental illness.”

The new WIOA changes the way Supported Employment and Extended services will be delivered:

Supported Employment

- Extension of SE services timeframe from 18 to 24 months
- The 50% of SE funds applies to all Youth, which includes Pre-employment Training Services (PETS).

Extended Services

- Services can be provided for a period of up to/but not to exceed four years to youth with the most significant disabilities expending supported employment Title VI funds.

- Prior to WIOA, these services not previously permitted for youth with disabilities under VR program or Supported Employment program.

For Supported Employment services, BRS will provide statewide training for all staff to support and empower counselors in making a shift towards more efficient plan development; in particular moving students with disabilities to plan (VR) while still exploring the potential need for Ongoing Supports. As the need for SE is established and funding identified for ongoing support, VR plans can be amended to Supported Employment Plans. Utilization of short term plans as a means towards assuring better opportunities for transitioning youth who are expected to be in our system for longer periods of time

For Transition to Extended Services, BRS will work with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and our other partners to transition consumers from Title VI, Part B funding to the identified provider of the ongoing, long-term support funding as soon as the funding is available and transition is appropriate. Use of Title VI, Part B funds will vary, based on the needs of the individual consumer, but will generally not exceed 24 months in length.

Transition to Extended Services

As with all bureau services, Supported Employment is designed and provided based on the individual needs of the consumer. BRS will work with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and our other partners to transition consumers from Title VI, Part B funding to the identified provider of the ongoing, long-term support funding as soon as the funding is available and transition is appropriate. Use of Title VI, Part B funds will vary, based on the needs of the individual consumer, but will generally not exceed 24 months in length.

Coordination and Collaboration

BRS oversees one of the three state-funded long-term supports programs. The bureau is engaged in facilitating systemic changes in how supported employment services are delivered in the community. The bureau works with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and other partners to transition consumers from the Title VI, Part B funding to an appropriate ongoing employment support program. These efforts have led to internal and external improvements in our state system and have built a foundation for a strong Supported Employment service program in this state.

(o) State's Strategies

Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA).)

(1) The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.

BRS will use the following objectives to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities:

- Work with WIOA core partners to ensure that individuals with disabilities are effectively supported in the newly designed state employment system.
- Implement its strategic plan for delivering pre-employment transition services.
- Focus on timely progress through each step of the case management process.

- Maintain a dedicated staff resource to manage the agency’s training program and will maintain a separate training line within the agency budget that equals the level of funds available under WIA.
- Continue to use social media to connect job seekers with opportunities to pursue jobs with employers.
- Develop materials on resources, labor market information and training/education programs to post on the BRS and Connect-Ability websites to provide consumers consistent access to information.
- Continue to dedicate a specific unit of VR staff to support employers as dual customers to create more business partnerships and more employment opportunities through direct job placement, the use of On-the-Job (OJT) Trainings and Industry Specific Training and Placement Programs (ISTPPs).
- Participate in cross agency trainings through the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) to strengthen state agency partnerships.
- Continue to develop and disseminated Distance Learning Modules for staff and consumer use.

(2) How a broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process and on a statewide basis.

BRS makes Assistive Technology (AT) available to individuals with disabilities through collaboration with the Connecticut Tech Act Project (Connecticut’s statewide assistive technology program) throughout the rehabilitation process across the state in the following ways:

- VR counselors may solicit the agency’s Assistive Technology Consultant for guidance and assistance to ensure that AT devices and services are considered throughout the consumer’s vocational rehabilitation process as appropriate.
- The AT consultant can conduct comprehensive AT evaluations with consumers and can provide training in the use of newly-acquired AT, as needed.
- Through the Assistive Technology Device Loan Program at BRS, VR consumers may borrow and try out devices to help them make informed decisions about whether the AT device is appropriate and if it will remove or reduce barriers, as expected. The inventory for this program includes a wide range of devices across the AT continuum from low to high tech, across disability categories (i.e.: hearing, vision, mobility, computer access, cognitive, communication, etc.), and across potential work environments.
- VR Counselors and the AT Consultant collaborate with other entities such as school systems, colleges/universities, employers, independent living centers, state Medicaid waiver programs, and insurance plans to facilitate the provision of AT devices and services.
- The AT consultant distributes an electronic newsletter and maintains a Tech Act website to provide information about AT trends for anyone interested in AT.
- The Connecticut Tech Act Project will host a biennial full day AT Conference with a focus on AT for employment, community living and education. The 2016 conference offers 12 to 15 sessions, hands on training with specific devices and up to 30 exhibitors.

(3) The outreach procedures that will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities, as well as those who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.

BRS has targeted a number of ways to better serve minority and unserved/underserved consumers:

- Work with the bureau's Latino Committee to develop new approaches to working with consumers who are Latino. Members of the Latino Committee and representatives the Employment Consultants will attend each other's meetings for ongoing updates and dialogue.
- Produce all new publications in Spanish and pursue options to add required forms on the BRS Intranet for staff use.
- Implement pre-employment transition services.
- Translate distance learning modules into Spanish and American Sign Language.
- Continue to partner with Local Mental Health Authorities and the state Mental Health Department to increase the number of employment outcomes and amount of earnings for individuals with psychiatric disabilities.
- Hold three meetings of the Autism Spectrums Disorder (ASD) Committee to develop more responsive services for individual with autism spectrum disorders. Provide joint staff training for BRS and Department of Developmental Services (DDS) staff on Autism Services.
- Conduct targeted outreach to employers to increase employment outcomes for individuals who are deaf. BRS will continue to disseminate an Interview Preparedness Tip Sheet on Deaf Culture issues to stakeholders as needed.
- Provide opportunities to strengthen cultural competencies for staff.

(4) The methods to be used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life

BRS will use the following methods to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities:

- Align existing VR services with Pre-Employment Transition Services as defined in WIOA 2014.
- Serve students with disabilities ages 16-21 enrolled in high school by providing pre-employment transition services from existing community rehabilitation providers, companies, community agencies, education entities, colleges and universities statewide.
- Assign 10 vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors to school systems statewide to serve students enrolled in high school. Allocate 100% of their time and funding for serving students enrolled in high school.
- Improve partnerships with school systems by providing transition services to students.
- Strengthen partnerships with State Department of Education, local school systems, community providers, higher education entities, other state agencies, and employers.

- Create and disseminate effective marketing and messaging to target school systems, students and their families to educate and inform them about the BRS shift in service delivery to students as outlined in WIOA regulations.
- Continue to strengthen and broaden collaboration resources with employers, two and four year colleges and universities, WDBs/American Job Centers and DOL grant training programs for students, youth and young adults with disabilities.

(5) If applicable, plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the State.

BRS will develop the capacity of Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) to meet the needs of VR consumers in the following ways:

- Continue to conduct annual performance reviews on all CRPs to ensure quality service delivery.
- Meet quarterly with CRPs in each district.
- Provide opportunities for CRPs to meet statewide, both in targeted committee meetings and at an annual forum.
- Participate in the Job Development Leadership Network.
- Continue to disseminate Distance Learning Modules focused on service delivery and fiscal process for CRPs to interact with BRS.
- Increase the number of providers who will serve underserved populations, including Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Monolingual Spanish.
- Explore procurement opportunities for specialized services.

(6) Strategies to improve the performance of the State with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.

BRS will work with the larger workforce investment system to set thresholds for the new WIOA performance accountability measures.

(7) Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

BRS is actively engaged in the implementation of WIOA in Connecticut with representatives on all planning committees. BRS assigned staff to participate on the four distinct planning committees to fully understand the changes WIOA would make and how VR services would be integrated:

- a. Administration/Governance – development and maintenance of the MOU among state partner agencies and a regional MOU template.
- b. Technology, Data, Outcomes – development of a strategy to use existing IT systems to obtain aggregate data on common customers and program outcomes.
- c. Service Design and Delivery – development of strategies and models for the coordinated delivery of effective workforce system services.
- d. Employer Engagement – development of a strategic plan to promote employer engagement in effective industry partnerships.

BRS will review the adequacy of existing Memoranda of Understandings with workforce boards and partners, and continue to attend workforce board meetings. BRS will also continue to seek a representative from the workforce board to serve as a member of the State Rehabilitation Council.

(8) How the agency's strategies will be used to:

- (A) **achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;**
- (B) **support innovation and expansion activities; and**
- (C) **overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State VR Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.**

Along with the strategies mentioned above to address goals and ways to overcome barriers to equitable access to VR services, BRS also anticipates using innovation and expansion (I&E) funds in FFY 2017 to support the State Rehabilitation Council, the State Independent Living Council, and to continue Individualized Financial Capability Coaching, a project to increase financial literacy and capability for people with disabilities. Other proposals will be assessed upon submission and considered based on the alignment with the state's goals and priorities

(p) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals

(1) An evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals described in the approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan for the most recently completed program year were achieved. The evaluation must:

- (A) **Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.**
- (B) **Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.**

Goal 1: To improve the quality of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities.

Priority areas:

1. Customer Service and Provision of Information

- Both the BRS and Connect-Ability websites provide information related to VR services that are updated, as needed. Staff responsible for maintaining these websites anticipate the State of Connecticut will implement a new portal platform scheduled for 2016.
- Response to Consumer Requests – During FFY 2015, BRS responded to more than 600 inquiries for information through the BRS e-mail submissions.

2. Ongoing Skill Development

The bureau was awarded two five-year, in-service training grants covering October 1, 2010 – September 30, 2015. The In-Service Training Project identified two major goals:

- Goal 1: To improve the skills of all BRS staff by providing training and development in vocational rehabilitation service provision, responsiveness to consumers, bureau mission and programs, awareness of state and community resources.

- **Goal II:** To improve recruitment and retention of BRS staff by providing career development and succession planning activities to assist counselors in defining appropriate career paths and to assist the bureau to maximize its resources, while continuing to meet CSPD requirements.

BRS provided Foundations of CT VR, a year-long series of in-service training that was mandatory for new staff and available for staff that desired refresher training. This included a broad array of topics pertaining to VR such as: Foundations of CT VR Training, trainings on specific populations, independent living, transition, and community rehabilitation services. A variety of training methods were utilized to assure that training activities were diverse enough to address individual learning styles.

The Bureau developed an integrated program of training, education, and development activities for staff to gain the necessary skills, knowledge, and experiences to improve the quality of services and the number and quality of employment outcomes for people with disabilities. This training project enhanced counselor knowledge of current VR practices and BRS policy.

Effective October 1, 2015, the Bureau maintains the above practices, and will continue them as long as funding is available. BRS will also maintain a dedicated staff resource to manage the agency’s training program and will maintain a separate training line within the agency budget that equals the level of funds available under WIA.

3. Social Media

Job seekers, employers, advocates and providers use social media to communicate and network. In order to keep pace with technological advancements, BRS added the use of Social Media as a form of communication to help consumers gain access and become familiar with online job information. BRS formed a Social Media Committee that continues to meet regularly to oversee the agency’s social media activities. The committee developed social media policy and guidance that was the basis for staff training. BRS has a presence on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Staff is encouraged to have a presence on these platforms for work-related activity only. Staff may assist consumers in developing a presence on these platforms to access information from BRS and employment information and opportunities. Consumers may be referred to the Department of Labor for LinkedIn training as well.

For federal fiscal year 2015, BRS social media activity reports the following:

- a) Facebook Analytics reports we have 21 followers; this number is not enough to report residual posts from our original posts.
- b) LinkedIn Analytics reports we have 193 “Connections.” BRS also used LinkedIn to post job announcements that garnered 389 views and 50 applicants.
- c) Twitter Analytics reports that we have 133 followers that have enabled BRS to reach 43,992 Twitter users via tweets about the VR program and services, job openings and disability related information.

Goal 2: To increase employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, particularly those individuals from unserved or underserved populations.

Priority areas:

1. Individuals from Minority Backgrounds

BRS initiated a Request for Applications from qualified Community Rehabilitation Providers to procure Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) services in an effort to give youth in high school and young adults out of school an opportunity to have summer work experiences. Particular emphasis in the procurement application was placed on serving young adults who are in the priority areas of underserved populations, including Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Monolingual Spanish speaking, Individuals with Autism and young adults with psychiatric disabilities. The procurements were awarded to agencies that would be able to serve specific geographical areas and took into account the underserved populations in those areas. The results of the procurement produced a small set of CRPs who were able to serve the capacity.

The SYEP provided work experiences to a significant number of young adults, both in school and out of school. These young adults were given the opportunity to be better prepared to gain employment, giving them work related experiences for resume building.

Training: BRS provided the following training to improve employment outcomes for unserved or underserved populations:

- Deaf Culture – different communication methods of persons who are deaf;
- Understanding Team and a Diversified Workforce – communicating appropriately with and about different groups of people;
- Ethics and Multicultural Counseling Competency – cultural issues in counseling; and
- Using the Myers-Briggs and Strong Inventories in VR – using these inventories in career counseling.
- BRS also offered World of Work Inventory that provides tools for staff to use to accommodate consumers who have different levels of English, consumers with hearing loss, consumers who are visually impaired and Spanish-speaking consumers.

As a result of these efforts BRS assisted 565 Individuals from Minority Backgrounds achieve successful employment outcomes. This represents a 66% increase over FFY 2014.

2. Young Adults with Disabilities

BRS has met quarterly with SDE and representatives from the Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) to continue providing current transition information. This group now includes the Department of Developmental Services Education Liaisons and Transition Consultants.

BRS, SDE and the CT Transition Community of Practice (CT COP) have now partnered with the IDEA National Transition Community of Practice. This partnership established a Connecticut presence on the SharedWork website. It also established a core team of stakeholders and initial practice groups that include the BRS Transition Committee and the SDE Transition Task Force. BRS continues to work with the website committee on transition resources for all stakeholders. The CT COP has adopted the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD) Guideposts for Success as a framework for secondary transition activities and information. This is the same framework BRS has used for Transition since 2010.

As a result of these efforts BRS assisted 311 Young Adults with Disabilities achieve successful employment outcomes. This represents a 3% increase over FFY 2014.

3. Individuals with Psychiatric Disability

BRS continues to partner with Local Mental Health Authorities and the state Mental Health agency to increase the number of employment outcomes and amount of earnings for individuals with psychiatric disabilities.

As a result of these efforts BRS assisted 310 Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities achieve successful employment outcomes. This represents a 23% increase over FFY 2014.

4. Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders

BRS held 10 meetings of the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Committee in order to develop more responsive services for individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

As a result of these efforts BRS assisted 100 Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders achieve successful employment outcomes. This represents a 15% increase over FFY 2014.

Goal 3: To increase access to services for all individuals with disabilities.

Priority areas:

1. Services for Individuals who are Deaf

BRS offers additional services, including Hearing Assistive Technology Services (HATS) and HATS Evaluation services, for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. HATS products may be approved for purchase when required for a consumer to maintain employment, comparable devices of lesser cost have been explored, and the products are not available as a reasonable accommodation through their employer. Examples include T Coil Loops and Silhouettes, FM Systems, Amplified or Bluetooth Stethoscopes, Pocket Remotes, Bluetooth accessory adapters, and HATS products produced by hearing aid manufacturers that only work with one's personal hearing aids.

BRS has translated five of 14 distance-learning modules into American Sign Language (ASL), the remaining nine are scheduled for translation over the next two years.

2. Services for individuals whose primary language is Spanish

BRS has translated five of 14 distance learning modules into Spanish, the remaining nine are scheduled for translation over the next two years.

3. Cultural Competencies for Staff

BRS is committed to assisting individuals with the most significant disabilities to achieve competitive employment outcomes. Efforts have been initiated and specialized training has been offered on how to work with underserved target groups (mental health disorder, substance abuse, learning disabilities, Deafness, Autism Spectrum) has been provided, or is scheduled to be provided. Trainings are comprised of both in-person and online modules.

Goal 4: To create effective partnerships designed to advance employment for Connecticut citizens with disabilities.

Priority areas:

1. Businesses

In FFY 2015, BRS negotiated 160 On-the-Job Training (OJTs). BRS also contracted with the following Industry-Specific Training and Placement Programs (ISTPPs):

- Southeastern Employment Services/Lowes Distribution Center

- Community Enterprises/Mohegan Sun
- Community Enterprises/Walgreens Retail Stores
- Ability Beyond/Walgreens Retail Stores
- Ability Beyond/Crowne Plaza
- Community Enterprises/Mystic Aquarium
- Community Enterprises/Home goods Distribution Center
- Kennedy Center/CVS Retail.

From these ISTPP partnerships, 117 individuals participated in training; 66 individuals were hired permanently upon successful completion of the training.

2. Community Rehabilitation Providers

BRS completed the CRP Distance Learning Modules created for staff in CRP agencies to understand the core services that BRS contracts with providers. The first module is a CRP overview, which is also available to the public in the Connect-Ability Website. The following modules are only available to CRP agencies: Assessment Services, Job Placement Services, On-the-Job Training, Job Coaching Services, Interview Preparedness Services and Fiscal Services. These modules are effective ways to increase knowledge about BRS services for the CRPs who traditionally have high staff turnover and lack the capacity to train new employees in a timely manner. BRS has the capability of monitoring agency participation of staff that enrolls in the training. These tools were developed in conjunction with the CRP agencies through the BRS CRP Committee.

As part of the Annual Review Process, each CRP agency reports to BRS on the staff that have taken the DL modules as well as staff who have participated in one of three BRS CRP trainings that are offered throughout the year.

Four new CRPs were developed during this fiscal year.

3. State Agencies

With the implementation of WIOA, BRS has collaborated with the core partners to unify the job services available for consumers seeking employment opportunities.

(2) An evaluation of the extent to which the Supported Employment program goals described in the Supported Employment Supplement for the most recent program year were achieved. The evaluation must:

- (A) **Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.**
- (B) **Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.**

Supported Employment Strategies

Supported Employment goals were achieved using the following strategies:

- VR Supported Employment Foundations Training was expanded to two days for new VR Counselors. Senior VR counselors are also invited to the training to get a refresher on the current SE environment as well as provide technical assistance to the training.
- In addition, a BRS and DMHAS protocol document was developed by both agencies to provide technical assistance on Supported Employment Policy and Procedures for

both agencies. Both agencies participated in a combined training for VR staff, mental health staff, CRP staff on an ongoing basis.

- Collaborative meetings were held quarterly with partners.

Impeding Factors for Achieving Goals and Priorities

- Consistent policies and practices in and between agencies administering Supported Employment programs continue to be a challenge for all stakeholders, including providers.
- Staff turnover is frequent and coordinating collaborative trainings and providing technical assistance is difficult. While this has been a challenging effort, training is still a priority for VR and partner agencies and providers.

(3) The VR program's performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA.

BRS awaits the publishing of the performance accountability thresholds that will be required.

(4) How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized.

I&E funds were used in the following three areas:

1. Individualized Financial Capability Coaching is available to BRS consumers at age 18 who receive Social Security Benefits. Participants receive Benefits Counseling to understand the impact of earnings on benefits and an opportunity to plan for the future using the following topics and tools:

- One-on-one Financial Coaching;
- Personal Financial Education Sessions;
- Work vs Benefits Discussion;
- Goal-Setting Support;
- Help to Create a Working Budget;
- Debt Reduction Tools; and
- How to Make Tax Credits Work.

BRS funds this pilot specifically tailored to meet the needs of individuals receiving Social Security benefits through an award to the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS), a private non-profit agency.

Measures of success will be based on a consumer's improved financial literacy and his/her ability to budget a household, create realistic goals, understand credit scores (and demonstrate actions to maintain or improve them), increase self-sufficiency, obtain employment/increase wages, and go off of SSDI and/or SSI benefits. The number of new checking, savings or equivalent accounts that are opened will also be counted.

2. State Independent Living Council

During fiscal year 2015, the State Independent Living Council (SILC) received \$103,000 in Innovation and Expansion (I&E) funds to support the general operation of the Council. This included salaries for two full-time staff, office rent, supplies, phone and computer services, and SILC meeting expenses such as

transportation, interpreter services, CART, and other accessibility costs. In addition to the administration and operation of the federally mandated SILC, staff is responsible for developing, implementing, and evaluating the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). The I & E funds also supported the development of the Standards of Performance for the CILs and the development of SPIL Goal 2 to expand the capacity and build sustainability for the five CILs.

Much of 2015 was spent in developing the Standards of Performance, with approval and implementation. The overarching aim of Goal 2 is to provide capacity-building and sustainability support to the CILs in order to improve the provision of IL services, pre-employment/employment opportunities for consumers, and services to unserved and underserved consumers and geographic areas. BRS has continued to support the SILC Resource Plan with I&E funding, of \$103,000 in the current SPIL for FFY 2015.

3. State Rehabilitation Council

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) received \$24,350 to support efforts to assist BRS in assessing programs and services provided to vocational rehabilitation consumers. The SRC incurs travel expenses to in-state meetings and sign-language interpreters, when needed. The SRC sends a delegate to attend out-of-state conferences for the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) and the Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). The SRC is an organizational member the NEAT Marketplace, a Connecticut facility that provides training and support with assistive technology devices. It also supports the Connecticut Youth Leadership Project by providing funds to support its summer advocacy training program for youth with disabilities and a scholarship towards post-secondary education for a former participant. In 2015, the SRC also collaborated with BRS to engage the Center for Public Policy and Social Research at the Central Connecticut State University to conduct a consumer satisfaction survey of current and former BRS consumers.

(q) Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

- The quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.
- The timing of transition to extended services.

Program Status

BRS is allocated \$255,000 annually for the Title VI, Part B Funds and expects to expend all of its allocation. The bureau continues to focus on the quality services delivered through collaborations with our state and local community rehabilitation service partners for the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015.

WIOA changes the way Supported Employment and Extended services will be delivered.

Supported Employment services:

- Extension of SE services timeframe from 18 to 24 months; and
- 50% of SE funds apply to all youth, which includes PETS.

Extended Services:

- Services can be provided for a period of up to/but not to exceed 4 years to youth with the most significant disabilities expending supported employment Title VI funds; and

- Prior to WIOA, these services not previously permitted for youth with disabilities under VR program or Supported Employment program.

For Supported Employment services, BRS will provide statewide training for all staff to support and empower counselors in making a shift towards more efficient plan development; in particular moving students with disabilities to plan (VR) while still exploring the potential need for Ongoing Supports.

- As the need for SE is established and funding identified for ongoing support, VR plans can be amended to Supported Employment Plans.
- Utilization of short term plans as a means towards assuring better opportunities for transitioning youth who are expected to be in our system for longer periods of time

For Transition to Extended Services, BRS will work with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and our other partners to transition consumers from Title VI, Part B funding to the identified provider of the ongoing, long-term support funding as soon as the funding is available and transition is appropriate. Use of Title VI, Part B funds will vary, based on the needs of the individual consumer, but will generally not exceed 24 months in length.

Coordination and Collaboration

BRS is engaged in facilitating systemic changes in how supported employment services are delivered in the community. The bureau works with relevant state agencies, private non-profit organizations and other partners to transition consumers from the Title VI, Part B funding to an appropriate ongoing employment support program. The bureau oversees one of the three state-funded long-term supports programs and in SFY 2012 spent approximately \$1 million in serving VR consumers after VR services were completed. These efforts have led to internal and external improvements in our state system and have built a foundation for a strong Supported Employment service program in this state.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

VR CERTIFICATIONS

[NOTE: DRAFT CERTIFICATIONS HAVE BEEN PRODUCED/PROVIDED IN STATE PLAN FOR BESB VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND STATE PLAN SUPPLEMENT FOR STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM.]

State must provide written and signed certifications that: [FROM DORS]

1	The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA, and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act;
2	As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures established by Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for provision of VR services and administration of the VR services portion of Unified or Combined State Plan;
3	As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services agrees to operate

	and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;
4	The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement;
5	The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement.
6	All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.
7	The State Treasurer has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement;
8	The Director, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;
9	The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

VR ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

State Plan must provide assurances that: [FROM DORS]

1	Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2	Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as

	<p>required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan: The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act. (b) The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (Option A or B must be selected): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (A) Is an independent State commission. (B) Has established a State Rehabilitation Council (c) Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act. The non-Federal share, as described in 34 CFR 361.60. (d) The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds, (Yes/No) (e) The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs, (Yes/No) (f) State-wideness and waivers of state-wideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency is requesting or maintaining a waiver of state-wideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified State Plan. (g) The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11), (24)(B), and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. (h) All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act. (i) The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act. (j) The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of Rehabilitation Act. (k) The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities. (l) The submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.
<p>4</p>	<p>Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act. (b) Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of Rehabilitation Act (c) Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No) (d) Comply with all required available comparable services and benefits, determined to be available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act and (e) Comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. (f) Comply with requirements regarding provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act. (g) Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act. (h) Comply with requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual review, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act. (i) Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs
<p>5</p>	<p>Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. (b) The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.
<p>6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Financial Administration: The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act. (b) The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to

	<p>individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>(a) Provision of Supported Employment Services: The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(b) The designated State agency assures that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act ii. An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB)

Input of the State Rehabilitation Council

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program at the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind continues to be a valuable and active contributing partner to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the organization as a whole. Over the course of the past fiscal year, the Council members have participated in many activities on behalf of the Program, as well as continuing their existing responsibilities as identified in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The following information summarizes the recommendations and initiatives of the State Rehabilitation Council and incorporates the Bureau’s response to each item.

SRC Recommendation:

Have the Consumer Satisfaction Survey conducted by an entity experienced in performing consumer-based surveys and statistically analyzing outcome data.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Response:

The Bureau agreed with this recommendation. The SRC commissioned the Center for Public Policy and Social Research (CPPSR) at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) to conduct a consumer satisfaction survey of VR service recipients for fiscal year 2014. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the services that clients received from the Vocational Rehabilitation Program at BESB. Results of the survey found that nine out of ten clients (90%) reported that they would recommend BESB Vocational Rehabilitation Services to a friend. Similar to both 2012 and 2013 survey findings, Rehabilitation and Adaptive Equipment and Low Vision were the two most widely used BESB services. Personal Care Attendant remained the least used service. Four services experienced an increase in mean satisfaction rating, while four saw a decline in rating. Reader Services had the largest mean increase (8.67, up 1.67 in mean rating). Personal Care Attendant Services climbed to its highest

rating in five years (9.0, up 1.0 in mean rating). Higher Education Services set its second-best rating in the history of the survey (8.7, up .9 in mean rating). This figure is only second to the all-time high of 8.86 set in 2003. Small Business Services also increased in ratings (7.14, up .39 in mean rating).

Among the services experiencing a decline in reported satisfaction, Low Vision Services saw the most sizable decrease (7.89, down .9 in mean rating). Transportation Services experienced a notable decline (7.25, down .46 in mean rating), as did Skills Training Services (8.67, down .42). Rehabilitation and Adaptive Equipment Services registered a modest decline (8.60, down .20 in mean rating). Overall satisfaction with BESB services decreased to 7.96, down .48 in mean rating. Ratings on the extent to which services met clients' IPE also saw a decline of .42 in mean rating, coming in at 7.89. Satisfaction with the extent to which services met client expectations dropped to 7.46, down .33 in mean rating. Finally, satisfaction with the extent to which services met the needs of clients decreased to 8.16, down .19 in mean rating.

The completed report was posted on the Bureau's section of the agency website (www.ct.gov/besb).

SRC Recommendation:

Based on the results of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey, implement two measureable strategies for improving on the delivery of services for clients of the Program.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Response:

The Bureau agreed with this recommendation. Based upon the high level of utilization that was identified in the Consumer Satisfaction Survey for Rehabilitation and Adaptive Equipment Services, one strategy for continuous improvement focused on this area. In consultation with the State Rehabilitation Council, it was felt that the Bureau should develop a strategy of assisting clients with the latest smart phone technology by conducting group training sessions for clients on this topic. Two training sessions occurred, one in July on the use of Android devices and the other in August on the use of iPhone devices. Both sessions were held at the Bureau's location in Windsor, with a distance learning option being offered so clients could participate remotely if they desired.

In the category of higher education, the SRC worked to identify challenges experienced by clients of the Bureau who were attending college. Disability Coordinators at the colleges were seen as critical resources for both clients and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to work closely with so that it would be clear to all concerned which entity held particular responsibilities and further to ensure that clients had timely access to the necessary services. To address this, the Bureau met with 15 staff from 13 institutions of higher education in Connecticut and 1 additional staff from a college in New York to provide an overview of the services available from the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

SRC Recommendation:

Include a Vocational Rehabilitation Client Success Story into each meeting of the Council.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Response:

The Bureau agreed with this recommendation and has incorporated this as a standing agenda item for every meeting of the Council. At each quarterly SRC meeting, a current or former recipient of services attends and informs the group about how services enabled them to achieve or maintain employment. In situations where the client is not self-employed or a homemaker, their employer is invited as well to present on their experiences in working with the Bureau to ensure a successful employment outcome. The SRC membership

greatly values this aspect of the meetings, as it affords members the opportunity to hear directly from clients and employers that have benefitted from services.

SRC Recommendation:

Support initiatives that develop leadership qualities in transition-age youth who are blind.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Response:

The Bureau supported this important recommendation. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program as well as the State Rehabilitation Council were cosponsors once again of the Youth Leadership Forum, with 4 clients participating and 2 former client participants returning as counselor mentors. Additionally, BESB was a cosponsor of the Governor's Coalition for Youth with Disabilities Scholarship event, recognizing the high school achievements of 3 students served by the Bureau. BESB further collaborated with Oak Hill to provide a week-long residential leadership development and mentoring camp for transition age youth at Harkness, with 8 clients participating.

SRC Recommendation:

Implement the recommendations resulting from the Section 107 RSA Monitoring process to shorten the timeframe in Bureau policy for the development of Individualized Plans for Employment.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Response:

The Bureau agreed with this recommendation and actively engaged the SRC in reviewing the existing Bureau policy regarding the development of Individualized Plans for Employment after a determination of eligibility is reached. New draft policy language was proposed and subsequent to a public hearing, a new policy was adopted.

SRC Recommendation:

Reinforce the priority for competitive, integrated employment by modifying existing Bureau policy to mandate that employment must be for wages that are at least the State minimum wage but also the customary wage that is paid to individuals who are not disabled, performing the same type of work for the employer.

Bureau Response:

The Bureau agreed with this recommendation. This proposed policy change reflected the priorities of the Bureau as well as the State Rehabilitation Council to move away from placement options where the individual was working toward competitive wages that could potentially never be offered by the employer. With the proposed policy change, a shift to only permitting employment outcomes where the individual was earning the competitive and customary wage ensured that clients would be afforded the same level of earnings offered to their non-disabled coworkers. Subsequent to a public hearing process, this policy was changed.

SRC Recommendation:

Replace SRC members whose terms are expiring with individuals who are actively interested and committed to participating on the SRC.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Response:

The Bureau agreed with this recommendation and sought candidates who were committed to serving and whose background and qualifications would satisfy particular categories for appointment to the SRC. Current

and former recipients of services were also contacted by their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to make them aware of openings on the SRC. All interested candidates were referred to the membership committee of the SRC to initiate the process of contacting each candidate to discuss the role of the SRC and the role of the members. For candidates who then expressed an interest in joining the SRC, the membership committee forwarded their information to the Governor's office for consideration. During the fiscal year, new appointments were made in the categories of Community Advocacy Organization and Recipients of Services. Additionally, those existing members of the SRC who were eligible for a second term of appointment were presented to the Governor's Office for reappointment consideration. The SRC and the Bureau express their appreciation and gratitude to the Governor and his staff for the attentive and timely actions taken to process these appointment and reappointment requests.

Public Comments:

A public comment period was available from December 29, 2015 through February 1, 2016 that included a public hearing on January, 21, 2016. In total, there were 10 public comments submitted. All 10 of the commenters focused on the importance of Orientation and Mobility Instruction. Six commenters specifically noted the importance of Orientation and Mobility Instruction as a component that is necessary for employment. Six commenters indicated that the current ratio of 1 Orientation and Mobility Instructor to 1,016 clients is insufficient and 6 commenters requested that at least one more Orientation and Mobility Instructor position be added. Four commenters mentioned the importance of Orientation and Mobility Instruction for independent living activities and 3 commenters noted the importance of Orientation and Mobility Instruction for children. Five commenters provided comments that referred to there being only 1 Orientation and Mobility Instructor for the entire Bureau. One commenter noted that while Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are important, that Orientation and Mobility Instruction should be a higher priority. One commenter noted that the Orientation and Mobility Instruction that was provided to her met her needs.

In order to promote collaborative and informative discussion, the State Rehabilitation Council and the DORS-BESB Advisory Board scheduled their meetings for February 2, 2016, allowing for the members of both bodies to participate in the other's discussions and to obtain additional information from the Bureau simultaneously.

Bureau staff clarified that the ratio of 1 Orientation and Mobility Instructor position to 1,016 clients only referred to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, as that is the subject matter of the BESB portion of the draft Unified State Plan. The ratio is a formula that takes the total number of clients in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and divides that by the total number of staff in each category. There are 7 Orientation and Mobility Instructors for the Bureau, with 1 assigned to Vocational Rehabilitation, 3 assigned to Children's Services, and 3 assigned to Adult (Independent Living) Services.

Bureau staff further clarified that within the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, the actual caseload of the 1 Orientation and Mobility Instructor averages approximately 190 referred clients, but only 15 to 30 requesting assistance at any one time. The Orientation and Mobility Instructor reported that this caseload size is manageable.

SRC Recommendation:

The SRC recommended that the draft Vocational Rehabilitation section of the Unified State Plan be submitted as drafted, with no changes.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Response:

The Bureau agrees with this recommendation.

Waiver of Statewideness

The bureau provides the full range of services across the entire state and does not utilize a waiver of statewideness.

Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System

The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) is the designated state Vocational Rehabilitation unit for individuals who are blind within the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), which is the designated state agency. The Commissioner on behalf of, and for the benefit of, the Bureau executes cooperative agreements at the designated state agency level.

The Bureau is in a cooperative agreement with the Social Security Administration (SSA) that makes it possible to seek and receive reimbursement for certain costs associated with clients of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program that have achieved earnings at or above substantial gainful levels and have therefore transitioned off of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The process to seek reimbursement requires a combination of cooperative agreements at the state level. Client benefit status verification is obtained through an agreement with the Department of Social Services (DSS). A cooperative agreement with the Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL) makes it possible to review wage records of individuals who are participating in BESB's Vocational Rehabilitation Program to determine if their earnings are above substantial gainful activity (SGA) levels and would therefore qualify the Bureau to request cost reimbursement from SSA. Cost reimbursement would be for the cost of BESB purchased services as well as fees for administrative and tracking costs associated with a client's case. In federal fiscal year 2014 BESB received \$122,689 from SSA under this program.

The Bureau also is in a cooperative agreement with the Native American Vocational Rehabilitation Program in Connecticut. This agreement has been developed to help with both program's efforts to coordinate and provide services to individuals who are mutually served by the programs or who could benefit from these services if they were to apply and meet eligibility criteria. To maximize collaboration, a representative of the Native American Vocational Rehabilitation Program serves as an appointed member of the BESB State Rehabilitation Council, and a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor from BESB represents the Bureau on the Native American Vocational Rehabilitation Council.

The Bureau also has a cooperative agreement with the other Vocational Rehabilitation State Units within the New England Region that allows for the provision of services, such as mobility training for clients of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program who are attending training programs in those states.

For individuals who are deaf and blind, BESB works closely with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) for the coordination of services. Through a cooperative agreement, individuals who are deaf and blind can receive coordinated services from both public vocational rehabilitation programs. Through case conferencing, a determination is made as to which program will assume lead case management responsibilities, with the other program providing support services as needed. For clients who are receiving case management services through BRS, BESB offers vocational consultations, orientation and mobility services, and rehabilitation teaching assistance.

Through the Assistive Technology Act, BESB works closely with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services to provide outreach and referrals of clients who are deaf and blind so that clients who meet the eligibility requirements of the Deafblind Technology Grant can apply for and received specialized adaptive equipment to increase their access to communication.

For clients who are blind and have developmental disabilities, the Bureau coordinates services with the State Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to bring about successful job placements with long-term supports. Each Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor works closely with DDS to establish a strong working relationship and a close collaboration of services with the DDS case manager.

BESB's Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors also coordinate services with the State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) for individuals who are blind and have a mental health diagnosis and/or addiction.

The Bureau also is in a cooperative agreement with the state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) that implements a state law requiring the department to report on a quarterly basis to DMV the names of individuals age 16 and older who have been declared legally blind in each preceding fiscal quarter. The DMV uses this information to notify such individuals that their driver's license is no longer valid.

At the Department level, the agency participates with the Office of the State Comptroller for a Purchase Card program that permits for expedited purchasing of goods and services needed by clients to participate in the rehabilitation progress. The Department also has established a fee for service contract model with community rehabilitation providers across the state that enables BESB to purchase services at consistent pricing levels, making budget forecasting a more consistent and reliable process.

The Bureau has also entered into service agreements with Almada Lodge Times Farm Camp for the provision of transition programs for in-school and out-of- school youth. Programs include mentoring, leadership development, independent living skills trainings, and work experiences as camp counselors.

Coordination with Education Officials

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program at the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind is actively involved in a variety of transition school-to-work initiatives, with extensive collaboration and coordination at the administrative and service delivery levels of the organization.

Through a cooperative agreement with the State Department of Education, the roles and responsibilities of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the public educational system are clearly defined. This includes financial responsibilities as well as coordination of services and staff training. To facilitate this coordination, the Transition School to Work Coordinator from BESB serves on an interagency transition task force and there is an appointed representative from the State Department of Education serving on the State Rehabilitation Council to BESB.

Within the higher education area, the agency has successfully negotiated with the State University System to establish a cooperative agreement that addresses the services available in the university setting for students with disabilities. This cooperative agreement includes the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and describes the responsibilities of the universities as well as the responsibilities of public vocational rehabilitation to ensure that students with disabilities achieve equal access to classroom instruction, internships, and school-sponsored activities.

At the direct service level, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors participate in Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings of clients who are in middle school or high school and assist in the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEP's) for students. The services that are detailed in the IEP of each student are factored into the development of each client's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), which must be developed within ninety (90) days of the determination of eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services, or by the time the client exits high school, whichever comes sooner. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor involvement begins as early as age 14, with referrals to the Program initiated by the Education Consultants of the Bureau's Children's Services Program and Teachers of the Visually Impaired that work directly for school districts. The client is assigned to one of the two Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors that are exclusively dedicated to serving pre-employment transition services eligible clients. Assignments are based on geographic location of the client.

Since BESB maintains a registry of all students who are legally blind or visually impaired within Connecticut, the process for identifying and referring clients from Children's Services to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program is streamlined and efficient. The electronic case management system for the Bureau has a built in tracking system for identifying clients by age range to further facilitate the referral of clients who desire to participate in vocational rehabilitation services. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors work with the students, educators, parents or legal guardians and the Program's Education Projects Coordinator to identify careers of interest, develop career exploration opportunities, work and job shadowing experiences, mentoring activities and leadership development programs.

In addition to serving on the statewide transition taskforce, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program's Educational Projects Coordinator is also an active member of the Board of Directors of the Youth Leadership Project that oversees the Youth Leadership Forum. The forum is a yearly event that teaches students with disabilities leadership and self-advocacy skills.

BESB continues to conduct career exposure camps for high school students who are visually impaired or legally blind. These programs include opportunities to interact with former recipients of vocational rehabilitation services who are successfully employed in a variety of careers. Some of these programs are held on college campuses, where the students gain a firsthand perspective of residential campus life in addition to gaining insight into a variety of careers that former clients are now engaged in.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program staff continue to participate and present information at in-service training programs organized by the Bureau for public school teachers and guidance counselors on issues affecting students who are blind or visually impaired. The Children's Services Program of the Bureau further provides a comprehensive training series every year for school district staff to learn about low vision aids and adaptive technology, braille instruction, expanded core curriculum activities and resources that are available to facilitate the education and transition of students served by BESB.

Through these comprehensive activities, BESB has and will continue to take an active approach to transition school-to-work activities to prepare students for the world of work.

Cooperative Agreements with Private Non-Profit Organizations

The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) uses a wide range of contractual agreements with accompanying fee schedules that have been established by the Department of Rehabilitation

Services (DORS), the designated state agency for BESB as well as the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS). This provides for a statewide comprehensive set of program options and services to choose from. More than 50 non-profit community based rehabilitation programs are available through these contractual agreements for clients to select from. The services that are offered through the community rehabilitation programs in the state include job development, job coaching, and work assessments, among a variety of other training and evaluative services to enable clients to prepare for and enter into employment.

Additional fee agreements have been established with private non-profit service providers in other states where it is identified that these programs offer specific vocational and independent living services for persons who are blind. These agreements include non-profit rehabilitation providers in Louisiana, Colorado, Maryland, Arkansas, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts, which provide work training programs as well as adjustment to blindness training.

In a contractual agreement with the National Federation of the Blind, the NFB Newslines are available for clients to access news, career information and current events. This collaboration includes the National Federation for the Blind of Connecticut, which provides funding to cover a portion of the cost for this service.

When new community rehabilitation providers become known to the Bureau, staff outreach to the provider to learn of the services that are available, and often to follow up with onsite meetings to assess the relevance of the provider's services to the clients served by BESB. Where the new provider has program offerings that could be beneficial, Bureau staff notify the centralized contracting unit for DORS about the program so that contractual arrangements can be further explored. Upon contractual approval, the Bureau is provided with the agreed-upon fee schedule and Bureau staff are notified of the availability of the new program and the available services. BESB staff members arrange to conduct training of staff at the provider's facility on blindness related topics such as orientation and mobility and the use of adaptive technology to ensure that programs and services are safe and accessible.

Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services

The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) has been actively involved in cooperative working relationships with other public and private agencies for many years with regard to supported employment and extended services. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors identify individuals who have a significant disability along with legal blindness who can potentially benefit from long-term supports through supported employment. This process begins as early as middle school and high school for transition-age youth through the Counselor's involvement in the Planning and Placement Team meetings and discussions, but it can also often occur during the adult years of clients in situations where supported employment services may be appropriate and beneficial.

The Bureau utilizes contractual agreements and fee schedules established by the Designated State Agency, the Department of Rehabilitation Services in working with community providers to purchase supported employment services prior to the transition to the provider of extended services. Typically, job coaching is the most frequently purchased service, but work assessments to establish the level of support that may be needed on the job after placement occurs are also utilized.

This Bureau continues to have an active working arrangement with the State of Connecticut, Department of Developmental Services (DDS). This cooperative agreement assists in the coordination

and identification of training providers that have specific expertise when a client with a developmental disability and legal blindness could benefit from supported employment services. This working relationship also involves the utilization of the Department of Developmental Services as a long-term third party provider of funding.

In addition to the collaborative relationship with DDS, BESB has developed a working relationship with the State of Connecticut, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). Through this arrangement, individuals who have a mental health diagnosis, acquired brain injury, or an addiction diagnosis along with legal blindness can access supported employment opportunities, with DMHAS providing the third party funding.

Beyond the collaborative arrangements for third party funding with other state agencies, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program continues to identify and work with a growing number of private Community Rehabilitation Providers throughout the state. Working relationships have been established with providers such as Goodwill Industries of Hartford/Springfield, Mindscape Industries, the Kennedy Center, Marrakech, and C.W. Resources to provide extended services to ensure the long-term stability of job placements within supported employment settings.

Staff from the Bureau participates in meetings and training seminars organized by the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE). This organization links community providers, employers, state agency representatives and other resources together to exchange information on job placement strategies, funding sources and employer job leads. Bureau staff have presented at meetings of this organization on blindness related topics such as adaptive technology so that other providers in attendance would be aware of the options that exist for bringing about a successful job placement when accepting a referral from BESB for a client who is seeking a job placement with supported employment services.

Coordination with Employers

The primary goal of coordinated activities with employers is to bring about long-term partnerships that foster a mutually beneficial relationship for both the employer and the clients served by the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind. All staff with job placement responsibilities underwent training in job development, case management strategies and relationship development strategies through the consulting firm of Employment Management Professionals. Initially launched as a collaborative effort with the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, the Bureau underwent further training in June, 2014 with this company. Additionally, the vocational rehabilitation counseling staff received training in motivational interview techniques to strengthen client engagement in the rehabilitation and job search process.

Under the statewide coordinated efforts of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling Coordinator, the vocational rehabilitation counseling staff utilizes the techniques learned in these training programs to connect employers with job seeking clients. However, a key component of the Employment Management Professionals strategy is to work with employers to develop longer standing relationships that are built on a genuine interest in the work of each employer, their needs and their priorities. This could mean that an actual job opening for a particular client may not come along for some time, but the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is nonetheless a resource the employer can turn to for information, referrals to other service providers, and also to learn about job site accommodations and provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

With the development of these relationships, even when employers may not be immediately hiring, they can offer other valuable services such as informational interviews, job shadowing opportunities and work assessment site hosting. Company tours can further be arranged for clients of the Bureau to learn about a wide variety of careers. This is particularly important to the transition-age youth clients served by the Bureau, who may otherwise have very limited exposure to actual job sites during their junior high and high school years. Employer sites where current or former clients of the Bureau are employed have proven to be particularly beneficial in these situations. The opportunity for mentoring these young clients helps them to learn directly from another individual who is legally blind about careers in many of the occupations that provide solid earnings and long-term stability.

One such example is evident in an initiative launched by the Chair of the Bureau's State Rehabilitation Council. As an employee of a leading employer in the aerospace industry, she successfully coordinated a mentoring event for transition-age students to spend a day at the company, touring the facility, shadowing employees and gaining inspiration by learning how the Council Chair successfully navigated and problem-solved questions regarding work site accommodations, transportation and career development.

Bureau staff strives to act as an employer's placement agency, where the employer will contact the Counselor before placing job advertisements for open recruitment. If there are no clients with the skill set to meet the particular job requirements, Bureau staff can connect the employer with other agencies or share this information at Job Developer Leadership Network (JDLN) meetings.

BESB also coordinates placement services through the National Employment Team (NET). This is a business approach of all 80 publically funded vocational rehabilitation programs working together to nationally coordinate placement services to employers that have a major presence in multiple states. The NET is a valuable resource to develop relationships with the national companies, where access to Human Resources staff at the state level is less readily available. The NET coordinator puts the businesses local human resources representative in contact with Vocational Rehabilitation agency's point of contact. In turn, the local Vocational Rehabilitation agency point of contact and the human resources staff of the company can meet to discuss specific services or recruitment needs at the local branch level. The needed services can vary from providing job candidates for local job openings, or providing in-service training to front line supervisors on disability topics, to offering job retention assistance for workers with disabilities who have requested work site accommodations.

Within the NET, there is an employer database, referred to as the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP), where only job seekers who are receiving services from a public Vocational Rehabilitation agency can access the portal. Employers can search for qualified candidates through this portal as well. This helps the employer recruit pre-screened qualified candidates who have a disability.

Within the provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Bureau has been involved in new initiatives with the other partner programs to engage employers in the process of identifying how the system can best respond to their hiring, training and retention needs. A Business Engagement Partnership Forum was held in May for the purpose of hearing from employers, and to begin to develop a strategy to address their business needs. Working groups were formed to continue this effort with the ongoing involvement of staff across the partner programs.

The Bureau is looking forward to a strong and collaborative approach with the other workforce partners who engage in employer outreach, with a focus on offering employers a seamless and coordinated team approach to job order placing and matching candidates from the partner programs to the needs of the employers.

Interagency Cooperation

The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) has been actively involved in cooperative working relationships with other public agencies for many years with regard to supported employment services, benefits counseling and access to public health care information for clients served by the Bureau.

This Bureau has an active working arrangement with the State of Connecticut, Department of Developmental Services (DDS). This cooperative agreement assists in the coordination and identification of training providers that have specific expertise when a client with a developmental disability and legal blindness could benefit from supported employment services. This working relationship also involves the utilization of the Department of Developmental Services as a long-term third party provider of funding.

In addition to the collaborative relationship with DDS, BESB has developed a working relationship with the State of Connecticut, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). Through this arrangement, individuals who have a mental health diagnosis, acquired brain injury, or an addiction diagnosis along with legal blindness can access supported employment opportunities, with DMHAS providing the third party funding.

Benefits Counselors from the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services are available to assist clients of this Bureau with understanding how employment earnings and public assistance benefits interact so that clients can make informed decisions regarding employment. The Benefits Counselors also explore with clients the many options that are available within the state and federal government programs including how to apply for Medicaid and Medicare, as well as health insurance under the Affordable Care Act.

One additional provision that Connecticut participates in is Money Follows the Person, a Medicaid demonstration grant that assists with the transition from institutionalized living to community living for individuals who are receiving Title XIX. A staff person from BESB has been designated to work with this program that is housed in the Department of Social Services.

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development:

The current composition of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program includes one State Director, one Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, one Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Coordinator, one Quality Control Reviewer, one Education Project Coordinator, eight full-time Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, two Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselors, one Orientation and Mobility Instructor, four Rehabilitation Teachers (two of these staff members are Rehabilitation Technologists), one Administrative Assistant, one Secretary, and three Special Assistants to the Blind.

With this staffing level, the staff to client ratio breaks down as follows:

Administrative Assistant 1/1016
Education Projects Coordinator 1/1016
State Director 1/1016
Secretary 1/1016
Orientation and Mobility Instructor 1/1016
Quality Control Reviewer 1/1016
Rehabilitation Teacher 1/508
Rehabilitation Technologist 1/508
Special Assistant to the Blind 1/339
VR Counselor/Assistant Counselor 1/102
VR Counselor Coordinator 1/1016
VR Supervisor 1/1016

In terms of years of service, the breakdown for staff is as follows:

1– 4 years of service 3/25 or 12 %
5– 9 years of service 5/25 or 20%
10 – 14 years of service 7/25 or 28%
15 – 19 years of service 6/25 or 24%
20—29 years of service 4/25 or 16%

The service delivery to the clients is divided into five regions throughout the state. At least one Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is assigned to each of the five regions. The state is divided in half (East and West) for rehabilitation technology services, with one technologist covering each region. There is currently one Rehabilitation Teacher specializing in independent living skills training and adaptive technology training with screen readers, and one Rehabilitation Teacher specializing in computer training with screen readers and/or magnification software. Each of the Rehabilitation Teachers serves the entire state.

Also divided in half (East and West) are the two Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor caseload assignments for clients whose preferred language is Spanish.

There is one Vocational Counselor Coordinator that covers the entire state and works with the ten VR Counselors. This position is designed to work with the VR Counselors on job development activities and case management.

There is one Orientation and Mobility Instructor covering the entire state. This Instructor explores transportation options with clients who are in need of solutions to participate in training or employment. Additionally, the Instructor also provides assessments and travel training with the use of long white canes.

The service delivery model also includes one Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor who works primarily with college students. This Counselor has established close working relationships with the offices of Disability Services at the institutions of Higher Education. Through this approach, consistent coordination of support services can be achieved. The assignment of a specific Vocational Rehabilitation

Counselor to the college students also ensures consistency and timeliness with the financial aid application process.

The Education Project Coordinator serves as the Program's Transition School-to-Work coordinator, overseeing the statewide mentoring initiative, with efforts in this past year focusing on the development of mentor videos for the Bureau's webpage. The Education Project Coordinator also is responsible for the development and implementation of programs that provide students with opportunities to work through summer employment and internships, as well as providing career exposure experiences through job shadowing, employer tours, and mentor activities.

For fiscal year 2016, plans are in place to dedicate two of the existing Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to work exclusively with caseloads of Pre-Employment Transition-Age students. The service delivery model will have one Counselor covering the Southwestern portion of the State based on the demographic of where many of the students are located. The other Counselor will cover the remaining portion of the State. Dedicating two Counselors to work exclusively with the Pre-Employment Transition-Age students will ensure a strong focus on preparing students for careers and higher education after exiting high school.

Over the next 5 years, the Bureau anticipates there will be vacancies due to retirement and attrition in the categories of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and Special Assistant to the Blind. The demographic of this need is illustrated by the following description, listing the job title, current number of positions within that job title, the current number of vacancies in the job category and the projected need over the next five years.

Job Title-- Total positions--Current vacancies--Projected vacancies over next 5 years:

Administrative Assistant: 1 -- 0 -- 0
Education Projects Coordinator: 1 -- 0 -- 0
State Director: 1 -- 0 -- 0
Office Assistant: 1 -- 0 -- 0
Orientation and Mobility Instructor: 1 -- 0 -- 0
Quality Control Reviewer: 1 -- 0 -- 0
Rehabilitation Teacher: 2 -- 0 -- 0
Rehabilitation Technologist: 2 -- 0 -- 0
Special Assistant to the Blind: 4 -- 1 -- 1
VR Counselor/Assistant Counselor: 10 -- 0 -- 4
VR Counselor Coordinator: 1 -- 0 -- 0
VR Supervisor: 1 -- 0 -- 0

During Fiscal Year 2014, the Program had one vacant position. The vacant position was a Special Assistant to the Blind that became vacant in 2010. The decision was made not to fill the vacant position at this time due to competing funding priorities. The Program acknowledges that it may become more critical to fill this position in the future if the demographic of the field staff shifts beyond the current ratio of four field staff that are legally blind to three Special Assistants to the Blind.

It is projected that within the next five years, the need for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors due to attrition and retirement will be four. It is further anticipated that the Program may expand to add one

additional Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to serve a regional caseload. The new position would be established to offset the reassignment of two current staff to work exclusively with students with disabilities that meet the definition for eligibility to access Pre-Employment Transition Services reserved funding. As the Program implements the provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act associated with the emphasis on serving students with disabilities, the realignment of staffing to serve these individuals beyond what has traditionally occurred prior to the passage of the law becomes more critical. Dedicating specific staff to exclusively serve this client population will address this need.

With the relatively high starting salary for Master's level Rehabilitation Counselors compared to the private rehabilitation sector within the state, it is anticipated that recruitment efforts would again result in a sufficient applicant pool of qualified individuals when a Counselor vacancy occurs or a new position is established. The Program recruits for individuals who meet the highest standard in the state (CRC eligibility) first. The competitive salary offered by this Bureau has resulted in the ability to hire individuals who possess this level of credentialing in most situations. If there are no qualified candidates from those recruitments, then recruitment will be made for a Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor level.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program monitors the number of students enrolled in Masters of Rehabilitation counseling programs at colleges throughout the region by contacting the educational institutions to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of candidates to address future anticipated recruitment needs. In the past year, Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts had 86 students enrolled, with 32 recently graduated. Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, Connecticut had 91 students enrolled with 25 recently graduated. The number of Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling degree candidates is sufficient to address the projected recruitment needs over the next fiscal year.

Plans for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel:

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program remains in contact on an annual basis with all of the institutions of higher education in this region that offer Master's degree programs in Rehabilitation Counseling to ensure that an adequate flow of graduates is anticipated for projected vacancies. When positions are available, recruitment efforts are conducted through job announcements that are placed on the Department of Administrative Services web site, news publications of minority-based organizations, and colleges in the area. The Program also distributes the job vacancy announcements to organizations of and for individuals who are blind within the state, as well as advertising nationally through Rehab Net, which is a list-serve that connects all 80 public vocational rehabilitation agencies. The list-serve for the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) is also utilized to distribute job announcements to ensure the widest possible distribution.

Within the past year, the Bureau has also reached out to Goodwin College to arrange to speak with students in their human services classes at the bachelor's level in an effort to increase awareness of the field of Rehabilitation Counseling, with the goal of encouraging students to consider graduate work in this field. Beyond this outreach activity, the Bureau also worked with Springfield College, Central Connecticut State University and the University of Massachusetts to host graduate level interns at the Bureau for the new fiscal year. Two interns are scheduled to do their field placements within the Vocational Rehabilitation program and the third intern's field placement will be in the Children's Services program during fiscal year 2015.

With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), new opportunities for collaborative training with other partners of the workforce system are emerging within the state. The Bureau will be working in partnership with the State Department of Labor and the State Department of Education to identify training opportunities that Vocational Rehabilitation staff can participate in on labor market projections and career forecasting, employer engagement strategies, and skill requirements for high growth job opportunities in the state. Additionally, the Bureau will work with the One-Stop partners in each of the regions to identify training workshops available to staff from partner programs on topics such as accessing services from training providers, including apprenticeship opportunities and certificates from post- secondary occupational schools.

Personnel Standards:

All staff members working as Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor at the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind meet the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development. These staff members meet these requirements by having a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or a closely related field, as specified by the criteria for certification as a rehabilitation counselor by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC). In addition, the State Director for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program also meets the CRCC standard and holds the credential of Certified Rehabilitation Counselor.

There are two staff members that do not meet the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development requirements of a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation or a closely related field. As specified in Bureau policy, the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, who meets this standard, approves all eligibility decisions, Individualized Plans for Employment, and case closures for these two staff who are both in the job title of Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor.

There is no requirement in the job specification of the Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor series to advance into the Counselor level. However, staff hired into the job title of Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor are encouraged to pursue continuing education to meet the qualifications of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor level. This strategy has proven to be successful. One of the current staff did pursue this option, acquiring a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling through the Region I Continuing Education Grant, and subsequently applied for and was promoted into the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor level position. In the past year, he moved into a higher level position of Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling Coordinator.

The most recently hired Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor is currently participating in the Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling program at Central Connecticut State University. The anticipated date for completion of the program is 2016.

Working with the Department of Labor and the One-Stop Centers and their regional partners, Vocational Rehabilitation staff will be participating in training seminars on the needs of employers within the state, to better prepare staff in working with clients to meet the needs of the employer community. This will include training to learn of the credentials required for careers in demand, the universities and training programs that offer these degrees and credentials, and the adaptive technology considerations that must be taken into account to enable individuals who are blind to access these training curricula and the job tasks.

Staff Development:

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program makes available a full range of training programs offered through public and private entities. Program staff members are encouraged to identify training areas of particular interest for their individualized professional development in addition to the Bureau identifying programmatic training categories for staff to participate in.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors work directly with their supervisor to identify areas for professional growth and development each year. Each employee of the Program receives at least one written evaluation per year, which is consistent with collective bargaining agreements. The Supervisor of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program meets with staff members regularly to assist with any areas of their job performance that could benefit from further development and to provide feedback on best practices that have proven to be effective in service delivery. Technical assistance on policies and procedures is also provided during individualized meetings and during staff meetings. If an employee is found to need additional assistance and training in order to meet the job requirements, then a plan for improvement is developed. This may include the use of weekly reviews, additional written performance evaluations, and increasing the opportunity for the employee to participate in formalized training programs to increase skills and competencies.

Assistive Technology continues to be among the highest training priorities for staff in Vocational Rehabilitation, particularly since adaptive equipment is so often a component of success on the job for clients served by the Program. One of the Rehabilitation Technologists attended a national conference on technology at California State University at Northridge (CSUN). The other Rehabilitation Technologist attended the National Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA) conference. The Rehabilitation Technologists bring back all the information they learned and provide an in-service training to Program staff on the latest technology available to individuals who are blind.

The two Rehabilitation Teachers who provide adaptive technology training to clients took part in trainings on accessible applications and features for the iPhone and Android devices. Several Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors also participated in these training sessions. Additionally, eight staff attended the statewide conference "Achievement Through Technology" with the two Rehabilitation Technologists presenting a workshop session on adaptive technology for people who are blind.

Additionally, online training programs have been utilized on such topics as how to fund adaptive technology, making web pages accessible and JAWS for Windows with Math.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling staff, the Supervisor and the Director all participated in a refresher course that was first delivered in fiscal year 2006 on employment outreach strategies that engage employers in the job development process. Originally delivered as part of a two-state initiative with the Region I Technical Assistance Center and the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, this training taught new approaches to job development through effective long-term relationship building with employers and a technique for time management. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors also attended a training on motivational interviewing strategies to increase the Program's focus on client engagement in services.

Information on best practices in other state vocational rehabilitation programs as well as evidenced based research and practices is disseminated to staff of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to help them remain current with trends and strategies. Most noteworthy are the recent developments with

transition age youth and the programs that have been developed across the country to increase access to leadership development, mentoring and summer employment.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs:

There are two Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselors who are bilingual in English and Spanish, and who work with Spanish-speaking clients throughout the State. Part of their duties includes outreach to community-based organizations to distribute information about services offered by the organization. The Bureau also provides information to clients in large-print, Braille, electronic, and audio formats to ensure that materials are accessible. Bureau staff can also utilize contracted translation services to communicate with clients in other languages. Through the Deaf and Hard of Hearing unit at the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, interpreters for the deaf are available, including tactile interpreters for clients of the Bureau who are deaf and blind and whose preferred mode of communication is through sign language.

Coordination of Personnel Development Under the individuals with Disabilities Education

Improvement Act:

Collaboration through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) occurs on a continual basis through joint training programs and initiatives. Staff members from Vocational Rehabilitation have participated in transition work groups including the Transition Taskforce that is facilitated by staff from the State Department of Education. There is also a Community of Practice group that focuses on best practices and emerging trends in transition services to youth with disabilities. This multi-agency initiative includes representatives from this Bureau as well as the State Department of Education, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Department of Developmental Services and the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services.

With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, there is increased emphasis on providing career development services to youth with disabilities prior to high school completion. The Bureau is developing strategies to address these priorities for eligible and potentially eligible individuals. Training in the components of the new law and how it will be implemented within the Bureau has already begun and will continue into the new fiscal year.

Statewide Assessment

The State Rehabilitation Council to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program for individuals who are blind commissioned the Center for Public Policy and Social Research (CPPSR) at Central Connecticut State University to conduct a comprehensive statewide needs assessment in fiscal year 2015 to assist the Bureau with establishing goals and priorities. The full report as issued by CPPSR appears immediately below. The Council has utilized the findings and recommendations within this document to assist with the development of goals, objectives, strategies and measures for the upcoming state plan.

CPPSR Full Report:

**BUREAU OF EDUCATION AND SERVICES FOR THE BLIND (BESB)
NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

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I. Overview

In accord with the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) is required to conduct a needs assessment of individuals with disabilities living within the state. This needs assessment complies with the evaluative objectives outlined in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) Guide dated November 30, 2009. As noted in the Guide, this analysis is valid for three years. In conducting this analysis, Central Connecticut State University's (CCSU) Center for Public Policy and Social Research (CPPSR) gathered information from consumers, an advisory council, the Internet, and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff.

II. Methodology

In conducting the assessment, The Center for Public Policy and Social Research examined and/or conducted:

- An analysis of population statistics for Connecticut that describe disability and minority status;
- A description of VR participation rates of minority individuals in comparison to individuals in the overall population in Connecticut and to national VR statistics;
- An analysis of VR services to individuals with the most significant disabilities,
- An analysis of Bureau improvements since the previous VR assessment;
- The results of a teleconference focus group discussion held with the Bureau Consumer Advisory Committee (conducted January 2014);
- The results of the consumer satisfaction survey for individuals served during Fiscal Year (FY) 2013;
- Comparative longitudinal data analysis based off of the consumer satisfaction survey from FY 2003-2013;
- The results of one in-depth interview with a Bureau Consumer Advisory Committee member.
- The results of three in-depth interviews with BESB Vocational Rehabilitation counselors (conducted April 2014).

III. Clientele Summary

A. Overview

At the end of fiscal year (FY) 2011, BESB's registry comprised of 10,942 visually impaired individuals (footnote 1). The Bureau's registry for FY 2012 accounted for 10,735 visually impaired individuals, revealing that their clientele decreased by 1.8% (footnote 2). Data for FY 2013 further show a registry increase of approximately 2.7% to 11,034. No reliable state blind population statistics are available at this time. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain whether this recent registry increase indicates growth within the visually impaired community or success on BESB's behalf at identifying more of its potential clientele.

B. Minorities

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 data, predictions based on 2010 Census findings, Connecticut's minority population is slightly less representative than that of the national population. Approximately two-fifths of all Americans (38.9%) self-identified their ethnicity as part of a minority group. Of those individuals who associated with one ethnicity, 16.9% were Hispanic or Latino, 13.1% were African American, 5.1% were Asian, 1.2% were Native American, and 0.2% were Pacific Islander (footnote 3). Slightly off of national statistics, approximately one-third (32.3%) of Connecticut survey respondents identified themselves as a minority (footnote 4). In order of frequency, state minorities are accounted for as follows: 14.2% Hispanic/Latino, 11.2% African American, 4.2% Asian, .5% Native American, and .1% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (footnote 5).

Comparing BESB, state, and national statistics, we find that the Bureau's Vocational Rehabilitation program appears to be successful at engaging Connecticut's visually impaired minority community. Overall, Bureau clientele enrolled in the VR program who self-identify their ethnicity reasonably reflect both the state and national minority population at approximately 34%. Sub-groups are similarly represented. For fiscal year 2012, BESB reported the following of program enrollment: 19% African American, 12% Hispanic/Latino, 2% Asian, and less than 1% Native American/Pacific Islander (footnote 6). As noted in the overview of the Clientele Summary, participation in BESB's Vocational Rehabilitation program has decreased by approximately 1.5% between 2011 and 2013 (footnote 7). Notably, minority enrollment in the program remained steady during this time. This indicates that while the overall registry enrollment has dropped, outreach to minorities with visual disabilities has remained consistent. Currently, there is no reliable data that measures the incidence of blindness in minority communities within Connecticut. For this reason, the Needs Assessment approximates information based on general minority population statistics.

Since the last VR assessment was issued, BESB has taken numerous steps to improve its outreach to the minority community. BESB employs two bilingual counselors and pays for interpreters on an "as needed" basis. BESB also continues outreach to specific minority groups through local meetings and events. Such outreach efforts include attending the Puerto Rican Forum and working with other agencies that offer ESL (English as a Second Language) classes (footnote 8). Given the information, CPPSR concludes that BESB has made successful efforts in reaching out to underserved populations. Towards the end of this report, suggestions to further assist in outreach efforts have been provided.

C. Youth

Reporting practices vary, so it is difficult to compare BESB's success at reaching minority and child populations with other states. For example, many agency websites do not divulge statistics for race, ethnicity, or age. Despite the lack of comparative data, it is possible to assess how BESB is doing within its own state. We conclude that BESB is actively engaging blind youth in the State of Connecticut. In fiscal year 2011, the Bureau's registry accounted for 10,942 blind individuals. Out of that number,

1,074 were children. The 2012 report reveals that 1,123 out of 10,735 individuals on BESB's registry were children. This reflects a 3% increase in their enrollment. While the registry grew 2.7% in FY 2013 (totaling 11,034), the number of children decreased to 1,100 (footnote 9). This represents a drop of less than 1%. The amount of children served since the last Assessment saw a statistically insignificant increase of .09%. This adds a net of three children since the end of fiscal year 2010. While it is difficult to determine the reason behind the fluctuation of children registered with BESB simply by looking at numbers, a possible explanation is that some children entered adulthood.

IV. Vocational Rehabilitation Outcomes

This section compares Connecticut's Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind outcome data with those from other peer agencies. These data were derived from the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) 911 Ad Hoc Query feature. Information is from the most recent RSA reporting (FY 2012). Looking at a variety of metrics, BESB's measured outcomes are very competitive with peer agencies.

Compared to peer agencies with similar grant amounts received for FY 2012, BESB ranked the highest for closing cases based upon favorable employment outcomes (88.8%, footnote 10). Of the 6 peer state agencies included in this particular comparison, Oregon ranked second at 78.13%, Iowa and South Carolina tied for third (77.88%), Arkansas fifth (73.99%), and New Mexico sixth (53.03%). Another metric that can be used to evaluate BESB's VR program is to compare the Bureau's outcome data to peer agencies with similar amounts of individuals served. BESB served 125 new clients in FY 2012. Other agencies serving numbers of clients closest to this figure include Minnesota (159), Oregon (128), Idaho (106), and Iowa (104). BESB reported the highest positive employment outcome percentage in this cohort by over ten percentage points (10.67%, footnote 11). Among peer agencies, as measured by both grant funds received and the number of clients served, Connecticut's Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind leads in positive employment outcomes.

While BESB is highly competitive in most measures presented in the RSA data, one area stands out as being a place to improve the services offered. This comes in observing the average hours per week in which clients are employed. Looking at reported outcomes for agencies that exclusively serve blind populations, the average is 26.48 hours per week worked (footnote 12). BESB sits right at this mean. Using the median, a more precise measure of central tendency given the outlier of Maine (10.33), we find that BESB falls just below the middle point of the data (28.17). The unfortunate fact is that Connecticut has the 39th highest unemployment rate in the country (footnote 13). This undoubtedly contributes to the Bureau's difficulty in locating and obtaining full-time opportunities for their clients. However, when BESB does place VR clients in positions, these individuals make highly competitive salaries. Among all 24 states that isolate the reporting of blind agency data outcomes, BESB is second in the nation with an hourly wage of \$16.24. This figure is \$3.54 above the average for this agency cohort. Washington leads this grouping with an average hourly wage of \$17.03.

The Bureau stands out when examining the average time to case closure with no employment. BESB leaves cases open for an average of 95.30 months, a true outlier. Isolating reported outcomes for agencies exclusively serving the blind population, a cohort of 24 states, the statistical average for this metric 46.72 months. Qualitative data offer some insights as to why BESB's figure is comparatively high. Some clients who enter the VR program are unprepared for employment. For example, some of these individuals are adjusting to life as a newly blinded person. These individuals may not aggressively seek employment for an extended period of time. These cases are typically left open. Further, VR counselors

report an unconditional desire to never give up on a client. These insights are statistically corroborated by BESB's low percentage of cases closed without employment. Looking at the 24 states that isolate data for agencies exclusively serving the blind population, the Bureau has the lowest percentage of cases closed without unemployment (11.2%). Notably, this figure is just shy of 20 percentage points below the average for this cohort (31.18%).

Financial efficiency is extremely important in today's economic climate. We find the Bureau to be extremely efficient with its funds. BESB spent an average of \$5,603 on each client with a positive employment outcome. This measure of efficiency is sixth in the nation among the 24 state cohort referenced above. Looking at this same peer grouping, BESB spends the highest amount of dollars on cases closed with no employment (average of \$14,249.07). This figure is substantially above the mean (\$7,437.268).

Bureau employment outcomes reported to the RSA correspond to customer satisfaction survey results. Central Connecticut State University's Center for Public Policy and Social Research has collected longitudinal data on client attitudes towards services rendered by BESB. The results typically yield a margin of error of +/-5 at the 95% confidence interval. In fiscal year 2013, more than nine out of ten survey respondents (91%) reported that they would recommend BESB to a friend (footnote 14). Since the last time this assessment was conducted, the Bureau reached its all-time high on this valuable measure. The results for fiscal year 2012 revealed that 94% of clients surveyed would recommend BESB to a friend.

Overall, Bureau clients that participated in the survey reported high levels of satisfaction across all services. On average, BESB clients reported higher levels of satisfaction with services compared to 2012. Five services enjoyed an increase in mean satisfaction rating. Only three services experienced a decline, all of which were modest downturns. These findings continue the general positive trend set in 2012. In 2013, Low Vision and Skills Training services, for example, both experienced notable increases in satisfaction from the previous year's survey. The mean satisfaction score for Low Vision Services improved from 7.72 in 2011 to 8.79 in 2013 (footnote 15). Skills Training Services' mean score increase from 7.96 in 2011 to 9.09 in 2013. This represented the highest satisfaction mark out of all of BESB's services in 2013.

V. Focus Group Summary

As part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, the Center for Public Policy and Social Research conducted a focus group with members of the Bureau Consumer Advisory Committee (BCAC). This focus group was conducted within the context of a BCAC teleconference business meeting held in January of 2014. The purpose of this focus group was to understand how BCAC members felt about BESB services, needs that should be addressed in the near future, and how BESB could increase outreach efforts to the unserved and underserved. Given that BESB's Director was involved in the teleconference, Advisory Committee members seeking greater confidentiality were encouraged to call the Principal Investigator at a later point in time. One individual took advantage of this offer. It is worth noting that these qualitative findings cannot be generalized beyond the BCAC membership. Still, they provide valuable insight into how a group of select consumers and agency affiliates view BESB's operations.

The chief concern that emerged from the focus group revolved around the topic of access to technology. Multiple BCAC members talked about the importance of getting technology to older adults. They felt

that the concentration of technology training has been geared towards people who are going into the workforce or are currently employed. An increasing number of older adults are interested in using computers at home. However, these individuals are missing both the adaptive technology and the skill set needed to use that equipment. The Committee stressed that technology is a critical tool for independence. Clients have the ability to receive needed goods and services that are otherwise difficult to obtain. Provided example included online grocery shopping and access to online vendors such as Amazon. One client suggested that there is a large population of older people living alone. Access to online services is particularly important for this age group.

A second concern was the issue of unreturned phone calls. One focus group participant mentioned that certain staff members return phone calls right away, while others do not return their calls. As a result, clients end up calling supervisors. This strategy puts an additional strain on the Bureau's management team. The Director of BESB mentioned that messages left on direct lines cannot be tracked. He can only identify calls that come in via the main switchboard. This means that the Bureau currently has no mechanism to confirm if calls were received and/or returned. CPPSR offers some suggestions to address this issue in section seven of this report.

A third concern is improving outreach to underserved populations. One individual referenced the demographic influence that Connecticut's two casinos have had on the Southwest region of the State. Language barriers may hinder outreach efforts. For example, there is a growing Haitian population in Connecticut that speaks French Creole. Furthermore, one BCAC member highlighted the importance of recognizing cultural barriers. Some cultures tend to deal with disabilities within the family, a concern that was reaffirmed by CCSU in an interview with one of the VR counselors. VR Counselors should be knowledgeable about—and sensitive to—how certain cultures view disability.

Finally, focus group participants expressed a need for a job placement specialist. The group was informed that a Counselor Coordinator was hired in October of 2013. This hire will be responsible for helping people get jobs and needed services. Mr. Richmond, the incumbent, should be instructed to engage federal partners when they have job openings. He should also help clients who have given up on finding employment. Further suggestions about how to best use the Counselor Coordinator are offered at the conclusion of this report.

It is worthy of mention that BCAC members were very complimentary of BESB's services. While not specifically related to VR, one individual praised the Bureau for helping with general daily skills. This client has learned basic organizational skills, cooking skills, and alternate ways to deal with day-to-day tasks. CRIS Radio, a collaborative partner of the Bureau, is thankful that counselors are informing clients about their service. It is estimated that 90% of new applications come from BESB referrals.

VI. VR Staff Interview Summary

In April of 2014, CPPSR conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with three counselors working in BESB's Vocational Rehabilitation division. The VR employees who participated in the interview process made several recommendations. CPPSR is presenting these recommendations in a broad context to help BESB identify actionable solutions:

Finding 1: VR counselors are responsible for a diverse range of time-sensitive tasks. Some of these tasks are clerical responsibilities that take away from quality casework time. Bill paying tasks were cited as being particularly time consuming.

Solution: We suggest that the Counselor Coordinator adapt an “open door policy” to assist counselors with identifying priorities. We also suggest developing a college internship program to help with BESB’s day-to-day operations. This would allow additional time for counselors to focus on getting their clients jobs.

Finding 2: Counselors expressed interest in being more integrated into the agency’s policy- making process.

Solution: Our findings suggest that management values the expertise of its VR counselors. We suggest that management verbally reaffirm this position to its staff. We also suggest that, when possible, that the leadership continue to engage the counselors in the policy brainstorming and implementation processes.

Finding 3: Counselors are concerned that clients call management as a means of overriding their decisions. A unified front should be presented in these scenarios.

Solution: Utilize middle management, specifically the Counselor Coordinator, to deal with these situations. When a client calls management, that call should be redirected to the Coordinator. This person should then meet with the counselor to come up with a mutually agreeable solution. This approach would help establish a greater sense of teamwork among the staff.

Finding 4: One counselor expressed that he/she did not feel technologically mobile, especially during the client intake process. This person reported not having access while “on the go.”

Solution: A separate finding suggests that technology requests from VR counselors are taken seriously and usually approved. Management should verbally reaffirm this position. We suggest that the Director convene a meeting focused on technology. Counselors should be encouraged to discuss what technology they see as being necessary. If technological gaps are ultimately identified, management should work to fill them.

Finding 5: One counselor expressed frustration over not being able to accept electronic signatures from clients. This counselor reported driving a long distance just to secure a signature.

Solution: A separate finding suggests that BESB can accept electronic signatures from clients. This position should be reaffirmed to VR staff members.

Finding 6: Counselors find the new case management system frustrating. A common report states that the system’s built-in authorization process is cumbersome and time consuming.

Solution: Offer this feedback to appropriate decision-makers in the Department of Rehabilitation Services. Encourage the DORS leadership to make the system more user-friendly.

VII. Further Recommendations

Based on the data collected for this Assessment, CPPSR has a few recommendations for improving the VR program. First, we have some broad suggestions on how to improve agency outreach. CPPSR sees social media as a valuable way for the Bureau to extend its name recognition and knowledge of services offered. As state law permits, CPPSR suggests setting up and maintaining a Facebook account. There is no charge to establish an account. The Bureau could then post regular announcements regarding special events and outreach efforts. By “friending” other agencies or business-oriented networks, the Bureau may come to learn of new outreach opportunities. We also recommend, as state law permits, that BESB create a series of YouTube videos. These videos could highlight BESB’s mission, available services, and client success stories. These videos could be posted on the BESB website and Facebook page. Links to the videos could also be distributed via e-mail. If someone calls BESB wanting to learn more about the Bureau’s mission, video links could serve as valuable promotional material. Clients could also participate in making videos and share their personal stories about the Bureau. We realize that some of the decisions regarding the use of social networking platforms rest with the Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitation Services. It is our suggestion that the Commissioner consider the Bureau as a test case for social media outreach. We find that both VR staff and the Bureau’s management team are interested in utilizing digital technology.

Activating LinkedIn accounts for VR counselors was a positive first step. Continued advancements should be investigated, especially in light of the Bureau’s enthusiasm towards integrating this new technology. Along the lines of digital technology, we recommend that the BESB website be improved. The website is unorganized and visually unappealing. This could discourage potential consumers, as well as potential employers, from pursuing a relationship with the Bureau. Having a strong digital presence is important in today’s technological age. Should the BESB pursue this suggestion, it is critical that the Bureau conforms to the standards adopted by the State of Connecticut Website Accessibility Committee (WCAG A, footnote 16). We suggest that documents and reports should be organized with clear headings. We also recommend having headings on the home page targeted to specific populations. For example, “Information for Consumers” or “Information for Employers” would offer website visitors some direction. If the Bureau is in a position to pursue social media outreach, including that information on the website would be extremely valuable.

CPPSR finds great merit in the newly instituted college mentorship program. This is a positive development that may ultimately assist students in important career trajectory decisions. Interviews with VR staff members highlighted some potential improvements to the program. Instead of starting the mentorship program during a client’s freshman year, establish the mentor/mentee relationship one year earlier. The junior or senior year of high school would be ideal. The mentor could then assist with critical decisions such as what college/university to attend and navigating the first day of school. Capturing the transition period from high school to college would maximize the value of this new program. This same mentor may then assist the student with career questions as they prepare to transition to post-college life.

Also in the realm of higher education, we suggest that the Bureau consider establishing an internship program with local colleges and universities. Students majoring in social work, sociology, and political science may have interest in gaining real-world experience at the Bureau. Many departments housed in Connecticut’s state university system have internship coordinators. This individual is a valuable point-person for connecting the Bureau with students. Students could work for either a semester or, more

ideally, an entire academic year. We see an internship program as a valuable pipeline for addressing some long-standing concerns that BESB has been facing. One prominent example is the issue of phone calls going unreturned. CPPSR is not aware of any technology that could serve as an immediate fix to this dilemma. Consequently, we suggest that the Bureau turn to the power of people. College interns could assist with the day-to-day operations of BESB. This could include things such as helping with billing paperwork, tracking phone calls, and directing clients to the appropriate staff member. We realize that part of the difficulty with addressing these needs comes in training new workers. If BESB could secure interns for an academic year, this training would be worth the time investment. Many internship programs base themselves on a “for credit only” arrangement. To present a more competitive internship program, we suggest that the Bureau consider offering a semester stipend in addition to the possibility of earning college credit. Such a program would also allow for BESB to identify new talent worthy of full-time positions.

CPPSR views the recent re-emergence of the Counselor Coordinator position as a positive development. During the BCAC teleconference, BESB’s Director mentioned that the incumbent will be responsible for helping clients get jobs and needed services. We perceive that this employee can serve as a critical liaison between upper management and the VR staff. As an example, a client recently called upper management to challenge a decision that a VR counselor made regarding technology training. These types of calls should be redirected to the Counselor Coordinator. In close consultation with the VR counselor handling the case, a decision can be made on how to address the dispute. This team-oriented approach will enhance the sense of camaraderie and teamwork within the Vocational Rehabilitation division.

VIII. Conclusion

Connecticut’s Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind has done an excellent job of providing services and employment opportunities for the blind population of the State. When clients get jobs, those placements are quality employment opportunities. The average wage for BESB clients in the Vocational Rehabilitation program is extremely competitive. While this may partially be attributed to the high cost of living in Connecticut, it may also be that BESB takes steps to ensure that its clients maintain a quality standard of living. Additionally, in fiscal year 2012, 47 out of 111 cases closed with employment resulted in the client receiving health insurance. Moving forward, with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, this metric may become less significant. Still, we see this as a positive measure of the Bureau’s commitment to placing clients in viable, long-lasting employment opportunities. Counselors have a true passion for helping their clients.

The client satisfaction data also reveal positive trends. The survey results from 2012 and 2013 indicate that the Bureau is very popular among its clientele. As previously mentioned, the Bureau posted excellent satisfaction ratings in many key service areas. Notably, satisfaction ratings have improved over the last two years, even as funding has decreased. Not only has the Bureau been able to serve more individuals with less grant funding, but it was highly ranked in several of our comparisons with other states that did not have similar grant decreases.

IX. Appendix & Footnotes

<u>Table Number</u>	<u>Table Title</u>
Table 1:	BESB Clientele, FY 2009-2013

- Table 2: BESB Vocational Rehabilitation Participants, FY 2013
- Table 3: BESB Vocational Rehabilitation Participants, FY 2012
- Table 4: State of Connecticut Minority Statistics, 2012
- Table 5: National Minority Statistics, 2012
- Table 6: Comparison of Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Outcomes between BESB and States with Similar Grant Amounts, FY 2012
- Table 7: Comparison of Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Outcomes between BESB and States Serving Similar Amounts of Individuals, FY 2012

Table 1: BESB Clientele, FY 2009-2013 (footnote 17)

Clientele	Number
Total for 2009	12,166
Children	1,071
Total for 2010	12,426
Children	1,097
Total for 2011	10,942
Children	1,074
Total for 2012	10,735
Children	1,123
Total for 2013	11,034
Children	1,100

Participants	Number	Percentage of Total
Total VR	954	
Minorities	326	34%
African-American	182	19%
Hispanic/Latino	115	12%
Asian	19	2%
Native-American/Pacific Islander	9	<1%

Table 3: BESB VR Participants (FY 2012, footnote 19)

Population	Number	Percentage of Total
Total VR	958	
Minorities	321	33.5%
African-American	184	19.2%
Hispanic/Latino	118	12.3%
Asian	19	2%
Native-American/Pacific Islander	5	<1%

Table 4: State of Connecticut Minority Statistics (2012, footnote 20)

Population	Number	Percentage
Total Population	3,591,765	≈ 1% of national
Minority Population	1,160,140	32.3
African-American	402,278	11.2%
Hispanic/Latino	510,031	14.2%
Asian	150,854	4.2%
Native American	17,959	0.5%
Pacific Islander	3,592	0.1%
Other	75,427	2.1%

Table 5: National Minority Statistics (2012)

Population	Number	Percentage
Total	313,873,685	
Minorities	122,096,863	38.9%
African American	41,117,453	13.1%
Hispanic/Latino	53,044,653	16.9%
Asian	16,007,558	5.1%
Native American	3,766,484	1.2%
Pacific Islander	627,747	0.2%

Table 6: Comparison of Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Outcomes between BESB and States with Similar Grant Amounts (FY 2012, footnote 21)

	CT	OR	IA	SC	AR	NM
Employment Rate	88.8%	78.13%	77.88%	77.88%	73.99%	50.9%
Number Closed with Employment	111	100	81	257	313	35
Percent Closed with Employment at 35 Hours Per Week or More	39.2%	18.75%	41.35%	31.21%	38.53%	12.1%
Average Hourly Rate	16.24	13.60	14.76	8.41	9.98	12.4
Average Time to Close Months with Employment	28.5	38.6	28.0	17.3	22.1	63.9
Other		7,532,968	2.4%			

Table 7: Comparison of Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Outcomes between BESB and States Serving Similar Amounts of Individuals (FY 2012, footnote 22)

	CT	OR	IA	ID	MN
Employment Rate	88.8%	78.13%	77.88%	75.47%	50.94%
Number Served	125	128	104	106	159
Number Closed with Employment	111	100	81	80	81
Percent Closed with Employment at 35 Hours Per Week or More	39.2%	18.75%	41.35%	45.0%	43.21%
Average Hourly Rate	16.24	13.60	14.76	13.26	13.41
Average Time to Close Months with Employment	28.5	38.6	28.0	27.1	45.6

Footnotes

1. BESB, "Annual Report on Services to Individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired," <http://www.ct.gov/besb/cwp/view.asp?a=2848&q=465926>
2. BESB. "4.11 (b) Annual Estimates CT-B-FFY 2013" Under "DORS-BESB VR Program FFY 2013 State Plan." <http://www.ct.gov/besb/cwp/view.asp?a=2851&q=504626>
3. ¹U.S. Bureau of the Census, "USA People QuickFacts" under "State & County QuickFacts – USA QuickFacts" <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>
4. U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Connecticut," under "State & County QuickFacts – Connecticut" <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/09000.html>
5. U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Connecticut," under "State & County QuickFacts – Connecticut" <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/09000.html>
6. BESB, "Annual Update on Services to Individuals from Minority Backgrounds" Under "Underserved Populations CT-B-FFY 2013," <http://www.ct.gov/besb/cwp/view.asp?a=2851&q=504658>
7. BESB, BESB, "State Plan for Rehabilitation Services for FY 2012," under "Draft" http://search.ct.gov/search?q=submitted%20fy%202011&btnG=Search&client=besb&output=xm|_no_dtd&proxystylesheet=besb&ulang=en&entqrm=0&entsp=a__besb_policy&oe=UTF-8&ie=UTF-8&ud=1&sort=date%3AD%3A%3Ad1&exclude_apps=1&site=dors_collection&ip=108.248.14.233∾

BESB, "State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program for FY 2014," Under "4.11(b) Annual Estimates CT-B-FFY 2014," <http://www.ct.gov/besb/cwp/view.asp?a=2851&q=504626>

8. One such example is BESB's alliance with Aspire.

9. BESB, " Dept. Rehabilitation Services, under "4 11(b) Annual Estimates CT-B FFY 2013" <http://www.ct.gov/besb/cwp/view.asp?a=2851&q=504626> (accessed on March 12, 2014), BESB, Dept. Rehabilitation Services, under "4 11(b) Annual Estimates CT-B FFY 2014" <http://www.ct.gov/besb/cwp/view.asp?a=2851&q=524056>, Dept. Rehabilitation Services, State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation FFY 2012, under "4 11(b) Annual Estimates CT-B FFY 2012," <http://www.ct.gov/besb/cwp/view.asp?a=2851&q=483788>

10. Data derived from: U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Management Information System (MIS), Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Data, 2012, <http://www.rsa.ed.gov>.

11. Oregon had the second-best positive employment outcome figure at 78.13%.

12. This analysis excludes RSA data from states that combine disabilities.

13. As reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for March of 2014: <http://www.bls.gov/web/laus/laumstrk.htm>

14. Diana T. Cohen, "Connecticut Board of Education and Services for the Blind Vocational Rehabilitation Division. Survey Report: Fiscal Year 2013," Center for Public Policy and Social Research, Central Connecticut State University <http://www.ct.gov/besb/cwp/view.asp?a=2851&q=532954>

15. Cohen, page 5.

16. State of Connecticut Website Accessibility Committee: Design Guidelines <http://www.access.state.ct.us/policies/accesspolicy40.html>

17. State of Connecticut, Board of Education and Services for the Blind, "The Digest of Administrative Reports to the Governor Fiscal Year 2007-2008; State of Connecticut, Board of Education and Services for the Blind, "The Digest of Administrative Reports to the Governor Fiscal Year 2008-2009," under "Annual Report 2009," http://www.ct.gov/besb/lib/besb/Administrative_Digest_for_BESB_FY09.doc, 2; State of Connecticut, Board of Education and Services for the Blind, "The Digest of Administrative Reports to the Governor Fiscal Year 2009-2010," under "Annual Report 2010," <http://www.ct.gov/besb/cwp/view.asp?a=2848&q=465926>.

18. BESB, "State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program for FY 2014," Under "4.11(b) Annual Estimates CT-B-FFY 2014," <http://www.ct.gov/besb/cwp/view.asp?a=2851&q=504658> BESB, "Annual Update on Services to Individuals from Minority Backgrounds" Under "Underserved Populations CT-B-FFY 2013."

19. State of Connecticut, Board of Education and Services for the Blind, "State of Connecticut, Bureau of Rehabilitative Services; Services for the Blind, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program," <http://www.ct.gov/besb/cwp/view.asp?a=2851&q=504658>.

20. U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Connecticut," under "Quick Facts" <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/09000.html>. This is a prediction based upon the 2010 US Census. All numbers that ended in .5 or above were rounded up to the next whole number.

21. Data derived from: U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Management Information System (MIS), Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Data, 2012, <http://www.rsa.ed.gov>.

22. Data derived from: U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Management Information System (MIS), Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Data, 2012, <http://www.rsa.ed.gov>.

Annual Estimates

The Department of Rehabilitation Services, Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind is a comprehensive service delivery organization, providing a wide range of rehabilitative services to children and adults who are legally blind or visually impaired within Connecticut. Presently the Bureau has identified 11,854 individuals who meet these criteria and are listed on the Bureau's Blind Registry. Of that number, 10,766 of these individuals are adults and 1,088 are children. Through outreach efforts, the Bureau has worked to ensure that all individuals who are legally blind have access to and knowledge of the services provided by this organization.

Of the total number of individuals on the Bureau's registry, 992 clients are presently registered with the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, with 797 of these individuals found eligible for services. The majority of the remaining 195 individuals are in referral status or applicant status moving towards eligibility determinations. Of the total number of eligible individuals, 27 clients have been determined eligible for supported employment services.

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program provides a wide range of services to eligible individuals. Guidance and counseling, mobility training, rehabilitation technology, adaptive equipment, rehabilitation teaching, job coaching, on-the-job training, low vision services, as well as a variety of skills assessments, are among the services provided.

In fiscal year 2014, there were a total of 1,016 participants in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program expended \$1.39 million in purchased client services during the fiscal year. Additionally, \$598,000 was expended for the improvement and maintenance of Business Enterprise locations. Total Program costs, including all purchased services, staffing, and administrative operations were approximately \$5.56 million for the year. For Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, budget projections indicate that approximately \$5.51 million will be expended on combined Program costs, including an estimated \$1.69 million in purchased services to serve approximately 1,100 clients, and \$3.82 million in administrative and operational costs. This estimate includes inflationary adjustments, inclusion of indirect cost charges of 12.5 percent to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, as well as projected costs to serve transition age students who are visually impaired as well as who are legally blind.

With the availability of \$4.12 million in Title I carry over funds from FY 2014 in addition to the federal Title I allotment of \$3.1 million (representing 15 percent of the total Title I allotment received by Connecticut) and state matching funds of approximately \$900,000, the Program did not need to enter into an Order of Selection in FY 2015 and is not projecting the need for an Order of Selection in FY 2016.

State Goals and Priorities

The following goals, objectives, strategies and measures of performance were developed in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council. These goals reflect the vision of Governor Dannel P. Malloy and the accompanying priorities and strategies of the statewide workforce system and the regional partners to contribute towards the achievement of the Governor's vision. Additionally, this document details the strategies that will be utilized by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to contribute towards the achievement of these shared goals through the provision of services to individuals with significant visual impairments and to employers across the state.

Governor Dannel P. Malloy's Vision: Connecticut will create and sustain the global economy's best-educated, most-skilled, most-productive workforce.

Overarching Goals:

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 CT workers.

Strengthen Current Workforce: Workers must have the skills and credentials needed to prosper and advance in careers that support their families.

Develop Future Talent: Connecticut youth must be prepared and ready for career and post-secondary success as productive contributors to a competitive state economy.

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

Objective 1. Analyze economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

Strategy: Identify employment needs of employers – knowledge, skills, abilities in key industries and occupations.

Measure: Documentation of coordination with CTDOL, Office of Research to obtain data and information.

Strategy: Analysis of current workforce unemployment data, labor market trends, workforce's educational and skill levels (including individuals with barriers/disabilities).

Measure: Documentation of coordination with CTDOL, Office of Research to obtain data and information.

Strategy: Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, capacity) of CT's workforce development activities (including education and training), to address identified education/skill needs and employment needs of employers.

Measure: Coordination with CTDOL, Office of Research to obtain data and information.

Objective 2. Implement strategies for workforce partners to prepare educated/skilled workforce.

Strategy: Establish performance accountability measures and align strategies across the workforce programs to support economic growth and self-sufficiency, and how Connecticut will assess workforce system effectiveness.

Measure: Performance measures established with each partner program's anticipated contribution to the measures noted.

Objective 3. Operationalize the Service Delivery System

Strategy: Review statewide policies, programs, and recommended actions to support comprehensive streamlined workforce system.

Measure: Vocational Rehabilitation provides policies to workforce partners for review.

Strategy: Develop/continuously improve workforce system: identify coordination/alignment barriers (avoid duplication); develop career pathways strategies; develop outreach/access strategies for individuals and employers; develop/expand industry/sector partnership strategies; identify regions/designate local areas; develop One-Stop system continuous improvement strategy; develop staff training strategies.

Measure: Vocational Rehabilitation staff participate in regional and statewide workforce meetings that focus on implementation of coordinated One-Stop service delivery system.

Strategy: Develop and update comprehensive State performance accountability measures.

Measure: Vocational Rehabilitation provides data on performance in identified accountability categories.

Strategy: Identify/disseminate info on best practices for: effective operation of One-Stop centers; development of effective local boards; effective training programs responsive to real-time labor market analysis.

Measure: Vocational Rehabilitation provides to the state and regional workforce system evidence based practice on successful job placement and retention strategies for individuals with significant disabilities.

Strategy: Develop and review statewide policies to coordinate services through One-Stop system: criteria and procedures for WIBs to assess effectiveness and continuous improvement;

guidance to allocate One-Stop center infrastructure funds; policies on roles/contributions of One-Stop partners.

Measure: Documentation of Vocational Rehabilitation staff participation in the review and development of coordination of services to people with significant disabilities with One-Stop center staff and partners.

Strategy: Develop strategies for technological improvements to One-Stop system to: enhance digital literacy skills; accelerate acquisition of skills and credentials; strengthen staff professional development; ensure accessibility of technology.

Measure: Documentation of Vocational Rehabilitation adaptive technology consultations and recommendations for equipment to make the One-Stop centers accessible to individuals with significant disabilities.

Strategy: Develop strategies to align technology and data systems across One-Stop partner programs.

Measure: Documentation of Vocational Rehabilitation staff participation in statewide meeting regarding the development of a common-front end data collection system.

Strategy: Develop allocation formulas to distribute funds to local areas for adult and youth programs.

Measure: Documentation of Vocational Rehabilitation staff participation in cost allocation formula reviews that follow prescribed federal requirements.

Strategy: Prepare annual performance reports.

Measure: Vocational Rehabilitation report on performance measures distributed.

Strategy: Develop statewide workforce and labor market information system.

Measure: Vocational Rehabilitation staff provide data on job placements for clients served by the program.

Strategy: Develop other policies to promote statewide objectives and enhance system performance.

Measure: Documentation of BESB participation in the development of state policies and objectives.

Strategy: Alignment of funded activities.

Measure: Vocational Rehabilitation clients gain access to core services offered by the One-Stop centers with information provided in accessible formats by the centers.

Strategy: Alignment with activities not covered by Plan, to assure coordination, avoid duplication.

Measure: Independent Living services are offered and provided to eligible individuals with disabilities who are being served by the One-Stop centers.

Strategy: Coordination of activities, comprehensive services, including support services.

Measure: Vocational Rehabilitation staff members participate in regional and statewide planning and implementation meetings to coordinate the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to eligible clients served by the One-Stop delivery system.

Strategy: Engagement with community colleges, career/technical schools, to leverage resources.

Measure: Vocational Rehabilitation staff become participating members in regional teams that develop certificate and training programs at community colleges and career/technical schools to ensure curriculum accessibility for individuals with significant disabilities.

In addition to the participation of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program in contributing to the aforementioned, comprehensive statewide goals for the Workforce system, the following, goals, objectives, strategies and measures specific to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program have been developed with the full participation and guidance of the State Rehabilitation Council. These goals, objectives and accompanying strategies reflect on the priority to provide comprehensive, timely and quality services to clients of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, including those clients who are receiving supported employment services. Based on a review of the findings and recommendations in the Statewide Assessment and the Consumer Satisfaction Survey, as well as a review of the most recent Section 107 report and the performance achieved on established program measures in existence at the time of this plan's development, these priorities have taken into account this information to shape the efforts of the Council in establishing focus areas for the coming year.

Goal A: Increase employment opportunities for eligible individuals of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

Objective: BESB will collaborate with BRS and at least one major employer with a statewide presence to implement a Disability Resource Team to assist the employer with job recruitment and retention services.

Strategy: BESB Job Developer will coordinate with BRS Job Development Team to identify and work with employer(s) to implement a Resource Team.

Measure: Team is developed and implements resource meetings with employer(s).

Objective: BESB Counselors join job development teams implemented through the regional workforce boards to gain access to employers within the regions who are seeking job candidates.

Strategy: Counselors contact the Job Developers of the regional One Stop Center to become part of their employer outreach teams.

Measure: Each counselor serves as part of a regional job development team.

Objective: Vocational Rehabilitation clients obtain proficiency to utilize web-based job search websites.

Strategy: Rehabilitation teachers and/or fee for service vendors teach no less than ten job seeking clients how to navigate and utilize at least one job search website on the internet.

Measure: Documentation of utilization by each client.

Objective: Each BESB Counselor with job development responsibilities shall engage clients on their caseloads in job fair attendance.

Strategy: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors will share information on job fairs within their regions with job seeking clients on their individual caseloads and facilitate the attendance of clients at job fairs.

Measure: Documentation of no less than 5 clients per Counselor caseload attending a job fair.

Goal B: Provide coordinated services to students with disabilities to prepare for careers and post-secondary education after exit from high school.

Objective: The Vocational Rehabilitation Program shall designate two full-time Counselors to exclusively serve clients that are in the Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) category.

Strategy: Junior high and high school clients will be assigned to one of the counselor caseloads to receive specific, qualifying PETS services with dedicated PETS funding.

Measure: Documentation of caseload assignments.

Objective: PETS eligible students and their parents/guardians shall receive a resource guide that explains all of the BESB services that can be provided to prepare for careers and post-secondary education.

Strategy: The Vocational Rehabilitation Program shall develop a transition resource guide to post on the Bureau's webpage of the DORS website and to distribute to PETS eligible clients and their parents/guardians in their preferred format.

Measure: Case record documentation that the resource guide has been mailed or delivered to each PETS eligible client and their parents/guardians.

Objective: PETS eligible clients are provided timely notice of opportunities from the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and/or the Transition Coordinator to participate in work exposure programs, paid employment, internships, college preparatory programs, technology training programs, life skills programs and related career development camps, seminars and initiatives, both in state and out of state.

Strategy: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and the Transition Coordinator working with the PETS clients provide timely information on available services and programs so that clients and their guardians can make informed decisions on attendance at programs, activities and related transition experiences of interest.

Measure: Case record documentation of the services being authorized.

Objective: The Vocational Rehabilitation Program develops and implements outreach and public education programs for potentially PETS eligible clients and their parents/guardians.

Strategy: Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Coordinator designs and delivers outreach and public education programs to populations where PETS eligible clients are likely to be found, such as, but not limited to school districts.

Measure: Documentation of the programs being provided.

Objective: The Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the State Rehabilitation Council co-sponsor leadership development activities and camps for groups of PETS eligible clients.

Strategy: The State Rehabilitation Council and the Vocational Rehabilitation Program provide co-sponsorship funding for the Youth Leadership Forum, and similar programs if available.

Measure: Documentation of the funds committed.

Goal C: Utilize Innovation and Expansion authority to engage in continuous improvement initiatives, to increase access to services and activities that can benefit groups of individuals with visual impairment or legal blindness, to increase access to career information, adaptive technology, self-advocacy, and public awareness of the employment potential of individuals served by BESB.

Objective: The Vocational Rehabilitation Program shall provide funding for electronic access to career and news information.

Strategy: Funding provided to have NFB Newsline available to Vocational Rehabilitation clients.

Measure: Documentation of purchase order for NFB Newsline.

Objective: Provide access to the latest adaptive technology devices for clients to try out for assessment purposes.

Strategy: Purchase new adaptive technology devices for the BESB Technology Lab and the Technology Lab at the Southeastern Connecticut Community Center of the Blind.

Measure: Documentation of purchase order for technology devices.

Objective: The State Rehabilitation Council utilizes an entity experienced in administering consumer satisfaction surveys to conduct the fiscal year 2016 Consumer Satisfaction Survey and the results are used to develop continuous improvement initiatives.

Strategy: The State Rehabilitation Council selects a vendor, reviews the results of the survey, and works with Program staff to implement strategies that address the results and trends identified in the survey.

Measure: Documentation of purchase of survey, Consumer Satisfaction Report received and reviewed with Program staff.

Objective: State Rehabilitation Council representatives participate in state, regional and national conferences and programs that provide opportunities to increase public awareness of the employment capabilities of BESB clients, increase the Council members knowledge and understanding of the public Vocational Rehabilitation Program, and create opportunities for learning best practices that can develop into new goals and strategies for the BESB Vocational Rehabilitation Program to explore and implement, if applicable.

Strategy: State Rehabilitation Council Chair is provided with information about upcoming conferences, seminars and activities from the Bureau Director and designates a Council member or members to participate and share information with the full membership.

Measure: State Rehabilitation Council members attend CSAVR, NCSAB and other national, regional or statewide conferences or seminars that address the components stated in the objective.

Order of Selection

The bureau is not operating under an order of selection and provides services to all eligible individuals.

Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds

It is the primary goal and priority of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to consider supported employment as an option in all circumstances where the provision of these services will increase the likelihood of placement success for people with significant, multiple barriers to employment.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program for individuals who are blind received \$45,000 in Title VI, Part B funds for fiscal year 2014. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, there were 3 clients who achieved employment outcomes in supported employment settings. The funding source for long-term support for 2 of these situations was the Department of Developmental Services, with the client's family being the provider of long-term support in the third situation since the client works at a family-run business. Community rehabilitation providers were utilized for onsite training in all three situations.

Fourteen (14) new clients were found eligible for supported employment services during the fiscal year, bringing the total number of clients that have been found eligible for supported employment services to 30. Of the 30 clients that were eligible for supported employment services during the fiscal year, 3 clients achieved employment outcomes, 1 individual was in plan status, 1 individual was placed in employment status, 1 individual was moved to services interrupted status due to medical issues and 24 individuals were in a service status. Of this total number of eligible individuals, Title VI, Part B funds have been utilized for 8 individuals during the fiscal year.

Community rehabilitation providers continue to be utilized most frequently as the providers of extended services for the employment programs coordinated. In the current and upcoming year, this approach will continue to be utilized. This is based on the history of job placement outcomes from preceding fiscal years that has continually demonstrated the proven ability of community rehabilitation providers to employ job coaches and vocational instructors necessary for the provision of long-term employment supports, combined with their willingness to periodically assume the cost of providing extended services when other public funding options are not available. This arrangement is especially important, given the limited availability of third party funding from other public agency providers.

In addition to the option of utilizing community rehabilitation providers for the provision of extended services, the successful utilization of natural supports through a client's family and the use of a volunteer organization in placement situations in prior years have shown promise as a practice to replicate to expand options for the provision of support services. It is a high priority goal to identify all possible providers of long-term funding to cover the cost of providing the supports over an extended period of time. In addition to seeking out community rehabilitation providers who can financially assume the role of becoming the provider of extended services, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program will continue to explore the option of utilizing volunteer groups, employers, and families where feasible to offer natural supports as an option. The Program will also continue to contract with community rehabilitation providers who can access public and private funds in order to secure supported employment placements.

In order to facilitate the identification of supported employment options for transitioning high school students, the two Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors assigned to work with this specific client population participate in Planning and Placement Team meetings (PPTs) and work in cooperation with the Children's Services Program at BESB. The number of students who are legally blind or visually impaired who are age fourteen and older continue to be tracked by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to ensure that services are offered and made available. There are approximately 140 students of transition age who are presently being served in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. With the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), there are new provisions pertaining to serving youth with disabilities, and in particular, for youth with significant disabilities who require supported employment services, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program can fund the cost of extended services for up to 4 years in situations where no other funding options are available. Provisions within WIOA require that 50 percent of Title VI B funds are reserved to exclusively serve youth with significant disabilities to assist with meeting this priority.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program will continue to distribute funds to providers and employers who can offer the long-term assurances that supports will be in place to enable people with the most significant disabilities to participate in integrated employment with competitive wages and benefits. Vocational Rehabilitation Program staff will continue to participate in Planning and Placement Team meetings early in the transition process to identify the need for supported employment services, and to identify providers, both private and public, that may offer services while a student is preparing to transition from public or private education into employment. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors will also utilize supplemental evaluations through community rehabilitation providers to identify the need for supported employment services prior to the development of Individualized Plans for Employment in situations where it is uncertain if long-term supports will be necessary to ensure a successful placement outcome.

State's Strategies

The following strategies support the goals and objectives that have been identified with the participation of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), and reflect the commitment of the Bureau to increase employment opportunities for people who are legally blind or visually impaired through the provision of Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Services.

Methods To Be Used to Expand and Improve Services:

Utilizing the results and recommendations from the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, as well as the Section 107 Review conducted by Rehabilitation Services Administration, the Program has identified areas that need further expansion and revision to better serve clients. Shortening the timeframe for the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment was recommended in the Section 107 Review. This recommendation was implemented in Bureau policy subsequent to a public hearing process and prior to the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The Act prescribes a time frame of 90 days for plan development to occur. The Program is utilizing this new requirement to ensure the timely movement of case services subsequent to determinations of eligibility.

To augment the capacity of maintaining adequate levels of contact with clients, the Program embraced the recommendation of the Center for Public Policy and Social Research to contact graduate level programs that offer Master's Degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling and closely related fields to seek internship and practicum students who could assist the Program in contacting clients, following up on service requests and maintaining higher levels of contact than what is possible with the existing staffing levels. This approach has been very successful, with students from Springfield College and Central Connecticut State University coming to the Bureau for their graduate field work in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program further addressed case management activities through the reestablishment of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Coordinator position, which had been vacant for several years. A major focus of this position is to assist the Counselors with case management strategies. Utilizing the newly developed case management computerized dashboard, the Coordinator, Supervisor and the Counselors are able to track the timely movement of client services and timeframes for case status changes. The dashboard is capable of analyzing trends by caseload to further assist in identifying where additional activity is required.

The other major focus of the Coordinator position is to serve as the statewide job placement point of contact with employers. The Coordinator organizes the Bureau's participation in job fairs held by partner agencies of the workforce system, coordinates meetings between employers and Counselors in situations where an employer has locations that cross Counselor territories, and also serves as the point of contact with the national job matching system operated by the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR).

The results of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment also found that while the Bureau's website contained a considerable amount of important and useful information, it was organized in a way that made it difficult to search for information by topic. An extensive review of the website was subsequently conducted and substantial revisions were implemented. The Bureau's website is now organized by type of service, with subcategories under each major service heading. Policy manuals are grouped by program type as well so visitors to the website can locate and search the applicable policies more conveniently than in the past.

The Comprehensive Needs Assessment also recommended that BESB develop a presence in social media, possibly uploading information on services to You Tube. This recommendation has been explored and has been conservatively implemented. To date, there have been 5 BESB mentor videos uploaded to You Tube for public viewing, but plans for greater expansion in the use of social media have become part of the larger discussion at the agency level. It is anticipated that the agency and the Bureau will expand further into social media in future years.

Results of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey indicated that levels of satisfaction with low vision services were on the decline. Over the past several years, the number of doctors on the approved provider list has decreased, due to retirements and also due to doctor dissatisfaction with the paperwork burden required to obtain payments from the agency for fee schedule rates that are less than what the doctors can receive by seeing private pay patients. More Low Vision doctors would add increased options for clients and hopefully also reduce wait times for clients to get a low vision appointment, since many of the current doctors on the low vision provider list limit the number of BESB referred clients they will see each month. Toward that end, the Bureau Director sought and obtained an opportunity to speak at the statewide Optometric conference on the topic of seeking additional low vision providers. Subsequent to that event, three doctors have expressed an interest in becoming approved low vision providers. Efforts are underway to have their applications processed so they can be utilized.

How a Broad Range of Assistive Technology Services and Devices will be Provided at Each Stage of the Rehabilitation Process:

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program employs two full time Rehabilitation Technologists who are available to provide individualized assessments on adaptive technology options and solutions so that clients can make informed decisions as to the best option for their particular vocational training and employment situations. The Technologists are able to provide these assessments at the employer site, training facility or home of the client by utilizing a portable array of technology devices that are maintained by the Bureau.

Additionally, the Bureau maintains a fully equipped adaptive technology laboratory in Windsor that is available for both assessments and training sessions. In collaboration with the Southeastern Connecticut Community Center of the Blind, an additional technology laboratory is located at their facility in New London.

The Bureau further employs two full time Rehabilitation Teachers, who provide training in the use of adaptive devices that have been provided for client use in training and employment. Their services are available in addition to the use of both in state and out of state vendors that offer fee for service training in the use of technology devices.

Through the Assistive Technology Act, BESB works closely with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services to provide outreach and referrals of clients who are deaf and blind so that clients who meet the eligibility requirements of the Deafblind Technology Grant can apply for and received specialized adaptive equipment to increase their access to communication.

Outreach Procedures that will be used to Identify and Serve Individuals with Disabilities from Unserved and Underserved Populations:

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program has two Counselors who are bicultural and fluent in Spanish. Throughout the past fiscal year, these two staff members each served half of the state, with each of these Counselors serving the Spanish-speaking clients within their assigned territory. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program also employs a Counselor who is African-American and who serves a caseload in traditionally underserved communities. These staff members engage in extensive outreach activities, working with employers, community rehabilitation providers and community based organizations to share information on Bureau services and to secure work assessments, internships and job placements. Among the employers utilized in the past year were Capital Cleaners, Neighborhood Studios, Neighborhood Housing, Kimmy's Homemaker and Companion Services, Caring Connection, Dress for Less Inc., Center for Latino Progress, Stub Hub, New Britain Recreation Center, Adult Education Center in Hartford, and Sean Patrick's Plants. Community rehabilitation providers that assisted with training and job placement services included Futures, CW Resources, Marrakech and the Chrysalis Center.

A key component of successful strategies in job placement is to work with community based organizations that can assist with housing, mental health supports, medical services and benefits as well as family support services. Outreach efforts have included working with Neighborhood Housing, New Opportunities, Dads Matter Too, Acts 4 Ministries, Mi CASA, Family Services of Woodfield, Boys and Girls Village, Merton House Soup Kitchen, and the Bridgeport Senior Center.

Methods to Improve and Expand Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Students with Disabilities:

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors participate in Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings of clients who are in junior high or high school and assist in the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEP's) for students. The services that are detailed in the IEP of each student are factored into the development of each client's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), which must be developed within ninety (90) days of the determination of eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services, or by the time the client exits high school, whichever comes sooner. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor involvement begins as early as age 14, with referrals to the Program initiated by the Education Consultants of the Bureau's Children's Services Program and Teachers of the Visually Impaired that work directly for school districts. The client is assigned to one of the two Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors that are exclusively dedicated to serving pre-employment transition services eligible clients. Assignments are based on geographic location of the client.

Since BESB maintains a registry of all students who are legally blind or visually impaired within Connecticut, the process for identifying and referring clients from Children's Services to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program is streamlined and efficient. The electronic case management system for the Bureau has a built in tracking system for identifying clients by age range to further facilitate the referral of clients who desire to participate in vocational rehabilitation services. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors work with the students, educators, parents or legal guardians and the Program's Education Projects Coordinator to identify careers of interest, develop career exploration opportunities, work and job shadowing experiences, mentoring activities and leadership development programs.

In addition to serving on the statewide transition taskforce, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program's Educational Projects Coordinator is also an active member of the Board of Directors of the Youth Leadership Project that oversees the Youth Leadership Forum. The forum is a yearly event that teaches students with disabilities leadership and self-advocacy skills.

BESB continues to conduct career exposure camps for high school students who are visually impaired or legally blind. These programs include opportunities to interact with former recipients of vocational

rehabilitation services who are successfully employed in a variety of careers. Some of these programs are held on college campuses, where the students gain a firsthand perspective of residential campus life in addition to gaining insight into a variety of careers that former clients are now engaged in.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program staff members continue to participate and present information at in-service training programs organized by the Bureau for public school teachers and guidance counselors on issues affecting students who are blind or visually impaired. The Children's Services Program of the Bureau further provides a comprehensive training series every year for school district staff to learn about low vision aids and adaptive technology, braille instruction, expanded core curriculum activities and resources that are available to facilitate the education and transition of students served by BESB.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program has also established a goal of participating in Planning and Placement Team meetings early in the transition process to identify the need for supported employment services, and to identify providers, both private and public, that may offer services while a student is preparing to transition from public or private education into employment.

Strategies to Improve Performance Accountability Measures:

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act established new measures of performance for the partner programs to collectively work towards achieving. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program is participating in discussions on the implementation of these new performance measures with the other partners at both the state and the regional level. At this point in the development process, it is premature to discuss how to improve performance on measures that have not been established and implemented at the partner agency level. This Bureau shall have an active and integral role in contributing towards the achievement of the regional and statewide performance measures by working collaboratively with the other workforce partners to coordinate services and to leverage the resources and employer contacts that will be mutually available to the partner programs.

Strategies for Assisting Other Components of the Statewide Workforce Development System:

How the Strategies will be used to:

A) Achieve Goals and Priorities Consistent with the Comprehensive Needs Assessment:

Employer outreach and engagement are key components of the workforce system to achieve success in the performance measures and toward that end, the benefits of becoming part of a unified approach toward employer outreach will serve the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the partner programs particularly well. Being a part of regional job development teams will ensure that Counselors of the Bureau are at the forefront of discussions with employers who are seeking to fill job vacancies as well as those employers who are considering expansion in this state.

The Vocational Rehabilitation staff's expertise on blindness related topics, including how adaptive technology can be utilized to make core services of the One Stop Centers and training programs accessible, will also benefit the partner programs. This level of technical assistance to the partners will resolve many barriers, both anticipated and unanticipated by the partner program staff, in regards to training materials and tasks that require adaptive technology to access.

An additional potential benefit that is anticipated will be a coordinated approach toward the use of social media to expand the reach of all partner programs in communicating the availability of the myriad of services that are offered through the partner programs. Expanding the use of social media to educate the public about services was a recommendation contained in the Comprehensive Needs Assessment and through a coordinated effort across partner programs, this recommendation is likely to experience a greater level of growth than it may have experienced as a separate and distinct goal for this Bureau.

B) Support Innovation and Expansion Activity:

Access to career information and job openings is a key component of the Innovation and Expansion activities that have been established as priorities for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. The opportunity to become part of a larger, organized and comprehensive approach to access job search engines is particularly beneficial. BESB staff can contribute to this initiative by offering technical assistance on accessibility requirements so that equal access among program participants can be achieved.

Programs serving youth, including youth from unserved and underserved populations is another priority that has been identified in the Innovation and Expansion initiatives for this Bureau. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program staff can provide information to the partner programs on the types of leadership development camps and initiatives that it had designed and utilizes, so the partner programs that serve youth can assess if similar models would be beneficial to their clients.

Additionally, youth training, employment and leadership programs offered by partner agencies may be readily accessible to clients of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, opening new opportunities that were previously unknown or unavailable to clients of this Bureau.

Expansion of the availability of adaptive technology in training programs, core services and apprenticeship programs is another category where there is considerable opportunity for growth. Bureau staff will bring their knowledge of blindness related technology accommodations into discussions with the partners so that solutions can be identified and implemented in the planning stages of new initiatives, ensuring equal access to services.

Overcome Identified Barriers Relating to Equitable Access and Participation in Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Services:

Perhaps the most significant barrier is within the category of training materials that are utilized across a broad spectrum of vendors and service providers utilized by the partner programs and the One Stop Centers. Materials are often created in formats that do not readily lend toward conversion into accessible text to speech formats for those clients who are not able to access print. This is particularly seen in training materials that are distributed electronically, where PDF files are a common format of the documents being distributed. Being at the front end of discussions with partner programs on how to make training materials accessible from the onset will bring about a seamless training opportunity for clients of this Bureau. In this scenario, training materials in accessible formats would be prepared in advance and distributed to seminar and training program participants who are blind at the same time that other participants receive their materials. Rehabilitation Technologists are available to participate in the review of the training materials and to offer recommendations on how to make the information accessible.

Evaluation and Report of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals

The following summary details the goals and objectives established for FY 2014 with the participation of

the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the outcomes for each of these goals.

GOAL A (the desired outcome)

CLIENT SERVICES GOAL: Individuals who are blind acquire the necessary skills and training to obtain and retain employment in a challenging economy.

Objectives (The reasons the goal is of high importance):

1. Due to the continuation of a challenging economic climate, individuals who are blind continue to experience fewer opportunities to access and maintain employment, requiring a greater diversity of skills and flexibility in adapting to employer needs.
2. Employment provides individuals who are blind the opportunity to be contributing, self-sufficient members of society.
3. Career advancement is an important aspect of career development, resulting in greater likelihood of achieving self-sufficiency.
4. For individuals who are losing vision or whose job duties change, assistance to maintain employment is often necessary.
5. For individuals who are blind and who experience multiple barriers to employment, on-the-job training and long-term job supports enable achievement and maintenance of employment.

Strategies (The methods for achieving the objectives):

1. Vocational Rehabilitation clients will be trained in the use of new internet-based job search engine technologies to identify and apply for job openings.
2. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program will facilitate a job seekers skills training on resume writing and interviewing techniques.
3. Vocational Rehabilitation staff that have job placement as a primary responsibility will each conduct ongoing employer outreach activities.
4. Vocational Rehabilitation clients will receive training in the use of new smart-phone and tablet technologies that have built in accommodation features.
5. Vocational Rehabilitation staff will conduct training sessions for disability coordinators at Connecticut colleges to become familiar with the supports and services that are available through Vocational Rehabilitation for students who are blind.
6. Vocational Rehabilitation staff will develop a support and mentoring group for college students who are blind.

Measures (the activities that will be achieved in FY 14):

1. Vocational Rehabilitation staff will conduct or coordinate two informational sessions on the use of the major job search sites and provide individualized training to ten clients, consistent with the individual's vocational goal.

Summary of Activities: Two information sessions were held. One session was held in Bridgeport with 8 attendees and the second session was held in Windsor with 7 attendees. The sessions reviewed the accessible job search sites that are featured on the agency website in the document titled "JOB SEARCH WEBSITES THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE WITH SCREEN READERS."

Evaluation of Progress: This measure was achieved.

2. Two job seekers training programs will be offered and delivered to Vocational Rehabilitation clients on resume writing and interviewing techniques and strategies.

Summary of Activities: One job seekers training program was conducted in Hartford in July with 6 participants and the second was held in New London with as many as 11 participants attending at one time during ongoing sessions conducted between February and July.

Evaluation of Progress: This measure was achieved.

3. Each Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor with job placement responsibilities shall engage in an average of 2 hours per week in job development and job placement outreach to employers, including the use of internet based employer networking sites.

Summary of Activities: More than 1,000 hours of employer outreach activity occurred in the fiscal year, provided by 9 Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling staff. On average, 2.39 hours per week per Counselor were provided.

Evaluation of Progress: This measure was achieved.

4. Vocational Rehabilitation staff will conduct or coordinate the delivery of two training sessions in the use of smart-phone and tablet technologies for clients of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

Summary of Activities: Two training sessions occurred, one in July on the use of Android devices and the other in August on the use of iPhone devices. Both sessions were held at the Bureau's location in Windsor, with a distance learning option being offered so clients could participate remotely if they desired. While the iPhone training was attended by 6 clients, the Android training only had 2 client participants, although 5 staff members who are legally blind attended as well.

Evaluation of Progress: This measure was achieved.

5. Vocational Rehabilitation staff will conduct in-service training sessions on the services available through this agency for disability coordinators at no less than 5 institutions of higher education in Connecticut, focusing specifically on colleges where Vocational Rehabilitation clients are currently enrolled.

Summary of Activities: This particular objective was developed in response to prior Consumer Satisfaction Survey results and sought to better educate disability coordinators at institutions of higher education on the services that BESB can provide and also to explain the expectations that the Bureau has of the colleges in regards to providing reasonable accommodations. In total, 15 staff from 13 institutions of higher education in Connecticut and 1 additional staff from a college in New York were provided with training. It is noted that the Consumer Satisfaction survey results obtained at the close of fiscal year 2014 showed a marked increase in the level of satisfaction with higher education services, going from a mean satisfaction rating of 5.0 out of 10 in 2012, to 7.8 out of 10 in 2013, and then to 8.7 out of 10 in 2014.

Evaluation of Progress: This measure was achieved.

6. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program will develop and implement a mentoring program for college students with a focus on connecting freshman students with seniors or recently graduated students who can provide insight and guidance on how to overcome the challenges and obstacles often encountered at college.

Summary of Activities: This objective produced both a formal and an informal approach toward mentoring. A mentoring panel was developed to discuss experiences with incoming freshman students, occurring in January. Offered as an in-person and telephonic event, there were 4 students who participated out of 11 new freshman students. Challenges in getting participation in this formal event led to the development of a more informal approach of connecting incoming college students with college seniors and recently graduated students. Plans were also put in place to offer a mentoring panel for high school students at the 2015 college on-campus program as well.

Evaluation of Progress: This measure was achieved.

GOAL B (the desired outcome)

INNOVATION AND EXPANSION: Expand and promote vocational services to groups of individuals who are legally blind who want to obtain, retain or advance in employment.

Objectives (The reasons the goal is of high importance):

1. There is a broad range of Vocational Rehabilitation services that benefit whole groups of individuals who are legally blind, who want to obtain, retain, or advance in employment.

Strategies (The methods for achieving the objectives):

1. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program will cosponsor NFB Newline for clients of the agency to access educational, career and occupational outlook information.
2. Community-based adaptive technology centers will receive updated adaptive technology for people who are blind to engage in vocational preparation and job seeking activities.
3. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program will support and fund State Rehabilitation Council activities that promote awareness of services and supports available to people who are blind.
4. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program will cosponsor and implement leadership development opportunities for transition school-to-work students who are legally blind.
5. The State Rehabilitation Council will implement a client satisfaction survey to identify areas where improvements are necessary to better meet the rehabilitation goals of clients served by the Program.

Measures (the activities that will be achieved in FY 14):

1. The agency enters into a contract with the National Federation of the Blind for NFB Newline.

Summary of Activities: In collaboration with the National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut, NFB Newline has been available for clients to access on an ongoing basis throughout the year. CRIS Radio continues to broadcast Newline programming. BESB services have been featured on CRIS Radio, and a

new program on employment has been launched by CRIS Radio, with BESB staff providing input into the development of topic areas for the program. In total, during the fiscal year, more than 412,000 minutes of use of the Newline service occurred.

Evaluation of Progress: This measure was achieved.

2. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program provides technical assistance and purchases updated equipment, as needed, for at least one community-based technology center.

Summary of Activities: The Bureau continues to provide support and technical assistance to the technology laboratory at the Southeastern Connecticut Community Center of the Blind, and provided a new monitor for their facility during the year. At the present time, there are no other community based technology laboratories that are directly supported by BESB. The Bureau maintains a fully equipped technology laboratory at the office location in Windsor that is utilized for assessments and training of clients.

Evaluation of Progress: This measure was achieved.

3. On behalf of the SRC, the client satisfaction survey is conducted by an entity experienced in administering such surveys, and the SRC utilizes the results of this survey to develop two measureable strategies for continuous improvement.

Summary of Activities: The SRC commissioned the Center for Public Policy and Social Research (CPPSR) at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) to conduct a consumer satisfaction survey of VR service recipients for fiscal year 2014. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the services that consumers received from the Vocational Rehabilitation Program at BESB. In 2014, nine out of ten clients (90%) reported that they would recommend BESB Vocational Rehabilitation Services to a friend. Similar to both 2012 and 2013 survey findings, Rehabilitation and Adaptive Equipment and Low Vision were the two most widely used BESB services. Personal Care Attendant remained the least used service. Four services experienced an increase in mean satisfaction rating, while four saw a decline in rating. Reader Services had the largest mean increase (8.67, up 1.67 in mean rating). Personal Care Attendant Services climbed to its highest rating in five years (9.0, up 1.0 in mean rating). Higher Education Services set its second-best rating in the history of the survey (8.7, up .9 in mean rating). This figure is only second to the all-time high of 8.86 set in 2003. Small Business Services also increased in ratings (7.14, up .39 in mean rating). Among the services experiencing a decline in reported satisfaction, Low Vision Services saw the most sizable decrease (7.89, down .9 in mean rating). Transportation Services experienced a notable decline (7.25, down .46 in mean rating), as did Skills Training Services (8.67, down .42). Rehabilitation and Adaptive Equipment Services registered a modest decline (8.60, down .20 in mean rating). Overall satisfaction with BESB services decreased to 7.96, down .48 in mean rating. Ratings on the extent to which services met clients' IPE also saw a decline of .42 in mean rating, coming in at 7.89. Satisfaction with the extent to which services met client expectations dropped to 7.46, down .33 in mean rating. Finally, satisfaction with the extent to which services met the needs of clients decreased to 8.16, down .19 in mean rating.

Average ratings of counselors were mixed in 2014 with four dimensions of counselors improved, one remained unchanged, and four declined in mean ratings. The counselors ability to provide information in a format that clients could use increased the most in satisfaction, coming in at 9.36, up 1.27 in mean

rating. Counselors' ability to help clients understand the process for complaint resolution also saw substantial improvement, setting an all-time high for this survey at 8.85, up 1.14 in mean rating. The professionalism of counselors achieved a mean rating of 9.06, up .27 in mean rating. Counselors' ability to identify career goals climbed to the second-best average in the history of the survey at 8.05, up .27 in mean rating. Reports of counselors' ability to help clients understand their vocational rehabilitation rights remained unchanged from last year (8.47, zero change in mean rating). The remaining four dimensions of counselors experienced declines in mean satisfaction ratings. Counselors' ability to develop an IPE could not sustain the record-high ranking set in 2013 (7.84, down .39 in mean rating). Ratings of the knowledge of BESB counselors experienced an identical decline in mean ratings, (8.28, down .39 in mean rating). Counselors' ability to recognize the special needs of their clients dropped to 7.84, down .38 in mean rating. Finally, client satisfaction of referrals dropped for the second consecutive year (8.20, down .20 in mean rating).

In fiscal year 2014, a Comprehensive Needs Assessment was also conducted by CPPSR. A complete overview of their findings and recommendations were included in the fiscal year 2015 state plan submission. In summary, based on the data collected for the assessment, CPPSR recommended that BESB develop a greater use of the internet to get the message out to a broader audience, ideally by expanding into social media and perhaps even posting videos onto YouTube that could highlight success stories. CPPSR also recommended that the Bureau's website be updated and made easier to use for identifying services by categories of interest. CPPSR found merit in the newly-instituted college mentorship program and encouraged further development in this area. They also recommended that the Bureau should establish an internship program with local colleges and universities so that students majoring in human services and rehabilitation could gain real-world experience at the Bureau, and help to create a pipeline for addressing some long-standing concerns that BESB has been facing with staffing levels necessary to maintain higher levels of contact and engagement with clients.

Utilizing the results of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey and the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, the State Rehabilitation Council and the Vocational Rehabilitation Program established several objectives for the 2015 state plan. These objectives included establishment of mentoring videos for posting on the internet, reorganizing the Bureau's web site to make it more user friendly, and implementing an internship program with local colleges and universities to bring student interns into BESB. Strategies were also identified for increasing the level of client access to career information by adding to each Individualized Plan for Employment information on the career identified in the plan. Additionally, there was a strategy identified to place greater emphasis on offering and utilizing supported employment services to facilitate access into careers for clients with the most significant disabilities.

Evaluation of Progress: This measure was achieved.

4. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program cosponsors two leadership development programs for clients.

Summary of Activities: The Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the State Rehabilitation Council were cosponsors of the Youth Leadership Forum, a weeklong leadership development residential program, with 4 clients participating and 2 former client participants returning as counselor mentors. Additionally, BESB was a cosponsor of the Governor's Coalition for Youth with Disabilities Scholarship event, recognizing the high school achievements of 3 students served by the Bureau. BESB further collaborated with Oak Hill to provide a weeklong residential leadership development and mentoring camp for transition age youth at Harkness, with 8 clients participating.

Evaluation of Progress: This measure was achieved.

5. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program sponsors the participation of SRC members at conferences and events that promote advocacy, service delivery and information exchange of best practices in the field of rehabilitation.

Summary of Activities: The SRC chairperson attended the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) national conferences in April. The chairperson attended conference seminars as well as participated in the visit to Washington, DC to meet with Connecticut's Congressional delegation to educate them on how the VR Program assists people who are blind to achieve employment and self-sufficiency.

Evaluation of Progress: This measure was achieved.

Factors that Impeded the Achievement of the Employment Goals and Priorities:

While it is noted that all of the goals and objectives were achieved, the relatively low numbers of clients participating in training sessions that were held on topics ranging from adaptive technology to job seeking skills was below expectation. Challenges such as availability of transportation, and varied skill levels of clients contributed to these difficulties in attracting larger numbers of clients to participate in group training activities. Arranging for similarly skilled clients to attend trainings at a particular location for one or more sessions proved to be logistically difficult, and sometimes frustrating for the clients and the trainers. Even when offering virtual training options, the number of participants was still small. While these group training goals were certainly worthwhile, the time and resources required to plan for and implement these sessions has made the Program question if it would be more productive to utilize the training opportunities offered by fee for service providers, in addition to providing individualized and customized training through Bureau staff.

Supported Employment Program Goals and Outcomes:

It is the primary goal to identify all possible providers of long-term funding for extended services. In addition to seeking out community rehabilitation providers who can financially assume the role of becoming the provider of extended services, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program established the goal to encourage employers to offer natural supports. The Program also sought to contract with community rehabilitation providers who could access public and private funds for people with multiple disabilities in order to secure supported employment placements. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, there were 3 clients who achieved employment outcomes in supported employment settings. The funding source for long-term support for 2 of these situations was the Department of Developmental Services, with the client's family being the provider of long-term support in the third situation since the client works at a family-run business. Community rehabilitation providers were utilized for onsite training in all three situations. The Bureau has achieved these objectives by successfully accessing other funding sources including natural supports through a family operated business.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program also established a goal of modifying Bureau policy to clearly reinforce that a successful employment outcome in a supported employment setting requires that the individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and

level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled. This proposed policy change reflected the priorities of the Bureau and the State Rehabilitation Council to move away from placement options where the individual was working toward competitive wages that could potentially never be offered by the employer. With the proposed policy change, a shift to only permitting employment outcomes where the individual was earning the competitive and customary wage ensured that clients would be afforded the same level of earnings offered to their non-disabled coworkers. Subsequent to a public hearing process, this policy was changed and went into effect for October 1, 2015.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program has also established a goal of participating in Planning and Placement Team meetings early in the transition process to identify the need for supported employment services, and to identify providers, both private and public, that may offer services while a student is preparing to transition from public or private education into employment. This is an area that continues to require more effort. Of the 14 new clients who were found eligible for supported employment services during the fiscal year, none of them were of transition-age. With the new reorganization in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, assigning two counselors to work exclusively with transition-age students, it is anticipated that discussions regarding the option for employment with supports will become a much larger focal point in Planning and Placement Team meetings, with anticipated improvements in this category of service delivery occurring as a result.

Factors that Impeded the Achievement of the Supported Employment Goals and Priorities:

The challenging economy continues to impact on the scope and variety of job placement options available to clients, making customized employment particularly difficult to secure. The need for long-term funding support is an additional step that is necessary for supported employment placements at the onset. These two variables in combination make the timing challenging in filling job vacancies with a client who requires long-term supports. Dedicating two counselors to work specifically with the transition-age client population will facilitate discussions on supported employment options much earlier in the Planning and Placement Team process, starting as early as junior high school. This should allow for increased time to explore and secure long-term funding commitments and also to develop job opportunities for clients.

Performance Accountability Indicators:

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act established new measures of performance for the partner programs to collectively work towards achievement. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program is participating in discussions on the implementation of these new performance measures with the other partners at both the state and the regional level. However, as these are new measures of performance, outcomes cannot be reported on retrospectively. Under the Workforce Investment Act, Vocational Rehabilitation Programs reported on their performance in achieving established Standards and Indicators. What follows is a summary of this Bureau's performance on these measures for FY 2014.

The first indicator addresses the overall number of individuals achieving employment outcomes in FY 2013 and FY 2014 in total, in comparison to the number of individuals achieving an employment outcome in total for fiscal years 2012 and 2013. The Program increased the total number of individuals achieving employment outcomes from 224 to 227 for these time periods, thereby passing the first indicator. The second indicator addresses the number of individuals who exit the Program in employment versus the number of individuals who exit the Program not in employment subsequent to the development of an employment plan. Eighty-two percent of Program participants exited the

Program in employment in FY 2014, thereby achieving the required passing level of 68.9 percent. The third indicator addresses the number of individuals that exit the Program in competitive employment job categories as a percentage of all employment outcomes. Of the 227 individuals that achieved employment outcomes during the two-year time period, 205, or 90.3 percent achieved competitive wages, passing the required indicator level of 35.40 percent. Performance indicator #4 asks for the percentage of individuals achieving an employment outcome who are classified as having a significant disability as defined by the Rehabilitation Act. The Program passed this indicator, achieving 100 percent. The fifth indicator examines the hourly earnings of the individuals who achieved employment, requiring that the average hourly earnings of these individuals reach at least 59 percent of the Connecticut average hourly wage. For this state, the average hourly wage was \$30.26 in 2014, so to pass the indicator, the Program would need to achieve \$17.85 per hour on average for the clients who achieved employment. The Program passed this indicator, with the average hourly earnings reaching \$18.58, or 61 percent of the Connecticut average hourly rate. The final indicator is the only one the Program was not able to pass in 2014. It examines the percentage of clients that report self-sustaining earnings at Program completion compared to those who indicated self-sustaining earnings at application. Since this Program provides a significant level of assistance to individuals who are employed at application and who are seeking assistance to retain their current employment or find new employment, it is common for applicants of services to have competitive wages at the time of application. To pass this indicator, 30.4 percent of individuals who exited the Program in employment needed to have transitioned from other sources of support at application to self-sustaining earnings at closure. The Program was not able to reach this required percentage, with 17.1 percent of individuals moving from other sources of support at application to self-sustaining wages at closure.

A separate category of performance indicators asks the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to describe the policies it has adopted and steps it has taken to ensure that individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds have equal access to services in programs where fewer than 100 individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds exit the program during the fiscal year.

Individuals from underserved populations are tracked in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to ensure that they are engaged in services and fully understand the scope of available services that can be provided. Before any individual from a minority background is inactivated from the Program with an unsuccessful outcome, a supervisory review process is required. The Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor confirms that the individual was provided with information in his or her preferred language and accessible format. Additionally, the Supervisor reviews the case record of services to confirm documentation is present, substantiating that the individual was afforded the opportunity to make informed decisions in regards to participation in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

According to current data on the U.S. Census Bureau website, 31.6% of the overall populations of Connecticut identify race or ethnicity from a minority background. This data further breaks down to 11.5% of the overall population as African-American, 15% as Hispanic or Latino, 0.5% as American Indian/Alaska Native, 4.5% as Asian, and 0.1% as Pacific Islander. Analysis of the demographics of clients in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program found that 39.9% indicated race or ethnicity from a minority background, exceeding the overall demographic of 31.6% for Connecticut. This can be further broken down as 21.7% identifying their race or ethnicity as African-American; 15.5% identifying their race or ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino; 2.7% identifying their race or ethnicity as Asian, and less than 1% identifying their race or ethnicity as American Indian/Alaska Native or Pacific Islander. As this data

illustrates, outreach efforts to underserved populations by the Bureau have been effective in reaching and serving individuals from traditionally underserved populations.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program has two Counselors who are bicultural and fluent in Spanish. Throughout the past fiscal year, these two staff members each served half of the state, with each of these Counselors serving the Spanish-speaking clients within their assigned territory. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program also employs a Counselor who is African-American and who serves a caseload in traditionally underserved communities. These staff members engaged in extensive outreach activities, working with employers, community rehabilitation providers and community based organizations to share information on Bureau services and to secure work assessments, internships and job placements. Among the employers were Capital Cleaners, Neighborhood Studios, Neighborhood Housing, Kimmy's Homemaker and Companion Services, Caring Connection, Dress for Less Inc., Center for Latino Progress, Stub Hub, New Britain Recreation Center, Adult Education Center in Hartford, and Sean Patrick's Plants. Community rehabilitation providers that assisted with training and job placement services included Futures, CW Resources, Marrakech and the Chrysalis Center.

A key component of successful strategies in job placement is to work with community based organizations that can assist with housing, mental health supports, medical services and benefits as well as family support services. Outreach efforts have included working with Neighborhood Housing, New Opportunities, Dads Matter Too, Acts 4 Ministries, Mi CASA, Family Services of Woodfield, Boys and Girls Village, Merton House Soup Kitchen, and the Bridgeport Senior Center.

Report on How Funds Reserved for Innovation and Expansion Activities were utilized in FY 2014: During the fiscal year, Innovation and Expansion funding was utilized to cover the cost of the NFB Newsline service. Innovation and Expansion funds were also utilized to cover the cost of the State Rehabilitation Council's co-sponsorship of the Youth Leadership Forum. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program also was a separate co-sponsor of this leadership development camp for transition-age students. Innovation and Expansion funding was also utilized to secure the Center for Public Policy and Social Research to conduct and analyze the 2014 consumer satisfaction survey and to report their findings to the State Rehabilitation Council for use in developing Program goals and priorities. Additionally, Innovation and Expansion funds were utilized to purchase adaptive technology for the technology training facility located at the Southeastern Connecticut Community Center of the Blind. Innovation and Expansion funding also made it possible for the Program to be a co-sponsor of the Governor's Coalition for Youth with Disabilities, an initiative that awards college scholarships to graduating high school students with disabilities who are college bound. Lastly, funding was utilized to facilitate the participation of the State Rehabilitation Council, through its Chair to participate in national activities at the conferences of the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind is committed to providing competitive employment opportunities in integrated settings to all clients of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. The Program utilizes Title VI, Part B Funds, federal Vocational Rehabilitation Program funds and State matching funds to cover the costs of client placement into supported employment, and ensure that participants are provided with the necessary long-term support to succeed in the competitive labor market.

Supported Employment refers to competitive integrated employment, including customized employment, that is individualized and customized consistent with the strengths, abilities, interests, and

informed choice of a client with a most significant disability, and that includes ongoing support services. Supported employment services may be considered for individuals for whom competitive integrated employment has not historically occurred, or for whom competitive integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent, and where there is a need for extended services after the transition from support provided by the Bureau, in order for the client to perform this work. Supported employment may also be provided in the form of transitional employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities due to mental illness, in addition to legal blindness or lessened visual acuity.

Supported Employment Services are ongoing support services, including customized employment, and other appropriate services:

- (A) Organized and made available, singly or in combination, in such a way as to assist an eligible individual to achieve competitive integrated employment;
- (B) Based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual, as specified in an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE); and
- (C) Provided by the Bureau for a period of not more than 24 months, unless under special circumstances the eligible individual and the rehabilitation counselor jointly agree to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the IPE; and
- (D) Following transition to extended services, as post-employment services that are unavailable from an extended services provider, and that are necessary to maintain or regain the job placement or advance in employment.

Prior to determining that an applicant is unable to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program must conduct an exploration of the individual's abilities, capabilities, and capacity to perform in competitive integrated work situations. This is accomplished through the use of trial work experiences, which must be provided in competitive employment settings to the maximum extent possible, consistent with the informed choice and rehabilitation needs of the individual. Trial work experiences include supported employment, on-the-job training, and other experiences using realistic integrated work settings. Trial work experiences must be of sufficient variety and over a sufficient period of time for the Bureau to determine that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the individual cannot benefit from the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in terms of a competitive integrated employment outcome. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program will provide appropriate supports, including assistive technology devices and services and personal assistance services to accommodate the rehabilitation needs of the individual during the trial work experiences.

For individuals who have been found eligible for services, an IPE shall be developed as soon as possible, but not later than a deadline of 90 days after the date of the determination of eligibility, unless the Bureau and the eligible individual agree to an extension of that deadline to a specific date by which the IPE shall be completed. If the Bureau is operating under an order of selection, this timeframe will apply to each eligible individual to whom the Bureau is able to provide services.

The Bureau will conduct an assessment for determining vocational rehabilitation needs, if appropriate, for each eligible individual or, if the Bureau is operating under an order of selection, for each eligible individual to whom the Bureau is able to provide services. The purpose of the assessment is to determine the employment outcome, and the nature and scope of vocational rehabilitation services, including the need for supported employment services, to be included in the IPE. The IPE will be designed to achieve the specific employment outcome that is selected by the individual consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and

informed choice, and results in competitive, integrated employment. The IPE will be amended, as necessary, by the individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative, in collaboration with a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor employed by the Bureau if there are substantive changes in the employment outcome, the vocational rehabilitation services to be provided, or the providers of the vocational rehabilitation services. For a student with a disability, the IPE will consider the student's Individualized Education Program or 504 services.

For a supported employment outcome to be considered, the employment must be within an integrated work setting in the community that is at a location where the employee interacts with other persons who are not individuals with disabilities (not including supervisory personnel or individuals who are providing services to such employee) to the same extent that individuals who are not individuals with disabilities and who are in comparable positions interact with other persons, and that, as appropriate, presents opportunities for advancement that are similar to those for other employees who are not individuals with disabilities and who have similar positions.

The outcome must also be for paid employment where the client will be compensated at a wage that is not less than the rate specified in Section 6(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. 206(a)(1)) or the rate specified in the applicable State of Connecticut minimum wage law. The wage should not be less than the customary rate paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by other employees who are not individuals with disabilities, and who are similarly situated in similar occupations by the same employer and who have similar training, experience, and skills. The client will also have access to the same level of employer-offered benefits that are available to similarly situated employees within the company.

For a client for whom an employment outcome in a supported employment setting has been determined to be appropriate, the IPE or subsequent amendment developed to include supported employment must identify:

- (A) The supported employment services to be provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program;
- (B) The extended services needed by the eligible individual, which may include natural supports;
- (C) The source of extended services, or to the extent that the source of the extended services cannot be identified at the time of the development of the IPE, a description of the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that such a source will become available;
- (D) Periodic monitoring to ensure that the individual is making satisfactory progress toward meeting the weekly work requirement established in the IPE by the time of transition to extended services;
- (E) The coordination of services provided under an IPE with services provided under other individualized plans established under other federal or state programs;
- (F) The extent that job skills training is provided, and identification that the training will be provided at the job site; and
- (G) Placement in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice of the individual.

Extended Services in supported employment refer to ongoing support services and other appropriate services that are:

- (A) Organized or made available, singly or in combination, in such a way as to assist an eligible individual in maintaining supported employment;
- (B) Based on the needs of an eligible individual as specified in an IPE;
- (C) Provided by a state agency, a private nonprofit organization, employer, or any other appropriate resource, after an individual has made the transition from support provided by the Bureau, and;
- (D) Provided to youth with the most significant disabilities by the Bureau for a period of time as established by policies adopted by the Bureau, not to exceed 4 years.

Ongoing Support Services in supported employment are identified based on a determination by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program of the individual's needs as specified in an IPE, and are furnished by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program from the time of job placement until transition to extended services, unless post-employment services are provided following transition, and thereafter by one or more extended service providers throughout the individual's term of employment in a particular job placement or multiple placements if those placements are being provided under a program of transitional employment. These services include an assessment of employment stability and provision of specific services or the coordination of services at or away from the worksite that are needed to maintain stability based on:

- (A) at a minimum, twice-monthly monitoring at the worksite of each individual in supported employment; or
- (B) if under special circumstances, especially at the request of the individual, the IPE provides for off-site monitoring, twice monthly meetings with the individual, consisting of:

- (1) Any particularized assessment supplementary to the comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs;
- (2) The provision of skilled job trainers who accompany the individual for intensive job skill training at the work site;
- (3) Job development and training;
- (4) Social skills training;
- (5) Regular observation or supervision of the individual;
- (6) Follow-up services including regular contact with the employers, the individuals, the parents, family members, guardians, advocates or authorized representatives of the individuals, and other suitable professional and informed advisors, in order to reinforce and stabilize the job placement;
- (7) Facilitation of natural supports at the worksite;
- (8) Any other service identified in the scope of vocational rehabilitation services in Bureau policy.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES – BESB VR CERTIFICATIONS

State must provide written and signed certifications that: [FROM DORS-BESB]

1	The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA, and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act;
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2	As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures established by Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for provision of VR services and administration of the VR services portion of Unified or Combined State Plan;
3	As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;
4	The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement;
5	The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement.
6	All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.
7	The State Treasurer has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement;
8	The Director, Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;
9	The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

VR ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

State Plan must provide assurances that: [FROM DORS-BESB]

1	Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2	Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements

	<p>pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.</p>
3	<p>Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan: The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:</p> <p>(a) The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(b) The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (Option A or B must be selected):</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(A) Is an independent State commission.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(B) Has established a State Rehabilitation Council – YES</p> <p>(c) Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act. The non-Federal share, as described in 34 CFR 361.60.</p> <p>(d) The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds, NO</p> <p>(e) The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs, NO</p> <p>(f) State-wideness and waivers of state-wideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency is requesting or maintaining a waiver of state-wideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan? NO</p> <p>(g) The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11), (24)(B), and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(h) All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(i) The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(j) The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(k) The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities.</p> <p>(l) The submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p>
4	<p>Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:</p> <p>(j) Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in</p>

	<p>accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(k) Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of Rehabilitation Act</p> <p>(l) Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? YES</p> <p>(m) Comply with all required available comparable services and benefits, determined to be available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act and</p> <p>(n) Comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(o) Comply with requirements regarding provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(p) Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(q) Comply with requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual review, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(r) Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs</p>
5	<p>Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:</p> <p>(c) The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(d) The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.</p>
6	<p>(c) Financial Administration: The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(d) The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided</p>

	under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.
7	<p>(c) Provision of Supported Employment Services: The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.</p> <p>(d) The designated State agency assures that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act iv. An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1: Performance Goals for Core Programs

Include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability indicators based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA.

	PY 2016/FY2017		PY 2017/FY 2018	
	Year:		Year:	
	Proposed/Expected Level	Negotiated/Adjusted Level	Proposed/Expected Level	Negotiated/Adjusted Level
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)				
Adults	56.4		57.2	
Dislocated Workers	63.1		63.5	
Youth*	62.2		64	
Adult Education				
Wagner-Peyser	56%		56%	

Vocational Rehabilitation				
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)				
Adults	51.3		52.5	
Dislocated Workers	55.5		56.7	
Youth*	59.0		60.0	
Adult Education				
Wagner-Peyser	58%		58%	
Vocational Rehabilitation				

Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)				
Adults	3325.00		3419.00	
Dislocated Workers	5700.78		5791.21	
Youth	2425.61		2312.56	
Adult Education				
Wagner-Peyser	\$5,800		\$5,800	
Vocational Rehabilitation				
Credential Attainment Rate				
Adults	32		32	
Dislocated Workers	37		37	
Youth	67		68	
Adult Education				

Wagner-Peyser	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Vocational Rehabilitation				
Measurable Skill Gains				
Adults	30		30.8	
Dislocated Workers	38		38.6	
Youth	55		56.2	
Adult Education	51%	TBD	50%	TBD
Wagner-Peyser	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Vocational Rehabilitation				

Effectiveness in Serving Employers				
Adults				
Dislocated Workers				
Youth				
Adult Education				
Wagner-Peyser				
Vocational Rehabilitation				

Additional Indicators of Performance	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

Instructions: Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each State submitting a Unified or Combined Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The State is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education on state adjusted levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

To effect an orderly transition to the performance accountability system in Section 116 of the WIOA, the Departments will use the transition authority under WIOA sec. 503(a) to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators in the first plan submission. A “baseline” indicator is one for which States will not propose an expected level of performance in the plan submission and will not come to agreement with the Departments on adjusted levels of performance. “Baseline” indicators will not be used in the end of the year performance calculations and will not be used to determine failure to achieve adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The selection of primary indicators for the designation as a baseline indicator is made based on the likelihood of a state having adequate data on which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance and such a designation will vary across core programs.

States are expected to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline”. The actual performance data reported by States for indicators designated as “baseline” in the first two years of the Unified or Combined Plan will serve as baseline data in future years.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for each indicator, except for those indicators that are listed as “baseline” indicators below.

For the first Plan, the Departments will work with States during the negotiation process to establish the adjusted levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs. If necessary, some may be adjusted after the release of the final regulation and Joint Performance ICR.

Baseline Indicators for the First Two Years of the Plan

Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth):

- Measurable Skill Gains
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Title II programs (Adult Education):

- Employment in the 2nd quarter
- Employment in the 4th quarter
- Median Earnings
- Credential Attainment
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Title III programs (Wagner-Peyser):

- Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Title IV programs (Vocational Rehabilitation):

- Employment in the 2nd quarter

- Employment in the 4th quarter
- Median Earnings
- Credential Attainment
- Measurable Skill Gains
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers

States may identify additional indicators in the State plan and may establish levels of performance for each of the State indicators. Please identify any such State indicators under *Additional Indicators of Performance*.

PRA BURDENS TABLE

OMB Control Number	Topic	Estimated Total Burden	Citation for Requirement to Respond
Common Form Elements			
1205-ONEW	Common Requirements and Program-Specific requirements for: The Adult Program, the Dislocated Worker Program, the Youth Program, the Wagner-Peyser Act Program, the Adult Education and Literacy Program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Program	3,268 hours	WIOA sec. 102 and 103
1205-ONEW	Two Special Combined State Plan Questions: Section I of document “WIOA State Plan Type” and Section IV of document “Coordination.”	10 hours	WIOA sec. 102(b)(2)(C)(viii)
Supplemental Collections for Combined Plan Partners’ Program-Specific Elements			
1830-0029	Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-270) State Plan Guide	2,240 hours	Sections 122(a)(1) and 201(c) of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Act), 20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq. as amended by P.L. 109-270, and WIOA sec. 103
0970-0145	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) State Plan Guidance	594 hours	42 U.S.C. 602, and WIOA sec. 103
0584-	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	1431	7 CFR 271-274.1, and

0083	Operating Guidelines, Forms, and Waivers, Program and Budget Summary Statement	hours ⁴	WIOA sec. 103
1205-ONEW	Trade Adjustment Assistance	50 hours	WIOA sec. 103
1225-0086	Grant Application Requirements for the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program	1620 hours	38 U.S.C. § 4102A (c), and WIOA sec. 103.
1205-0132	Unemployment Insurance State Quality Service Plan Planning and Reporting Guidelines	1530 hours	29 CFR 97.40 ET Handbook No. 336 18 th Edition, and WIOA sec. 103.
1205-0040	Senior Community Service Employment Program Performance Measurement System	406 hours	20 CFR Part 641, and WIOA sec. 103
1205-ONEW	HUD Employment and Training Activities	tbd ⁵	, and WIOA sec. 103
0970-0382	Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Model Plan Applications	112 hours ⁶	Section 676(b) of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9908(b)), and WIOA sec. 103.
1205-ONEW	Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program	40 hours	WIOA sec. 103

⁴ This number represents estimated average burden for the portion of the SNAP plan that covers programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) and section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 only.

⁵ This number represents estimated average burden for the portion of HUD program plans that cover employment and training activities only.

⁶ This number represents estimated average burden for the portion of the CSBG plan that covers employment and training activities only.