

WORKFORCE ALLIANCE WIOA LOCAL PLAN 2016

Workforce Innovation & Opportunities Act services for South Central CT
Prepared by Workforce Alliance, 560 Ella T. Grasso Blvd., New Haven, CT
Draft Posted April 25, 2016
Deadline to Submit Comments: 12 Noon, May 25, 2016
Submit Comments to: aharrison@workforcealliance.biz

Bethany
Branford
Chester
Clinton
Cromwell
Deep River
Durham
East Haddam
East Hampton
East Haven
Essex
Guilford
Haddam
Hamden
Killingworth
Madison
Meriden
Middlefield
Middletown
Milford
New Haven
North Branford
North Haven
Old Saybrook
Orange
Portland
Wallingford
West Haven
Westbrook
Woodbridge

WORKFORCE ALLIANCE WIOA LOCAL PLAN

Table of Contents

- I. Organizational Structure, Page 2
- II. Environmental Scan, Page 6
- III. LWDB Vision, Goals and Strategies, Page 18
- IV. Coordination of Services, Page 25
- V. Local One-stop System, Page 29
- VI. Description of Program Services, Page 34
- VII. Attachments, See PDF document

Workforce Alliance WIOA Local Plan (DRAFT)
Spring, 2016

I. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. Chief Elected Official(s) (CEOs)

1. Identify the chief elected official(s) by name, title, mailing address, phone number and email address.

See Attachment A.

2. If the local area includes more than one unit of general local government in accordance with WIOA sec. 107(c)(1)(B), attach the agreement that has been executed to define how the parties will carry out the roles and responsibilities of the CEO.

See attachment B.

3. If applicable, attach a copy of the agreement executed between the CEO (s) and the LWDB.

See Attachment B.

4. Describe the following:

i. The nomination process used by the CEO to elect the local board chair and members;

Board officers, following a recommendation from the WDB Nominating Committee, shall be elected by the Board of Directors, and shall hold office until their term has expired or until others have been chosen in their stead. Business nominations are put forth by the Chambers of Commerce within the region. Non-business nominations are garnered by governing agencies. Board appointments are voted on as necessary at the Council meetings.

ii. The term limitations and how the term appointments will be staggered to ensure only a portion of membership expire in a given year;

An equal number of members are assigned one, two or three year terms. Board members may be reappointed for up to two additional terms.

iii. The process to notify the CEO of a board member vacancy to ensure a prompt nominee;

The Council of Chief Elected Officials meet at least twice a year. Board vacancies are communicated to the Council prior to meetings. Business nominations are put forth by the Chambers of Commerce within the region. Board appointments are voted on as necessary at the Council meetings.

- iv. The proxy and alternative designee process that will be used when a board member is unable to attend a meeting and assigns a designee as per the requirements at §679.110(d)(4) of the proposed WIOA regulations;

Board members are able to vote by proxy, by either fax or email when a board member is unable to attend a meeting.

- v. The use of technology, such as phone and Web-based meetings that will be used to promote board member participation;

Because our WDB area is accessible to major highways within the state, most meetings are in person, at a central facility. When that is not possible, we do make use of conference calls. Going forward, we will also have the capacity to conduct meetings over the internet.

- vi. The process to ensure board members actively participate in convening the workforce development system's stakeholders, brokering relationships with a diverse range of employers, and leveraging support for workforce development activities; and,

We have formed, and will continue to assemble ad-hoc workgroups of board members and stakeholders to address items of priority to the board. We have already convened a workgroup to address the basic skills gap among individuals who utilize the system, and the high wage jobs that are available. Additionally, a WIOA Stakeholder Focus Group was held on Thursday, April 14, 2015, to review an early draft of the plan, in which 23 individuals were in attendance. Some board members participated in the focus group as well. Some of our board members are new to the board; others are seasoned and understand the workings of the workforce development system. We expect that all of our board members will be advocates for the system, and will provide ongoing education and guidance as the WIOA regulations are put to life.

- vii. Any other conditions governing appointments or membership on the local board.
N/A

- 5. Provide a description of how the CEO was involved in the development, review and approval of the plan.

The Council of Chief Elected Officials Chair was present at the Board Retreat in October, 2015, and participated in the discussion of the economic factors of the region, and the emerging workforce development priorities. Members of the CEO Executive Committee have participated in professional development provided by the National Association of Workforce Boards and other entities. Additionally, many CEO's are users of the system, either directly or through their economic development or youth services offices. They make it a practice of referring jobseekers and businesses that are in need of service. They have a perspective of the system and have suggested strategies to improve these services, which have been incorporated into the plan. The CEO will have the

opportunity to review and comment of the draft plan. A meeting is scheduled in May, which will be a joint meeting of the CEO and the Workforce Alliance Board of Directors. At that meeting, it is expected that the plan will be approved.

B. Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB)

1. Provide a matrix identifying LWDB members including the category each member represents.

See Attachment D.

2. Provide a description of how the LWDB was involved in the development, review, and approval of the plan.

Responsibility for overall development of the plan is under the program of work for the Workforce Alliance Planning Committee, which is comprised of board members and other individuals whose work aligns with that of Workforce Alliance. An initial outline of planning activities was presented to the Board in fall, 2015. Initial research was presented, including the last strategic plan which was developed and adopted five years ago. This formed a framework for our discussion. The Planning Committee examined and approved the general direction of planning activities, which included focus groups, real time and traditional Labor Market Information, employer individual and group discussions and participation in state-led workgroups.

The Planning Committee and the Workforce Alliance Executive Committee were kept informed of staff work on an ongoing basis. The full board of Directors was briefed at its regular meetings. A joint meeting of the Executive Committee and Planning Committee was held on April 21, 2016, at which time the committee members voted to put the plan, in draft form, out for the mandatory 30-day review and public comment.

3. Provide an organizational chart for the LWDB and administrative support.

See Attachment E.

C. Local Administrative Entity and Grant Sub Recipient

1. Identify the administrative entity.

The administrative entity is Workforce Alliance.

2. Identify the entity selected to receive and disburse grant funds (local fiscal agent).

The local fiscal agent is Workforce Alliance.

D. One-Stop System

1. Provide a description of the local one-stop system, including the number, type and location of full-service and other service delivery points. Identify the process to select the one-stop operator.

The local one-stop system in the Workforce Alliance region utilizes a “One-Stop Operator” competitive model of service delivery. Currently, we have American Job Center (AJC) offices in New Haven, Hamden and Meriden. Additionally, because of our federal LEAP grant, an AJC opened within the New Haven Correctional Facility at Whalley Avenue in New Haven, and began serving participants in February, 2016. Currently, WIOA funded services are provided in New Haven, and Meriden. We are currently in negotiations with the Connecticut Department of Labor to identify the American Job Center located at 560 Ella T. Grasso Boulevard, as the location of the full-service center. WIOA Youth activities operate at various sites in the region, through vendor contracts.

2. Identify the entity or entities selected to operate the local one-stop center(s).

The current One-stop Operator is Human Resources Agency (HRA) of New Britain.

3. Identify the entity or entities selected to provide career services within the local one-stop system.

The current entity selected to provide career services is HRA of New Britain.

4. Identify and describe what career services will be provided by the selected one-stop operator and what career services, if any, will be contracted out to service providers.

At this writing, our intent is to have all Adult and Dislocated Worker career services provided by the selected One-Stop operator. The “sequencing of services” will be eliminated, and core and intensive activities under WIA will be combined into a ‘career services’ category in which workforce staff will have the flexibility to better meet the unique needs of individual job seekers. Career services consist of activities such as, determining eligibility to receive assistance under WIOA, outreach, intake and orientation, initial assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, and supportive service needs, job search and placement assistance and where appropriate career counseling, provision of Labor Market Information, provision of performance information and cost information on eligible providers of training services. Sector focused pathways to careers will be encouraged and will place job seekers on a clear career pathway towards their employment goals.

Youth career services are currently conducted initially by the One-Stop operator and then referrals for additional career services and training services are made accordingly, to contracted WIOA-Y service providers and/or partners. It is our intent to provide additional services, activities and programs to youth in the AJCs beginning in 2017.

II. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

1. Provide an analysis of the local area’s economic conditions, including information on existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

INTRODUCTION

The South Central Workforce Investment Area, encompassing 30 towns in South Central Connecticut, and the New Haven Labor Market Area (NH LMA), has experienced a strong recovery from the effects of the great recession,

Table 1: South Central CT Job Erosion vs. Job Recovery (March 2016)

Indicator	US	CT	NH LMA
Job Peak (thousands)	138,432	1,713	282
Job Trough (thousands)	129,733	1,594	264
Absolute Loss (thousands)	8,699	119	18.1
% Loss: (Erosion Rate)	6.3%	7.0%	6.4%
Current Jobs (thousands)	143,774	1,686	280
Job Gain from Low (thousands)	14,041	91	16.4
% Gain (Recovery Rate)	161.4%	76.7%	90.6%

Workforce Alliance Data Quarterly, DataCore Partners LLC March 2016

rate of 76.7% but below the national rate of 161.4%. From 2000 to 2014, the region’s population grew by 4.9%, slightly under the state’s growth rate of 5.6% during the same time period.

The South Central region’s unemployment rate has fallen over the last five years from a high of 9.2% in 2010 to 5.6% in 2015. While this shows a substantial recovery, the unemployment rate remains higher than it was pre-recession (4.3% in 2007).¹ However, the number and rate of job openings are higher than pre-recession levels, and the overall labor force has increased by 2.5%. Table 2 shows that, according to a March 2016 report by Monster Government Solutions, total job postings in the region rose from the final quarter of 2014 to the final quarter of 2015 by 15,024 (or 11%) to 150,796 postings – an all-time high. The City of New Haven, which represents 40% of the South Central region’s job posting volume, experienced a 3% increase in job postings from

surpassing that of the state of Connecticut as a whole. As of March 2016, the region had recovered 90.6% of the jobs lost as a result of the great recession, higher than the state’s recovery

Table 2: Job Postings by Sub-Region: South Central CT 2014-2015

	2014	2015	% Change
New Haven	58,767	60,782	3.4%
Greater New Haven	59,499	69,333	16.5%
Rest of South Central	17,506	20,681	18.1%
TOTAL	135,772	150,796	11.1%

Key Labor Market Trends: Monster Government Solutions, 2016

¹ CT DOL Annual Workforce Investment Area Information. Accessed March, 2016.

2014 to 2015.² The region has also seen growth in the number of business establishments compared to pre-recession levels, reaching an all-time high of 21,100 in 2013 (an increase of 225 establishments since 2008).³

The following sections discuss economic and employment information and trends, as well as demographic information relevant to Workforce Alliance’s planning efforts to educate and train residents of South Central Connecticut in search of employment.

EXISTING AND EMERGING IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS

Every two years economists at the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) Office of Research create ten-year industry and occupational employment forecasts. The most recent forecasts at the time of this document’s publishing utilize 2012 data as the base year, and project employment trends out to the year 2022. The purpose of these forecasts are to assist students, schools, training programs, businesses, and governments to make informed planning decisions.

Industry Forecasts. The latest CTDOL forecasts project the highest growing industry sector in the region to be Health Care and Social Assistance (a ten-year growth of 13,554 new jobs), followed by Educational Services (5,600 jobs), and Administrative, Support, Waste Management and Remediation Services (3,461 jobs). Table 3, below, shows the top five industries predicted to grow by the largest number of jobs over the next ten years.

Table 3: Top Five Growing Industry Sectors 2012-2022

Industry Sector	Estimated '12	Projected '22	# Change	% Change
Health and Social Assistance	67,480	81,034	13,554	20.1
Educational Services	52,442	58,042	5,600	10.7
Admin., Sup., Waste Man., Serv.	18,806	22,267	3,461	18.4
Prof., Scientific, and Tech. Services	14,154	17,068	2,914	20.6
Construction	11,492	13,793	2,301	20.0

CTDOL Industry Growth Projections SC WIA 2012-2022

Occupational Forecasts. The latest CTDOL forecasts project Health Practitioners and Technicians to be the highest growing occupational category over the next ten years, growing by 4,736 jobs or 17.8%. The next highest occupational growth categories are Education, Training, and Library Services (4,153 jobs, 12.4%) and Personal Care and Service occupations

² Key Labor Market Trends: Real-Time Labor Intelligence Research for South Central CT. Monster Government Solutions, March 2016.

³ Economic and Demographic Profile of the Workforce Alliance Region. CERC 2015.

Table 4: Top Five Growing Occupational Categories 2012-2022

Industry Sector	Estimated '12	Projected '22	# Change	% Change
Health Practitioners and Tech.	26,644	31,380	4,736	17.8%
Educ., Training, & Library	33,393	37,546	4,153	12.4%
Personal Care and Service	16,787	20,185	3,398	20.2%
Office and Admin. Support	55,463	58,330	2,867	5.2%
Management	23,422	25,553	2,131	9.1%

CTDOL Occupational Growth Projections SC WIA 2012-2022

(3,398 jobs, 20.2%).⁴ These projections align with historical occupational growth with Education and Health Services occupations having seen the highest growth over the past decade. Table 4 shows the top five occupational categories predicted to grow by the largest number of jobs over the next ten years.

From 2010 to 2014, two of the five occupational sectors predicted to grow the most by 2022 have also experienced significant positive aggregate dollar shifts. The Management occupational sector has seen a \$174.6 million shift and the Health Care and Social Assistance occupational sector a \$154.6 million shift.⁵ Aggregate dollar shifts signal growth (a positive shift) or decline (a negative shift) in a particular sector, and are calculated by multiplying job losses/gains by the average annual salary.

2. Provide an analysis of the employment needs of employers in those industry sectors and occupations.

Health and Personal Care Sector. Factors such as the passage of the Affordable Care Act, an aging population, as well as other demographic and workforce shifts have and will continue to fuel growth in the health and personal care sectors. As more Americans become insured, access to medical care will increase, leading to a more fiscally healthy health care system.⁶ Hospitals are the single largest employer within the health and personal care sector. The South Central region is home to the largest hospital network in the state of Connecticut, Yale New Haven Hospital. Additionally, rapid growth of rehabilitation services in traditional nursing homes is driving a need for ongoing specialized training within the healthcare sector. For instance, an increasing number of CNAs currently trained in caring for the elderly are in need of additional training in rehabilitation therapy services.

⁴ CT DOL 2012-2022 Occupational Growth Projections for South Central Connecticut. Accessed April, 2016.

⁵ Workforce Alliance Data Quarterly, September 2015. DataCore Partners, LLC

⁶ U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services:

<http://www.hhs.gov/healthcare/facts-and-features/fact-sheets/aca-is-working/index.html>

Table 5: Job Postings, South Central CT 2013-2015

Employer	2013	2014	2015
Yale-NH Hospital	3,490	4,388	3,157
Anthem, Inc.	565	1,439	1,651
Medtronic	796	578	974
Genesis Healthcare	428	438	427

Monster Government Solutions Report

Relative to the state, the region’s concentration of Health Care and Social Assistance employment is 1.14 times higher. Within New Haven, that concentration is 1.34 times higher than state averages.⁷ With such a high concentration of employment as well as high growth projections, Workforce Alliance

identifies Health Care and Social Assistance as a priority sector in the region. From 2013 to 2015, four of the top fifteen hiring employers in the region were in the Health Care and Social Assistance sector: Yale-New Haven Hospital (2nd most hires), Anthem, Inc. (3rd most), Medtronic (4th), and Genesis Healthcare (11th) (Table 5).

Educational Services. The South Central region’s concentration of employment in the educational services sector 2.2 times higher than that of the rest of the state, and 3.8 times higher than national averages.⁸ This is due in large part to Yale University, the single largest employer in the region, which has posted roughly 4,000 jobs annually from 2013-2015.⁹ As mentioned on page 7, the CTDOL forecasts the educational services sector to see the second highest job growth in the region. The educational occupation projected to grow by the largest number of jobs by 2022 are Preschool, Primary, Secondary, and Special Education School Teachers. These occupations are predicted to add 1,428 jobs, or 13.2% by 2022.

While many occupations in the educational services sector have significant educational requirements, a large portion do not such as: information technology, financial services and billing, and building grounds and maintenance workers. These support occupations will grow alongside others in the educational sector. Workforce Alliance plans to partner with community colleges to match employment needs with training for these support occupations. This partnership has the potential to create a two-generational solution, as the children of community college employees may attend the college tuition free – paving the way for the next generation’s success.

STEM-related occupations remain among the hardest occupations to fill including: computer and mathematical, architecture, and engineering occupations. Connecticut employers’ difficulty filling STEM-related occupations mirrors a nationwide issue. According to a 2014 report from the Brookings Institution, employers are spending twice as long recruiting for STEM positions as compared to non-STEM positions. Among the 100 largest metropolitan areas in the United States, the New Haven-Milford, CT metro-area ranks 21st (a rank

⁷ CT DOL Workforce Investment Area Planning Information. Accessed April, 2016.

⁸ CT DOL Workforce Investment Area Planning Information, Accessed 2016.

⁹ Key Labor Market Trends: Real-Time Labor Intelligence Research for South Central CT. Monster Government Solutions, March 2016.

of 1 indicates the largest number of days) in the number of days it takes to fill a STEM-related job advertisement (39.9 days), 41st in the percentage of job advertisements requiring STEM skills (39.8%), and 14th in the share of ads requiring STEM skills and a sub-bachelor’s level of education (14.7%).¹⁰ With some STEM skills training, these jobs represent potential employment for the portion of the population lacking a bachelor’s degree.

Despite relatively higher salaries, the supply of workers with specific high-value skills needed by employers common to STEM occupations remains insufficient.

Information Technology (IT) Sector. Information Technology represents one of the South Central region’s super-sectors. The Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sector is

Among the top five growing industry sectors in the region (see table 3 on page 7). Within this sector, Computer Systems Design and Related Services occupations are projected to grow by a staggering 44.9% or 1,014 jobs by 2022. Among low and mid-skill IT occupations,

employers in the SC region posted 1,700 job ads in 2015, an increase of 152 ads (or 10%) over 2014. Colleges, universities, and professional schools represented the highest share of job advertisements in 2015. Table 7 shows the top five low to mid-level skill IT occupations in the SC region. Of note is the number of job advertisements for web developers decreased by 14% from 2014 to 2015.

Table 7: Low and Mid-skill Level IT Job Postings, South Central 2015

Occupation	Share (%)
Computer User Support Spec.	62%
Web Developers	36%
Computer Operators	1%
Computer Network Support Spec.	1%
Desktop Publishers	1%

Monster Government Solutions Report

Manufacturing Sector. The manufacturing sector faces two important challenges that also represent potential opportunities for the region: 1) manufacturers have unfilled positions due to current job-skills mismatches; and 2) manufacturers forecast future openings due to an aging and retiring workforce. At a recent Workforce Alliance Manufacturing Focus Group, local manufacturers reported significant growth and signaled a need for skilled labor. Virtually all focus group attendees indicated that the lack of skilled workers is inhibiting their ability to grow. A 2014 survey of 246 Connecticut manufacturing company leaders concluded that “the greatest barrier to expanding [businesses’] capabilities in advanced manufacturing technology is not cost or lack of time, but lack of talent.”¹¹ The need for a skilled workforce will only increase as the manufacturing industry rebounds and the aging manufacturing workforce continues to retire. WFA is working to capitalize on these needs by developing programs and services to train the region’s workforce for these in-demand occupations.

¹⁰ *Still Searching: Job Vacancies and STEM Skills*. Rothwell, Jonathan. Brookings Institution, 2014.

¹¹ Connecticut Business & Industry Association. *2014 Survey of Connecticut Manufacturing Workforce Needs*.

The manufacturing industry in Connecticut is in the midst of a renaissance, as the aerospace and shipbuilding sectors expand due primarily to Pratt and Whitney's development of the F-135 aircraft engine and Electric Boat's Virginia Class submarine program, both of which have a ripple effect throughout the statewide supply chain. Total job postings within the manufacturing cluster rose by 348 ads, or 12%, in 2015 compared to 2014. The occupations generating the majority of this growth are the Computer-controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal/Plastic occupations, representing 114 of the total 348 additional ads in 2015 (44%). Overall demand for the 17 occupations that comprise the manufacturing cluster was up 12% in 2015 in the SC region compared to 2014 (23% statewide).¹²

3. Provide an analysis of the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs in in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

Health-related Knowledge and Skills. The Health Care sector offers career pathway opportunities to residents, as entry-level jobs within the sector may lead to higher-paying careers. For instance, within the Personal Care and Service occupations category (projected to grow by 20.2% and 3,398 jobs by 2022), 65% (2,209) of those jobs are projected to be Personal Care Aides (PCA).¹³ PCAs, and a host of other health-related entry level positions (e.g. Personal Care Technicians, Home Health Aids, Nursing Assistants) offer workers opportunities to pursue careers rather than just a job. For example, a worker with experience as a Personal Care Aid could, through on-the-job training and further experience, progress to a role as a nursing assistant or even a licensed practical or vocational nurse.

Many of these in-demand positions within the health and personal care sectors (e.g. Personal Care Aids, Nursing Assistants, Patient Care Technicians, and Community Health Workers) appeared on the Health and Human Services list of "Promising Occupations Achievable through Short-term Education or Training for Low-Income Families."¹⁴ Often times these occupations do not require a post-secondary degree. Instead, many of these occupations require only a post-secondary certificate (and only a high school diploma or equivalent as pre-requisites), making them ideal positions for which to train unemployed or underemployed workers. Providing assistance to doctors and nurses, these occupations play an increasingly important role in successful healthcare delivery.

Educational Knowledge and Skills. Within the Educational sector, the occupation with the largest projected growth is post-secondary teachers adding 1,914 jobs or 13.9%, followed by preschool, primary, secondary, and special

¹² Key Labor Market Trends: Manufacturing Cluster. Real-Time Labor Intelligence Research for South Central CT. Draft Report. Monster Government Solutions, April 2016.

¹³ CT DOL Occupational Employment Projections, 2012-2022.

¹⁴ http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/tanf_sectors_region_1_020216_b508.pdf

education school teachers which is expected to add 1,428 jobs or 13.2%.¹⁵ Nearly all education-related jobs, especially public ones, require at least a bachelor's degree, while the majority of post-secondary teaching occupations require a doctor's degree. The educational requirements of this sector present a significant barrier for a large portion of those seeking employment, and for the majority of WFA clients.

STEM-related Knowledge and Skills (Including IT). Similar to the educational sector, occupations requiring STEM-related knowledge and skills including information technology, computer and mathematical, and professional and technical occupations, require a bachelor's degree. However certain occupations require only an associate's degree including Computer Network Support Specialists (which is not predicted to grow within the region), and Web Developers (predicted to grow by 13.7%, adding 47 jobs by 2022).¹⁶

Manufacturing Knowledge and Skills. Manufacturing occupations, including machinists and welders (two occupational categories projected to grow), require a range of skills including: analytical, mechanical, and technical skills. Workforce Alliance aims to provide much of the necessary core education and skills training through its AJCs, partnerships with local community colleges, technical high schools and 4-year colleges and universities, as well coordinated on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs at many local and regional manufacturing companies.

4. Provide an analysis of the workforce in the region, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region, including individuals with barriers to employment.

Employment & Unemployment Data. The South Central region has seen a strong recovery from the negative effects of the Great Recession. Since 2007, the number of employed persons within the region has increased by 1.6% or 5,782 jobs. While the region's 2015 unemployment percentage (5.6%) is above its pre-recession level (4.7% in 2007), it has steadily declined since its high of 9.2% in 2010. From 2007 to 2015, the region's labor force grew by 2.5% or 9,836 workers.¹⁷ Table 8, summarizes the region's employment and unemployment information from 2007 to 2015.

¹⁵ CT DOL Occupational Employment Projections, 2012-2022.

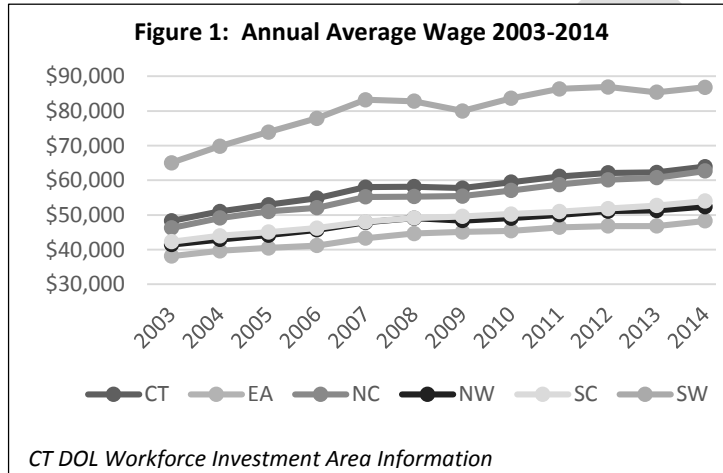
¹⁶ CT DOL Occupational Employment Projections, 2012-2022.

¹⁷ CT DOL Workforce Investment Area Planning Information. Accessed April, 2016.

Table 8: South Central Current and Historical Employment Information¹⁸

Indicator	2015	2010		2007 (Pre-Recession)	
	Current	2010	5-Year Δ	2007	8-Year Δ
Employed	376,882	367,176	+9,706	371,100	+5,782
Unemployed	22,254	37,080	-14,826	18,100	+4,154
Unemployment rate (%)	5.6%	9.2%	-4	4.7%	+1

Local Wage Information. Annual average wages within the South Central region have remained below state averages from 2003-2014. In 2014, the average



annual wage in the region was \$54,003, \$9,956 less than Connecticut's average wage. However, wages throughout the region and state have been trending upward since 2003, increasing by 27.7% in the region and 32.4% statewide. Figure 1 shows wage trends from 2003 to 2014. The SC region's trend line

(lightest) overlaps with the Northwest Region's (darkest), until the SC region's takes a sharper jump beginning in 2013.

Table 9 shows average and entry level annual hourly wages for the five occupational groups projected to grow by the largest number of jobs over the next ten years.

Table 9: Local Job Sector Wages – Top Five Occupation Sectors (Q1 2015)

Occupational Sector	Average Wage		Entry Level Wage	
	\$/Hr	\$/Yr	\$/Hr	\$/Yr
Health Practitioners and Tech.	39.29	81,735	22.50	46,798
Educ., Training, & Library	33.66	70,029	14.34	29,823
Personal Care and Service	14.31	29,764	9.86	20,516
Office and Admin. Support	20.18	41,981	12.37	25,725
Management	58.63	121,940	31.87	66,279

CT DOL Occupational Wages SC WIA Q1 2015

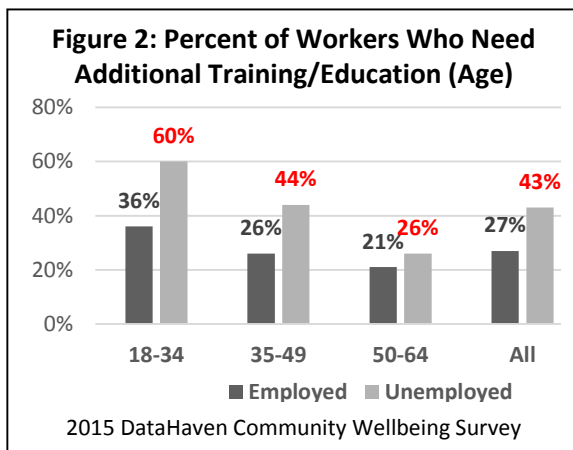
Educational and Skill Levels of Workforce. The South Central region has an educated workforce. Thirty-seven (37) percent of the region's residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher,¹⁹ in line with state percentages and 8% higher than

¹⁸ CT DOL Workforce Investment Area Planning Information. Accessed April, 2016.

¹⁹ American Community Survey, Decennial Census

the national average.²⁰ The region’s four-year high school graduation rate of 85.6% mirrors that of the state as a whole (85.5%).²¹ The percentage of the region’s residents lacking a high school diploma or GED at 9.8% is 0.7% lower than the state (10.5%), and 3.9% lower than the national average of 13.7%.²²

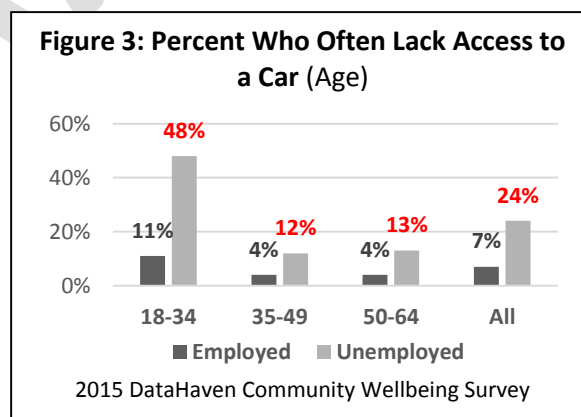
Employed vs. Unemployed Demographic Information.²³ Stark differences in the region’s employed and unemployed were revealed in a 2015 DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey of 2,872 residents.



Forty three percent of unemployed residents in the region felt they needed more *training and/or education* in order to “get ahead in their career,” compared to 27% of employed residents (more than 1.5 times as many). Figure 2 shows the percentage of residents who indicated that they needed additional training and/or education in order to get ahead in their career by age. Nearly 1.7 times as many unemployed residents ages 18-34 felt they needed additional

training/education compared to employed residents age 18-34 (the largest percentage difference among age groups).

Figure 3 shows that *Transportation*, specifically access to a car when needed, can pose another significant barrier to employment. Almost 3.5 times (24%) as many unemployed residents reported they often do not have access to a car when needed, compared to employed residents (7%). Black and African American respondents reported the greatest disparity, with 48% of unemployed Black residents reporting they often do not have access to a car when needed, compared to only 13% among employed Black respondents.



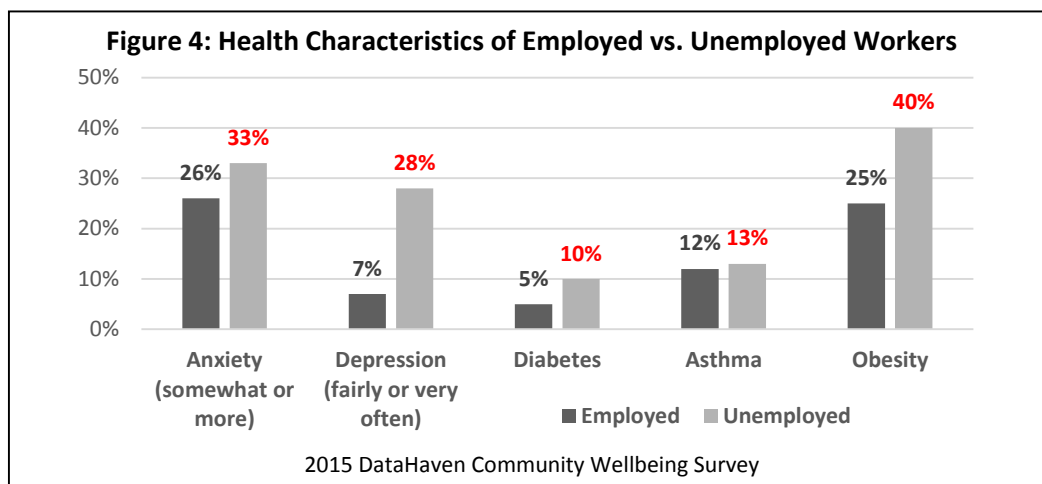
²⁰ United States Census Bureau, 2010-2014. <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/09,00>

²¹ CT DOL WIA Planning Information. Accessed April, 2016.

²² United States Census Bureau, 2010-2014. <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/09,00>

²³ 2015 DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey

In regard to potential *health barriers* to employment, unemployed residents reported higher percentages of anxiety (7% higher), depression (21% higher), diabetes (5% higher), obesity (15% higher), and asthma (1% higher) as compared to employed residents. Figure 4 compares health characteristics among employed and unemployed survey respondents in the region.



Under-employment. When accounting for part-time workers who would prefer to work full-time, as well as workers who may not have been actively looking for work in the past 30 days, the actual under-employment rate is at least double the official unemployment rate. For example, in 2015 DataHaven found under-employment rates of 14% statewide, 20% in New Haven, and 27% in Meriden.

5. Provide an analysis of the workforce development activities (including education and training) in the region, including an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of such services and the capacity to provide such services, to address the identified education and skill needs of the workforce and employment needs of employers in the region.

Workforce Alliance provides a wide range of workforce development activities including:

- ***Individual Training Accounts*** for WIOA-eligible adults, dislocated workers, and TANF recipients. Customers select occupational training options from the state-approved provider list of vendor institutions. Services are arranged through the One-stop.
- ***On the Job Training (OJT)*** for WIOA /TANF eligible, underemployed or long-term unemployed individuals. Individuals who are job ready but who lack specific occupational skills are likely candidates for OJT. One-stop Job Developers match jobseekers with employers who are willing to provide the skills training, and are reimbursed for a specific period to offset training costs.

- **Customized Training** in which an employer or consortium of employers design curriculum and agree to interview and/or hire successful program graduates.
- **Incumbent Worker Training (IWT)** is available to help companies grow and maintain competitiveness by investing in training of their existing workforce. Training programs may include training designed to increase the basic skills of employees including, but not limited to, training in written and oral communication, mathematics or science, or training in technical and technological skills. Incumbent Worker Training grants are structured to be flexible to meet the business's training objectives.

Please see SECTION IV Coordination of Services for more information.

6. Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area.

Please see information regarding workforce development activities described in number 5 above.

7. Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area, including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities. The description and assessment must include an identification of successful models of such youth workforce investment activities.

The Workforce Alliance Youth Committee includes Board Members, stakeholders and young people from the community who all share a mission.

Together, the Committee devises strategic themes for action, and oversees youth training opportunities. The following are examples of these programs:

- **Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES):** A year-Round Youth Program that specifically targets and works with students between the ages of 16-21 with physical, emotional and learning disabilities. The program offers a continuum of academic, career development, employment, and support and transition services to eligible students. Students participate in summer and year-round activities while they complete their high school education requirements and earn a diploma. Services offered through this program motivate students to stay in school, demonstrate their value in the adult world of work and dramatically increase their chances of success as they enter the competitive labor market.
- **The Children's Community Program of CT – In-School Youth Program** serves in-school youth in grades 11 through 12, many of whom have been or are involved in the juvenile justice system. Referrals are made through arrangements with the Street Outreach Worker Program, New Haven Police Department, and the New Haven Board of Education. Students receive academic guidance/counseling and paid work experiences during the year.

- Career-related workshops are provided in the following areas: career identification, making informed career decisions, career plan development, understanding the importance of education and its relation to employment, and developing an educational plan. Goal setting, action planning and real-life application supplement skills development in the classroom.
- *Summer Youth Employment Program*: every summer, Workforce Alliance puts more than 1,000 young people to work across the region. Over the last five years, Workforce Alliance Summer Youth Employment programs have included a collaboration with the State Department of Children and Families to put youth into jobs via programs operated by municipalities, boards of education, and chambers of commerce. WFA plans to expand this program to 25 of the regions 30 towns by the summer of 2016.
- *The Common Ground* year-round program provides assistance to eligible youth with real work, opportunities for learning and leadership, and individualized supports. The program provides participants with work-based learning experiences with an emphasis on Green Jobs. Work experience activities – ranging in length from six (6) to 12 weeks, for between five (5) and 25 hours per week – represent the defining feature of the program. Some students work as facilitators for after-school environmental programs, while others help with outside gardening, tree planting and maintaining school grounds, gardens and parks throughout the City of New Haven. The program also helps youth with resume writing and interviewing skills. Youth attend workshops throughout their participation in Green Job Corps to make them feel more comfortable and experienced while getting out into the world of work.
- *Hamden Public Schools Limited Internship Program* provides an incentive to employers to train and hire students who are educationally and economically disadvantaged as identified by receiving special education services. This program provides students with individualized job development, training structure and job coaching in a year-round supported program. Students enrolled in the Limited Internship Program have ongoing career development and are placed into work experience activities after school.

Workforce Alliance recently submitted an application to the Department of Rehabilitation Services for consideration as a qualified contractor to deliver *pre-employment transition services (PETS)* focused on workplace readiness training to high school students with disabilities, ages 16-21. If selected, Workforce Alliance will hire a Transition Facilitator who will lead the development and implementation of the program and deliver Workforce Alliance's PETS at its three American Job Centers.

8. Identify gaps in service based on the above analyses.

Skills Gap. One of the greatest challenges facing the region is a lack of workers trained and educated for in-demand occupations. Employers in the region report

shortages for qualified workers in the area's in-demand sectors, including the health, manufacturing, and information technology. In order to meet this challenge, and to ensure that our AJC customers receive the best in customer service to help them advance along their desired career pathways, Workforce Alliance will transition to a customer-centered case management methodology. The large scope of the skills gap challenge requires a coordinated response among workforce stakeholders. Through the implementation of these strategies, Workforce Alliance will work to address both the demand and supply side of the skills gap issue (see Section III, OUR STRATEGIES for more information).

Transportation. Another significant barrier to employment for much of the region's residents is a lack of transportation. The 2015 DataHaven Survey results show the magnitude of the problem (see demographic information under number 4, above). Workforce Alliance will work with ride-sharing services to pilot a customized menu of transportation services for AJC customers who lack transportation to interviews and employment (see Section III, OUR STRATEGIES for more information).

Reintegrating Ex-Offenders. Reducing the prison population and reintegrating nonviolent ex-offenders into society is both economically and socially important to the region. Workforce Alliance will work with local, state, and non-profit entities to help the ex-offender population become contributing members of society (see Section III, OUR STRATEGIES for more information).

Youth. The region's public workforce system does not offer adequate options for youth and young adults. The transition to a customer-centered case management system will allow Workforce Alliance to better serve the region's young people, in particular out-of-school youth. Additionally, Workforce Alliance will prioritize a capacity to provide youth programs in the procurement of the One-Stop operator (see Section III, OUR STRATEGIES for more information).

III. LWDB VISION, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. Identify the vision, goals and strategies adopted by the LWDB in response to the passage of WIOA and how these will affect the preparation of an educated and skilled workforce.

OUR VISION

To work with our partners to cultivate the highly-skilled, high-quality workers needed for regional employers to prosper and grow.

Our vision embraces the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) emphasis on partnership, alignment and systems integration, as well as WIOA's dual focus on developing a supply of highly-qualified workers while meeting the hiring demands of employers.

Our vision aligns with Governor Malloy’s workforce vision for our state, which also serves as the vision in Connecticut’s WIOA Unified State Plan: *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.*

OUR GOALS

Our goals align with WIOA priorities and the goals of the Unified State Plan while capturing our region’s unique priorities.

- 1. *Make the regional public workforce system more customer-centered.***
Customer-centered service involves restructuring the traditional service delivery process to make it more responsive to customer capacities, needs, desires, and rights to self-determination – in other words, using a strength-based approach rather than an approach that focuses primarily on deficits and barriers. Customer-centered case management begins with the customer’s goals rather than organizational service or program goals. Customer-centered services support the individual’s capacity to overcome barriers, utilize their personal strengths, and navigate a variety of service systems.
- 2. *Improve access to the public workforce system for residents throughout the region.*** Three American Job Centers (AJCs) in New Haven, Hamden, and Meriden represent the main points of entry for most regional customers of the public workforce system. Unemployment and underemployment affect residents in every one of the 30 towns in our workforce investment area, however. To increase access to our services for people across the region, we must become more agile and flexible, utilizing technology to reach more people more efficiently and bringing our services to people where they live, work, and congregate. Connecticut’s new public workforce management information system (CTHires) includes a more portable case management function that will allow us to provide more remote services.
- 3. *Increase the level of coordination, integration, and responsiveness of Business Services.*** Our Business Services Team ensures that the regional public workforce system responds to the talent demands of area employers. We must improve coordination between Business Services and all other areas of the system, and cross-train Business Services and other AJC staff as a means to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of Business Services and the greater adoption of a demand-driven mindset throughout our system.
- 4. *Increase the level and accessibility of American Job Center services for young adults and persons with disabilities.*** Many of the young adults and persons with disabilities served at our AJCs face multiple barriers to

employment. Basic skills deficits represent a common barrier among these populations (roughly 70 percent of all AJC populations test as basic skills deficient in math, literacy or both), but other factors such as physical disabilities, mental health issues, and limited work experience also frequently present challenges to employment. Traditionally, we have offered few viable options to help these populations advance in their career paths, as their needs are too extensive for Adult Basic Education (and many are high school graduates so not eligible for ABE), but they are not prepared to succeed in occupational training. Through customer-centered case management (see Goal #1) and other strategies, we will develop strength-based employment plans that move young adults and persons with disabilities along their desired career pathways.

OUR STRATEGIES

The following paragraphs describe several strategies we will utilize to accomplish our vision and goals.

- *Transition to a customer-centered case management methodology in our American Job Centers.* To ensure that our AJC customers receive the best in customer service to help them advance along their desired career pathways, we will transition to a customer-centered case management methodology as fully as possible within our resource constraints. We have begun this transition within the past year through utilization of a customer-centered case management approach on a limited basis for two discrete projects: the South Central Connecticut Secure Jobs project and the Health Careers Advancement Project (HCAP). Through these projects, we are learning about the potential and limitations of customer-centered practice within the public workforce system, including the financial implications of moving to the smaller caseloads required to utilize a customer-centered approach. We will apply these lessons learned to the broader roll-out of customer-centered practice throughout the American Job Centers. We will prioritize the ability to provide customer-centered case management in our procurement of a One-Stop operator to ensure the commitment and capacity of our One-Stop operator to deliver this vital service.
- *Utilize customer-centered practice to increase cross-system integration.* Communication among all of the agencies and systems that touch an individual represents a cornerstone of customer-centered case management. In a very real sense, the customer sits in the middle and everything revolves around him/her – a constellation of service providers works together and with the customer to achieve the goals the customer defines. For the Workforce Alliance, this will require a greater degree of communication and integration with our partners within and outside of the public workforce system – a hallmark of WIOA. Among other examples, we will work more closely with: a) our regional Adult

Education providers to address basic skills issues; b) the State Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) to better integrate services for individuals with disabilities; and c) the State Department of Social Services (DSS) to better integrate services for our Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) customers who receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

- ***Work with all stakeholders to address skills gaps.*** Skills gaps represent the greatest single barrier to the achievement of our vision of a high-quality, highly-skilled regional workforce. The skills gap challenge is so large that it will require a coordinated response from every stakeholder along the continuum of workforce stakeholders. To address the demand side of the skills gap issue, therefore, we will increase our work with local employers to determine where skill gaps exist and to fully understand employer needs. With this information in hand, we will convene all of our partners in the regional workforce development system – including K-12 partners, Adult Education providers, community colleges, and economic development stakeholders – to develop coordinated, integrated strategies to address these skill gaps. We will employ every tool in our toolkit – including career pathways, customized training, incumbent worker training, on-the-job training and apprenticeships – to work with our partners to ensure that the skills of our workers better match the needs of our employers.
- ***Develop innovative solutions to address transportation barriers.*** As noted in the Environmental Scan section and elsewhere, transportation access remains an intractable barrier to education, training, and employment for many residents in our region. In the absence of massive State investments in the region’s public transportation infrastructure or smaller-scale State funding to support customized transportation assistance, we will continue to expand our existing menu of transportation options (e.g., bus passes, gas cards, mileage reimbursement) and increase our collaboration with CTRides. Workforce Alliance staff and Board leadership acknowledge that these existing options offer little help to customers who live and/or work in areas with limited or no public transportation. In response, we will work with ride-sharing services (e.g., Uber) to pilot a first-in-the-nation customized menu of transportation services for our AJC customers who lack public transportation options for interviews and employment. We look forward to learning from this and other innovative solutions to transportation barriers to improve employment access for our customers and to lead the replication of effective strategies statewide and nationally.
- ***Reintegrate ex-offenders into the workforce.*** The public and legislators on both sides of the aisle recognize the social and economic imperative to reduce the prison population and to reintegrate nonviolent ex-offenders into society and the workforce. In July 2015, Governor Malloy signed

into law the "Second Chance Society" bill that focuses (in the Governor's words) "on turning nonviolent offenders into productive members of our society that can contribute to our economy, rather than drain it." In support of this priority, the Workforce Alliance will continue to build upon the success of our Next Steps Re-Entry program, which has offered employment services to former inmates for more than a decade, resulting in over 1560 job placements for ex-offenders since 2003. We prioritized services to ex-offenders in our 2016 procurement of a One-Stop operator. In February 2016, as part of the Second Chance Society initiatives, the Workforce Alliance – in partnership with the City of New Haven and the Connecticut Department of Correction – opened an AJC within the New Haven Correctional Center. This is a first-of-its-kind AJC at a Connecticut correctional facility, and one of only 12 in the country. The new AJC will provide workshops, job search services, and referrals to inmates within six months prior to the end of their sentence. The lessons learned from this innovative initiative will inform continued efforts to help the growing ex-offender population contribute to a vital regional workforce.

- *Increase efforts to engage out-of-school youth in education, training, and employment services.* As noted in Goal #4 above, the public workforce system currently offers too few viable options to serving youth, particularly out-of-school youth. The use of customer-centered case management (strategy #1) will help to engage out-of-school youth by meeting them where they are and focusing on *their goals* rather than goals imposed on them by a system or program. In addition, we are prioritizing the capacity to serve youth in our procurement for our One-Stop operator, and we will provide professional development to our selected vendors to increase their willingness to serve older youth, and their skills for successfully working with this population. This will help to facilitate a smooth transition from WIA Youth programs to WIOA Youth programs, turning this population into an asset in our regional talent pipeline.
- *Improve our responsiveness to the needs of underemployed workers.* Underemployed workers typically represent a difficult population to engage deeply in workforce development services due to their work and family obligations. Underemployed workers who pursue education or training often drop out because they are forced – in order to make ends meet – to take part-time jobs or adjust their work schedules in ways that conflict with their education and training schedules. We will continue to explore strategies to better serve this population, such as through the expansion of short-term customized training options that enable workers to quickly obtain skills and credentials without forgoing a great deal of income or unemployment benefits and through innovative transportation strategies (see the previous strategy on addressing transportation barriers).

- ***Make Business Services more employer-driven.*** To increase the integration of Business Services with other areas of our system, and ensure that Business Services has the tools and information to respond directly to employer needs, Workforce Alliance, we will establish an Employer Advisory Committee comprised of employers from our current priority sectors as well as from declining sectors. Business Services staff members will participate in the Employer Advisory Committee. This strategy, along with cross-training of Business Services and AJC staff, as well as cross-selling Business Services and AJC services, will increase the effectiveness of the Business Services Team in addressing employer needs.
 - ***Give individuals with disabilities the tools they need to achieve their goals.*** Just like other populations with barriers to employment, individuals with disabilities have the potential to become valuable assets in the regional workforce. Traditionally, an AJC customer with a disability would be directly referred to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) for services. Due to the WIOA emphasis on systems integration and our focus on customer-centered practice, AJC staff will now work more closely with partners such as VR to meet all of the needs of customers with disabilities as they move through the public workforce system and our partner systems. This process will involve concurrent service planning, rather than sequential planning or simply a referral, to ensure that services are better coordinated and customers gain access to all of the tools they need to achieve their employment goals. In addition, we are prioritizing the capacity to serve individuals with disabilities in our procurement of a One-Stop operator.
2. Describe the process used to develop the LWDB's vision and goals, including a description of the participants in the process.

Workforce Alliance has incorporated extensive involvement from workforce development stakeholders and the public in the development of its vision and goals. The following bullets capture highlights of this process, including the participants involved in each portion of the process.

- We convened *focus groups with employers* from our priority industries, including information technology, manufacturing, and health care. Over 30 regional employers participated in these focus groups, which gave employers the opportunity to talk about their current and future workforce challenges.
- We organized and facilitated a *stakeholder meeting* to invite broad input on our vision, goals, and strategies. Invitees to this meeting included representatives from local United Ways, the Melville Charitable Trust, local housing authorities, employers, the State Department of Social Services, the State Department of Labor, the 2Generational pilot

programs, homeless advocates, the Secure Jobs pilot, Adult Education providers, and the current One-stop Operator.

- **Workforce Alliance leaders held a *strategic planning meeting* with representatives of the Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education and two of the region’s community colleges (Gateway and Middlesex) to discuss opportunities to increase collaboration and coordination between the public workforce and higher education systems.**
 - **The Workforce Alliance Planning Committee and Executive Committee have been leading the strategic planning effort that developed the vision and goals and produced this Local Plan.**
 - **Workforce Alliance leadership has taken advantage of professional development opportunities related to WIOA to ensure a seamless transition from WIA to WIOA, and other opportunities related to emerging areas such as customer-centered practice. These webinars, trainings, and learning and networking opportunities (e.g., National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP) and National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) meetings) have all informed the development of our vision, goals and strategies.**
3. Describe the local area’s strategy to work with entities that carry out the core programs to align resources available to the local area to achieve the strategic vision and goals established by the local board.

The *Our Strategies* section above describes in detail current and planned strategies to align resources and increase coordination with our partners that carry out core WIOA programs. Increasing coordination and integration represents an imperative under WIOA, and is a hallmark of the customer-centered approach to which we are transitioning our system

4. Describe service strategies the LWDB has in place or will develop that will improve meeting the needs of customers with disabilities as well as other population groups.

The *Our Strategies* section above describes in detail current and planned strategies to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities (strategy #8), as well as other priority populations including ex-offenders (strategy #5), out-of-school youth (strategy #6), and underemployed workers (strategy #7).

5. Describe how the LWDB’s goals relate to the achievement of federal performance accountability measures to support economic growth and self-sufficiency.

The four Workforce Alliance goals support the achievement of WIOA performance accountability measures. Making the public workforce system

more customer-centered (Goal #1) will improve credential rates, skills gains, employment rates, and earnings. Improving access to the public workforce system for residents throughout the region (Goal #2) will increase the number of people receiving services. Increasing the level of coordination, integration, and responsiveness of Business Services (Goal #3) will improve employment rates and earnings, and will improve Workforce Alliance achievement of WIOA performance accountability measures related to employers. Increasing the level and accessibility of AJC services for young adults and persons with disabilities (Goal #4) will improve credential rates, skills gains, employment rates, and earning for those priority populations.

Workforce Alliance WIOA performance accountability measures will be completed when performance measure negotiation is completed.

6. Indicate anticipated local levels of performance for the federal measures.

The Workforce Alliance consistently met WIA performance measures, and anticipates meeting or exceeding WIOA measures. At this time, we have not received federal or state guidance on this topic, as final regulations have not been published. At the local level, we will use our last three years of performance as a baseline for negotiation of local performance levels.

7. Describe indicators used by the LWDB to measure performance and effectiveness of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), contracted service providers, and the one-stop delivery system in the local area.

Current indicators include periodic monitoring of expenditure rates, outreach, enrollments, persistence in training, completion, credential, placement into employment, earnings upon employment and employment retention. Additional system indicators will be developed by the partners during the transition period, and will be benchmarked to June 30, 2016.

IV. COORDINATION OF SERVICES

1. Coordination with Partner Programs and Services
Describe how individualized career services will be coordinated across programs/partners in the one-stop centers, including Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Education and Literacy activities And TANF. Specify how the local area will coordinate with these programs to prevent duplication and improve services to customers.

Workforce Alliance is cognizant that the “past system” of working with the entities described above would in reality, only warrant a referral to the appropriate entity. For example, if a person presented him/herself into the One-stop with a disability, then that person would almost always be directly referred to Vocational Rehabilitation for services, as their employment plan. Individuals who are basic skills deficient would automatically be referred to the Adult

Education provider. This will no longer be the case for any of the above entities, including the One-stop. The “new system” would involve working TOGETHER with the partners as the customer moves through the system. It will involve concurrent service planning, rather than sequential planning or simply a referral.

As indicated above, we will embrace not only customer-centered case management, but a more customer-centered workforce development system. The closest that this system is currently operating is the Secure Jobs pilot, currently operating in New Haven. The two 2Generational pilot programs (New Haven and Meriden), soon to be launched in the region will also feature a customer-centered feature this modality, and both pilots feature a customer base that would be highly likely to benefit at least one of the WIOA core partners.

We will shift the focus of our regular partner meetings in an effort to become more intimately familiar with the individualized career services provided by each entity. This will enable all parties to examine and address areas of potential duplication. Where appropriate, cross training of front line staff will occur to make more informed and appropriate plans involving programs and services. We expect that this will result in established planning, referral and continuous improvement protocols and procedures between agencies. We will work to formulate a shared means of tracking participant progress and modify as necessary.

2. Coordination with Economic Development Activities

Provide a description of how the local board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with economic development activities.

Economic development professionals are members of our local board, as well as on our Planning Committee. Staff from the WDB have been significantly involved in several local and regional economic development planning efforts. The Manager of Strategic Development is active in the CEDS Committees in the region, the Regional Economic Development Forum of the South Central Council of Governments, and the Economic Development Committee of the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce as examples of direct coordinated efforts. Staff regularly attend the SCRCOG and Valley RPA meetings as well. These relationships are long standing, and the WDB will continue to use these venues as a primary economic development coordination checkpoint. Our work with our Chief Elected Officials, Economic Development Commissions, Chambers of Commerce, Organized Labor and Trade Associations, as well as with public utilities often enables us to participate early in on their efforts, and we will continue to share information about programs and services with those entities/organizations.

3. Coordination of Education and Workforce Development Activities

Describe how the LWDB will coordinate education and workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.

Education representatives serve on our local board and board committees. As indicated above, we will begin implementing customer-centered case management, and this will of course apply to our relationship with the education community.

For adults, our postsecondary strategy includes program development with adult education community colleges based on real time employer need. Customized training programs may be developed collaboratively, should a new or expanding company in the region warrant the need. We support articulation agreements of our regional community colleges for smooth transition into a four

degree program along established career ladders. On the secondary level, as well as for those matriculating at community colleges, we will continue to work with “soon to be graduates” on enhanced job readiness and placement, in an effort to smoothly move them on to the next step. We have had discussions with the two community colleges in the region and preliminary plans are to have a one-stop part-time presence at the colleges, and to host college staff in the One-stop Centers as well.

WIOA Out of School youth has been redefined to include an older youth population (more suitably called “young adults”). Our WIOA Out of School Youth Strategy focuses around three principles: 1) every activity must include work-based learning, 2) contextualized instruction is the preferred mode, particularly with out of school youth, and 3) employer engagement beyond hiring, is critical to success. Our WIOA RFP incorporates these principles and we require that they be integrated into all WIOA Youth programming. Our Youth Committee and Planning Committees will benchmark and evaluate programs and identify any best practices in the region.

4. Coordination of Transportation and Other Supportive Services

Describe how the LWDB will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out under this title in the local area with the provision of transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate supportive services in the local area.

Transportation access has been a top supportive service barrier in this region for many years. In the absence of state funding to support customized transportation assistance, the WDB will expand its existing support service menu of transportation options (bus passes, gas cards, mileage reimbursement), but the staff and board understand that that strategy needs to be improved if our customers are to have better access to jobs around the region where little or no transportation exists.

As a result of the above, we are currently in discussions with Uber to develop a customized menu of transportation services to be provided to customers who need to get to interviews and employment in areas where public transportation isn't an option, or hours of public transportation do not coincide with work hours. . This Uber pilot, we believe, will be the first in the country to involve the company and a local Workforce Development Board.

We have also worked with CTRides to market their services to our regional employers, and will invite CTRides to any large scale hiring events.

Other support services include child care, assistance in tools, books, exam fees, certifications/licensing, drivers' license as necessary. The support service determination is carried out at the beginning of the workforce investment activity and individually tailored to customer needs.

5. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services

Provide a description of plans and strategies for, and assurances concerning, maximizing coordination of services provided by the state employment service under the Wagner-Peyser Act and services provided in the local area through the one-stop delivery system to improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services.

A Wagner-Peyser funded representative from the Connecticut Department of Labor sits on our local board. Additionally, CTDOL staff serve on our Planning Committee and our Youth Committee. Our Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Labor (Attachment F) articulates how services provided under Wagner-Peyser will interface with WIOA. All parties are committed to participate in a system that will eventually improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services.

6. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy

Describe how the LWDB will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out under this title in the local area with the provision of adult education and literacy activities under Title II in the local area, including a description of how the local board will carry out, consistent with subparagraphs (A) and (B)(i) of section 107(d)(11) and section 232, the review of local applications submitted under Title II.

A representative from New Haven Adult Education serves on our local board. Our local Adult Education programs are a presumptive deliverer of adult education and literacy services in the region. To participants who lack a high school diploma or GED, or who are in need of ESL, we will continue to make referrals in order for them to receive services either concurrently or sequentially, with workforce development services as we transition to a more customer-centered case management system. Our preference is that these services be delivered concurrently. There continues to be a large volume of individuals with educational certification, who require refresher or short time educational intervention to be successful in occupational training.

Unfortunately, those individuals cannot access traditional Adult Ed services. We will continue to work with adult education and other providers to establish alternative accelerated remediation activities such as boot camps, tutoring, or online options.

We will continue to be involved in the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) establishment of priorities, RFP review and selection process conducted by SDE in our region. We will provide the State Department of Education (SDE) and local Adult Education programs with relevant labor market information and economic/demographic information in the region, in an effort to assist in their new program development for their respective communities.

We will work with our local adult education and literacy providers to arrange for them to establish a rotating presence in our American Job Centers in an effort to formalize and strengthen the referral/ engagement/persistence processes. As MOU's with One-stop partners will be developed, a conscious effort will be made to better integrate services, including assessment, testing, tutoring and career planning.

7. Cooperative Agreements

Provide a description of the replicated cooperative agreements (as defined in WIOA section 107(d)(11)) between the local board or other local entities described in section 101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29U.S.C 721(a)(11)(B)) and the local office of a designated state agency or designated state unit administering programs carried out under Title I of such Act (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11) with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross-training staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers and other efforts of cooperation, collaboration and coordination.

Core MOU's are included as Attachment E.

V. LOCAL ONE-STOP SYSTEM

1. General System Description

Describe the one-stop delivery system in your local area including the roles and resource contributions of one-stop partners.

- A. Is each of the required WIOA partners included in your one-stop delivery system? Describe how they contribute to your planning and implementation efforts. If any required partner is not involved, explain the reason.

The required WIOA partners are included in our One-stop Partner meetings. The group has been meeting for some time and WIOA transition issues have been discussed. WIOA partners have been invited to attend the WIOA Stakeholders Focus Group. This group was held on April 14th and over twenty individuals were in attendance. We discussed the plans for a more integrated, customer-centered system. This was a first step in the

process and the discussion that ensued has influenced the writing and execution of this plan.

In some cases, there is no program or funding coming into the region (for example, Migrant Farmworkers) and in those cases, there subsequently is no representation.

B. Identify any non-required partners included in the local one-stop delivery system.

At this point, we will add as a partner, the two 2Generational Pilots that will operate within the region, in New Haven and in Meriden, and Literacy Volunteers of greater New Haven. We will address the issue of any further non-required partners in the Request for Proposals for the One-stop Operator, and we would look to include more representation from organizations serving individuals with disabilities.

C. The LWDB, with the agreement of the chief elected official, shall develop and enter into a memorandum of understanding between the local board and the one-stop partners. Please provide a copy of any executed MOUs.

CORE Partner MOU's are attached. MOU's with One-stop partners will be executed once a One-stop Operator is selected.

2. Customer Access

Describe actions taken by the LWDB to promote maximum integration of service delivery through the one-stop delivery system for both business customers and individual customers.

A. Describe how entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and one-stop partners, will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act regarding physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing needs of individuals with disabilities.

All of our current American Job Centers are ADA-compliant. We will survey all of our required One-stop partners to determine their levels of compliance as part of the transition period. We will also work with partners to conduct an inventory of programs, services, technology, equipment and materials for each required partner, and make that information available to all required partners in the system.

It is interesting to note that there had previously been a dedicated space in the One-stop Center in New Haven that housed career assessment, training and other adaptive tools, such as the Jobs Access With Speech (JAWS), DRAGON, Open Book Zoom Text and WYNN Wizard software , TTD/TTY relay technology, computer stations with speech cards, CCTV that magnifies copy,

and wheelchair accessible tables. This area was called the “Ability Works Center.” The area was disbanded in order to better integrate these services and tools into the mainstream operations of the center. It is our intent that to the fullest extent possible, we integrate all programs, tools and services identified in the inventory, into the system.

We expect that there would be a significant amount of training of one-stop staff, as well as ongoing cross-training of partner staff. We would look to our emerging partnership with DOHRS to provide guidance and assistance in training resources, and contract with Independence Unlimited, Inc. and New England ADA Technical assistance Center, to provide additional training. As an important first step in the integrated service delivery process, we have applied to DOHRS to be an approved vendor of services to their youth population, aged 16-24. If approved, we will be able to work with DOHRS, to provide work readiness training, which would include developing appropriate skills to gain competitive employment. We would offer this training throughout the region. The training would include money management, time management, healthcare management, benefits management and “soft skills” training, to complement any occupational instruction that they may desire.

- B. Describe how entities within the one-stop delivery system are utilizing principles of universal design in their operation.

This is an ongoing process, and, in the absence of final regulations we are just beginning the process. As we procure a One-stop Operator, the principles will be institutionalized, with timeframes and metrics associated with implementation.

The most important universal design element that entities will need to initially adopt is that of *customer-centered case management*. Many of the partner entities have already commenced adopting this design others, however all entities will need significant training in the model, both initially and ongoing in order to accommodate for employee turnover.

Another universal design element that we would incorporate is that *referrals should occur based on needs and strengths, not demographics*. For example, if a customer needs services who is a veteran, it should not be an automatic handoff to the “veterans’ person” on the One-stop, with the initial employment specialist thinking that his/her job is done.

Additionally, we will need to further develop a more universal design of *how employer services are delivered in the region*. Agencies, and even programs within agencies all seem to have dedicated job development/employer services staff. We expect that this design principle will be a challenge to implement in the region. We expect that this will involve cross-training, some degree of shared data, and where appropriate, shared “credit” for referral of

employers, placement of customers and shared participation at hiring events throughout the region.

- C. Describe how the LWDB facilitates access to services provided through the local delivery system, including remote areas, through the use of technology and through other means.

One of our goals (see section III) is to provide improved access to all communities within our 30 city and town region. Our website allows for basic information on programs, services and Labor Market Information. We are in the process of redesigning the website to provide links to learning resources related to skills, social networking, and other tools to support jobseekers. The new website will also allow for tools for direct inquiry to program managers. This will allow us to build a database for outreach. There will continue to be a dedicated section to research, data and economic development reports. The website will be a conduit to CT HIRES and Metrix online training, as well as a new online resource for workshops. Additionally, there will be dedicated program pages, info on workshops, and detailed program info for youth and ex-offenders. We are currently researching how to use the website and/or CT HIRES for Customer Relationship Management, in order to improve attendance, persistence and customer and employer follow up.

We have made extensive use of social media to inform our community. Traditionally, we use Linked In as a means of general networking and outreach. We have a Facebook page, which is used for general announcements, information and job postings. We use LinkedIn similarly, and also advise customers on establishing accounts and using LinkedIn for job search. Our Twitter account is used to attract more of the Information Technology jobseekers and employers. Moving forward in the next year, we will develop an Instagram account which will be youth focused and managed by Youth staff.

In spite of our ability to provide information remotely and through technology, in a customer-centered system, it is our belief that, at least initially, a face to face meeting either in an individual or group format, should be the preferred modality of service. We have commenced implementation of this modality on a trial basis. CT HIRES allows for portable intake, and will allow the staff person to travel to the outlying area and conduct initial planning with the customer. Our plan is to refine this model and select 3-4 towns to initially participate in the provision of career services to outlying areas of the region.

We will build upon some of the more successful aspects of the local delivery system in an effort to bring services and programming to remote areas. The most evident example of this would be the expansion of our Summer Youth Program. With the cooperation of the Chief Elected Officials and the local

business community, we have been able to expand summer jobs for youth from 23 municipalities in 2015, to a planned 25 communities (out of the 30 municipalities that make up the region) during the summer of 2016. It is important to also note that for our WIOA Youth programs, the Youth staff who are employed by the One-stop Operator also provide intake, assessment and enrollment functions remotely, most often at the location of the WIOA Youth vendor.

Finally, we hope to expand what was initially a pilot event, held in October 2015. Through a partnership with the town of Westbrook and with media sponsorship thru *The Day*, we facilitated a Job Fair tailored to local employers and jobseekers. The event was held inside Westbrook Town Hall. The town provided resources in kind including the use of multiple, parking, staffing, coordination through the Mayor's office and Town Department of Social services. The event features free workshops, Linked-in profile reviews and headshots. Over 150 jobseekers attended the event, 21 employers participated, over 40 individuals attended the workshop, and over 100 people with Linked in profiles and photos.

7. Integration of Services

Describe how one-stop career centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under this Act and programs carried out by one-stop career center partners.

We currently use the CT HIRES system, which enables us to integrate services with Wagner-Peyser, Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA), Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), and Veterans services currently provided by the Connecticut Department of Labor. We are currently assisting CTDOL with creating the Jobs First Employment Services component of the CT HIRES system in order to better facilitate integration with that program.

There are inherent challenges to the CT HIRES system. Non-CTDOL programs such as any and all discretionary grants, including the statewide initiatives (such as the National Emergency Grants and TAA-CCCT projects operated by the community colleges) are not included as part of CT HIRES and cannot be technologically linked to the system. These issues have already been brought to CTDOL's attention. We and our partners (local and state) are looking to work with CTDOL to address and resolve this system-challenging issue, as we move to a more integrated and transparent system as a whole.

8. Competitive Selection of One Stop Operator

Describe the steps taken or to be taken to ensure a competitive process for selection of the one-stop operator(s).

The process for design and selection of the One-stop Operator began in January, 2016 where we received technical assistance from a national consultant. Since

that time, Senior Staff have worked diligently at examining best practices in One-stop Operation and the opportunities to better serve customers through WIOA. Specifications are already developed. We have established a preliminary timeline for a traditional competitive procurement, review, selection process, contract negotiation and transition period for a One- Stop Operator. The formal procurement process will commence in summer, 2016. We expect to be fully operational with a One Stop operator on July 1, 1017.

9. System Improvement

Describe the steps the LWDB will take to ensure continuous improvement of the area's one-stop system.

Workforce Alliance has embraced many of the models that have emerged that could potentially improve services to our customers. These are over and above the WIOA performance indicators and are grounded in our vision and values.

The "2Gen" pilots in the region, the Secure Jobs pilot in New Haven, and the Customer –Centered Design Models such as the SSDI all take a more holistic approach to case management and to service delivery. We will migrate to Customer-centered design in the first year of operation. We have already started this process with some of our discretionary grants, and our plan is to implement the design system-wide.

The region is composed of thirty cities and towns. In light of there currently only being a WIOA presence in New Haven and in Meriden, it is often difficult to come to one of the centers for service. Therefore, one of our service improvement goals is to bring more services to our outlying areas. The CT HIREs case management function is more portable and will allow us to provide more remote services. A plan will be developed as part of One-stop Operator negotiations, which should significantly improve services to our outlying areas. We have done this in the past with our Summer Youth Program, and we are confident that we can replicate many career service functions.

On the employer services side, we will work towards more seamless service delivery of products in the region, with extensive cross training of a Business Services Team, comprised of partners who carry on that function.

These three factors will be initially benchmarked by Workforce Alliance as of June, 2016, and evaluated every six months.

VI. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM SERVICES

1. System Description

Describe the local workforce development system. Identify the programs that are included in the system and how the local board will work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs to support alignment in provision of services, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D.

Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.), that support the strategy identified in the State Plan under WIOA section 102(b)(1)(E). WIOA §108(b)(2).

The system as it will operate as of July 1, 2016 in the south central region includes programs authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth), the Jobs First Employment Services, the SNAP Employment and Training program, two National Emergency Grants, the Connecticut Advanced Manufacturing Initiative, the Health Care Advancement Program (HCAP), the Ready to Work Program, serving long term unemployed and underemployed in targeted industries, the Step-up Program, the AJC @ Whalley program, bringing WIOA Career Services to incarcerated individuals, the Summer Youth Employment Program, the Next Steps program (serving ex-offenders) and the Supportive Services for Veterans and their Families Program.

Co-enrollment policies currently exist for Wagner-Peyser, Trade Adjustment Assistance and REA, the Jobs First, Employment Services and SNAP. We will develop stronger coordination and co-enrollment protocols with DOHRS programs and services.

Adult Education Programs in the region currently operate programs to provide basic skills remediation, ESL, occupational training, besides their legislated program menu of ABE and GED instruction. We will work to strengthen referral and policies for concurrent or sequential enrollment, in an effort to better align services

2. Sub Grants and Contracts

Provide a description of the competitive process to be used to award sub-grants and contracts in the local area for WIOA-funded activities and the services to be made available.

The competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process will be used to procure a One-stop Operator for the region. This RFP will be issued in late spring, 2016 and will contain the specifications, using the goals and principles outlined in this plan as general guidance. Public notice of the RFP will be made available through our website and through social media. A letter of intent will be required by prospective bidders. Once proposals are received, a detailed review process will be used to select a vendor, which may involve proposal review and evaluation, interviews and on-site visits of finalists and contract negotiations prior to the execution of a contract. We expect that there will be a “transition period” of several months prior to full implementation on July 1, 2017.

The competitive RFP process is also used to procure WIOA-funded in school and out of school youth programs. A set of evaluation criteria and processes are developed and included in the RFP package, which is always made available on the Workforce Alliance website. Evaluation teams usually consist of a mix of

individuals which may include staff, board members, committee members, stakeholders and customers. The result of this process then produces a menu of WIOA Youth programs and services which are made available to eligibly youth in the region. We do take into account factors such as geographic distribution within the region, as well as service mix, to insure a broad and rich array of programming.

3. Expanding Access to Employment

Describe how the local board, working with entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment, including how the local board will facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs, and improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credential.

It is important that in discussions with core partners, we come to agreement on how each partner's strength can contribute to overall improvement of the system. In all cases, the discussion would evolve around how each entity conducts employer and customer outreach and information, and facilitates solid referrals and/or co-enrollment within the core partnership, if co-enrollment in programs results in added services and/or customer benefits. The partners need to have a level of confidence in the system, not only at the administrative level, but more importantly at the "front line" staff level. Staff must be comfortable enough to share customers and information in a customer-centered case management model.

4. Key Industry Sectors

Identify how the LWDB plans to better align its resources to support and meet the training and employment needs of key industry sectors in the local area. Describe policies adopted or planned for aligning training initiatives and Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to sector strategies and demand occupations.

The top three "Super Sectors" that we have identified in our region are *Information Technology (IT), Healthcare and Manufacturing*. See Section II. Environmental Scan for a discussion of occupation/industry demand. Within all of these sectors, there exists demand occupations all along their respective career pathways. In addition to WIOA funds, we currently have additional resources to provide training in these sectors as a result in our ability to have attracted federal discretionary funding. It is important that we examine the career pathway access points in all of these sectors and ensure that both funding and appropriate training modalities are available to support each step within the respective career path.

In some cases, Individual Training Accounts is the most appropriate training modality, based on the need for credentialing. We have established policies governing ITAs, and will modify as necessary, after examining the final WIOA

regulations. We will keep our education partners informed of any gaps in this modality and encourage them to develop training classes which will meet these needs.

We currently provide the largest On the Job Training (OJT) program in the state of Connecticut, currently supported by eight different funding streams. We have been very successful with this program on both the jobseeker and employer side; jobseekers begin earning a wage quickly, and employers can train individuals who have solid foundation skills, to their individual specifications. Under OJT, a portion of the training wage is provided to the employer to offset those training costs. This training modality has been very popular in the IT and manufacturing sectors. At this point, we foresee only minimal policy changes, if any under WIOA for OJT.

WIOA is explicit in its discussion of transitional employment and incumbent worker training modalities. We have provided both of these types of training and it is our intention to use WIOA and other resources to support transitional employment (for workers who need to establish – or reestablish – a credible work history) and incumbent worker training (as a business expansion or layoff aversion strategy) moving forward.

5. Industry Partnerships

Describe how the LWDB will identify and work with key industry partnerships where they exist within the local area, and coordinate and invest in partnership infrastructure where they are not yet developed.

We have identified industry partnerships within our workforce development area and additionally outside of our area where we can build with employers to strengthen our support for our sector strategies.

For the *Information Technology* sector, one of our exemplary partnerships we have worked with is the Grid. The Grid is one of the five state-funded sites authorized by Governor Malloy, designed to be a “hub” of entrepreneurialism and innovation in New Haven. This “hub” group has evolved into a collaborative group of several small IT companies, all innovators and all looking to build a future workforce. They have developed the A100 program, a bootcamp that will give classroom and hands on instruction in coding. We are working with this group to enable A100 to be on the state Eligible Training Providers’ List, and we have also facilitated discussions between them and the CTDOL Director of Apprenticeship training. We are also exploring using incumbent worker training as a tool within the sector to keep current on certifications, as a business expansion and/or layoff aversion strategy. We have also joined the Connecticut Technology Council, which provides access to over 200 IT employers in the state, real-time research on industry trends and demographics, and emerging issues and challenges in the IT sector.

For the *Healthcare* sector, our work with the Healthcare Committees of our regional Chambers of Commerce, as well as with the Town of Hamden Healthcare Cluster, puts in direct contact with the broad spectrum of healthcare employers. We are confident that this direct involvement will augment our involvement with the Connecticut League for Nursing, the Allied Health Policy group and the CT Hospital Association in better understanding career lattices, as well as career ladders in the industry.

For the *Manufacturing* sector, we have been a member of the New Haven Manufacturer's Association for several years. We have been consistently supportive of their work, and they have assisted us in assembling a sector focus group of employers (some of which we have worked with; some are new). The focus group revealed that virtually ALL of the attendees had immediate hiring needs, but could not find good, qualified candidates. They are very aware of the training pipeline at the community colleges and vocational-technical schools, but all felt that this pipeline needs to be expanded in order to meet their current and future demand. Many of their workers are at, or are close to retirement age. New, as well as replacement workers are needed. We expect that the sector strategy for manufacturing would include finding ways to expand the training pipeline, and marketing manufacturing as an economically viable career option.

6. In-demand Training

Describe the process utilized by the local board to ensure that training provided is linked to in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area, or in another area to which a participant is willing to relocate.

We utilize several types of Labor Market Information in determining a more granular picture of what is in demand, what jobs go unfilled any way they are unfilled. For example, we certainly utilize the "Information for Workforce Investment Planning," as well as "The Labor Situation" documents published by the Ct Department of Labor, on a regular basis. Additionally, we look at real-time LMI in the south central sub-regions, the south central region as a whole, and the state from sector reports supplied through Monster Government Solutions.

It is also important that we speak directly to our partner employers on an ongoing basis, to determine the relevance of the training and to provide a timely and useful response to our employer partners. This is particularly important to all modalities of training, such as classroom training, online training and OJT's. It is perhaps the most critical to evaluate in the information technology sector, where training and skills attainment can quickly become obsolete.

7. Employer Engagement

Describe the strategies and services that will be used in the local area to:

- A. facilitate engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations, in workforce development programs;

- B. support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area;
- C. better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development; and
- D. Strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs.

Workforce Alliance considers the concept of “Employer Engagement” to be one of its WIOA areas of strength, as evidenced by an employer roster of well over one thousand employers who placed individuals from all of the programs overseen by Workforce Alliance, from July 1, 2014-June 30, 2015. Because of discretionary grants such as our H1-B Technical Skills Training Program, our Ready to Work Program, our Job Driven National Emergency Grant, Workforce Innovation ACE Program and the Step-up Program, we have greatly improved on our network of engaging small employers, as well as employers in demand industries/occupations such as Information Technology, Advanced Manufacturing, Financial Services, Healthcare and Engineering. Most of the employers in these industries have hired more than one individual, and have been made aware of WIOA requirements for more intensive employer engagement. Moving forward, we will build on these relationships, with the vision of greater participation in the system, not only through hiring, but through the provision of career related information in the system.

Part IV., Section 2 of this plan fully articulates our ability to coordinate with local and regional economic development entities.

As regards linkages with unemployment insurance, we are pursuing having a CTDOL UI person being out-stationed in our full service office. We expect that this role would provide ongoing information about UI to customers, as well as ongoing to One-stop staff and partners. Additionally, we will make a more concerted effort to enroll REA customers who desire training and more individualized job development/placement assistance, as well as access to other programs and services of the system.

8. Priority for Services

Describe the local policy and procedures that have been established to 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 in the Adult program.

The priority of services is targeted to give priority to veterans, low income, those individuals who are basic skills deficient and /or have low educational attainment, and those who have occupational skills deficiencies. Please see Attachment F for the policy and procedure.

9. Training Services

Describe how training services will be provided, including, if contracts for training services are to be used, how such contracts will be coordinated with the use of ITAs.

A variety of training products will be made available to individuals which will allow workers to obtain better paying jobs, access to the middle class and further contribute towards building our economy. Job seekers will have access to quality education and training and workforce activities through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), Online Training, On-the-Job training, Transitional Employment, Incumbent Worker Training and Customized Training opportunities. We will consider developing Contracts for training if there is a pressing need to deliver training as part of a regional economic development project. Every effort will be made to encourage the vendor to apply to be accepted to the state Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) if it is feasible to institutionalize the training.

10. Customer Choice

Describe processes utilized by the local board to ensure customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are to be provided.

At One-stop orientation, the concept of Customer Choice will be introduced. As a customer moves on to receive more individual WIOA career services, the topic will be discussed in more detail. It is important to note that “informed customer choice,” in order to be aligned with the principles of WIOA and Customer-centered Design, should include a 1) detailed discussion of career pathways, 2) current and future expected wages, and 3) impact on their life in general, and their family members. As part of the WIOA transition for the selected One-stop Operator, extensive training will occur for front line staff and partners, which will include traditional and real-time Labor Market Information provided by a variety of sources.

11. Individual Training Accounts

Describe the process and criteria for issuing Individual Training Accounts (ITAs).

A. Describe any ITA limitations established by the board.

B. Describe any exceptions to the use of ITA.

The policy and procedure criteria and packet for Individual Training Accounts is listed in Attachment G. Currently, our maximum financial threshold for issuance of an ITA is \$3,500.00. All ITA's must be issued in accordance with the providers' being in good standing on the state Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). All vendors must have a signed “blanket contract” with Workforce Alliance. ITA payment benchmarks for training is authorized at 75% the point of 3-day enrollment, 25% at completion.

Exceptions to the use of ITAs:

Customized Training - Customized Training may be provided for employers in the South Central Connecticut region in priority industries as identified by the Board for potential and incumbent workers. Employers must demonstrate the need for the required skills upgrades for new **and** existing employees in order to remain competitive. Existing employees must be earning less than a self-sufficiency wage of \$29.16/hour as determined by Board policy*.

Employers must:

- Provide a significant match to the training funds allocated by Workforce Alliance, either in cash or through in-kind contributions including, but not limited to, employee release time, training space, equipment, staff contributions, advisory committee membership, training program design and curriculum development.
- Ensure that relevant increases in job competencies and wages occur for participants who successfully complete training goals; or that non-incumbent workers who successfully complete training goals are hired.
- WIOA Eligibility documentation (Social Security cards, Driver's Licenses, W-2 forms, I-9 forms, payroll information, INS Right to Work forms (Alien Registration Cards), Birth Certificates, etc) must be collected & maintained in the WIOA primary file.
- Make available all participant outcome information regarding training activities, employment offers, promotion, wages, etc., to Workforce Alliance.

**Exceptions to the employee wage requirement will be made in cases where customized training is in a Board-identified priority area, and alternative funding is unavailable.*

Group Contracts for Training - When there is an insufficient number of local eligible providers on the ETPL, Group Contracts for Training will be issued in high demand occupations that include participant support and other specialized services that are directly tied to meeting customer targeted needs and performance requirements. Such targeted needs include, but are not limited to:

1. Individuals who are basic skills deficient and/or require basic skills strengthening in a contextualized learning model;
2. Individuals with language or cultural barriers;
3. Ex-offenders;
4. Youth and/or individuals with a substantial disability;
5. Recipients of Temporary Assistance Needy Families;

Contracted programs will be provided by Community Based Organizations, Local Adult Basic Education Centers, Community Colleges and or another private organization that have:

1. Previously demonstrated training effectiveness (minimum 80% credential attainment rate); *and/or*
2. Demonstrated performance in the delivery of services for hard to serve populations; *and/or*
3. Been procured through our existing procurement policy process.

Such programs will relate to the Workforce Development Board needs identified in Workforce Alliance's local Plan. Efforts will be made to add providers contracted under this option to the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

On-The-Job Training Individual Contract -On-the-Job Training services will be provided for an individual in need of hands-on, employer-specific occupational skills training in order to be able to successfully carry out the tasks, responsibilities and functions of a job vacancy. The goal of the OJT program is to place participants into occupations that will enhance their prospects for long-term employment and self-sufficiency.

On-the-Job Training is available for participants who would not otherwise be hired by the employer due to one of the following factors:

1. Lack of skills, credentials and/or experience in a specific industry; *and/or*
2. Lack of skills/experience performing unique tasks, operation of specific machinery, equipment or software.

The On-the-Job Training program is a "Hire First" program in which the employer, private or public, enters into an agreement with Workforce Alliance to hire, train, and retain the individual upon successful completion of the on-the-job training program.

On-the-job training is provided under an OJT contract with Workforce Alliance where businesses may be reimbursed for a portion of the new employee's wages while they are in training.

Transitional Employment -In accordance with US Department of Labor standards, unpaid work experience and subsidized employment may be provided for individuals:

1. With a history of limited connection to the workforce; and/or
2. Has significant gaps in their employment history; and/or
3. Individuals with significant barriers such as criminal background, lack work readiness skills, and or recently acquired occupational skills (but lack hands-on experience).

This category will be expanded once final US DOL guidance/standards have been issued.

12. Enhancing Apprenticeships

Describe how the LWDB will enhance the use of apprenticeships to support the local economy and individuals' career advancement. Describe how job seekers are made aware of apprenticeship opportunities in the area's career centers.

One-stop staff have been trained by Connecticut Department of Labor staff in the various apprenticeship programs offered. Apprenticeships are an important product in the WDB's "Work Based Learning Toolkit," which also includes activities such as OJT, Transitional Employment, Internships and Placement. Where appropriate, we will market the American Apprenticeship Initiative, The Manufacturing Innovation Apprenticeship Fund (for new and incumbent workers), and the Step Up Apprenticeship programs to both jobseekers and employers.

13. Other Program Initiatives

Describe the services to be provided that may include the implementation of initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies career pathway initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other initiatives in the support of the board's vision and strategic goals described in Section III. WIOA §134(c)

See item #4 above for a discussion of OJT and incumbent worker training.

Sector strategies are currently being formulated by conducting focus groups with employers in each Super Sector. Those strategies will be more fully articulated in the final plan.

We plan to participate in any customized training opportunities which may present, as a result of a new company locating within the region, a company expansion or a large scale economic development project.

14. Service Provider Continuous Improvement

Describe the LWDB's efforts to ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services, including contracted services providers and providers on the eligible training provider list, through the system and ensure that such providers meet the needs of local employers, workers and jobseekers.

All providers (both those on the ETPL and those contracted services providers) are monitored both financially and programmatically every year. Discussions regarding program improvement and enhancements are usually held at the conclusion of programmatic monitoring. For those programs on the ETPL, we examine both program completion and placement into training-related services in an effort to address the needs of local employers and jobseekers.

15. Youth Program Design

Describe the design framework for youth programs in the local area, and how the 14 program elements required in §681.460 of the proposed WIOA regulations are to be made available within that framework.

We have retained a standing Youth Committee, which is a subcommittee of our local board. The committee consists of board members, stakeholders and youth. This group works to design and implement the framework for youth programs and activities in the region.

All youth programs are competitively procured on an annual basis as needed. Contracts are executed with a unilateral option to extend based upon satisfactory performance and employer demand. The 14 program elements are addressed in the RFP for Youth services and are evaluated accordingly when proposals are received. The Youth Committee is charged with ensuring that our program menu incorporates the entire 14 program elements as described in the Act, wither directly through the vendor itself or through referral.

Our Out of School Youth program design is based upon three guiding principles: 1) Career Pathways, 2) Contextualized Learning and 3) Employer Engagement. All vendors MUST incorporate a work-based learning component into their programming.

Because under WIOA, the age for out-of-school youth eligibility has been expanded, we recognize that families may be impacted. In keeping with a customer-centered case management design and integrating 2Generational policies, we may look at other funding besides WIOA youth (such as TANF) to support this effort.

For In-School Youth, our design is to support youth while they are matriculating and inform them of the world of work/maturation skills, labor market information, work-based learning and academic remediation as necessary, with the goal of having them graduate from high school with pathways to either employment or post -secondary education.

Additionally, we have found that WIOA does not speak in detail of the process of integrating the youth population into the One-stop delivery system. Our Youth Committee feels strongly that our local area needs to provide better access, services and activities to bring the WIOA Youth population – both in school and out of school – into the One-stop system. Individuals who respond to the One-stop Operator procurement will have to describe a system which accommodates youth on a regular and ongoing basis.

- A. Definition of the term “a youth who 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.” Describe how the local board defines whether a youth is unable to demonstrate these skills well enough to function on the job, in their family, or in society and what assessment instruments are used to make this determination. 20 C.F.R. §681.290.

We conduct an initial assessment, which consists of a CASAS appraisal and pre-test. Dedicated One-stop staff will conduct individual assessment of all applicants for suitability for WIOA-Y programs. Additionally, contracted vendors do their own suitability assessments.

- B. Definition of “requires additional assistance.” Describe how the local board defines the term “requires additional assistance” used in determining eligibility for WIOA-funded youth programs.

The Youth Committee is charged with developing the policy on “requires additional assistance.” It is included as Attachment H.

16. Rapid Response

Provide a description of how the LWDB will coordinate workforce development activities in the local area with rapid response activities.

The LWDB will continue to participate in local Rapid Response Activities, including employer meetings to determine extent and scope of the layoff, possible aversion strategies and planning on Early Intervention Meetings. The LWDB and/or its One-stop Operator representative will participate in Early Intervention activities and meetings, to explain the programs and services of the American Job Center, as well as to encourage affected workers to obtain WIOA Dislocated Worker Certification.

VII. SEE ATTACHMENTS in separate PDF document

###