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## **Workforce Alliance Receives Grant for Racial Equity & Accountability Initiative**

NEW HAVEN, Conn. - July 22, 2021 - Workforce Alliance has received a grant from the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven to further its Racial Equity & Accountability Initiative.

In June 2020, Workforce Alliance issued a [statement](#) on its commitment to racial equity. "As a result of the inequities underscored by the pandemic and the urgency to address the seemingly intractable systemic racism throughout our society, the board and staff of Workforce Alliance realized that we could not continue with business as usual," said Robin Golden, chair of the Board of Directors. "We strongly believed then – and are no less committed now -- that the time has come to accelerate our work to transform the employment and training ecosystem in South Central CT and lead the state of Connecticut in this effort."

Over the course of the last year, the commitment reflected in that statement has been developed into action steps to take both internally to create a more equitable and inclusive environment within the organization and externally as a leader in workforce development serving employers and jobseekers in South Central CT.

"Our vision includes a renewed focus on creating a more just system that produces equitable outcomes for Black and Brown residents and to implement actions that move our region toward racial and economic equity," said William Villano, President & CEO.

The \$75,000 one-year Foundation grant will allow Workforce Alliance to build upon these efforts and accelerate implementation of several aspects, such as hiring a Chief Racial Equity & Inclusion Officer to lead the implementation efforts including:

- Expansion of efforts to support growth of minority-owned businesses and assist employers in the region to diversify their workforce and implement equitable hiring practices;
- Contribution to a community-wide response to improve racial equity and accountability by engaging its network to develop inclusive policies and practices;
- Development of legislative advocacy with the Board of Directors that blends workforce development with racial equity;
- Build a more complete culture of racial, equity, diversity and inclusion;
- Ensuring diversity in recruitment, hiring, retention and promotion serving as a model for employers that receive Workforce Alliance services.

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Workforce Alliance has already taken major steps to address racial equity and inclusion within the organization through a multi-phase, eight-month knowledge building process for board members and staff lead by Dr. Wizdom Powell, President & Founder of The EvidenceWatch Collective, Inc. and a tenured professor at UCONN. This process is creating a shared understanding of and commitment to advancing racial equity needed to sustain this work long-term.

"We want to collaborate with existing community programs with a shared mission to reach and serve Black and Brown-owned businesses," said Business Services Coordinator Steve Johnson. "And work with our partners to cultivate the highly-skilled, high-quality workers needed for regional employers to prosper and grow."

Workforce Alliance will report to the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven on its progress toward these efforts in September 2022.

Earlier this year, the Foundation announced Stepping Forward, a commitment to increase grant-making to address the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racial inequity. The Foundation is a philanthropic institution that was established in 1928 as the community's permanent charitable endowment. It is one of the oldest and largest community foundations in the United States and remains the largest grant-maker in a twenty-town region located in the heart of central Connecticut.

Workforce Alliance is a policy and oversight organization responsible for creating a comprehensive, community-wide response to the challenges of building a highly skilled workforce in 30 towns in South Central Connecticut. Through the coordination and administration of a variety of employment and training initiatives, it prepares thousands of individuals for jobs and assists hundreds of employers annually. As the workforce development board for South Central CT, Workforce Alliance is charged with implementing programs and services that lead to employment using state, federal and philanthropic support. It leads the South Central Partners Network which consists of education, training, community and other entities in New Haven and Middlesex Counties.

With a majority of leaders of local businesses and industry, Workforce Alliance works closely with business organizations, local elected officials and community leaders to meet changing local needs and shifting national economic and workforce trends.

Workforce Alliance thanks the board members who serve on the Racial Equity & Accountability Initiative committee: Co-Chairs Robin Golden and Howard K. Hill, owner of Howard K. Hill Funeral Homes; Stephanie Wolfe, Vice President, Human Resource at Alexion Pharmaceuticals; Ed Dooling, Vice President, Human Resources at Masonicare; Marcia LaFemina, owner of PennGlobe Manufacturing; Larry McHugh, board secretary and president of the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce; Chris Brown, Director, Yale University New Haven Community Hiring Initiative; Maria Campos-Harlow, executive director of the United Way of Meriden-Wallingford; Past Chair Joseph Mirra; and Linzi Bell, general manager of the Hilton Garden Inn-Wallingford.

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