

State of Connecticut

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Annual Report



Program Year 2021

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022

December 2022

*A Message from
the Connecticut Department of Labor
and
the Governor's Workforce Council*

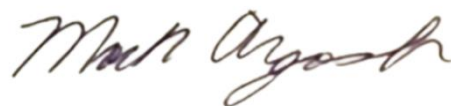
The state's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Annual Report for July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022 provides a comprehensive overview of our advancements. Together, the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL), our five Workforce Development Boards, and other partners focused on the overall goal of improving and strengthening our public workforce system. We helped employers hire and retain skilled workers and assisted jobseekers access education, training, support services, and employment. Connecticut has once again achieved remarkable successes in workforce development. A host of activities, programs, and initiatives, provided throughout Program Year 2021, were key to our achievements.

This report highlights our unified efforts, including services for dislocated workers, individuals with disabilities, youth, veterans, and others, and delineates the positive outcomes that resulted. Summaries for each Workforce Development Board including innovative projects, exceptional activities, and individual success stories are included. The report also provides WIOA program data and costs as well as details regarding system funding allocations and relevant statistics.

While many of the opportunities made available to the state's employers and jobseekers through WIOA during Program Year 2021 will continue to be offered, many new and planned projects are expected to provide additional results that will further benefit the state and its residents. As always, the state's partners in workforce development are seeking innovative ways to achieve our goals and grow the economy. With ongoing funding through WIOA and the dedicated attention of Connecticut's workforce development partners, the outlook for Program Year 2022 is promising.



Danté Bartolomeo
Commissioner
Department of Labor



Mark Argosh
Chair
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On the cover: *The Connecticut flag (photo credit: Mary Ziomek)*

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Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) - Program Year 2021

Throughout Program Year 2021 (PY21), the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and the state's five Workforce Development Boards (WDB) achieved many goals and successes in fulfilling responsibilities set forth under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. A variety of long-standing programs and services that have produced positive results continued to be offered, while new, promising ones were developed and made available. Overall, jobseekers and employers around the state benefited from the endeavors of CTDOL and its many partners in workforce development, as this report reflects.

Since taking office in 2019, a top priority of Governor Ned Lamont has been the development of "a nation-leading, accessible, and equitable workforce in Connecticut that is responsive to the needs of the 21st century economy." The Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), established in 2020 to create workforce development policies, strategies, and goals for accomplishing this priority, worked in partnership with public and private stakeholders throughout Program Year 2021 to develop, inform, and improve the state's workforce ecosystem. In addition, OWS, which was codified effective July 1, 2021 as an independent agency tied to the Office of the Governor for "Administrative Purposes Only," continually collaborated with key WIOA partners, chief among them, the Connecticut Department of Labor and WDBs.

Over the past year, the Office of Workforce Strategy developed its flagship initiative, CareerConneCT, to offer a variety of targeted, data-driven, and employer-informed workforce training opportunities. CareerConneCT offers residents of the state access to a full suite of workforce services, including case management, supportive services, and other employment-related assistance. To streamline this effort, OWS made an investment to scale up one of Connecticut's nationally-acclaimed models, the Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI). Successfully administered for years in eastern Connecticut by the Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board, the MPI will be expanded to all industries and regions with the help of OWS's investment. This advancement is key to ensuring all residents have access to employment and training opportunities. As this model scales and launches, OWS will work closely with CTDOL and the Workforce Development Boards to operationalize the project.

To support CareerConneCT, OWS helped secure a combined \$110 million in funding. Connecticut's legislature appropriated \$70 million of federal American Rescue Plan Act dollars to target unemployed and underemployed residents for upskilling and reskilling as the COVID-19 pandemic began to wane, and \$40 million from state bond funds was appropriated to OWS in 2021 to be disbursed over the biennium (\$20 million in FY22 and in FY23). In addition to the training opportunities and systematic support of the workforce ecosystem provided by this investment, Connecticut will be able to further its Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access (DEIA) goals.

Also during PY21, the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC), the state workforce board, continued to meet quarterly. During the 2021 legislative session, the GWC membership was

increased to 51 members and was carefully constructed to ensure an equitable mix of council participants with consideration to race, ethnicity, gender, industry representation, and business size and type (non-profit or for-profit). OWS continued to have the GWC provide leadership and guidance to a changing workforce climate through GWC's sub-committees of: Business Leadership, Education & Career Pathways, DEIA, and Data & Accountability. In the spirit of continuous improvement, OWS's plan to add a WIOA sub-committee is reflected in the PY22 agenda for vote by GWC. The GWC sub-committees continue to meet regularly and will operationalize their goals through CareerConneCT.

CTDOL's Employment Services (ES) Operations Unit continued advancements that significantly benefited both employers and jobseekers in Connecticut and, at the same time, assisted the agency in meeting its WIOA goals for the program year. Details of the accomplishments are described in the "Employment and Training" section of this report, but highlights of successes by ES staff are as follows:

- In partnership with the New York Department of Labor, implemented the Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (UI RESEA) Impact Study to evaluate UI claimants' receipt of reemployment services and their impact on reemployment outcomes, including wages.
- Developed and implemented a new, statewide UI RESEA Bootcamp Virtual Workshop, with attendance-tracking capabilities, for all mandated claimants under the Impact Study.
- Updated and maintained the interagency "Employer Resource Guide" and "Employer Reference Card" which offer road maps to the many programs, services and incentives for businesses. Available in electronic format, these annually-updated resources provide important marketing and training tools for business services professionals.
- Developed automation enhancements for businesses requesting Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC), significantly increasing the processing and completion of application requests, as well as reducing backlog.
- CTDOL and Hartford Athletic hosted the first annual Hiring Expo on September 7, 2021. The expo featured over 60 hiring employers, across industry sectors, committed to workforce diversity. Job Fair Readiness workshops were conducted prior to the event. Planning for the second annual Hiring Expo is already underway.

The Consumer Contact Center, established in July 2020 to handle the massive surge in Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims that were filed as the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, is a cornerstone in CTDOL's customer service delivery system. While UI claims have decreased significantly since 2020, unemployment levels in Connecticut during Program Year 2021 resulted in ongoing demand for services provided by the Consumer Contact Center. Staffed with both intermittent and permanent agency employees utilizing efficient, convenient technology, the Consumer Contact Center provides a direct link to customers seeking guidance in filing a new or continued UI claim, information regarding unemployment, or answers to specific benefit questions.

During Program Year 2021, Consumer Contact Center staff handled more than 970,000 claimant calls and cases, resulting in a weekly average of more than 18,700. In addition, twelve experienced Consumer Contact Center agents provided virtual and in-person UI claim services

for claimant customers visiting CTDOL's five comprehensive American Job Centers; assistance was provided on a variety of topics, some of which included general claim status inquiries and issues, unpaid claims, identification verification, and assistance navigating the system. In PY21, more than 7,000 claimants who sought staff assistance at the state's American Job Centers were served, which represents a weekly average of more than 135.

As PY21 came to a close, CTDOL finalized years of effort to prepare for the launch of ReEmployCT, a modernized Unemployment Insurance system that provides integrated functionality for the Unemployment Insurance Division. ReEmployCT replaces several unemployment systems used by the agency. It provides a single sign-on for claimants; features online help for claimants and employers, reducing the need to mail or fax documents; and reduces the number of times certain businesses must file their wage records. The system, which may be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, also improves CTDOL functions by reducing manual processing and providing more comprehensive data about unemployment.

Throughout PY21, CTDOL's WIOA Administration Unit diligently continued oversight efforts to maintain programmatic and fiscal compliance with the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and WIOA regulations. In addition to annually monitoring the Workforce Development Boards and regularly communicating with them regarding activity under the many components of WIOA, day-to-day administrative duties included the thorough review of grant expenditures and invoices; analysis of contracts; provision of guidance to ensure adherence to ETPL policies; coordination of action to resolve questions or issues regarding CTDOL's case management system; and a host of other functions. Throughout the year, periodic, virtual meetings were held between the WIOA Administration Unit, the WDBs, and other partners to stay up-to-date on various workforce topics, and staff regularly attended local board meetings. The preparation and submittal of the WIOA Annual Report to USDOL is also completed by the WIOA Administration Unit, as is the WIOA Title 1 Data Validation process.

CTDOL's unwavering focus in working toward and attaining Connecticut's workforce development goals under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, in partnership with the five Workforce Development Boards and other organizations and agencies, resulted in significant opportunities for those who participated in WIOA's various programs throughout the year. High-quality services and training options were made available across the state and increasing employment opportunities remained at the forefront of plans and project development. The achievements reached during PY21, which are reflected in this report, are but steps toward further strengthening of partnerships and new ideas for growth and success in the area of employment and training.

State Evaluations, Oversight Activities, and Guidance

Compliance Monitoring

Compliance monitoring, as set forth in 2 CFR 200, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards," was conducted at three of the five WDBs during the period of July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022, in accordance with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations at 20 CFR §683.410. The compliance monitoring of the remaining two WDBs was scheduled to be conducted. Due to COVID-19, CTDOL compliance monitoring was conducted remotely through emails, drop box set ups, and virtual meetings with the boards' fiscal staff. The Jobs First Employment Services

(JFES), which is the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, along with other grants supported and administered through CTDOL, are monitored during the compliance review, in accordance with contract requirements.

The annual WIOA compliance monitoring includes a review of financial management, consisting of financial reporting, cost allocation methodology, cash management, allowable costs, payroll controls, audit requirements, procurement, and property controls. In addition, WIOA active participant files are sampled and reviewed for eligibility verification for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth in all five areas. The monitoring review of the three WDBs during PY21 revealed no findings. Any areas of concern were satisfactorily resolved and the WDBs made continuous improvements through the implementation of new policies and procedures during the program year.

As for finalization of the PY20 monitoring review process, all findings and recommended corrective actions were completed and adequate controls appeared to be in place. And, for PY21, monitoring review results showed that the three WDBs were overall in compliance with federal and state administrative requirements.

Status of State Evaluation Activities

Pursuant to 2021 Connecticut legislation, development of a plan to compile, analyze, and report on data for the purpose of assessing the performance of Connecticut's workforce system was designated to the Office of Workforce Strategy. The resulting annual report will include the number of individuals served, demographic information about such individuals, and outcomes achieved after completion of a workforce training program. Following a transition period, the report shall replace the Connecticut Higher Education/Workforce Legislative Report Card (LRC), developed by CTDOL's Office of Research. This report, available for PY21 at <https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/LRC/LRC2.aspx>, includes information on employment by industry and average wages of recent graduates of Connecticut's public colleges and universities.

Administrative Review and Technical Assistance

Monitoring, evaluation, and technical assistance are integral oversight responsibilities of the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and are mandated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and other applicable laws and regulations. CTDOL's WIOA Administration staff conducts annual program, data, and fiscal monitoring of the Workforce Development Boards and, throughout the year, offers technical assistance and performs administrative reviews to continually evaluate program components.

Additionally, the WIOA Administration Unit staff provides guidance to WDB staff, conducts Data Validation as required by USDOL, evaluates program activities for compliance with USDOL and CTDOL policies, and is available for consultation on program-related matters. Administrative reviews are also conducted and include, but are not limited to:

- Adherence to and compliance with USDOL ETA and CTDOL policies
- Eligibility for the WIOA program, including barriers and priority of service

- Performance outcomes for Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth participants
- WIOA outcome measures, including achievement of negotiated program goals

During PY21, staff continued to partner with the WDBs, both remotely and in-person, in the “new normal.” Program monitoring, for example, was conducted remotely with each Workforce Development Board and the process included interviews with program staff, partners and participants. This year’s area of concentration focused on the Eligible Training Provider List, specifically, approved providers. Also, although the Opioid National Dislocated Worker Grant concluded on June 30, 2021, WIOA Administration staff and the WDBs continued to provide support for the Employer Recovery Friendly Initiative. In addition, WIOA staff provided support to the WDBs through technical assistance in the following areas:

- Identifying and recording participant barriers
- Utilizing self-attestation for program eligibility
- Implementing CTHires upgrades

CTDOL’s WIOA Administration Unit continued to promote collaboration and communication within the workforce system through periodic WDB and partner meetings which were conducted remotely.

During Program Year 2021, CTDOL’s WIOA Administration Unit and Business Management staff participated in various professional development courses to improve skills and expand knowledge in regard to conducting financial and contracting-related tasks. The online learning opportunities specifically offered comprehensive instruction regarding the subjects of indirect (facilities and administrative) cost rates and contractor evaluation.

In October 2021, “Developing & Monitoring Indirect/F&A Cost Rate Proposals Under 2CFR 200” was attended by 14 staff. This two-day course focused on the purpose of and negotiating an indirect cost rate; practice developing an indirect cost rate; and applying an indirect cost rate to specific awards.

In May 2022, “Evaluating a Contractor’s Performance” was attended by 14 staff. This three-day course focused on:

- Explaining when it is necessary to evaluate a contractor’s performance
- Planning the evaluation
- Evaluating a contractor’s performance
- Taking corrective action
- Documenting the results

WIOA Participant and Employer Survey Results

During Program Year 2021, the Connecticut Department of Labor utilized SurveyMonkey to gather customer satisfaction information from participants. A total of 29 participants completed surveys. The majority of these respondents provided positive feedback to survey questions, with many specifically praising the professionalism, knowledge, and helpfulness of the American Job Centers’ (AJC) staff. Respondents indicated they were thankful for the services delivered and the flexibility around in-person and remote service delivery.

The results of the participant* surveys were as follows:

- 79% were very satisfied with the services provided by the American Job Centers
- 85% believed the services exceeded their expectations
- 81% believed the services provided were very close to the ideal set of services

Satisfaction surveys were also made available to employers during PY21, through a combination of sources. CTDOL's WIOA webpage hosts an employer survey powered by SurveyMonkey. In addition, Connecticut's virtual one-stop delivery system, CTHires, includes an option for employer feedback. During PY21, a total of 10 surveys were completed by employers through SurveyMonkey. Employer comments were positive, focusing on the value of the services and partnership provided through Business Services Units and the Apprenticeship system.

The results of the employer* surveys were as follows:

- 100% were satisfied with the services provided by the American Job Centers
- 99% believed the services met their expectations
- 100% believed the services were very close to the ideal set of services

Performance and Accountability

The Connecticut Department of Labor's (CTDOL) Performance and Accountability Unit is primarily tasked with the collection, compilation, evaluation, reporting, and distribution of performance and demographic data for state-funded and federally-funded programs and services that are administered and delivered by CTDOL, in collaboration with its partners and subcontractors. The unit also provides technical support to those administering the various programs and services that include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Veterans | • Wagner-Peyser Act |
| • Registered Apprenticeship | • Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) |
| • Unemployment Insurance (UI) | • Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) |
| • Foreign Labor Certification | • Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers |
| • Connecticut Individual Development Account Initiative | • Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth) |

To submit and generate required reports, the Performance and Accountability Unit utilizes the federal Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS). First, data extracts are generated for each report by Geographic Solutions, Inc., the developer of CTDOL's web-based case management system, then the extracts are provided to the Performance and Accountability Unit. Prior to report certification by CTDOL to USDOL, the unit collaborates with program administrators to ensure that program data is reviewed and accuracy is confirmed. For its performance data, Connecticut utilizes in-state wage information as well as data from the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS).

*Results are not intended to make any inferences beyond the survey's respondents.

As mandated by WIOA, CTDOL must collaborate with the Connecticut Department of Aging and Disability Services and the Connecticut State Department of Education for quarterly and annual reporting purposes. CTDOL previously established Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) for the exchange of data with these WIOA-required core partners and continues to share data as outlined in each respective memorandum. Each core partner transmits data to CTDOL via CTDOL's PilotFish, a server with a collection of software tools that allows for the secure connection, translation, and transformation of data between heterogeneous systems. The parties to the MOU share both participant data of those co-enrolled in the core programs of each entity as well as wage and employment data for all participants, not only those co-enrolled. A unique identification number is assigned, via CTDOL's MS SQL Server database, to represent each data entity (individual) instead of their Social Security Number. The unique identification number and co-enrollment and wage information are returned to the core partners for inclusion in each agency's respective federal report.

The Performance and Accountability Unit also synthesizes raw UI data and generates monthly reports so CTDOL's administration may determine whether claimants receive their benefits within federally-mandated timeframes; gathers and provides data critical to both negotiating the establishment of the state's WIOA performance goals with the Workforce Development Boards and helping to ensure Connecticut is meeting those goals; prepares CTDOL's section of the Governor's Budget Narrative; supports various programs with Data Element Validation tasks; and designs surveys and analyzes their results for numerous CTDOL units.

Continuing Workforce Activities

CTHires

In addition to the numerous reporting responsibilities described in the "Performance and Accountability" summary included in this report, the staff of the Performance and Accountability Unit also administer the Connecticut Department of Labor's web-based case management system, CTHires. An array of helpful options are offered to users of CTHires, including a job skills assessment tool; a format to create and send résumés and cover letters to employers; a job bank; a list of training providers; a job search tracker; a virtual job recruiter/job candidate finder; labor market information; and system email for communications between jobseekers, employers, case managers, and training providers. CTHires also collects required data for reporting on self-services and staff-assisted services for WIOA (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth), Wagner-Peyser, Trade Adjustment Assistance, National Dislocated Worker Grants, and Registered Apprenticeship Expansion Grants. Since the launch of CTHires in Program Year (PY) 2015, various components have been added to the system to integrate other programs, such as Foreign Labor Certification in PY16, JFES in PY17, the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program in PY19, and Registered Apprenticeship in PY20.

Rapid Response and National Dislocated Worker Grants

The state Rapid Response (RR) Unit, in conjunction with local Workforce Development Boards and other One-Stop partners, is responsible under WIOA Title I (20 CFR, Part 682, Subpart C) for carrying out rapid response activities statewide. Headed by the Connecticut Department of Labor, the RR Unit reaches out to employers contemplating or experiencing layoffs and plant closings. Employers, affected workers, and their unions are provided information on layoff aversion, mass layoff/plant closing, unemployment insurance, WIOA, One-Stop employment

services, and various labor laws. The RR Unit also makes referrals to, and coordinates services with, CTDOL units, other agencies, and programs for special intervention or supportive services applicable to dislocated workers and struggling businesses.

During the period of July 2021 to June 2022, the RR Unit made 174 initial outreach calls regarding potential layoffs and responded to nine WARN notices affecting 1,371 workers. Additionally, RR staff made 80 presentations to 685 impacted workers. The presentations included two Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) information sessions, 29 WIOA information workshops, and 37 webinars for workers from companies that did not avail themselves of Rapid Response services prior to layoff.

Additionally, 1,427 webinar invitations were sent to workers whose employers either declined pre-layoff presentations or who were identified by the Connecticut Department of Labor after layoff as being part of a mass reduction in force.

As a means of layoff aversion, RR staff also reached out to 57 employers that were participating in CTDOL's Shared Work program to advise them of their status and make appropriate referrals to Economic Development or other resources if the employers indicated that they were continuing to struggle or have difficulty emerging from a downturn in business.

In December 2021, RR Unit staff began an outreach initiative to target unemployed workers who were not part of a mass layoff, but met the definition of a Dislocated Worker, that is, have been laid off or terminated; determined eligible for unemployment benefits; and unsuccessful in seeking employment for a minimum of four weeks. A total of 15,484 WIOA outreach letters were sent to workers who met this definition. As a result of this initiative, 339 workers attended a WIOA information webinar, and 141 of those attendees were referred to WIOA program operators for enrollment.

CTDOL's Trade Act Petition Coordinator, in concert with the Rapid Response Unit, submitted 17 TAA petitions on behalf of workers whose jobs were believed to be affected by increased imports or a shift in production to a foreign country. Six petitions, covering 292 workers, were certified TAA eligible. One petition was still pending investigation at the close of the program year. Ten petitions resulted in negative determinations, partially due to reversion to the Trade program's 2002 amendments; the issuance of certifications was limited to manufacturing companies and eligibility for offshoring work was restricted to countries with which the U.S. has a Free Trade Agreement.

Connecticut was awarded \$2,331,000 by USDOL in April 2020 as part of a National Dislocated Worker Grant to provide disaster-relief employment, along with employment and training services, to eligible individuals significantly impacted by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The grant provided disaster-relief cleanup and humanitarian assistance activities, including cleaning/sanitizing public facilities; delivering food, medicine, and other supplies to the quarantined; and healthcare support positions caring for vulnerable populations. In addition, employment and training activities included online learning platforms such as Metrix Learning, Work-Keys, and Year Up Career Readiness online suites. Short-term, demand-driven, customized training programs were available that targeted occupations with immediate job openings. Eligible participants included workers laid off due to quarantine orders or business closures related to disruptions caused by the pandemic; those unable to go to their regular

workplace due to social distancing requirements; and those missing work to care for a family member. The grant served a total of 64 participants and concluded on March 31, 2022.

Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) was awarded a \$5.88 million Trade and Economic Transition National Dislocated Worker Grant by USDOL in Program Year 2018, with a grant period of October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2020. CWP applied for and was awarded a no-cost extension in September 2020 and the additional grant year resulted in an increase in the number of jobseekers served, from 500 to 600. Under this grant, CWP provided up to \$9,000, per dislocated worker, in scholarship funds and supportive services. Trainings have led to employment opportunities in the manufacturing, healthcare, information technology, transportation and logistics, and construction sectors. The grant also provided up to \$20,000 in On-the-Job Training (OJT) incentives, per new hire, to area employers. The grant, which ended on September 30, 2021, served 708 dislocated workers. A total of 472 participants enrolled in ITA training, 94 participants were placed into OJT, and 321 participants have obtained employment.

In PY19, CTDOL was awarded a Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grant, for up to \$4,757,845, by USDOL for the provision of comprehensive workforce services to assist Connecticut residents impacted by the opioid crisis. Aimed at providing training; career services and support; employer outreach; and temporary disaster-relief employment for selected dislocated worker participants, the state's Recovery Works program specialized in serving individuals with barriers, including ex-offenders, single parents, the long-term unemployed, and those who were low income or homeless/runaways. While CTDOL administered Recovery Works, with the agency's commissioner serving in a coordinative role, each of the state's five Workforce Development Boards operated a regional program under the grant funding while also working in conjunction with CTDOL on two statewide initiatives also funded by the grant.

Although the grant ended on June 30, 2021, CTDOL will continue to work with its partners at the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and Department of Public Health to coordinate the Employer Recovery Friendly Workplace initiative described in more detail below. During PY21, a total of 7 employers were recognized by Governor Lamont with an official "Recovery Friendly Employer" designation. The grant served a total of 280 participants, providing over 1,500 unique workforce-related activities. Career Navigators counseled 443 individuals. A total of 73% of enrolled participants were co-enrolled in partner programs and 83% of participants received a credential through training opportunities.

The Workforce Opioid Advisory Board was established in PY19 to best fulfill the objectives of both the Employer Recovery Friendly Workplace and the Peer Recovery Navigator initiatives. Board members, selected from state partner agencies, Workforce Development Boards, employers, and private nonprofit community agencies, were responsible for:

- Hiring and placing qualified individuals as Peer Recovery Navigators in each AJC; and
- Developing the Recovery Friendly Workplace (RFW) initiative, that supported communities by recognizing that recovery is a strength. Key objectives included a commit to hire and retain those in recovery and encourage a healthy, safe environment where the employer, employees, and communities could

collaborate to create positive change and eliminate barriers for those impacted by substance use disorders.

Outreach Efforts by the Office of Research

During Program Year 2021, although most of the outreach activities provided by the Connecticut Department of Labor's Office of Research continued to be virtual, a few events were conducted in-person for the first since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Office of Research provided labor market information of interest to jobseekers, workforce development professionals who provide job search and employment assistance, and education, government, and business leaders. The Office of Research also provided data and information to the Governor's Workforce Council and Office of Workforce Strategies.

Online presentations were held via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, throughout the year, for audiences including:

- Jobseeker groups;
- Business groups and chambers of commerce working to create jobs in Connecticut;
- Educational institutions helping their students with career planning, including the State Department of Education and local school district advisory boards;
- Alumni groups; and
- Workforce development organizations working with a variety of constituencies, including persons with disabilities and the second chance, or reentry, population.

In addition, the Office of Research participated in several of the Connecticut Science Center's virtual STEM Career Showcase events during the program year to provide information regarding STEM careers to middle and high school students, their families, and teachers.

The Office of Research continued to provide technical assistance to the Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) for Help Wanted OnLine (HWOL) through an account Research administers. All WDBs have access to the jobs posting data which is gathered from jobs posted each month from thousands of Internet job boards, corporate boards, and smaller job sites. Interest in job posting data increased during the second half of the program year.

This program year, there was particular interest in the job postings gathered from thousands of Internet job boards, corporate boards, and smaller job sites, and listed on the Office of Research's Help Wanted OnLine web page. The Office of Research published weekly updates to the page in addition to a comprehensive monthly report with information on job postings by industry, occupation, and employer for each Workforce Development Board area. The Office of Research also continued to provide weekly updates of Unemployment Insurance claimants by race/ethnicity, gender, age, education, industry, town, and previous wages. Data were provided statewide and by workforce area. Workforce Development Boards and other partners were particularly interested in this information.

Employment and Training

Wagner-Peyser

CTDOL receives federal funding under the Wagner-Peyser Act to provide universal access to an array of employment services offered at American Job Center (AJC) locations throughout Connecticut. These services, delivered both virtually and in person, include assistance with career choices and job search, referrals to jobs, reemployment services to claimants receiving unemployment insurance, and employer recruitment services to businesses with job openings. Additional resources that are available through the AJCs include computers with Internet connection, copiers, and fax machines, as well as résumé writing, interviewing, LinkedIn, and job search workshops. During PY21, a total of 36,150 Wagner-Peyser program participants received services (staff-assisted or self-service) through AJC offices, with 80,197 staff-assisted services provided statewide. CTDOL also conducted 199 virtual employment workshops that were attended by 6,340 individuals.

Reemployment Services for Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claimants

CTDOL provides a variety of federally-funded reemployment services to UI claimants through the Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (UI RESEA) program which serves claimants who are either profiled as most likely to exhaust benefits or those receiving Unemployment Compensation for Ex-servicemembers (UCX). The goal of this program is to provide UI claimants early access to services provided by the American Job Centers that will help get them back into the workforce faster. The UI RESEA program also serves as a prevention/detection program for improper UI payments. In PY21, CTDOL completed 6,225 virtual Initial RESEA appointments. For this same period, 5,885 claimants participated in a required reemployment activity.

In November 2021, CTDOL successfully implemented a RESEA Impact Study in partnership with the New York Department of Labor. The study is designed to evaluate UI claimants' receipt of various reemployment services and the impact of such services on reemployment outcomes, including wages. CTDOL began selecting individuals for the study on November 26, 2021, with Initial Appointments beginning on December 14, 2021. All individuals who completed their Initial RESEA Appointments during the study period were referred to a new virtual RESEA Bootcamp Workshop which included Job Search, Interviewing, Résumé Preparation and LinkedIn content. CTDOL's RESEA Bootcamp Workshop will serve as one of multiple reemployment services under evaluation in the ongoing study.

Business Services

Business Services helps Connecticut's employers connect with jobseekers. From July 2021 through June 2022, a total of 1,350 registrations from businesses were processed by CTHires staff. During this same period, employers posted 73,276 new Connecticut job orders and jobseekers placed 916 new résumés into the system. In addition, 259,617 job orders were indexed from corporate websites in PY21.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)

WOTC, a federal tax credit available to employers, reduces a business's tax liability and is an incentive to hire individuals from certain target groups who face barriers to employment. The

U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) and U.S. Department of Treasury, through the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), jointly administer the implementation of the WOTC program. USDOL, through the Employment and Training Administration, provides grant funding and policy guidance to the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and other state workforce agencies to administer the certification process, while IRS administers all tax-related provisions and requirements. WOTC is one of several workforce development programs that promotes diversity in the workplace and access to jobs. During Program Year 2021, CTDOL processed a total of 107,351 WOTC applications from employers, of which 38,248 resulted in certification.

Serving Our Veterans

Connecticut's veterans receive reemployment services from trained staff at AJCs throughout the state. Among the staff are representatives funded by the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program which offers specialized services to veterans. Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists provide intensive services and facilitate job placements to meet the employment needs of certain veterans and eligible spouses; those who have significant barriers to employment or other characteristics specified by the Secretary of Labor qualify for referral to a DVOP and may receive a jointly-developed employment plan and individualized career services that are administered through case management. Local Veterans' Employment Representatives conduct outreach to area employers to assist veterans in gaining employment and facilitate the employment, training, and placement services for all veterans in the AJCs.

During PY21, DVOPs provided employment and training services to 601 JVSG participants; of this total, 594 were eligible veterans which represents approximately 67 percent of the 888 eligible veterans served under Wagner-Peyser. Included in these counts are veterans filing for unemployment compensation who were connected to reemployment services through UI RESEA, as well as those who may have been simultaneously served by other workforce programs in the AJC. Community engagement by JVSG staff included a virtual presentation about CTDOL's services for veterans as part of the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs' September 2021 Stand Down; held annually for veterans who are homeless, chronically unemployed, or have difficulty adjusting in society, this Program Year's two-day event included information sessions broadcast over social media and a regional distribution of personal items at the VA's campus in Rocky Hill and other locations. In partnership with the Department of Defense and the Connecticut Military Department, JVSG staff also assisted returning troops from the Connecticut National Guard and U.S. Armed Service Reserves by participating in two Reverse Soldier Readiness Program briefings.

Community outreach during the program year was conducted virtually and in person. The DVOPs maintained contact with other service providers and veterans' organizations and made efforts to connect veterans with the AJCs and JVSG services. Services were also provided to homeless veterans, in collaboration with the VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families program and grantees of the U.S. Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program, and to veterans with service-connected disabilities participating in the VA's Veteran Readiness and Employment program.

Jobs First Employment Services Integration in the American Job Centers

In partnership with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the five Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), CTDOL administers the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES)

program which provides a host of employment-related services to recipients of Temporary Family Assistance (TFA), Connecticut's federally-funded cash assistance program for low-income families under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The WDBs operate as intermediaries that subcontract with other organizations to provide direct services to JFES participants in American Job Centers (AJCs) around the state.

On March 14, 2020, Governor Lamont issued a COVID-19 Executive Order that included the temporarily waiving of all in-person TFA interview requirements. Since TFA could be granted without mandated participation in employment services, JFES was temporarily suspended at the AJCs. During this time, CTDOL's JFES Unit Director, a member of the 2Gen Steering Committee that focuses on a family-centered, results-oriented approach in serving children and families to ensure education, workforce training, and social supports are in place so generation-to-generation economic stability and well-being may be sustained, took the opportunity to look at the entire JFES program through the 2Gen lens to suggest and implement enhancements to JFES. With the reopening of the JFES program on July 26, 2021 came dramatic changes to the foundational rules of the JFES program such as the development of a virtual JFES Orientation; increases in transportation supports and the participation allowance benefit; more in-depth assistance with barrier intervention and resolution; and other significant program modifications. Also, while JFES staff began receiving new referrals from DSS upon the reopening, all current TFA recipients reconnected virtually, with the exception of participants requesting an in-person appointment due to lack of access to technology. Virtual case management services included:

- Holding meetings/communication by email, phone, and/or video conferencing;
- Assisting participants with online career guidance and job search assistance efforts; and
- Connecting participants to local resources and supports to assist families with barriers and those that may be in crisis due to COVID-19.

In addition, CTDOL's JFES Unit oversaw or implemented the following services and programs:

- CT Association for Human Services (CAHS) Financial Literacy Workshops:
In partnership with CTDOL, CAHS moved to a virtual workshop delivery platform by offering a new set of four financial literacy workshops to all JFES participants via Zoom. This enabled more individuals to participate in the workshops and eliminated the need for the volunteer CAHS presenters to travel around Connecticut.
- Refugee Services for JFES Participants in the New Haven Region:
CTDOL convened a series of meetings with representatives from DSS, Workforce Alliance, and the Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS) agency to update the referral process of refugees who were being referred to the JFES program in order to allow a more seamless transition for refugees into the JFES program. This new process was designed to meet the needs of the 700-plus Afghan refugees who had arrived in Connecticut.
- JFES Staff Professional Development:
While JFES staff were providing employment services, they also participated in additional assignments that included monitoring and updating the CTHires case

management system and participating in virtual professional development opportunities coordinated by CTDOL such as:

- Certified Professional Résumé Writers (CPRW) Home-Study Process
- Poverty Immersion Training
- Welcome to Your Future of Teleworking
- Annual Conference - Serving Adults with Disabilities

Job Corps

Through Job Corps, youth have the opportunity to receive educational and career technical training, thereby gaining the skills needed to become employable, independent citizens. This federally-funded program, administered by the USDOL Employment and Training Administration, offers residential and non-residential placements for youth ages 16-24 (no upper age or income limits for those with disabilities) as well as intensive, wraparound service such as career and mental health counseling, driver education, social skills training, and many other benefits that support student achievement. Job Corps' success in Connecticut is largely due to the collaborative efforts of CTDOL, the Workforce Development Boards, state and local agencies and organizations, and Job Corps' program operators.

In PY21, Connecticut's Job Corps Centers resumed enrolling new students for the first time since COVID-19 forced the suspension of new enrollments in PY20. Although many already-enrolled students moved back on campus and participated in person, new student recruitment was ramped up as a result of many students dropping out due to the challenges of participating via distance learning. The Work-Based Learning program resumed, including student participation in internships with local community and business partners. Distance learning remained available to students when medical reasons for this mode of learning existed.

During PY21, a variety of trades were offered at two Connecticut Job Corps locations. New Haven Job Corps Center offered Culinary Arts, Certified Nursing Assistant, Building Construction Technology, Plumbing, and Carpentry. Trades available at the Hartford Job Corps Center included Insurance & Financial Services, Manufacturing Technology, and Clinical Medical Assistant. Students who qualified for the Advanced Career Training program were eligible to continue their education at local colleges and universities or transfer to a Job Corps Center offering advanced training in the field of their choice.

Job Corps Success Story



The structure and support of Job Corps were key to Sylvia's success.

Thanks to Job Corps and a focus on personal development, health management, and pursuit of higher education, Sylvia gained academic confidence and is well on her way to success. Raised and educated in Tennessee, Sylvia found the rigors of college coursework combined with health issues challenging to the point that she withdrew from the university she was attending. After learning about Job Corps from a flyer at an American Job Center, Sylvia planned to attend the Memphis Job Corps, but applied to Hartford when her family decided to move to the East Coast. When the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure

of the Hartford campus shortly after her arrival, she continued attending the Insurance & Financial Services program via distance learning. Once in-person classes resumed, she became Treasurer of the Student Government Association and served as a Peer Math Tutor. Upon completing her program of study in August 2021, she was accepted into Job Corps' Advanced Career Training Program and began attending Capital Community College where she achieved Dean's List. She was also accepted into a 2100-hour apprenticeship program with a prominent insurance company and will be eligible to apply for full-time opportunities in the company upon training completion. Sylvia, whose career goal is to become a Certified Public Accountant, credits her success to Job Corps' structure and the teachers who believed in her abilities and provided constant support.

Serving Individuals with Disabilities

The Connecticut Department of Labor, the Departments of Social Services (DSS) and Aging and Disability Services, and other state agencies and community-based organizations offer assistance and guidance on opportunities and options for individuals with disabilities. One particular role that remains a focus for CTDOL in this regard is the agency's membership on the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. In support of the Committee's mission of addressing the workforce development needs of individuals with disabilities, CTDOL provides links to disability resources for employers and jobseekers at www.ctdol.state.ct.us/gendocs/pwd.htm, a web page developed collaboratively by CTDOL and the Governor's Committee. Information on assistive technology, tax credits, workplace accommodations, and disability employment initiatives is offered via the web page.

In addition, CTDOL serves as a member of the following:

- Disability Focus Group

The members of this group, including the Department of Aging and Disability Services, the Department of Developmental Services, State Department of Education, CTDOL, EdAdvance, and Adult Education providers, plan the Annual Conference on Serving Adults with Disabilities. On May 6, 2022, a series of mini-workshops were held as a substitute for the traditional annual conference. Topics included a presentation from a Paralympian, Accessibility Guidelines and Troubleshooting, Self-Care for Staff in Trying Times, and Exploring Cognitive Issues.

- Connecticut Tech Act Project Advisory Council

This group, whose members include representatives of agencies interested in advancing the use of assistive technology (AT), individuals with disabilities who use AT, and family members or guardians of those individuals, provides input and perspectives regarding the Tech Act Project and the statewide, comprehensive activities implemented through it. Funded by a federal grant and overseen by the Department of Aging and Disability Services, the Tech Act Project has made significant strides in familiarizing employers and individuals with AT options.

Workforce Development Boards

(Summary information has been provided by Connecticut's Workforce Development Boards.)

Northwest (Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board)

Regional Sector Partnerships

The Next Gen Manufacturing Regional Sector Partnership (RSP) was assembled in February 2021 with a focus on two priority areas: Talent Development, and Talent Image and Recruitment. It has since launched an industry-led, community-supported recruitment campaign that includes the development and distribution of compelling content, such as video testimonials and brochures, through in-person school visits, company tours, virtual and in-person events, and social media channels. The ongoing campaign contains several elements, each customized to a specific target audience: youth under 18, older youth ages 18-25, local manufacturing program graduates, adults over 25, permanent part-time workers, and older workers. The goals of these efforts are to substantially increase youth interest in manufacturing as a career; strengthen the talent pool; and increase the number of career-changing adults who choose manufacturing.

In March 2022, the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board launched its Next Gen Healthcare Partnership. Presently comprised of eight co-chairs, this RSP is led by a team of the region's top healthcare executives. The convening team includes the Danbury, Waterbury, and Northwest Chambers of Commerce and representation from healthcare facilities in all four corners of northwestern Connecticut which affords equitable and inclusive access to adequately address the needs of the healthcare industry in the region. The goals of the partnership are to focus on industry-identified priorities such as expansion and improvement of local education and training programs; campaigns to promote awareness and interest in healthcare careers; and regulatory and other changes to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare.

Northwest Construction Careers Initiative

The successful Northwest Construction Careers Initiative (NCCI), which involves local trade unions' work in partnership with private sector companies to encourage careers through apprenticeship and construction readiness trainings in a variety related trades, continued in Program Year 2021. Staff offered outreach and recruitment events for residents of the Northwest region, with orientation sessions held virtually and in person.

The NRWIB also delivers a reentry program that offers job-readiness skills and the opportunity for more training, specifically with the Manufacturing Alliance Service Corporation program. Collaboration continues with local trade unions. NCCI has a mutually beneficial relationship with International Union of Operating Engineers Local 478. In addition, the program has helped participants find jobs with many private contractors.

NRWIB also administers the Good Jobs Ordinance, the local hiring ordinance issued by the City of Waterbury that requires contractors working on Waterbury projects with a value of \$500,000 or greater to hire qualified Waterbury residents. Contractors are required to hire 30% residents and 10% minority. The board continued to offer OSHA 10 classes multiple times a year, since this certification is mandatory for those who want to work in the construction field. In addition to OSHA, NCCI offers environmental remediation training and basic CORE construction with plumbing, HVAC and electrical classes.

Ticket to Work

Ticket to Work is a voluntary Social Security program that assists recipients of SSI or SSDI benefits, age 18 through 65, to obtain vocational counseling, training, job readiness, job referrals and other employment support services, free of charge. Authorized by the Social Security Administration as an “Employment Network,” the NRWIB provided these services to 34 participants during PY21. To participate, individuals must currently be receiving SSI or SSDI, meet the age criteria, and be willing to work full time. While participating, disability medical reviews are deferred, Medicare/Medicaid benefits continue, and, if needed, program participants receive expedited reinstatement of benefits.

Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative - Manufacturing Your Future

The NRWIB, serving as a convener and broker, continues to facilitate the implementation and delivery of a broad array of initiatives that focus on the region’s priorities. NRWIB’s Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative program addresses the shortage of skilled workers in the manufacturing sector through a regional partnership of schools, two community colleges, business associations, chambers of commerce, Manufacturing Alliance Service Corporation, and local businesses.

With funding from the Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative, NRWIB operates Manufacturing Your Future, a four-year, workforce pipeline program that trains qualified, entry-level workers for job placement with manufacturers. The board furthered program participation via CareerPath, a mobile app designed for NRWIB that enables students to create personalized career pathways. The application takes a student from registration to course completion, from the convenience of a smartphone device. Ultimately, the student will have access to active employers seeking qualified, skilled applicants. CareerPath features include push notification, graphic reporting and analytics, soft and hard skills tracking, co-curricular program integration, a badging and credentialing system, events, tasks, and milestones.

Youth

The NRWIB strives to deliver a comprehensive array of youth services that focus on assisting both out-of-school and in-school youth who have one or more barriers to employment to prepare for post-secondary education and employment opportunities. The goal is to attain educational and/or skills training credentials, and secure employment with career/promotional opportunities. During PY21, 53 WIOA out-of-school youth were served and, of those youth, 35 attained either a recognized certificate, diploma, and/or degree. The NRWIB closed out its YouthBuild program in November 2021. The YouthBuild program was deemed successful despite the pandemic’s impact on program recruitment efforts. Participants in the program worked to rehabilitate a multi-unit apartment building in Waterbury that is currently used for transitional housing in the boards’ Homeworks program. In collaboration with the Justice Education Center, the NRWIB successfully ran an after-school, career-exploration project in carpentry for eight youth, taught by members of the Carpenters Union. All eight students completed the program; four went on to begin their apprenticeship program with the Carpenters Union and the other four were hired by a local home improvement contractor.

Southwest (The WorkPlace)

Telework Pilot

The world of work has dramatically changed and, with that change, a new digital divide has been created that is capable of stripping individuals of opportunity and hope. Those hardest hit have been people with disabilities and people of color, and especially women impacted by the pandemic, whose options in regard to employment, childcare, housing, and other critical areas are shrinking in this new economy. To assist these individuals and address the dilemma, the Southwest board established an initiative, RemoteWorks, which aims to carry out an overarching strategy to provide robust workforce readiness, skills training, and supportive services.



RemoteWorks participants were provided with office supplies and equipment to telework.

The goals of the initiative were designed to:

- Create and deliver certificates to assure employers that potential employees have the necessary hard and soft skills---such as in technology, customer service, sales, or working independently---to work successfully in remote environments;
- Enroll individuals in a variety of IT/Digital Literacy training programs to ensure access to the technical skills required to telework;
- Offer workforce readiness curriculum to address résumé development, job search, interviewing skills, communication, and, most importantly, emotional support techniques to help build confidence in oneself and in his/her employment outlook;
- Implement a “concierge model” to address specific supportive service needs;
- Provide a newly-created wellness/resiliency curriculum and model
- Offer paid “returnships” to jobseekers (paid work experiences) with employers; and
- Leverage WIOA funding to work with candidates to established career pathways that lead to increased training, earnings, and earning potential.

The initiative’s approach was customized to individual participants and lasted 6-8 weeks depending on the need for occupational skills training. In addition, participants were provided with office supplies and equipment to telework. Nearly 50 participants completed the program, with 67% hired after completing a work experience program.

Connecticut Statewide Accessible Workforce Services (CT SAWS)

The CT SAWS Initiative, funded through a grant from USDOL, aims to expand equitable access to Connecticut’s public workforce system for dislocated workers and other populations experiencing longstanding disparities---exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19---in wealth, wages, and education. During PY21, The WorkPlace and other members of the CT SAWS partnership, began work on expanding the accessibility and capacity of the organizations’ websites to best engage priority populations. In addition to the technological upgrades to websites, members of CT SAWS developed four strategies: provide online learning and career exploration opportunities via the SkillUp CT program; offer translation capabilities and other

language accessibility features, on each WDB website, to improve the user interface and enhance the user experience for non-English-speaking customers and individuals with disabilities; add a chat feature, to each WDB website, to provide automated responses to standard customer questions and a trained chat specialists to answer all other questions, make referrals to programs and services, and assist with program registration; and create statewide, regional, and local outreach campaigns to increase awareness of workforce system services among marginalized populations that have varying levels of digital literacy and access.

USDOL's investment in the virtual service delivery and outreach capacity of the state's five Workforce Development Boards will unlock access to nationally-recognized, evidence-based training and support services. Facilitating entry into the public workforce system and access to these programs will help reemploy dislocated workers most affected by COVID-19, especially those from marginalized communities.

Connecticut Workforce & High-Tech Industry Skills Partnership (CT-WHISP)

The Connecticut Workforce & High-Tech Industry Skills Partnership (CT-WHISP), which is designed to strengthen the talent pipeline of workers in the Information Technology (IT) sector, began in spring 2022 with grant funding awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. CT-WHISP offers short-term IT courses, in both hybrid and online formats, that are aligned with industry certifications and prepare individuals for employment in entry-level IT positions; supportive services and job search assistance are offered as well. Training includes a CompTIA A+ Certification Preparation Course, a 15-week online program with Housatonic Community College. This certification is the starting point for a career in IT and prepares students for industry-recognized certification. Additionally, CT-WHISP offers Amazon Web Services (AWS) Cloud Foundations, in partnership with Norwalk Community College, which is intended for students who seek an overall understanding of cloud computing concepts, independent of specific technical roles. For employers, CT-WHISP offers tools and resources to enhance the skills of incumbent workers. The program supports current employees in obtaining industry-based skills or credentials that lead to career advancement and income mobility. Training must relate to the manufacturing sector and employers receive reimbursement (up to \$2,000) for each eligible employee to offset skills-based training costs.

MaturityWorks

MaturityWorks is a Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) funded by the U.S. Department of Labor that helps individuals, age 55 and older, increase their job skills by providing paid community service for local nonprofits and public agencies to which participants are matched. Based on employment interests and goals, participants may also receive supportive services and skills training. This year, MaturityWorks tested an approach to provide computer skills to mature workers. Supported by a grant from a local bank, technology-savvy WIOA youth participants were selected and trained to provide technical assistance and one-on-one mentoring to MaturityWorks trainees. Cyber Seniors, selected by The WorkPlace to administer the program to MaturityWorks and WIOA youth participants, established a dedicated webpage where trainees could access ongoing, one-on-one support; group mentoring; and 10 personalized training sessions that included Introduction to Chromebooks, Gmail Basics and Advanced Tools, and Search Engines, among others.

Eastern (Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board - EWIB)

Virtual Services

In PY21, the preferred method of service delivery for customers in eastern Connecticut continued to be virtual, which was a good fit for many customers experiencing a lack of transportation or ongoing daycare issues under the pandemic. EWIB offered numerous workshops during PY21, on a variety of topics, at no cost to jobseekers. For example, the need for technology workshops continued to be strong in PY21; EWIB met this need by offering virtual workshops, as follows, utilizing the Zoom platform to reach customers:

- How to Apply Online
- CTHires Résumé Builder
- Email for Job Seekers
- Networking with LinkedIn
- Preparing for a Virtual Interview/Job Fair
- Computer Basics
- Skillup CT Metrix Learning

Also, for customers impacted by the pandemic, EWIB continued to offer the following workshops: Career Transitions, Picking Up the Pieces, Confidence Makeover, and Mock Interviews. While these were presented virtually at the beginning of PY21, a few in-person workshops were held toward the end of the program year. In addition, EWIB conducted its WIOA Orientation Workshop either live via Zoom, in a video format, or in-person.

Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative

The Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI), an award-winning workforce program managed by the Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board (EWIB) and other partners, continues to grow at an exponential rate. As of PY21, the MPI had placed over 2,400 individuals in jobs since the program's inception by raising the baseline of competencies in jobseekers and aligning those skills with jobs in demand by manufacturers. With a solid foundation of curriculum designed by manufacturers and academia, the MPI's success is also attributable to its strong partnership of more than 30 stakeholders, including the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance which designed and implemented the program. With Electric Boat ramping up their hiring needs, EWIB scheduled 50 classes during PY21 to help meet their growing demand. This program year saw over 450 people trained through the MPI.

Healthcare Pipeline Initiative

The Healthcare Pipeline Initiative (HPI) has been modeled after the MPI program to train people interested in healthcare careers. Most customers who come through the Healthcare Pipeline are referrals from WIOA Workforce Advisors. EWIB's Healthcare Navigator guides customers through an orientation at which time in-demand healthcare fields and appropriate trainings are reviewed. Upon completion of the healthcare training, the customer either moves up in the current healthcare career, or is connected to a job developer who will assist the customer in finding a healthcare career opportunity based on their training.

Youth

Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative

The Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (YMPI) is an extension of the Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) described above. The YMPI offers the potential for a career pathway

for high school graduates who have chosen to enter the job market instead of college. EWIB continued to grow partnerships with regional high schools that worked toward embedding the YMPI curriculum into those schools. In the four years since its establishment, the YMPI has placed 178 high school graduates into jobs. The program has received strong support from the participating schools' administrators and youth participants, and an extension of program activities into elementary and middle schools is planned to further grow interest in YMPI programs across eastern Connecticut. Additionally, EWIB collaborates with community partners to provide career exploration and job fair events for the YMPI students. These events provide opportunities for students to engage with manufacturing employers and apply to the employer that they'd most like to work for.

Connecticut Youth Employment Program - Summer Youth Employment Program

In partnership with EASTCONN, New London Youth Affairs, and Norwich Human Services, the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) was made available to 41 towns in the region, making PY21 the fifteenth year in a row that this partnership came together to offer summer jobs to opportunity youth in the Eastern workforce development board area. The SYEP worked with eligible youth, ages 14-24, to provide them with job opportunities for the summer and prepare them for a successful future as fully-engaged members of the labor force across the 41-town EWIB region. These students will gain valuable experience while working in various jobs in the community and will have the opportunity to learn about in-demand jobs in the area, such as healthcare and manufacturing, as well as how to plan their career pathway.

North Central (Capital Workforce Partners)

During PY21, the North Central region engaged and or served 665 employers region-wide through Youth, Adult, and special programs, as well as regional sector partnerships.

Regional Sector Partnerships

Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) and the Metro Hartford Alliance continued to co-convene the Capital Area Tech Partnership (CATP) that primarily focused on talent pipeline development, including K-12 Career Awareness and Preparation; Skills-Based Hiring and Apprenticeship-style models; Business-Higher Education Partnership Development; and Postsecondary Supply/Demand Alignment. A CATP workgroup was formed to support placemaking and branding for the Greater Hartford region with the goal of attracting and retaining tech talent. CWP also continued to convene the Metro Hartford Alliance for Careers in Health (MACH), a regional sector partnership for healthcare, with support from the Workforce Solutions Collaborative. Among other priorities, the partnership advances strategies that address job quality and retention for frontline workers.

In February 2022, with support from the Workforce Solutions Collaborative, CWP launched the Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL) regional sector partnership that engages business leaders in addressing common barriers to the competitiveness and sustainability of north central Connecticut's growing TDL sector, including but not limited to hiring and training, employee retention, and job quality.

Employer Engagement

The regional deployment of the Connecticut Workforce and High-Tech Industry Skills Partnership (CT-WHISP), a statewide project funded by a \$10 million H-1B One Workforce grant from USDOL, led to a surge of interest and activity related to work-based training within the manufacturing ecosystem. CWP executed eight contracts for incumbent worker training, distributed across seven different employers and fourteen trainees. Of the trainings completed, 33% involved upskilling in machining, followed by 27% in tooling.

WIOA Adult Success Story

Carlos Tirado had been out of the workforce for ten years dealing with illness. Although fearful of reentering the workforce, the staff at the American Job Center (AJC) reassured him they would provide coaching and support at every point in his journey to employment. Carlos's dream was to land a job driving for CTtransit; he had applied several times, but never received a call back. He was awarded a WIOA training scholarship, completed CDL training in 2019, and, with the help of the Disability Resource Coordinator, reapplied to CTtransit in July 2020. The company informed Carlos that if he obtained his F Endorsement he would be hired, so the AJC provided funding for the training and, in July 2021, Carlos received a call from CTtransit to begin training. He successfully completed training and was hired.



Carlos Tirado (right), pictured with AJC staff Joshua Gilmore, landed his dream job.

Youth

In PY21, 479 participants were served in the North Central area by the WIOA Youth program. Of the 250 “actively” enrolled participants, 101 entered sector-based training; 77 participated in paid work experiences with companies and organizations across the Greater Hartford region; 87 were employed at some point in the program; and 50 obtained new employment as of June 3, 2022. During a time when mental health crises were on the rise and participants faced additional barriers to success, community-based providers made 92 supportive service referrals.

Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program (SYELP)

In spring 2021, CWP implemented a hybrid pre-application for youth and their families to complete, and many were able to apply to the program via a new online application portal that provided a secure way for applicants to upload documents essential to establishing program and employment eligibility. Families were also able to connect with the provider of their choice or complete a paper application.

The 2021 SYELP program also implemented a hybrid model for program and support services:

1. For a second year, CWP partnered with the Village for Children and Families to provide mental health supports, including virtual workshops.
2. A combination of virtual and in-person instruction in work-based learning competencies was implemented to provide a structured learning experience. Some community projects and work experiences were offered virtually as well.

South Central (Workforce Alliance)

Program Year Overview

During PY21, the WIOA program in the South Central board area served approximately 779 individuals across the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth funding streams. All enrolled participants had the opportunity to access career services to increase their marketability with employers. Many participants decided to take advantage of specialized opportunities to grow and develop their skill sets, including 102 participants who received an Individual Training Account (ITA) to help them gain occupational skills and industry-recognized credentials; 27 individuals who participated in On-the-Job Training; and 39 individuals who participated in a subsidized employment experience as a résumé-building activity. All American Job Centers in the region offered customers, both in-person and remotely, a variety of work-readiness workshops, including digital literacy, and weekly job clubs which, on a monthly basis, averaged 285 jobseekers in attendance. As a result of the career and work-readiness services provided, approximately 376 participants in the three funding streams were employed at case closure and 75 earned industry-recognized credentials.

Racial Equity Commitment

With racial inequities underscored during the pandemic and the urgency to address the seemingly intractable, systemic racism through society, the board realized business as usual could not continue. That is, while the board's data reflected success in serving Black and Brown jobseekers in existing programs, more could be done to achieve racial equity in terms of expanding access, providing support to retain engagement, and leveling program outcomes. In July 2020, the board made a public commitment to address racial equity in every aspect of its work and launched the Racial Equity and Accountability Initiative (REAI). The REAI Team, consisting of a third of board members and three Workforce Alliance senior staff, implemented and facilitated knowledge building sessions for staff of the board and the American Job Centers in the South Central area. The sessions were held starting in January 2021 and included topics such as the history and impact of racism on personal, social, and systemic levels; promoting awareness regarding equity versus equality; and exploring potential biases that impact our work, customers, and systems.

Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative - Skill UP

As manufacturing opportunities continue to grow, the board's mission to encourage participants in the area has also expanded. During PY21, seven manufacturing-based classes were held across New Haven, Hamden, and Middletown. A total of 58 students completed training: 47 males, 11 females; 11 ex-offenders; and 3 individuals with disabilities. Of these, 37 have been placed in jobs. Each of the seven classes had both a virtual job fair and graduation. In addition, during the year, there were 21 employer visits to the classes to meet students in person. Partners of the "Skill Up for Manufacturing Program" include Gateway Community College, Middlesex Community College, Vinal Technical High School, and Eli Whitney Technical High School.

Healthcare Careers

The Health Careers Advancement Program (HCAP) provides tuition assistance, professional development, and job placement to eligible jobseekers. Individuals who have prior healthcare

industry certifications are offered assistance in returning to school, adding skills, and moving up the career ladder. This year, a total of 62 career seekers enrolled in the program. Of the 62, twelve were placed in Pharmacy Technician training, nine were placed into CNA training, and four were placed in Patient Care Technician training. At the close of the program year, 25 students were still in training, pending an exam, looking for employment, or did not complete/pass the exam.

Youth

Project CEO, Workforce Alliance’s WIOA-funded program for Youth and young adults, collaborated with Hillhouse High School and hosted a Career Resource Fair for seniors. Approximately 100 youth attended the fair, and 40 youth showed interest in participating in the board’s services. Workforce Alliance also partnered with West Haven High School, ACES, and Success Academy to conduct presentations for in-school and out-of-school youth on topics such as career choice, money management, entrepreneurship, and creating a positive work environment. The partnerships also included following up with career readiness workshops for seniors. In addition, the board partnered with Young Adult Services, Bridges, Salvation Army, CT Stay Strong, and Rushford. The board’s Youth Program Manager was invited to be part of the Hamden Partnership for Young Children, a group that works with parents on issues related to caring for and raising children, from the pre-natal period to nine years of age.

Cost of Workforce Development Activities

During Program Year 2021, a total of \$23,953,380 was allocated to the Workforce Development Boards for WIOA services, a decrease of \$1,892,514 from the PY20 WIOA allocation of \$25,845,894. Funds were distributed as follows:

Program Year 2021 Fund Allocation

Adult - \$6,844,645
 Dislocated Worker - \$9,589,504
 Youth - \$7,519,231

For the period of July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022, as reported by CTDOL to USDOL via form ETA 9169, a total of 5,044 participants were served during PY21. The Dislocated Worker program assisted the largest number of participants; the 2,193 served represents 43 percent of the total WIOA participants served. Also in PY21, a total of 2,068 Adults and 783 Youth were served, comprising 41 percent and 16 percent of the total number of WIOA participants served respectively.

<u>Program Year</u>	<u>Adult</u>	<u>Dislocated Worker</u>	<u>Youth</u>	<u>Total</u>
PY20	1,731	2,239	925	4,895
PY21	2,068	2,193	783	5,044

As reported in Connecticut’s PY20 WIOA Annual Report, the decrease in the number of WIOA participants (Adults and Youth) compared to PY19 was attributed to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as to the length of time unemployment benefits were disbursed in Connecticut under the CARES Act’s multiple UI programs. The benefits continued in Connecticut into PY21, until September 4, 2021. Ultimately, as the program year progressed, the number of

individuals seeking job search and other assistance grew, and PY21 concluded with a greater number of Adults served than in PY20. While the cessation of UI benefits likely played a role; the increase also followed the state's and nation's determined efforts, across government-funded programs, private industry, education and training sectors, and other workforce-based areas, to resume regular activities. Vaccinating against COVID-19 was essential to reopening and Connecticut quickly became a leader with its vaccination rates, resulting in a positive turn for the health and safety of the state's residents and businesses. Connecticut's workforce system was soon operating in a "new normal" mode; in-person services resumed, but virtual or blended options were also offered given the persistent nature of the COVID-19 virus.

As for the Dislocated Worker category, the total served in PY21 (2,193) dropped minimally, by 46, compared to PY20 (2,239). This is indicative that, while many employers recovered from shutdowns and/or production and supply chain disruptions, there continued to be pandemic-related, adverse effects on businesses. Participation in the Youth category decreased more significantly in PY21, down by 142 compared to PY20 and by 442 compared to PY19. This is likely due to a variety of factors, including the necessary, but lengthy, shutdown of the American Job Centers (AJCs) upon the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020, and youth leaving education and employment settings. Although remote services were in place during the shutdown, and AJCs have reopened, engagement with youth was impacted. In the coming program year, CTDOL will further identify and address factors that have contributed to the declining Youth numbers and focus on increasing outreach to disconnected youth.

Discussion of Activities Funded By WIOA 15% Statewide Funds

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires the Governor to allocate the majority of WIOA funds, via formula, to the local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) which are responsible for setting local policy and directing the use of these formula-allocated funds in their regions. Under the Act, the Governor also may reserve a percentage of the state's WIOA funds for use in the administration and provision of statewide employment and training activities.

Statewide activities, delivered in Connecticut with 15% reserve funds during PY21, included:

- Maintaining the state list of eligible training providers;
- State administration of the adult, dislocated worker and youth workforce development activities, by conducting performance evaluations, including programmatic monitoring and customer satisfaction surveys;
- Assisting in the operations of the American Job Centers;
- Operating fiscal management and performance accountability system activities; and
- Supporting CTHires, the state's WIOA case management information system.

Activities related to monitoring, evaluation, and accountability provide essential information and guidance for the state and its workforce development partners in regard to continuous improvement and program efficiencies. Also, of particular value to the Workforce Development Boards in achieving programmatic goals is performance data that is made available through CTHires. By having timely access to this data, WDBs can analyze performance, determine areas in need of attention, and focus on solutions.