

ABSTRACT

Applicant Name. Workforce Alliance, 370 James Street – Suite 401, New Haven, CT 06513.

Contact: Ann Harrison, Director of Strategic Initiatives, aharrison@workforcealliance.biz

Project Title. Workforce Alliance Apprenticeship Accelerator (W3A)

Purpose. South Central Connecticut faces stagnant population growth but increasing demand for skilled labor in livable-wage occupations that do not require a four-year degree. Women comprise 53% of the region’s population yet remain underrepresented in high-demand fields such as manufacturing, construction, and other building trades. W3A aims to close this gap in collaboration with employer-driven Regional Sector Partnerships (RSPs) in Architecture, Engineering, and Construction (AEC) and Manufacturing by providing technical assistance (TA) to employers and unions, and redesigning outreach and retention activities for WANTO strategies. The project aims to: (1) Expand apprenticeship opportunities for women in construction and building trades through enhanced training, employer engagement, and union collaboration, (2) Enhance manufacturing career pathways by updating pre-apprenticeship models and fostering employer partnerships to create Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs), and (3) Implement system-level changes to scale and sustain WANTO strategies, including a comprehensive communications strategy, mentoring networks, performance dashboards, and knowledge sharing across workforce boards.

Workforce Alliance, a Regional Workforce Board, will lead W3A and leverage its role as the convener of the RSPs. W3A will advance strategies in the 2024 to 2028 Local Workforce Development Plan which calls for the intentional development of career pathways relevant to RSPs, the expansion of livable-wage opportunities for all residents and strengthening and better aligning workforce development system partners.

Activities Funded by Grant. Activities within construction and building trades will include (a)

Developing training options that support career pathways in AEC occupations, (b) Delivering technical assistance to 13 Building Trade Unions that increases women's participation and retention in WANTO programs, and (c) Redesigning the approach to engage and assist construction and trade companies with WANTO hiring and retention. Activities within the manufacturing industry will include (a) Enhancing the *Skill Up Manufacturing* pre-apprenticeship model in response to the needs of the Manufacturing RSP, (b) Delivering technical assistance to manufacturers on how to benefit from WANTO programs and other system incentives, and (c) Activating manufacturing companies to expand use of RAPs and hiring partnerships. WA will implement a series of workforce development system change efforts to scale and sustain WANTO strategies such as (a) Implementation of a WANTO communication strategy, (b) Coordination of a WANTO Support and Mentoring Network, (c) Introduction of WANTO performance dashboards, and (d) Technical assistance to RSPs to integrate WANTO strategies into talent pipelines.

Expected Project Outcomes. Anticipated outcomes will include increased enrollment and completion of training programs by women, higher rates of hiring and retention in target sectors, and measurable improvements in employer practices and regional workforce systems.

Intended Beneficiaries. Intended beneficiaries include (1) WANTO participants, (2) Employers, and (3) Implementation partners such as organized labor, employers, training providers, and (4) Partners funding or leading relevant strategic initiatives related to a significant amount of construction and infrastructure improvements, brownfield remediation projects, and ongoing economic development efforts within the region to increase entrepreneurship and small business development by minority and women-led entrepreneurs.

Subrecipient Activities. Not applicable.