

# State of Connecticut

## Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

### Annual Report

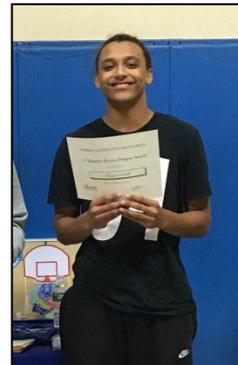
Collaboration



Educational achievement



Advancement through training



Skills gains

*July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019*



*A Message from  
the Connecticut Department of Labor  
and the Governor's Workforce Council<sup>1</sup>*

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and the State's five Workforce Development Board (WDB) partners under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) completed Program Year 2018 (PY18) with many successes. Participants and employers alike benefited from a host of programs and services that were available in the state. Our accomplishments were reached through a mutual commitment to stay connected, share ideas, and collaborate.

Highlights of achievements and details regarding employment and training programs and innovative projects are included in this WIOA Annual Report, and, throughout, Connecticut's many efforts to provide quality services are evident. The report contains summaries for each WDB, which were able to attain many of their workforce objectives by leveraging WIOA funds with state and local dollars. WIOA program outcomes and costs are included as well.

Connecticut has many ongoing workforce development components in place that work well, while others continue to be developed and new ideas are pursued. We have found that working in concert with other state agencies and our partners has been the key to realizing greater success for our WIOA plan. The goals of ensuring a strong economy, job opportunities for our citizens, and a skilled workforce for employers will continue to be our focus in the next program year.



Kurt Westby  
Commissioner  
Department of Labor



Garrett Moran  
Chairman<sup>2</sup>  
Governor's Workforce Council

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<sup>1</sup> Previously known as Connecticut Employment and Training Commission, renamed Nov. 2019

<sup>2</sup> SWDB Chair signature is that of recently appointed Chair - Garrett Moran; term of previous Chair, JoAnn Ryan, expired pursuant to SWDB by-laws which establish board membership terms to be coterminous with that of the Governor.

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**State of Connecticut  
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act  
Annual Report  
July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019**

**I. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) - Program Year 2018**

The commitment of CTDOL, the state’s five WDBs, local partners, and service providers to fulfill the requirements and goals of WIOA resulted in a productive year with many successes. While many ongoing workforce development activities and services continued to be offered given their positive outcomes over time, PY18 also included the further development and delivery of new projects to benefit businesses, jobseekers and customers. Besides the statewide WIOA efforts, many units within CTDOL provided administrative guidance, oversight, and assistance to partners that ensured compliance with the Act, productive performance, and progress toward goals.

**Governor’s Workforce Council**

The Governor’s Workforce Council (GWC) continued to focus on the state’s workforce development priorities during PY18, including the expansion of apprenticeship training, sharing of performance data amongst WIOA partners, and outreach to the employer community. In addition, WIOA local plan modifications were approved in August 2018.

The Service Design and Delivery Committee continued to address workforce development partner practices and explore integration opportunities to improve and streamline customer access to programs and services across WIOA partners. Additionally, CTDOL collaborated with the Department of Aging and Disability Services, Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind, to reformat CTDOL’s job search, interviewing, and résumé workshop participant manuals for use with screen reader software to ensure accessibility for people with visual disabilities.

The Business Engagement Committee continued its charge of promoting employer-led industry partnerships, sector strategies, and career pathways efforts. This included convening industry, education, and labor leaders around industry workforce issues and finding solutions to meet business needs. During the program year, the Committee sponsored four seminars: “Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA),” “Cyber Security,” “Medical Marijuana in the Workplace,” and “Creating an Inclusive Workplace with Assistive Technology.” The seminars were attended by more than 160 individuals and focused on the high-priority concerns of Connecticut businesses. Business Engagement Steering Committee, included representatives from Vocational Rehabilitation, CTDOL Employment Services, Adult Education, the WDBs, Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), and the community college and university systems with a goal of enhancing and aligning services to Connecticut businesses to help them grow and thrive.

The work of the Planning and Performance Committee continued, with the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and the Melville Trust, to address the need of foundations to better understand public program outcomes. A cross-agency team from CTDOL, Department of Aging and

Disability Services, and the State Department of Education was formed to address the coordination of WIOA performance data collection and reporting.

## **Connecticut Department of Labor**

### Employment Services

During PY18, CTDOL's Employment Services (ES) Operations Unit endeavored to further the WIOA goals of the agency. ES staff provided the third annual Interagency Business Engagement Training in June 2019 to front-line Business Services staff to educate stakeholders on topics including "Accommodations in the Workplace," "Emerging Middle Skills Jobs," "Tools Used to Build a Qualified Workforce," and "Medical Marijuana in the Workplace." Additionally this unit 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 print and electronic format, these annually-updated materials provide important marketing and training tools for business services professionals.

### Unemployment Insurance

As for Connecticut's Unemployment Insurance (UI) operations, effective December 2015, ES staff began providing comprehensive, in-person UI assistance in the American Job Centers (AJCs) in all five WDB areas. From July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019, staff assisted more than 30,000 UI customers. This UI assistance provided solutions to a host of needs including return to work notification, held claim inquiries, status letter requests, processing referee and board appeals, reopening unemployment claims, determining eligibility issues, and helping customers navigate UI phone and on-line systems. In addition to the UI office assistance, claimants were informed about ES services and referred to re-employment and partner staff for additional services.

The CTDOL has joined a consortium of states (Mississippi, Maine and Rhode Island) in order to implement a modernized Unemployment Insurance system. The new system will provide integrated functionality for the Tax, Benefits and Appeals units of the Unemployment Insurance division. The project is currently in the development and testing phase and is scheduled to be implemented in 2021.

### WIOA Administration

During PY18, CTDOL's WIOA Administration Unit was chiefly responsible for a myriad of agency activities under the Act, from contract development to the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) duties to a host of other major undertakings. Staff of the unit coordinated with the WDBs on projects, plans, and contract processing; maintained frequent communication with workforce development partners; attended local board meetings; updated the WIOA Policy Manual to reflect new developments; held periodic meetings with the WDBs and other partners; conducted fiscal and programmatic monitoring; and worked with Geographic Solutions to make improvements to the CTHires case management system. In addition, significant steps were made toward implementing the ETPL continued eligibility process, including the application, procedures, and policy, and the gathering and analysis of performance data was an ongoing priority.

With CTDOL's strong focus on fulfilling the intent and goals of WIOA, the agency has been able to foster growth, strengthen partnerships, and overcome challenges. Together, Connecticut's workforce development partners have steadfastly pursued new opportunities and remain equally committed to plans, in the moment and for the future. The pages that follow reflect the fastidious efforts of the state during PY18 and the many accomplishments attained.

## **II. 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 regional WDBs in 2018-2019, in accordance with WIOA regulations at 20 CFR §683.410. In addition, the Connecticut Youth Employment Program (SYEP) payrolls of 2019 and the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES), which is part of the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, were monitored in three of the five WDBs.

The annual WIOA compliance monitoring included 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 were sampled and reviewed for eligibility verification for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth in all five areas.

All recommended corrective action from the 2017-2018 monitoring review was completed and adequate controls appeared to be in place. Overall, the 2018-2019 monitoring review results showed that the three WDBs were in compliance with federal and state administrative requirements. Any findings were satisfactorily resolved and the WDBs made continuous improvements through the implementation of new policies and procedures during the program year.

### **Status of State Evaluation Activities**

The CTDOL's Office of Research produces the "Higher Education/Workforce Legislative Report Card" (LRC) accessible at: <https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/LRC/LRC2.aspx>. The LRC reports employment by industry and average wages of recent graduates of Connecticut's public colleges and universities. Also included is demographic information and results by program of study. Users can compare outcomes of colleges and universities on-line or download tables for further analysis.

### **Administrative Review and Technical Assistance**

Monitoring, evaluation, and technical assistance are integral oversight responsibilities of the CTDOL and are mandated by WIOA and other applicable laws and regulations. CTDOL's WIOA Administration staff conducts annual program, data, and fiscal monitoring of the WDBs 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 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 PY18, specific oversight was offered to WDBs regarding:

- ETPL
- Case notes
- Dislocated Worker certification
- Barriers to employment
- Supportive services
- Measurable skills gain

Program monitoring in PY18 included participant file reviews and site visits to AJCs in every region. The WIOA Administration Unit staff completed development of a monitoring tool for program participants and conducted a comprehensive review of a selection of participant cases in each WDB region. An outcome report describing the successes and challenges participants face in reaching economic self-sufficiency was prepared by CTDOL for each WDB. The monitoring process involved:

- Interviewing participants, WDB staff, providers, and subcontractors
- Obtaining and reviewing written policies, forms, and guidance issued by the WDB for each program component
- Discussion of identified issues requiring correction by the respective WDB
- An exit conference with WDB staff
- A review of governance and Governor's 15% funding for all five WDBs, in conjunction with Office of Workforce Competitiveness staff

CTDOL's WIOA Administration Unit continued to promote collaboration and communication within the workforce system through WDB and partner meetings on a monthly basis, and worked on several youth initiatives generated as a result of the Youth Summit held in 2017.

### **WIOA Participant and Employer Survey Results**

Throughout Program Year 2018, the CTDOL gathered participant & employer customer satisfaction information. The majority of respondents provided positive feedback to survey questions, with many specifically praising the professionalism, knowledge, and helpfulness of the AJC staff. Of particular note, several customers found the Career Navigators at the AJCs to be very understanding, comforting and accommodating. Some participants indicated a need for greater transportation options and more remote technological capabilities in rural areas.

The results of the survey were as follows<sup>2</sup>:

### Participants

A total of 312 participants completed customer satisfaction surveys.

- 74% were very satisfied with the services provided by the American Job Centers
- 68% believed the services exceeded their expectations
- 67% believed the services provided were very close to the ideal set of services

### Employers

A total of 10 employers completed satisfaction surveys.

- 72% of CTHires employer survey respondents rated their visit to the CTHires site as good or excellent
- 100% of the SurveyMonkey employer respondents believed the services provided met their needs
- 100% of the SurveyMonkey employer respondents believed the services provided were very close to ideal

## Performance and Accountability

CTDOL's 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:

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

To submit and generate required reports, the Performance and Accountability Unit utilizes the federal Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS). 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 Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) and Federal Employment Data Exchange System (FEDES).

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<sup>2</sup> 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 (DADS) and the Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE) for quarterly and annual reporting purposes. CTDOL continues to share data as outlined in previously established MOUs with these WIOA-required core partners. In PY17, a MS SQL Server database was created to share participant data of those co-enrolled in each entity's core programs and wage and employment data for all participants, utilizing unique identification numbers.

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 WDBs 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.

### **III. Continuing Workforce Activities**

#### **CTHires**

The Performance and Accountability Unit administers the CTDOL's web-based case management system, CTHires. An array of options are available in the system, 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.

During PY18, a total of 1,269 registrations from businesses were processed by *CTHires* staff. During this same period, employers posted 44,293 new Connecticut job orders and jobseekers placed 5,432 new résumés into the system. In addition, 153,749 jobs were indexed from corporate websites in PY18. CTHires also collects WIOA-required data for reporting on self-services and staff-assisted services for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) programs.

Since CTHires was launched in Program Year (PY) 2015, various components have been added to the system to integrate additional programs, such as Foreign Labor Certification in PY16 and JFES in PY17. Another system expansion is expected in the near future to incorporate the WOTC program.

#### **Rapid Response and National Dislocated Worker Grant**

The state Rapid Response (RR) Unit, in conjunction with local WDBs 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 CTDOL, 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 layoffs/plant closings, 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 PY18, the RR Unit made 377 initial outreach calls regarding potential layoffs and responded to 30 Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) notices affecting 2,390 workers. The RR staff made 59 employer and/or union visits and provided 110 presentations to 1,661 impacted workers, which included seven on-site job search and/or career planning workshops and 38 webinars for workers from companies that did not avail themselves of RR services prior to layoff.

Employment sites where face-to-face contact was not possible were provided packets of information, benefiting an additional 1,377 dislocated workers, including human resources managers and union representatives. An additional 3,528 webinar invitations were sent to workers who were part of large layoffs but whose employers declined on-site visits or had employees who work remotely.

As a means of layoff aversion, the RR Unit coordinated or assisted with five company-specific job fairs providing 230 jobseekers the opportunity to meet with potential hiring employers. RR staff also reached out to 41 employers participating in the Shared Work program to check their status and make appropriate referrals to DECD or other resources if the employers indicated they were continuing to struggle or have difficulty emerging from a downturn in business.

The RR Unit submitted 19 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. Fourteen petitions, covering 661 workers, were certified TAA eligible. Five petitions were still pending investigation at the close of the program year.

During PY18, Capital Workforce Partners (CWP), the North Central WDB, was awarded a Trade and Economic Transition National Dislocated Worker Grant by USDOL. Trade and Economic Transition grants generally provide resources for the provision of employment and training assistance to workers affected by major economic dislocations, according to USDOL's TEGL 2-18. The \$5.88 million grant provides up to \$9,000 per dislocated worker in scholarship funds and supportive services, for up to 500 dislocated workers in Connecticut, to attend community college and other training programs that lead to jobs in the manufacturing and healthcare sectors. The grant also provides up to \$20,000 in On-the-Job Training (OJT) incentives per new hire to healthcare and manufacturing employers. At the close of PY18, 138 individuals were enrolled in the program. The grant period is from October 2018 to September 2020.

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### ***CWP Dislocated Worker Made Whole***

*One grant participant, James Rosado, was certified as a dislocated worker in spring 2018 as part of a mass layoff from an insurance company. He received a scholarship to attend Asnuntuck Community College's one-year CNC Machining Certificate program. Upon achieving the 34 college credits, with perfect attendance, James was well-prepared for employment. CWP's Business Services Specialist reached out to several employers from the board's partnerships with manufacturing companies in the North Central board region, and James eventually had several job offers. James decided which job he wanted based on factors such as in-house training, growth opportunities, and rate of pay, ultimately selecting a precision machining position in the aerospace industry.*

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## **Outreach Efforts by the Office of Research**

During PY18, the CTDOL's Office of Research staff engaged in numerous outreach activities on behalf of the agency, providing labor market information of interest to: jobseekers; workforce development professionals who provide job search and employment assistance; and education, government, and business leaders. Presentations were made around the state at community and professional events, as well as for:

- Jobseeker groups
- Business groups working to create jobs in Connecticut
- Educational institutions helping their students with career planning
- Workforce development organizations working with a variety of constituencies

The Office of Research continued to provide technical assistance to the WDBs for Help Wanted OnLine (HWOL) through an account Research administers. HWOL, which all WDBs have access to, offers jobs data in a variety of measures, gathered from jobs posted each month from thousands of Internet job boards, corporate boards, and smaller job sites. To gain insight into the nature of short-term employment and temporary work, the Office of Research actively participated in a workgroup formed by the National Governor's Association to understand the on-demand workforce or "gig economy." In PY18, the Office of Research also:

- Met with three of the five WDBs to discuss Research's data products and ways Research could assist the WDBs in serving mutual customers
- Presented to a major corporation considering opening a Connecticut location
- Produced numerous publications (in print and on-line) of interest to students and school and career counselors

## **Employment and Training**

### Wagner-Peyser

CTDOL receives federal funding under the Wagner-Peyser Act to provide universal access to an array of labor exchange services offered at AJC locations throughout Connecticut. These services include assistance with career choices and job search, referrals to jobs, placement assistance for jobseekers, reemployment services to claimants receiving unemployment insurance, and employer recruitment services to businesses with job openings. Additional resources that are available at the AJCs include computers with Internet connection, copiers, fax machines; and résumé writing, interviewing, and career exploration workshops. During PY18, a total of 40,838 Wagner-Peyser program participants received services (staff-assisted or self-service) at AJC offices, with 207,056 staff-assisted services provided statewide. In addition, 4,347 individuals received résumé preparation assistance at CTDOL-sponsored events and job centers.

### Reemployment Services for Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claimants

During periods of unemployment, the agency provides a variety of federally-funded reemployment services to residents. CTDOL meets the reemployment needs of many 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 receiving Unemployment Compensation for Ex-servicemembers (UCX). The goal of this program is to provide UI claimants early access to services that will help get them back into the workforce faster. The UI RESEA program also serves as a prevention/detection program regarding improper UI payments. In PY18, CTDOL completed 8,882 initial RESEA appointments. For this same time period, 8,729 claimants participated in a required reemployment activity.

### Business Services

Business Services helps Connecticut's employers to hire, train and retain workers by analyzing the needs of businesses and customizing solutions. PY 18, Business Services staff assisted employers with more than 617 employer recruitments attended by approximately 5,293 jobseekers. In addition, four Connecticut Career Fairs were held in PY18, including a veteran-specific Heroes4Hire Job Fair co-sponsored by the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The fairs drew 260 company recruiters and 3,550 jobseekers.

### **Serving Our Veterans**

Connecticut's veterans may receive reemployment services from trained staff at AJCs throughout the state. Among the staff are representatives funded by the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) 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 veterans and eligible spouses who have significant barriers to employment or other characteristics that qualify them for DVOP services, and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives conduct outreach to area employers to assist veterans in gaining employment and facilitate employment, training, and placement services for veterans in the AJCs.

During PY18, JVSG staff provided employment and training services to 713 veterans, more than half of the 1,343 eligible veterans served by Wagner-Peyser. Included in these counts are the veterans who filed for Unemployment Compensation for Ex-servicemembers (UCX) and were connected to reemployment services through the Unemployment Insurance Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (UI RESEA) program. In September 2018, JVSG staff participated in the annual Stand Down held at the State Veterans' Home in Rocky Hill, an event for veterans who are homeless, chronically unemployed, or have difficulty adjusting in society. JVSG staff, in partnership with the Department of Defense and the Connecticut Military Department, assisted military troops and their families, including returning troops from the Connecticut National Guard and U.S. Armed Service Reserves, by participating in three pre- or post-deployment Yellow Ribbon events and three Reverse Soldier Readiness Program (RSRP) briefings.

In April 2019, approximately 550 veterans attended the *Heroes4Hire* Veterans Career Fair, an event that featured the participation of 137 employers and service organizations. In addition to having the opportunity to meet with representatives from companies with job openings, veterans were provided with information about available services and programs. Business attire and professional headshots for on-line networking were also offered to veterans, at no cost.

CTDOL continues to work toward ending veteran homelessness through its Homeless Veterans Employment Program (HVEP) which operates under a state grant. During the program year,

CTDOL's HVEP team met with 62 homeless veterans, or those at risk of becoming homeless, to provide job search assistance, referral information, and other supportive services. Specifically, 55 of these individuals received direct services from HVEP staff, such as résumé preparation assistance, job search assistance and career guidance; nine were referred to housing services; four were referred to medical services; 17 were referred to other supportive services; and 24 were referred to employment and training services at the AJCs.

### **Jobs First Employment Services Integration in the American Job Centers**

In partnership with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the five 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 AJCs around the state. In PY18, the WDBs coordinated an array of seamless case management and employment services for 7,765 TFA recipients enrolled in the JFES program.

In PY18, CTDOL's JFES Unit launched two pilot programs:

- DSS, Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS), and Workforce Alliance, the South Central WDB, worked in partnership with CTDOL on a pilot to better connect refugees in the New Haven region with JFES services by co-locating a JFES case manager at IRIS, a local refugee resettlement agency
- CTDOL and the WDBs for the Northwest and Eastern regions of the state piloted the use of Uber as a transportation option for JFES clients with transportation barriers

Also, approximately 70 JFES staff received training on several different topics including Successful Job Interviewing, 2 Generational Poverty, Diversity, Employer Engagement, Domestic Violence, Financial Literacy, Developing Awareness, Skill-Building and Motivation, Advanced Presentation Skills, 211 Awareness, and Collaboration Training.

### **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 services that lend to participants' achievements. Job Corps' success in Connecticut is largely due to the collaborative efforts of CTDOL, the WDBs, state and local agencies and organizations, and Job Corps' program operators.

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### ***Job Corps Success***



*Taylor enrolled at the Hartford Job Corps Center with an interest in pursuing manufacturing training. Motivated and determined to do well, Taylor participated in the Tooling U-SME pre-apprenticeship program and was then placed in an internship at a precision metal stamping and toolmaking company. She did so well in the internship that she was hired full-time. Taylor also wanted to participate in the Advanced Manufacturing Certificate program at Asnuntuck Community College. With determination and hard work to achieve the math placement test score necessary to enroll in the program, Taylor attended tutoring, studied on weekends, and even found her own personal tutor. In less than three months, she increased her math knowledge and qualified for the college's program. Through CTDOL, Taylor became a registered apprentice with her employer upon completing the Asnuntuck training program.*

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During PY18, 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 and Carpentry. Trades available at the Hartford Job Corps Center included Business Technology/Insurance & Financial Services, Advanced Manufacturing, and Health Occupations (Certified Nursing Assistant 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.

### **Serving Individuals with Disabilities**

CTDOL, DSS, the Department of 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](http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/gendocs/pwd.htm), which web page was 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.

#### Work Groups

##### *Parents with Cognitive Limitations Workgroup*

This workgroup, with members from various public and private agencies from around the state, is led by the Department of Children and Families and provides training to professionals to better equip them in assisting parents with cognitive limitations to access and navigate the vast offering of services available to them.

##### *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, Capitol Region Education Council, and Adult Education providers, plan the Annual Conference on Serving Adults with Disabilities which, in October 2018, celebrated its 26th anniversary.

### *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 employer and individuals with AT options. Presentations to employers on the use of AT in the workplace were offered at CTDOL's Business Breakfast Seminars and AT lending libraries were piloted in the Hartford and Waterbury AJCs that included staff training and desk aids highlighting supportive AT tools to address the ergonomic, sight, hearing, or communication challenges and learning styles of AJC customers. Sponsorship for the Connecticut Tech Act Project's statewide conferences has been provided by CTDOL

### Disability Employment Initiative

In October 2016, Connecticut was among six states to receive a federal grant under Round VII of the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI). Awarded to the Office of Workforce Competitiveness, this three-year, \$2.5 million youth-focused project involves the Northwest, Southwest, South Central, and Eastern workforce development regions. This project seeks to increase the participation of youth with disabilities ages 14-24 in the public workforce system's career pathways programs; offer the opportunity to attain industry-recognized credentials; and provide paid internships and experiential learning opportunities. As of June 30, 2019, as a result of the partnership and collaboration that is one of the strategic components of all the DEI projects, 201 youth with disabilities have entered training in career pathway programs, 167 have received industry-recognized credentials, and 609 have been placed in paid internship or work experiences.

## **IV. Workforce Development Boards' Innovative Practices and Exemplary Programs<sup>3</sup>**

### **Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board -NRWIB (Northwest)**

#### Adult

##### *Ticket to Work*

The NRWIB is a Social Security-approved Ticket to Work "Employment Network." Ticket to Work is a voluntary program offered by Social Security that provides assistance to Social Security disability recipients (of SSI or SSDI), age 18 through 64, who are interested in returning to work or working for the first time. In addition to providing support throughout the journey to financial independence, Ticket to Work helps participants obtain vocational counseling, training, job readiness, job referrals and other employment support services, free of charge. Services that NRWIB and the AJC can provide to "Ticket holders" include:

- Career counseling
- Résumé development and interview preparation
- A wide variety of employment workshops

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<sup>3</sup> Summary information has been provided by Connecticut's WDBs

- Referrals to additional services and supports
- Job matching and job development
- SSA disability benefits advisement referral
- Job accommodations instruction and assistance
- Possibility of training through WIOA funds, based on eligibility
- Follow-up supports and retention services after employment

## Youth

### *WIOA Demonstration Grant*

The NRWIB has developed a partnership with the National Retail Federation Foundation, Connecticut Retail Merchants Association and area Adult Education providers to address the region's most pressing workforce needs in the retail industry. The regional collaboration strives to address the employment needs of each town in the northwestern Connecticut region and will focus on those areas with the most concentrated employment needs. This program provides out-of-school youth, ages 16-24, with a groundbreaking training and credentialing initiative designed by the retail industry to help youth acquire the skills they need to land jobs in the retail industry and advance into promising careers. The following nationally-recognized credentialing programs, stackable and transferable across the nation, will be made available to eligible participants:

- Customer Service and Sales - a classroom-based, instructor-led program that typically takes 40 hours to complete. The curriculum is designed to help entry-level sales and service associates learn skills related to frontline work in retail (or any industry that values customer service and sales skills)
- Advanced Customer Service and Sales - designed for sales and service associates looking to expand their skills in retail and other sales and service-focused industries. This is a classroom-based, instructor-led program that typically takes 40 hours to complete. Candidates must earn the basic Customer Service and Sales credential to be eligible for this course

In PY18, 20 youth successfully completed and received a credential. Three students in the Danbury area have gone on to participate in internships and NRWIB is working to further develop internship opportunities.

### *Disability Employment Initiative (DEI)*

DEI Youth is geared to improving the outcomes for in-school and out-of-school youth with disabilities (ages 14-24) who are looking to transition into high-quality, post-secondary education; career pathways training programs; career exploration; and the workforce system. Built on the notion that youth with disabilities need added supports and opportunities to develop and learn, DEI Youth offers an internship component. AJC resources such as résumé writing, CTHires, and various work-readiness workshops are also available for participants to access.

Outreach efforts in the region have led to a significant increase in youth with disabilities using AJC career services, working to land an internship, seeking training, or entering employment. The program, which will continue through February 2020, currently involves six local school districts: Waterbury, Watertown, Naugatuck, Torrington, Ridgefield and Region 6. The board provides funds for an internship program for youth with disabilities; students are paid \$14 per

hour. In PY18, the funds supported work experiences for over 60 youth, with the number expected to increase considerably during the next program year.

### *TechHire*

The NRWIB, in partnership with the South Central WDB, offers Information Technology (IT) training and career support through the ITXpress program. Funded by a \$4 million TechHire Partnership Grant from USDOL, the program offers:

- Training to unemployed and out-of-school young adults (ages 17-29) with barriers
- Skills upgrading to current workers in IT fields such as computer user support, software development, information system management, and computer programming

Industry-recognized credentials in CompTIA A+, cybersecurity, data analytics, and other specialized areas may be achieved through the training. Support services, which often make the difference in being able to remain and participate in training, are also provided under the grant and are awarded on the basis of need and commitment. ITXpress has served 255 young adults (as well as 47 incumbent workers) since 2016. A total of 185 young adults have obtained industry-recognized credentials and 136 of those have obtained employment, with salaries as high as \$65,000.

### *YouthBuild Waterbury*

In February 2019, the NRWIB received its first \$1.1 million YouthBuild Grant from the USDOL. YouthBuild Waterbury provides education and training with a strong pre-apprenticeship component that helps at-risk youth complete high school or state equivalency degree programs, earn industry-recognized credentials and undergo training to build housing for low-income or homeless individuals and families. For NRWIB's local unemployed, out-of-school young people, YouthBuild is an opportunity for them to reclaim their education, gain the skills they need for employment, and become leaders in the community. YouthBuild Waterbury begins with "Mental Toughness," an eight-day, boot-camp-style training designed to assess potential for participation and provide potential participants a glimpse of what the program consists of, including the requirements for teamwork and perseverance.

## **The WorkPlace (Southwest)**

### Adult

#### *Mortgage Crisis Job Training Program (MCJTP)*

MCJTP helps homeowners who are behind on their mortgage payments become current and prevent future defaults by providing training and career services to increase earning potential. The statewide program, presented in partnership with Connecticut's workforce system, offers customized employment services, job training scholarships, job placement assistance, financial literacy workshops, credit counseling, and referrals to other needed services – all at no cost to eligible homeowners. Working through the MCJTP enables troubled borrowers to quickly connect to housing counseling and judicial mediation services while getting assistance from program specialists who help explore career options and identify skills needed to advance on career ladders.

This past year, the MCJTP celebrated 10 years of helping Connecticut residents remain in their homes. During PY18, the MCJTP provided career coaching to 359 individuals, awarded 179 training scholarships and helped 132 people receive financial literacy and housing counseling training.

Working together, the MCJTP, Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, judicial mediators, and the CTDOL provide better options for homeowners, now and in the future, by bringing together the right resources to address their individual situations and potential.

### *Career Coach*

In PY18, The WorkPlace announced the launch of a new AJC Career Coach. This replacement of the coach that had been on the road since 2004 will bring its mobile classroom (pictured, right) to many and deliver the career services and training opportunities traditionally available in an AJC. Employers, too, may use the Career Coach, to provide customized training services and recruit talent for their workforce.



The WorkPlace Career Coach

The new Career Coach is a self-contained vehicle equipped with state-of-the-art training technology and equipment. It offers residents of southwestern Connecticut a full array of computer training, career preparation, and employment services – the same services The WorkPlace and its partners offer at the AJCs in Bridgeport, Ansonia, Derby and Stamford.

The Career Coach travels throughout the 20-town workforce development area in southwestern Connecticut and to special events across the state. When people step aboard the AJC Career Coach, they are greeted by expert staff and seated at one of 10 computer workstations. They can register for occupational training or take a computer workshops right on the Career Coach. The Career Coach also features an interview room, an ADA-compliant lift and workstation, and a lavatory.

### Youth

#### *YouthBuild*

The WorkPlace partners with CTDOL and Habitat for Humanity to provide Bridgeport youth with opportunities for meaningful work and service to the community while fostering the development of employment and leadership skills. It is an evidence-based program for low-income youth to earn their high school diploma or equivalent, learn occupational skills needed to join the workforce, and give back to their community by building affordable housing while earning a stipend.

During PY18, YouthBuild enrolled 42 youth who completed construction-related community service projects, resulting in achievement of industry recognized credentials. Of the training programs that were offered and are listed below, the number of youth completers totaled:

- OSHA 10 – 21
- HAZCOM Safety & Worker Rights Training – 12
- Lead Worker Certification – 13

Asbestos Worker Certifications – 18  
Forklift Certified – 12  
Lead Renovator Training – 17

Additional partners for the program include a number of local unions, the City of Bridgeport including the Bridgeport Police Department, Housatonic Community College, and Park City Communities, the local housing authority.

*YouthWorks* - helps local youth ages 16 to 24 select and prepare for a career and become self-reliant members of the community.

#### Other programs offered by The WorkPlace

*MaturityWorks* - fosters economic self-sufficiency for older, low-income adults by providing job skills training through community service assignments at non-profit and public facilities.

*Health CareRx Academy* - cultivates a pipeline of health care workers to meet the needs of employers in southwestern Connecticut.



Project coordination at MaturityWorks

*Platform to Employment* - creates a pathway to opportunity for long-term unemployed job seekers.

Its foundation is a five-week preparatory program that includes skills assessments, career readiness workshops, employee assistance programs and more.

*Dress for Success Mid-Fairfield County* - empowers women to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support, professional attire, and development tools that help women thrive in work and in life.

### **Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board -EWIB (Eastern)**

#### Adult



Naomi Sargent gained manufacturing skills as a MPI participant.

#### *Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative*

The Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) continues to be a cornerstone for workforce programming in the Eastern region. The program began in April 2016 and has since placed more than 1,400 individuals in jobs, considerably more than originally anticipated. The MPI is a demand-driven program designed to raise the competency baseline of the labor force to align with skills that are in-demand by employers. Roughly 80% of those placed to date had no prior manufacturing experience before enrolling in the MPI, yet employer feedback is that these individuals outperform other hires from more traditional channels. The MPI has, therefore, proven adept at supplying important employment skills to both jobseekers and employers.

The program is managed by the EWIB in concert with 30 other stakeholders. The core of the program is high-rigor skills training

classes (150-300 hours in duration) with curriculum designed by employers in coordination with academia. The MPI is strongly supported by employers such as the 70-member Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance, a consortium of manufacturers. Given its success to date in placing adult unemployed and underemployed individuals, the MPI is currently being expanded in the Eastern region to serve high school students who intend to enter a career pathway upon graduation. EWIB has already received strong interest from high schools throughout its region in this programmatic concept. In addition, there are plans to expand the MPI to other regions, a testament to the dramatic impact of this initiative on workforce development.

#### *Health Professions Opportunity Grant*

EWIB was awarded a five-year \$7.5M Health & Human Service (HHS) Health Profession Opportunity Grant (HPOG) in September 2015 in partnership with the Northwest and South Central WDBs. HPOG targets individuals receiving TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) and low-income adults. Participants complete a contextualized, employability, work-readiness basic skills “boot camp” to prepare them for entry-level vocational trainings in the healthcare field. Participants then enroll in short-term occupational training programs resulting in an industry-recognized credential in one of four healthcare career pathways. To assist participants overcome life’s barriers, Health Career Navigators provide intensive, person-centered case management and connect participants to program resources such as funds for emergency payments, childcare assistance, and mileage reimbursement. Cumulatively, in the Eastern region through June 30, 2019, 120 participants enrolled, 88 completed healthcare training, and 50 were placed in healthcare employment at an average starting wage of \$14.08 per hour. An additional 21 are employed in other sectors as they continue to search for their first healthcare job.

#### Youth

##### *Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)*

EWIB’s SYEP, delivered by regional agencies across the 41-town area, provides valuable job experience and skills to participants. In PY18, the SYEP served 317 income-eligible youth at 150 different worksites throughout the region. Program participants gained skills through job duties in patient care, customer service, and maintenance, as well as by working as summer recreation assistants. The program was financially supported by the CTDOL and philanthropic donations from numerous banks and foundations.

### **Capital Workforce Partners – CWP (North Central)**

#### Adult

##### *Capital Area Pipeline Partnership*

CWP convened the Capital Area Pipeline Partnership (CAPP) as a regional, employer-led partnership of industry and strategic partners to develop a pipeline of job-ready talent in the North Central board area; meet employers’ demand for skilled workers; support business growth; and promote workers’ financial security. The partnership was established in response to the critical workforce development needs and job vacancies of employers in the areas of advanced manufacturing, healthcare, construction, transportation, information technology, and insurance/financial services.

CAPP focuses on producing skilled workers to fill high-value, in-demand, well-paying, middle-skill jobs, and offers practical career advancement opportunities through the industry partnerships of the Advanced Manufacturing Employer Partnership, the Metro Hartford Alliance for Careers in Health, and the Jobs Funnel Construction and Transportation Partnership. The objectives include developing an immediate regional talent pipeline producing sufficient job-ready candidates to satisfy employers' current demand for skilled workers and developing a sustainable pipeline of skilled, entry-level workers to meet employers' anticipated future workforce needs and advance careers.

### *Workforce Development and Community College Partnerships*

In the past two years, CWP has opened AJCs at Asnuntuck Community College in Enfield and Tunxis Community College in Bristol, and is in the final phase of opening an AJC at Goodwin College in East Hartford. Customers of the AJCs are able to access services offered at the college, including assessment, career coaching, job readiness, and credential training programs that can lead to employment in priority industries in the board's region. This co-location of workforce and education services provides a user-friendly experience and greater access to opportunities for both job seekers and employers.

### Youth

#### *Synergy High School's Pre-Apprentice Manufacturing Training Program*

CWP implemented Synergy High School's Pre-Apprentice Manufacturing Training, which is a partnership among East Hartford schools, Synergy High School, Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology (CCAT), CWP, CTDOL's Office of Apprenticeship Training, and regional manufacturing employers. Students attained working knowledge and organizational skills that can be applied to all manufacturing and logistics environments. Upon completing the program, students received a pre-apprenticeship certificate and many were placed in apprenticeships and employment.

#### *YouthBuild - New Britain*

This project provides construction training to New Britain youth who lack a high school diploma or GED. Participants are trained using the nationally-acclaimed Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) model, through which they learn basic academic skills necessary to be successful in the construction industry. In addition, this program provides a proven service

### **Synergy Student Path to Career**



*One Synergy High School student, Tuaquan Smith, entered Synergy to obtain the credits necessary to complete high school. He enrolled in the pre-apprenticeship program in fall 2018 and was placed in a 72-hour, on-the-job training experience at a manufacturer in New Britain. He also completed 72 hours of Tooling U-SME on-line manufacturing curriculum and was awarded a pre-apprenticeship certificate from CTDOL's Office of Apprenticeship Training. Tuaquan was coached in all aspects of job preparation, completed each phase of the CCAT training process, and participated in the seven-week manufacturing training class at Asnuntuck Community College. Upon graduation from Synergy High School in January 2019, Tuaquan was hired for a machinist position through the assistance of a recruitment and assessment process of the partnership*

infrastructure for assessment, case management, support services, basic and technical skills training, and job placement and retention services.

### *Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program*

CWP's SYEP provides 14-21-year-olds exposure to and connection with career pathways through paid work experience while also building a talent pipeline that meets employer needs.

## **Workforce Alliance (South Central)**

### Adult

#### *Shaping Career Services to Engage Job Seekers with Disabilities*

Upon coupling WIOA funds with the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) in March 2017, Workforce Alliance experienced a marked increase in the number of adults and dislocated workers with disabilities served. The significant increase over low registration numbers in the first two years of WIOA continued in PY18 when a total of 112 adults and dislocated workers with disabilities were served.

Two major WIOA-mandated events helped energize and support the effort to increase accessibility. First, the One-Stop certification process that took place in PY18 was a pivotal undertaking, facilitated by the WDB's Disability Resource Coordinator that engaged the Connecticut Bureau of Educational Services for the Blind (BESB) and the Department of Aging and Disability Services to not only co-locate, but provide assistance and expertise. Second, the Partner Memorandum of Understanding and infrastructure financial agreements required a physical presence of workforce development partners, payment for planned out-stationed time in the One-Stops, and the convening of partners to identify specific, actionable steps and services.

As a result of these efforts, the following strategies have taken hold:



Workforce Alliance & Department of Aging and Disability Services present DEI initiative at 2019 National Association of Workforce Development Professionals' annual conference

- The Disability Resource Coordinator organizes services, staff training, and the partner collaborative
- Vocational rehabilitation counselors are embedded in One-Stops
- Rehabilitation teachers are available to teach customers as needed
- Vocational rehabilitation counselors participate in employment planning meetings with job seeker consultants

A highlight of the initiative has been staff training, delivered by the Disability Resource Coordinator, which focused on key integration points and contributed to the rise in numbers served.

#### *Manufacturing Employment Pipeline*

One of Workforce Alliance's PY18 successes is "Skill Up for Manufacturing," a five-week training program designed to quickly provide jobseekers the fundamentals that manufacturing

employers seek, then channel participants to entry-level jobs with on-the-job training. Skill Up is based on EWIB's successful Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative, and, like EWIB's, stands out for:

- The participation of manufacturers in curriculum development for Skill Up
- Program visits by participating manufacturing employers during training
- Direct-hire opportunities backed by hiring incentives
- Training that continues on-the-job

The first two Skill Up cohorts were funded through WIOA, producing 38 graduates through training at Gateway Community College in PY18. With additional funding from the Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative, more Gateway cohorts were planned, and Skill Up expanded to Middlesex Community College with manufacturing labs held at Vinal Technical High School in Middletown. The majority of participants had no prior manufacturing experience; acceptance is largely based on a math skills assessment, but a refresher course delivered by adult education partners allows applicants to strengthen their skills and be reassessed if the minimum score is not initially met. Participants attend classes six hours per day, five days a week. Stipends are paid for training benchmarks and individual job search assistance is offered during and after the training program. Students also earn 250 pre-apprenticeship hours, OSHA 10 and Six Sigma certification. The program will continue to expand over the next four years to include advanced training and an in-school youth component; additional manufacturing employers with entry-level openings are being sought for this expansion.

## Youth

### *Municipal and WIOA Funding Combine for Success*

In PY18, Workforce Alliance utilized WIOA Youth funding to forge partnerships with several organizations serving out-of-school youth in the South Central area. One such partner is the Tri-Town Collaborative. Unique for its structure, Tri-Town serves 16-24 year-olds recruited through the Meriden, Middletown and Wallingford adult education programs. This alignment allows Tri-Town to first address external diploma/GED attainment, followed by training and credential attainment in the areas of health, manufacturing, or human services, then guidance to enter the workforce or progress to higher education. The collaborative also means that WIOA funding is leveraged with municipal dollars, allowing for a full complement of services that include not only education, but guidance, tutoring and mentoring. Local affiliations have facilitated the development of job shadowing opportunities; internships; and WIOA-funded work experiences with wage subsidies for participating employers. In PY18, Workforce Alliance served a total of 178 out-of-school youth through its network of vendors, plus another 40 in-school youth.

**V. Cost of Workforce Development Activities**

During PY18, a total of \$25,447,272 was allocated to the WDBs for WIOA services, a decrease from the PY17 WIOA allocation of \$27,405,351. Funds were distributed as follows:

Program Year 2018 Fund Allocation		
Adult - \$7,984,635	Dislocated Worker - \$8,819,842	Youth - \$8,642,795

As reported to USDOL by CTDOL via form ETA 9169 for the reporting period covering July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019, a total of 6,589 participants were served during PY18. Of those served, the Adult program assisted the largest number of participants, with 2,962 participants served, which is 45 percent of the total WIOA individuals served. Also in PY18, a total of 2,137 Dislocated Workers and 1,490 Youth were served, comprising 32 percent and 23 percent of the total number of WIOA participants served respectively.

**VI. Discussion of Activities Funded By WIOA 15% Statewide Funds**

The WIOA requires the Governor to allocate the majority of WIOA funds, via formula, to the WDBs which are responsible for setting local policy and directing the use of these 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 PY18, included:

- Maintaining the ETPL list
- Performance evaluations of the adult, dislocated worker & youth workforce development activities including program monitoring, data validation, & customer satisfaction surveys
- Assisting in the operations of the AJCs
- Operating fiscal management and performance accountability system activities
- Supporting CTHires

In addition, the 15% Statewide Funds supported some new efforts, in the form of demonstration projects administered through the WDBs. One such project replicated the successful MPI, by targeting the MPI to youth. The project established a partnership between the local board, area high schools, and employers to create opportunities and career pathways in manufacturing. Statewide 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. CTHires is of particular value to the WDBs in achieving programmatic goals. By having timely access to this data, WDBs can analyze performance, determine areas in need of attention, and focus on solutions.