OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
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ResearchReport

Workforce Development in Connecticut

By: Christopher Reinhart, Chief Legislative Attorney
Sarah Tata, Legislative Analyst II
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Issue

You asked about state agencies involved in workforce development in Connecticut.

Summary

Numerous state agencies and entities are involved in workforce development activities in Connecticut. They include the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), the Governor's Workforce Council, the Department of Labor (DOL), and regional workforce development boards.

State education agencies and public education institutions also play an important role in workforce development. This includes the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS), Connecticut State Community College (CT State), State Department of Education (SDE), Office of Higher Education (OHE), and individual public higher education institutions.

Various agencies are involved in pipeline programs, which are educational and workforce initiatives designed to facilitate entry into specific professional fields typically from the high school or college level through training, apprenticeship programs, and mentorship programs, among other things. Currently, the Career Pathways Commission is examining the state's career pathways efforts in coordination with the Governor's Workforce Council and OWS. It will report recommendations on this topic to the governor and General Assembly by February 15, 2027 (Executive Order 26-2).

In addition, certain agencies provide workforce development services to particular populations or administer programs that can include workforce development activities. For example, economic

development programs, such as those supported by the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), can have workforce development components.

Attachment A below lists agency workforce related programs based on an inventory OWS compiled last year. This list includes 15 state agencies and 90 programs. Some state agencies operate programs funded by the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA requires states to align their workforce development programs with the needs of job seekers and employers and requires federal agencies to provide information, funding, and other resources to states, localities, non-profits, and other stakeholders. Some of these WIOA programs are in addition to those listed in this report and Attachment A.

Additional information on state workforce development can be found in various state agency documents.

Primary State Workforce Development Agencies

Chief Workforce Officer and OWS

OWS, within DECD for administrative purposes only, is led by the chief workforce officer. Among other things, the officer:

1. is the governor's principal advisor on workforce development policy, strategy, and coordination;
2. is the lead state official for developing employment and training strategies and initiatives;
3. chairs the Workforce Cabinet (made up of governor-selected agencies involved with employment and training);
4. acts as liaison between the governor; Governor's Workforce Council; and local, regional, state, and federal organizations and entities on workforce policy, strategy, and coordination (including implementing WIOA);
5. works on developing and executing the state workforce strategy and plan through (a) developing and updating the strategy in consultation with the Governor's Workforce Council and Workforce Cabinet (for the governor's approval); (b) coordinating workforce development activities funded with state resources or WIOA funds or administered with state agencies to further the strategy and plan; (c)marketing and communicating the strategy to various audiences; (d) issuing guidance on the strategy in consultation with state agencies, the governor's workforce council, and regional workforce development boards (with Office of Policy and Management (OPM) approval); and (e) consulting with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and coordinating with community action agencies to further the strategy;
6. collaborates with regional workforce development boards to adapt best practices statewide;

7. coordinates the evaluation of education and workforce development program outcomes;

8. identifies material for elementary and high school students to improve student outcomes and meet workforce needs;

9. reviews state plans for WIOA programs and consults with DOL and regional workforce development boards to ensure legal compliance to further WIOA programs;

10. coordinates the state's role in WIOA on behalf of the governor and Governor's Workforce Council; and

11. provides staff to the Governor's Workforce Council (CGS § 4-124w, as amended by PA 25-119, § 5, and PA 26-48, § 10).

Among other things, OWS must also develop, and implement by January 1, 2027, a program to support training for commercial driver's licenses and certain other identified careers, with support from the Connecticut Career Accelerator Program Advisory Committee (CGS §§ 4-124mm, as amended by PA 26-85, § 2, & 4-124nn).

For additional information, see OWS's Governor's Workforce Strategic Plan.

Governor's Workforce Council

Within OWS, the Governor's Workforce Council:

1. is the state's workforce board under federal law and ensures that regional workforce development boards follow the law and guidance;

2. supports state activities under WIOA;

3. convenes state agencies, education institutions, business leaders, and others to (a) work on workforce development policy, (b) help agencies and educational institutions align with employer needs, and (c) help businesses understand how to contribute to state workforce efforts;

4. with the DOL commissioner's assistance and in consultation with regional workforce development boards, develops a four-year workforce development plan that complies with WIOA and updates the plan at least every four years in consultation with the boards; and

5. uses the plan to make annual recommendations to the governor on how to use funds received under WIOA (CGS §§ 31-3h, 31-3o, 31-11o, 31-11p, & 31-11s).

The council's website states that its "primary goal is to ensure that Connecticut maintains the most accessible, equitable, aligned and high-quality workforce in the country, ensuring our workforce remains agile to respond to the evolving needs of the 21st century economy."

It also states that the council "is responsible for setting strategy and policy for the state's Pre-K through retirement workforce pipeline, and to serve as the primary coordinator for businesses, educators, trainers, state agencies, state workforce boards, non-profits, and others."

Department of Labor

The law requires DOL to participate in a statewide network of job centers that give workers, students, and employers comprehensive workforce development assistance. Among other things, these centers must provide:

1. unemployment compensation and retraining allowances;
2. career, labor market, educational, and job training information;
3. career planning and job search assistance;
4. applicant recruitment and screening, training needs assessment, customized job training, apprenticeship programs, and consultation services for employers;
5. eligibility determination and referrals to employment and training providers; and
6. information about job openings (CGS § 31-3w).

In doing so, among other things, DOL must:

1. collaborate with the Governor's Workforce Council, regional workforce development boards, and the chief workforce officer;
2. coordinate service delivery with public and private providers of education, human services, and employment and training; and
3. conduct outreach to ensure services meet business' needs.

Apprenticeships. DOL, with the advice of the Apprenticeship Council, sets apprenticeship training standards. DOL must develop programs and apprenticeship terms with management and labor representatives and cooperate with relevant state and federal agencies regarding apprenticeships. The law also provides a DOL process to register apprentices and apprenticeship programs (CGS § 31-22n et seq.).

For more information, see DOL's Office of Apprenticeship Training.

Regional Workforce Development Boards

Within DOL, the law establishes a regional workforce development board within each of the five workforce development regions of the state. Each board must follow the workforce development plan, state workforce strategy, and guidance from the chief workforce officer and DOL to, among other things:

1. invest in developing human resources within its region and coordinate employment, education, training, and related services focused on client-centered, lifelong learning;
2. be responsive to business, the region, and its towns and residents;
3. lead local workforce development initiatives;
4. assess regional needs and priorities for employment and training programs, coordinate programs, and serve as an information clearinghouse; and
5. carry out its required duties under WIOA (CGS § 31-3k).

For more information, see Connecticut's five regional workforce development boards.

Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS)

CTECS is an independent state agency (previously it was part of SDE, see PA 17-237 & PA 19-117, §§ 273-284), and is advised by the Technical Education and Career System Board (CGS § 10-95s). CTECS consists of 31 career technical education programs, including 17 high schools, across the state and serves approximately 11,200 full-time high school students and 1,500 adult education students. These programs allow students to graduate with high school diplomas, career and technical education certificates, and other credentials such as occupational licensures and certifications.

CTECS' Work-Based Learning (WBL) program allows a student to work for an employer during their schooling. Students who participate in WBL receive academic credit as well as a salary. Available at all CTECS schools, WBL fosters workforce readiness skills and prioritizes smoothing the transition from school to the workforce. By law, CTECS students 16 and older are permitted to work in all trades, including high-hazard trades, through the WBL program, exempting them from the law that generally prohibits minors under age 18 from working in a hazardous occupation (see CGS § 31-23(c)).

CTECS and CT State Coordination. The CTECS board, in consultation with the DOL commissioner, must create an integrated system of statewide industry advisory committees for each career cluster offered by CTECS and CT State (see below). The committees must set standards

and a career ladder for each cluster, with support from OWS, DOL, and SDE (CGS § 4-124gg, as amended by PA 25-22, § 8).

As necessary, the law requires various entities to review and evaluate certification and degree programs at CTECS and CT State to ensure that programs meet employment needs (CGS § 4-124z, as amended by PA 25-22, § 7).

Connecticut State Community College (CT State)

CT State was launched on July 1, 2023, following the consolidation of Connecticut's 12 community colleges. CT State offers a variety of credit and non-credit granting courses, including degree and certificate programs. There are currently 362 programs serving a broad range of educational and career options. Courses are offered in various ways (including virtual, hybrid, and in-person) and programs typically range from less than six months to two years in length.

Workforce Development and Continuing Education Division. CT State's Workforce Development and Continuing Education (WDCE) division offers short-term licensure and certificate training programs and courses tailored to meet the needs of Connecticut residents and businesses. These programs focus on supporting individuals who are re-entering the workforce or want to obtain new technical skills to advance their careers. The program is open to everyone and does not require college enrollment.

WDCE also collaborates with companies and government agencies to administer training programs tailored to the needs of their employees. These classes can be conducted onsite, online or at campus locations.

WDCE's Business and Industry Services department provides entrepreneurial business development and training and is part of the statewide Business and Industry Services Network. It provides companies with services including customized trainings, business consultation services, and data gathering services.

State Department of Education (SDE)

SDE takes part in a number of workforce development activities in collaboration with other agencies. SDE takes the lead on a few workforce activities, including the following:

1. using the computer science education and workforce development account, in coordination with OWS and the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR), to support workforce development initiatives, among other things (CGS § 10-21*l*, as amended by PA 25-110, § 25, & PA 26-15, § 23);

2. collaborating with the chief workforce officer and using OWS' plan to promote health care professions to middle and high school students (CGS § 10-21q, as amended by PA 25-162, § 3); and

3. creating the Connecticut Apprenticeship and Education Committee, in collaboration with the BOR.

The Connecticut Apprenticeship and Education Committee must look at preapprenticeship and apprenticeship training program integration and program funding for high school and higher education programs for various careers. The SDE commissioner must take certain actions to promote these careers and develop best practices for schools on relationships with relevant industries (CGS § 10-21j, as amended by PA 25-22, § 16).

Educator Workforce Diversification Strategies. SDE programs specifically address careers in teaching, including promoting diversity of the educator workforce in Connecticut.

The law requires SDE to establish an Increasing Educator Diversity Policy Oversight Council (formerly the Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council) (CGS § 10-156bb). The council advises the SDE commissioner on ways to encourage minority students and professionals from other fields to pursue teaching careers.

SDE has also established multiple partnerships to pursue its goal of diversifying the educator workforce. Among others, these include partnerships with:

1. the Center for Public Research and Leadership to develop EdKnowledge, a collection of research, practices, and models designed to recruit, prepare, support, and retain teachers of color;

2. DOL to establish workshops on resume writing and interview skills for teachers of color who have earned CT educator certification but are not currently employed in CT public schools; and

3. TEACH to develop a comprehensive recruiting and marketing system ("TEACH Connecticut") to recruit the next generation of CT educators.

Office of Higher Education (OHE)

OHE oversees various entities related to higher education and workforce development in the state, including higher education institutions and state financial aid and loan reimbursement programs.

OHE is comprised of three divisions: academic affairs, finance, and grant initiatives. One of the responsibilities of the academic affairs division is to approve new higher education institutions and

private career schools, including both institutions that offer degree and nondegree programs. More information on the OHE authorization processes and the associated regulations can be found here.

Credentials Database. The law requires OHE in consultation with other entities to create a database of the credentials offered in Connecticut. A "credential" is a documented award issued by an authorized body, including:

1. degrees or certificates awarded by colleges and universities, private occupational schools, or State Board of Education-approved alternate route to certification program providers;
2. certifications awarded through an examination process designed to demonstrate that an individual has the knowledge, skill, and ability to perform a specific job;
3. government-issued licenses that allow someone to practice a specific occupation based on predetermined qualifications; and
4. documented completion of an apprenticeship or job training program (CGS § 10-35b, as amended by PA 25-21, § 7, & PA 25-99, § 9).

The database can be found here.

Other Agencies and State Entities

Certain agencies, including the following, provide employment services to particular populations:

1. DSS and DOL provide employment services to recipients of temporary family assistance for needy families (TANF), including education and occupational skills training (CGS § 17b-688i).
2. The Department of Aging and Disability Services, and its Bureau of Rehabilitation Services which works under the State Rehabilitation Council, supports people with disabilities in getting and keeping employment.
3. The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind helps people who are legally blind or visually impaired with employment.
4. The Department of Correction's Unified School District #1 provides education services and career-technical education within the state's prisons (see 2024-2025 annual report).

Various other state entities are involved in workforce development, such as the following.

1. DECD administers the Manufacturing Innovation Fund which, with the Manufacturing Innovation Advisory Board's approval, can be used to provide financial assistance for a number of purposes, including supporting education and training programs designed to

meet an anticipated demand for appropriately skilled and trained workers (CGS § 32-7m et seq.).

2. Various entities must consult on developing career ladders for jobs in the green technology industry (CGS § 31-3rr, as amended by PA 25-125, § 7).

3. The Clean Economy Council, among other things, must (a) coordinate climate mitigation, clean energy, resilience, and sustainability workforce efforts and opportunities for a technically advanced, enduring labor force; (b) develop workforce strategies that invest in job growth in these areas and advise the governor on related workforce plans; and (c) develop a plan to facilitate transition of workers from fossil fuel based employment to clean economy jobs (PA 25-125, § 6, codified as CGS § 22a-200g).

Pipeline Programs

Pipeline programs are educational and workforce initiatives designed to facilitate entry into specific professional fields typically from the high school or college level through training, apprenticeship programs, and mentorship programs, among other things. There are numerous pipeline programs offered through educational and workforce entities throughout the state. Below are some examples of current or upcoming programs.

Apprenticeship Connecticut. The Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative develops workforce pipeline programs to train entry-level workers for manufacturing and other industries with worker shortages. Regional industry partnerships can submit proposals to DOL for one of these programs. To be eligible, a partnership must consist of (1) entities with expertise in regional economic and workforce development, (2) the regional workforce development board, and (3) at least one employer in the region or an educational institution. DOL must review proposals and select those to fund (CGS § 31-11rr).

Human Services Career Pipeline. The law required the chief workforce officer, in consultation with specified persons and entities, to develop a human services career pipeline plan (CGS § 4-124xx, as amended by PA 26-85, § 1). The plan was released this past July.

Manufacturing Pipeline. This program offers free, short-term (6-10 weeks long) training programs specifically for unemployed and underemployed workers unable to attend longer-term training. The program, developed by CT State in conjunction with the Eastern Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative, prepares students for the trade skills needed to work at Electric Boat and Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance companies.

Pipeline for Connecticut's Future. The law requires SDE to collaborate with DOL on this program to provide assistance and incentives to school boards to enhance or create partnerships

with child care, early childhood education, or mental health service providers or businesses in other fields (including manufacturing, computer programming, or culinary arts) (CGS § 10-21k).

Police Officer and Firefighter Career Pipeline. New legislation requires the chief workforce officer to develop a plan to establish a police officer and firefighter career pipeline program that at least includes (1) a strategy to increase the number of state residents pursuing careers as police officers or firefighters and (2) estimated funding needed to support the program. The chief workforce officer must report on the plan to the legislature by January 1, 2027 (PA 26-12, § 74).

Youth Healthcare Pipeline Initiative. This program allows high school students located in Eastern Connecticut to undergo healthcare-specific training taught during class time in their individual schools. Following the completion of the program, students receive a recognized credential.

ATTACHMENT A

OWS provided the following list of agency workforce-related programs based on an inventory conducted last year:

Department of Aging and Disability Services

- Vocational Rehabilitation - General (Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS))
- Level Up Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Employment Transition Model (ETM) Grant
- Industry Specific Training and Placement Program (ISTPP)
- Vocational Rehabilitation - Blind (Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB))
- Employment Opportunities Program (BRS)
- Supported Employment (BRS & BESB)
- Worker's Rehabilitation Services (BRS)
- Business Enterprise Program (BESB)
- BRIDGE CT (BRS)
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SUA)

State Department of Education

- Advance College and Career Accelerator
- Integrated Education and Training (IET)
- Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE)
- Transition to Postsecondary Education/Training
- Transition: Workforce Readiness
- Career Navigator Training
- Perkins Grant Funds Administration - hospitality and tourism

- Perkins Grant Funds Administration - Advanced Manufacturing, Agriculture, Arts, Entertainment, and Design, Digital Technology, Energy and Natural Resources, Financial Services, Healthcare and Human Services, Management and Entrepreneurship, Marketing and Sales, Public Services and Safety, and Supply Chain and Transportation
- Perkins Grant Funds Administration - Advanced Manufacturing
- Dual Credit Expansion Grant
- Career & Workforce Readiness Council
- Credentialing Advisory Committee
- Dual Credit Courses Completed Dashboard
- EdRising
- Comprehensive Plan: One of the four Strategic Priorities
- Secondary Success Workgroup
- Teacher Registered Apprenticeship
- Unpaid Learning Experience

Department of Children and Families

- Education and Training Voucher (ETV) and Chafee Program
- CHEER Program
- Launch Program
- TSCA (Transitional Supports for Emerging Adults)
- Connections Inc. Homeless Support Program
- Liberty Bank Financial Literacy Partnership

Department of Consumer Protection

- Connecticut Trades Guide
- Outreach and Engagement with Job Corps/Home Builders Institute

Department of Developmental Services

- Direct Support Professional Recruitment Campaign
- Human Services Career Pathways Training Initiative

Department of Economic and Community Development

- Incumbent Worker Training
- Apprenticeship Funding Program

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)

- CT State Parks and CT Judiciary Court Support Services Division Summer Program
- Environmental Conservation Workforce Development Program (DEEP Statewide Work Crews)
- Multi-State Zero Emission Vehicle Workforce Initiative
- Training for Residential Energy Contractors

Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

- LPN to RN Upskilling Program
- Student Nurse Job Specification Program

Department of Corrections (DOC)

- DOC–CT State College Credit Partnership
- High School & Adult Basic Education Integration
- Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI)
- Unified School District #1-Special Education
- Correctional Enterprises of Connecticut (CEC) Unit

Department of Housing

- UniteCT Workforce Rental Assistance Program

Department of Labor

- Office of Diversity and Equity Programs (ODEP) Employment Transition Model Grant
- Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs
- Best Youth Initiative
- Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)
- State Youth Programs
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Youth Programs (WIOA Youth Programs)
- CT TECH High School

Department of Transportation

- Transportation Career Pathways Program (TCPP)
- Asphalt Technician Program (DOC Partnership)
- TMRA Transportation Maintenance Registered Apprenticeship Program
- Battery Electric Bus (BEB) Technician Program

Department of Public Health

- Behavioral Health Resources in Pediatric Clinics
- Child & Adolescent Psychiatrists
- Local Health Jurisdiction Workforce Development
- Community Health Worker Advisory Body
- CT PIE (Pathways to Integrated Employment)
- Inflation Reeducation Act (IRA): Code implementation, compliance, and integration, code enforcement, Building Inspectors, Increase workforce for building inspectors in the state.
- Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC): Code implementation, compliance, and integration, Increase workforce for building inspectors in the state.
- Associate's Degree and Certificate Programs at CT State

- Certificate in Public Health Leadership (UConn Department of Public Health Services (UConn PHS))
- Community Outreach Coordination (UConn PHS)
- CT Science Olympiad “Disease Detectives”
- UConn Early College Experience
- Public Health Training Academy of CT
- Public Health Education Planning
- Community Public Health Leadership Programs
- Public Health Workforce Development and Support Systems Infrastructure

Department of Social Services

- CT Pathways Program (SNAP Employment & Training)

Office of Early Childhood (OEC)

- OEC Scholarship assistance
- Lab School Investments Initiative (LSII)
- Technical Assistance Provider Supports (TAPS)
- Higher Education NAEYC Accreditation
- Workforce Pipeline Pilot
- Family Child Care Registered Apprenticeship Program
- Center-Based Registered Apprenticeship Program
- Child Development Associate Cohorts via CT State
- Social Finance Career Pathways Research Project

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