EWIB

EASTERN CONNECTICUT
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

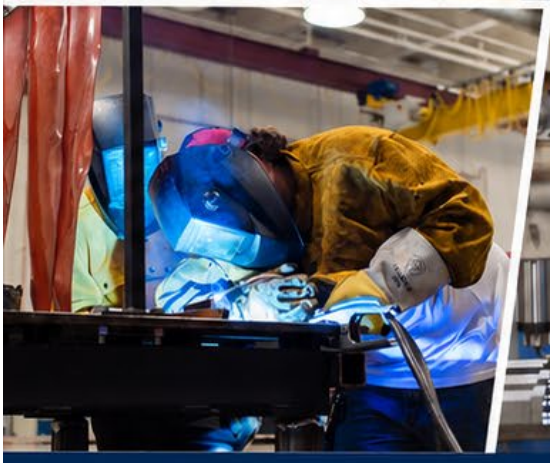
WIOA LOCAL PLAN

2024 TO 2028

UPDATE 2026











BUILDING A STRONGER WORKFORCE.
BUILDING A STRONGER REGION.

Connecting people to opportunities.
Driving economic growth.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

EMPLOYER SOLUTIONS

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

PARTNERSHIPS

ECONOMIC IMPACT

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About the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) 2026 Plan Update

20 CFR 679.580 requires that at the end of the first 2-year period of the 4-year local plan, each local workforce development board (LWDB), in partnership with their chief elected officials, must review the local plan and prepare and submit modifications to the local plan to reflect changes: (1) in labor market and economic conditions; and (2) other factors affecting the implementation of the local plan including but not limited to significant changes in local economic conditions, changes in the financing available to support WIOA Title 1 and partner-provided WIOA services, changes to the Local WDB structure, and the need to revise strategies to meet local performance goals. Consistent with WIOA Sec. 108, the local plan shall support the strategy described in the State plan in accordance with Sec. 102(b)(1)(E) and otherwise be consistent with the State plan. This document complies with federal and state requirements related to the procedures governing the modification of local plans.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2024–2028 Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB) Local Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Plan provides a roadmap for strengthening the region's workforce, supporting employers, and expanding economic opportunity across Eastern Connecticut. The 2026 Update refreshes the content to confirm the original Plan addresses any changes affecting the region or the workforce development system and its partners.

Eastern Connecticut is experiencing strong growth in industries that are critical to the region's future, including advanced manufacturing, healthcare, transportation and logistics, construction, and renewable energy. Major employers such as General Dynamics Electric Boat continue to drive demand for thousands of skilled workers, while healthcare providers, logistics companies, and skilled trades employers face ongoing workforce shortages. At the same time, the region faces significant challenges that affect both workers and businesses. An aging population, slow labor force growth, rising housing and childcare costs, transportation barriers, and persistent workforce shortages are limiting the region's economic potential. Employers increasingly report difficulty finding workers with the technical, digital, and workplace readiness skills needed in today's economy.

The plan recognizes that workforce development is about more than training alone. Many residents continue to face barriers that make it difficult to access education, employment, and career advancement opportunities. These barriers disproportionately affect underserved populations, including opportunity youth, justice-involved individuals, people with disabilities, veterans, English language learners, individuals in recovery, and low-income families. To address these challenges, EWIB's strategy focuses on building stronger talent pipelines aligned with regional employer demand while expanding access to workforce opportunities for all residents.

The plan emphasizes: (a) Expanding Regional Sector Partnerships in healthcare and manufacturing, (b) Increasing access to short-term training, apprenticeships, and industry-recognized credentials, (c) Supporting skills-first hiring practices that prioritize demonstrated competencies over traditional degree requirements, (d) Strengthening digital literacy and workforce readiness skills, (e) Expanding career awareness and work-based learning opportunities for youth and adult learners, (f) Improving coordination between workforce, education, economic development, transportation, housing, and childcare systems, and (g) Increasing access to supportive services that help residents enter and remain in the workforce. Through regional collaboration, innovation, and targeted investment, the 2024–2028 Local WIOA Plan establishes a clear strategy for building a stronger, more inclusive, and future-ready workforce system that supports long-term economic growth and opportunity throughout Eastern Connecticut

The table describes the nature of 2026 Plan updates by section. In general, no significant changes have occurred to the organizational structure, the service delivery system, or the Plan strategies in response to regional economic and industry-specific needs.

Section	Description of 2026 Updates
1. Organizational Structure	Refreshed information related to the Chief Elected Officials, Board members, staff members, and contractors as well as updated the organizational chart. No significant changes have occurred.
2. Environmental Scan	Included the most current regional WDA data available by CT DOL or other sources used in the original 2024 Plan, and addition of descriptive analysis based on other reports or studies in the region related to social and economic factors. No significant changes have occurred since the submission of the original plan.
3. Vision, Goals, and Strategies	Expanded discussion about regional goals and strategies
4. Coordination of Services	Updated information to reflect current programs and services and responsible partners and contractors. No significant changes have occurred with respect to service delivery systems.
5. Local One-Stop System	
6. Description of Program Services	
7. Approvals	Completed forms with signatures from required authorized entities

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SECTION 1. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. Chief Elected Official(s) (CEOs)

A1. Identify the chief elected official(s) by name, title, mailing address, phone number, and email address.

CEO Council Members

Name, Title, Role & Town	Contact Information
Honorable Thomas Sparkman First Selectman Town of Lisbon (Chair)	1 Newent Road Lisbon, CT 06351 Ph: (860) 376-3400 E-Mail: tsparkman@lisbonct.com
The Honorable Kevin Cunningham First Selectman Town of Plainfield (Vice-Chair)	8 Community Avenue Plainfield, CT 06374 Ph: (860) 230-3001 E-Mail: kcunninghamselectman@plainfieldct.org
The Honorable Christopher Lippke First Selectman Town of Canterbury (Secretary/Treasurer)	1 Municipal Drive Canterbury, CT 06331 Ph: (860) 546-9669 E-Mail: firstselectman@canterburyct.org
The Honorable Sandra Allyn-Gauthier First Selectwoman Town of Preston (Member)	389 Route 2 Preston, CT 06365 Ph: (860) 887-5581 E-Mail: allyngauthier@preston-ct.org
The Honorable Tina Falk First Selectwoman Town of Griswold (Member)	28 Main Street Jewett City, CT 06351 Ph: (860) 823-3743 E-Mail: firstselectman@griswoldct.gov

A2. If the local area includes more than one unit of general local government in accordance with WIOA sec. 107(c)(1)(B), attach the agreement that has been executed to define how the parties will carry out the roles and responsibilities of the CEO.

Attachments A and B contain an *"Agreement among Chief Elected Officials for the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Area"* that has been executed to define how the parties will conduct the roles and responsibilities of the CEO Council.

A3. If applicable, attach a copy of the agreement executed between the CEO(s) and the LWDB.

Attachments A and B contain an "*Agreement among Chief Elected Officials for the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Area*" that has been executed to define how the parties will conduct the roles and responsibilities of the CEO Council.

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A4. Describe the following:

i. The nomination process used by the CEO to elect the local board chair and members.

Nominees include replacement members for required partners nominated by the agency of the departing member as well as representatives from industry partners or other community resource partners. The EWIB President/CEO screens nominees to assure nominees hold clarity about roles, responsibility, meeting schedules, and expected time commitment. The EWIB President/CEO presents nominees to the CEO Council. The CEO votes on Board member appointments during meetings of the CEO Council. Newly appointed Board members receive a Board member orientation and complete required forms (e.g., contact, designee, conflict of interest) prior to joining the Board.

ii. The term limitations and how the term appointments will be staggered to ensure only a portion of membership expire in a given year.

EWIB Board members typically serve 3-year terms. Approximately 33% of the Board members' terms end in any specific year. This turnover ratio allows the Board to balance continuity of leadership with opportunities to refresh the Board with new leaders, particularly industry partners.

iii. The process to notify the CEO of a board member vacancy to ensure a prompt nominee.

The EWIB President/CEO meets regularly with the CEO Council and briefs Council members on various matters including any current or future Board member openings as well as the timing of the Board member recruitment cycles. Also, the CEO Council members receive EWIB Board and committee meeting minutes and invitations to attend the public EWIB Board meetings.

iv. The proxy and alternative designee process that will be used when a board member is unable to attend a meeting and assigns a designee as per the requirements at §679.110(d)(4) of the proposed WIOA regulations.

If a Board member cannot attend a Board meeting, the Board member may opt to send a predesignated alternate to participate in the meeting. The predesignated alternate may participate in votes as appropriate. The Board member holds responsibility to brief the predesignated alternate on matters related to official business, Board process, and decorum.

v. The use of technology, such as phone and Web-based meetings, which will be used to promote board member participation.

EWIB holds hybrid meetings with the CEOs and the Board.

vi. The process to ensure board members actively participate in convening the workforce development system's stakeholders, brokering relationships with a diverse range of employers, and leveraging support for workforce development activities.

EWIB Board members lead and participate in Board committees designed to convene and engage partners and stakeholders in discussions most relevant to the vitality of the public workforce development system. EWIB Board committees include advisory members from the public who hold no voting privileges. Board members assist in recruiting and engaging advisory members to add diverse voices and perspectives into discussions.

Board committees include:

- Executive Committee
- Nominating Committee

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- Performance, Accountability and Planning Committee[1]
- Youth Committee

EWIB coordinates and supports industry-led Regional Sector Partnerships (RSPs) in manufacturing and health care. Board members lead and participate in the RSPs and help EWIB encourage industry partners to engage in these efforts.

vii. Any other conditions governing appointments or membership on the local board.

Other notable conditions governing appointments or Board membership include:

- Board members must not miss three consecutive meetings, unless under extenuating circumstances.
- Board members must complete an annual conflict of interest attestation. Board members may not vote on a matter under consideration by the Board or a committee that poses a conflict of interest.

A5. Provide a description of how the CEO was involved in the development, review, and approval of the plan.

The EWIB President/CEO alerted the CEO Council members about the Board's responsibility to develop a new local plan in 2024. The EWIB President/CEO briefed CEO Council members on the planning requirements, process, and timeline – including the public comment requirements. CEO Council members shared any concerns about the process and their potential role or opportunities for involvement. The CEO Council members received a draft document and an opportunity to provide feedback to EWIB. The EWIB President/CEO caused revisions to occur in response to input from the Board and the public comment. The CEO Council members were informed of the Board's vote to approve the plan and received a final copy.

The EWIB President/CEO used the same approach to update the WIOA Local Plan in response to a guidance memo from the Office of Workforce Strategy for compliance with 20 CFR 679.580 requirements that at the end of the first 2-year period of the 4-year local plan, each local workforce development board (LWDB), in partnership with their chief elected officials, must review the local plan and prepare and submit modifications to the local plan that reflect any changes.

B. Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB)

B1. Provide a matrix identifying LWDB members including the category each member represents.

EWIB Board Members

Name	Organization	Type
Christopher R. Jewell (Chair)	Collins & Jewell Company	Industry
Thayne D. Hutchins, Jr. (Vice-Chair)	Mohegan Indian Tribe	Tribal Nation
Caleb Roseme (Secretary)	Assured Quality Homecare	Industry
David Jarvis (Treasurer)	North Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters	Labor
Tom Abate	Sonalysts	Industry
Susan Adams	Dominion Energy	Industry

[1] The PAP Committee includes responsibilities associated with the Regional Sector Partnerships such as the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance (EAMA) and the Eastern Connecticut Healthcare Partnership (ECHP).

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EWIB Board Members

Name	Organization	Type
Peter Baker	Metal Trades Council	Labor Union
Nereida Braasch	Berkshire Bank	Industry
Raymond Coombs, Jr.	Westminster Tool	Industry
Francheska Cordero	Nordson EFD	Industry
Jessica Corneau	CT Department of Aging and Disability Services	Voc. Rehab
Ginger Frasca	Generations Healthcare	Industry
Nicole Galo	Lawrence + Memorial Hospital / Yale New Haven Health	Industry
Dr. Mary Ellen Jukoski	CT State Community College – Three Rivers Campus	Education
Susan Kocaba	CT State Department of Education	Education
Linda Ladas	CT Department of Labor	Wagner-Peyser
Liz Li	Hartford HealthCare	Industry
William “Bill” Louis	MDA/UAW Local 571	Labor Union
Dr. Andrew McKillop	Pfizer	Industry
Daniel Mello	Ella T. Grasso Technical High School	Education
Courtney Murphy	General Dynamics / Electric Boat Division	Industry
Eric Protulis	EASTCONN	Education
Dina Sears-Graves	United Way	CBO
Jessica van der Swaagh	SPIROL	Industry
Paul Whitescarver	Southeastern CT Enterprise Region	Economic Development

B2. Provide a description of how the LWDB was involved in the development, review, and approval of the plan.

The EWIB President/CEO alerted the Board members about the Board’s responsibility to develop a new local plan in 2024. The present plan reflects the Board’s contribution to WIOA planning processes and its ongoing committee work. Board members received a draft document and an opportunity to provide feedback. The EWIB President/CEO caused revisions to occur in response to input from the Board and the public comment. The Board members received a draft prior to a final discussion at a Board meeting and vote of approval on May 21, 2024.

The EWIB President/CEO used the same approach to update the WIOA Local Plan in 2026. The Board members received a draft and summary of proposed revisions prior to a final discussion and vote at the June 2026 Board meeting.

B3. Provide an organizational chart for the LWDB and administrative support.

The figure shows the organizational chart for EWIB. The colors denote the reporting relationships and nature of the roles.

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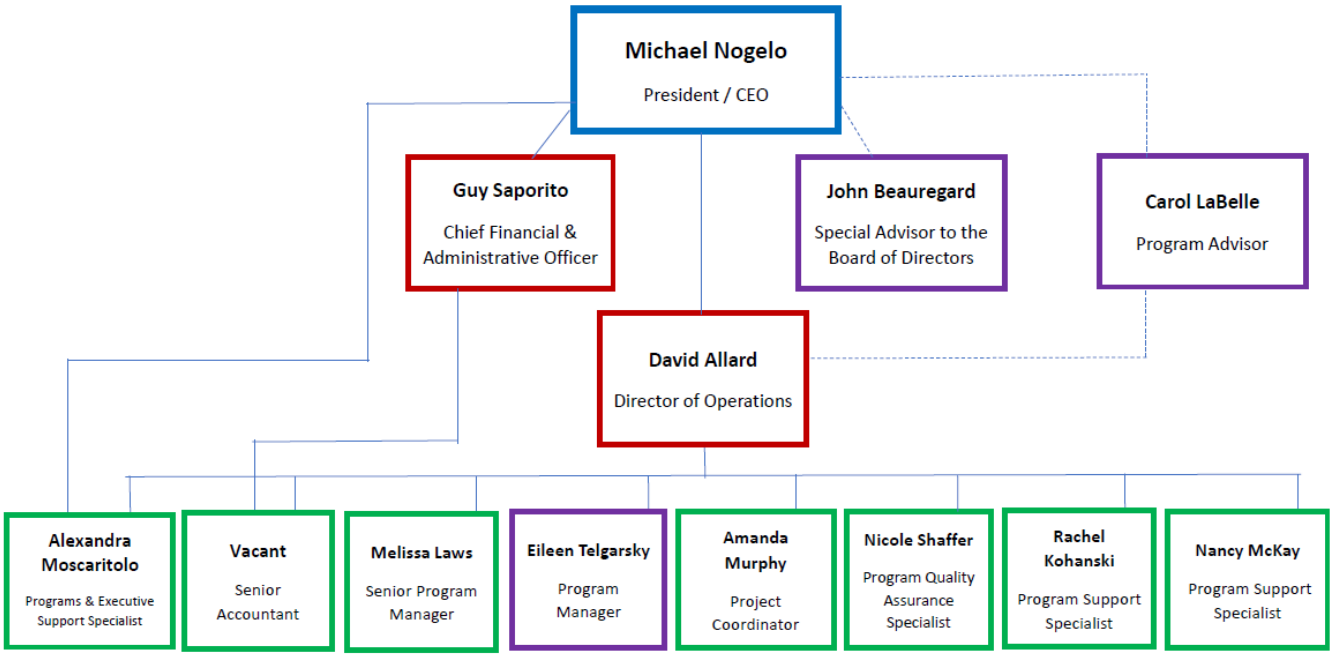
EWIB STAFF

Effective January 1, 2026



C. Local Administrative Entity and Grant Sub Recipient

C1. Identify the administrative entity.

EWIB operates as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and serves as the administrative entity that oversees a network of workforce-related programs including the operations of American Job Centers (AJCs).

C2. Identify the entity selected to receive and disburse grant funds (local fiscal agent).

EWIB serves as the local fiscal agent responsible for receiving and disbursing WIOA and related funding.

D. One-Stop System

D1. Provide a description of the local one-stop system, including the number, type, and location of full-service and other service delivery points.

The LWDA covers 41 towns in Eastern Connecticut. EWIB oversees the operation of one (1) Comprehensive One-Stop Center and two (2) Affiliate Centers.

One-Stop Center Type and Location

Comprehensive	Affiliate	Affiliate
Montville 601 Norwich New London Turnpike Suite 1 Uncasville, Connecticut 06382 Ph: (860) 848-5200	Danielson 562 Westcott Road Danielson, Connecticut 06239 Ph: (860) 774-4077	Willimantic 1320 Main Street Tyler Square Willimantic, Connecticut 06226 Ph: (860) 450-7603

The Comprehensive One-Stop Center creates a physical access point for job seekers and employers to access the programs, services, and activities of all required One-Stop partners and has at least one (1) WIOA Title I staff person physically present. The Comprehensive One-Stop Center provides career services, access to

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employment and training services, access to programs and activities carried out by One-Stop partners including the Employment Service program authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by WIOA Title III, and workforce and labor market information. The Comprehensive One-Stop Center offers customer access to these programs, services, and activities during regular business days and at other times as established by EWIB. The Comprehensive One-Stop Center meets physical and programmatic accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities (refer to response 3.D).

The Affiliate One-Stop Centers create physical access points for job seekers and employers to access one or more of the One-Stop Center system partners programs, services, and activities. Affiliate One-Stop Centers do not provide access to every required One-Stop Center partner program. EWIB works closely with the One-Stop Service Provider to determine the level of staff coverage in response to customer volume and more localized needs. Affiliate One-Stop Center sites meet physical and programmatic accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities (refer to response 3.D).

D2. Identify the process to select the one-stop operator.

EWIB followed its public procurement policies and processes to promote a full and open competition for the selection of its One-Stop Operator (OSO).

D3. Identify the entity or entities selected to operate the local one-stop center(s).

TVCCA serves as the lead WIOA Service Provider and subcontracts with EASTCONN for delivery of these services in Willimantic and Danielson American Job Centers.

D4. Identify the entity or entities selected to provide career services within the local one-stop system.

TVCCA provides Adult and Dislocated Worker (ADW) services in the Montville AJC and subcontracts with EASTCONN for delivery of these services in the Danielson and Willimantic AJCs. Other required WIOA partners deliver career services at the AJCs.

Core Career Services Providers by WIOA Category

WIOA Category	Provider *(*denotes contractor vs. required partner)*
Adult	TVCCA*, EASTCONN*
Dislocated Worker	TVCCA*, EASTCONN*
Youth (Out-of-School)	EASTCONN*, TVCCA*
Adult Education & Literacy	EASTCONN*, New London Adult Ed, Norwich Adult Ed
Wagner-Peyser Act	Connecticut Department of Labor
Rehabilitation Act	Connecticut Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

D5. Identify and describe what career services will be provided by the selected one-stop operator and what career services, if any, will be contracted out to service providers.

The OSO will not provide any career services. Required WIOA partners and One-Stop Service Providers (contracted) will provide career services (refer to response A.D.4). A variety of other partners will provide career services and ancillary services via referrals to support the delivery of career services.

Non-Required Service Providers at Eastern Connecticut's AJCs

Service	Partner Type	Provider
Transportation	Referral	Eastern Connecticut Transportation Consortium
Technology & Workshops	Contractor	Employment and Training Institute

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Non-Required Service Providers at Eastern Connecticut's AJCs

Service	Partner Type	Provider
Training & Special Projects	Contractor	Connecticut State (Three Rivers, Quinebaug Valley)
Business Services	Contractor	Northeastern Chamber of Commerce Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT
Employment & Training	Referral	Connecticut Indian Council
Rehabilitation Services	Referral	Connecticut Department of Aging & Disability Services
Job Corps	Referral	Job Corps
Justice-Involved	Referral	Opportunities Industrialization Center
Summer Youth	Contractor	Connecticut Department of Children and Families

** * * * * End of Section 1 * * * * **

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SECTION 2. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

A. Provide an analysis of the local area's economic conditions, including information on existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

Population. The Eastern Connecticut Workforce Development Area (WDA) includes 41 communities across New London and Windham Counties, as well as five towns in Tolland County, serving approximately 442,000 residents. The region's population is becoming increasingly diverse, particularly among younger generations. While White residents make up the majority of the population, Hispanic, Black, Asian, and multiracial communities continue to grow and contribute to the region's workforce and cultural vitality. Eastern Connecticut's population reflects both opportunity and workforce challenges. About 22% of residents are under age 20, representing the region's future workforce, while more than 17% are age 65 or older, contributing to Connecticut's aging labor force. Approximately 11% of residents under age 65 live with a disability, underscoring the importance of accessible workforce and support services. Educational attainment also highlights a key regional challenge. More than one-third of the workforce has a high school diploma or less, a higher share than the statewide average. At the same time, the percentage of workers with a bachelor's degree or higher remains significantly below the state average. Expanding access to education, training, and career pathways will be critical to meeting the workforce needs of the region's growing industries.

Employment Count vs. Labor Force. The labor force represents a total count of the civilian noninstitutional population aged 16 and over who are either employed or actively looking for work. Employed individuals are members of the civilian noninstitutional population aged 16 and over who have jobs. Unemployed people are individuals who are jobless and actively looking for work. The table shows the annual employment count compared to the labor force in the Eastern WDA as well as the number of unemployed individuals and the unemployment rate for the WDA compared to the state.

Labor Force and Employment Summary for Eastern WDA: 2019 to 2025

Description	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
WDA Labor Force Count	231,500	221,600	216,500	225,100	220,200	223,700
WDA Employed Count	223,300	202,500	202,300	215,800	213,100	216,800
WDA Unemployed Count	8,200	19,200	14,200	9,300	7,100	6,900
WDA Unemployment Rate	3.6	8.7	6.5	4.2	3.2	3.1
State Unemployment Rate	3.6	8.0	6.4	4.1	3.2	3.2

Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Wages. The table shows annual average wages in the WDA compared to the statewide average. Average wages have increased in the WDA albeit by less than the statewide average and remain significantly lower than the statewide average.

Annual Average Wages in the WDA compared to the State: 2018 to 2024

Description	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Connecticut	$67,744	$69,787	$75,411	$77,839	$81,241	$83,773	$87,403
Eastern WDA	$53,090	$54,384	$59,856	$61,709	$64,303	$66,235	$68,163
Difference	($14,654)	($15,403)	($15,555)	($16,130)	($16,938)	($17,538)	($19,240)

Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)

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Average wages in Connecticut increased steadily between 2018 and 2024 by almost $20,000 compared to $15,000 for the region. The gap remains wide because the state average is heavily skewed by the Finance & Insurance sector, which averaged $234,169 in 2024—nearly 2.6 times the state average. Successive increases in the state minimum wage—reaching $16.94 (January 2026) have helped lift the floor for entry-level service and retail roles across the region.

Cost of Living. ALICE is an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. ALICE families have household incomes above the Federal Poverty Level, but below a basic cost of living threshold. According to the United Way of Connecticut, a monthly "survival" budget totals $3,182 for one adult and $9,684 for a family of four in Connecticut. The table shows the uses of the survival budget for the adult and family of four. The 2025 ALICE Report reveals that 40% of Connecticut households now live below the survival threshold, with essential costs for families of four surpassing $128,000 annually by 2025 due to inflation. Data shows a significant wage-to-cost mismatch, as basic necessities outpace income growth and require a minimum of $19.00/hour for a single adult, above the state's current minimum wage. The table show comparisons for single adults ages 18-64 and above age 65 as well as for a household with 2 adults and 1 infant and 1 preschooler.

Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) Monthly Survival Budget (2025)

Description	Single Adult, Age 18-64	Single Adult, Age 65+	2Adults, 1 infant, 1 Preschooler
Housing using fair market rent	$ 1,267	$ 1,267	$ 1,850
Child care	$ 0	$ 0	$ 1,500
Food	$ 552	$ 508	$ 460
Transportation	$ 419	$ 355	$ 967
Health Care	$ 212	$ 595	$ 802
Technology	$ 86	$ 86	$ 116
Miscellaneous	$ 254	$ 281	$ 792
Taxes and available tax credits	$ 392	$ 451	$ 974
Monthly Total	**$ 3,182**	**$ 3,543**	**$ 9,684**
Annual Total	**$ 38,184**	**$ 42,516**	**$ 115,208**
Full-time Hourly Wage	**$ 19.09**	**$ 21.26**	**$ 58.10**

Source: United Way of Connecticut, "The State of ALICE in Connecticut, 2025 Update on Financial Hardship"

Housing. Eastern Connecticut's housing challenges have intensified as strong industrial growth—particularly in defense manufacturing—continues to increase demand for housing across the region. Although housing construction has accelerated statewide in recent years, the supply of affordable housing still falls far short of community needs. Housing development in Eastern Connecticut has grown steadily, with annual housing permits rising from fewer than 600 in 2022 to more than 950 in 2025. Even with this progress, the region is still producing only about half as many homes each year as it did in the early 2000s. The shortage is especially severe for smaller, more affordable homes that match the needs of today's households, more than half of which consist of just one or two people. Nearly 56,000 households in Eastern Connecticut earn at or below 80% of the area median income, yet fewer than 25,000 affordable housing units are available to serve them. Housing affordability continues to worsen statewide as costs rise faster than incomes. Since 2000, inflation-adjusted rental housing costs in Connecticut have increased by 15%, while median household income has declined by 5%. These trends place growing financial pressure on workers and families and create additional challenges for employers seeking to attract and retain talent in the region.

Childcare. Connecticut's early care and education system is at a critical turning point, shaped by historic state investments alongside ongoing shortages in affordable childcare. While the state is advancing major reforms through the Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Child Care, the gap between available childcare options and the needs of working families continues to grow. Childcare capacity has declined significantly over the past decade.

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In 2024, Connecticut reached its lowest number of licensed childcare slots in ten years, driven in part by a sharp decline in preschool availability and the continued loss of childcare providers—especially family childcare homes. Demand continues to outpace supply, with thousands of families remaining on waitlists for childcare assistance programs. High childcare costs also place a heavy financial burden on families, consuming an average of 16% of household income statewide. These challenges are especially severe in Eastern Connecticut, where rural geography and workforce demands create additional barriers. Many communities are considered "childcare deserts," with far too few licensed childcare slots available for local families. Shortages of childcare workers also affect employers in key industries such as manufacturing and healthcare, making it harder to recruit and retain workers. In a 2025 statewide business survey, nearly 60% of employers identified access to affordable, quality childcare as essential to workforce attraction and retention.

Transportation. Eastern Connecticut's low population density and rural geography create significant transportation challenges for workers and employers alike. With limited public transit options, most residents rely on personal vehicles to access jobs, education, and services. For many low-income households, however, the cost of owning and maintaining a car has become a major barrier to employment. Nearly 30% of low-income residents lack reliable access to a vehicle, even when living near transit routes. Rising transportation costs—including gas prices exceeding $4.50 per gallon in 2026—have added further financial strain on workers and businesses across the region. Transportation remains one of the region's most significant workforce barriers, with 68% of employment service participants identifying it as their top challenge. Public transit options are often limited and time-consuming, with transit commuters averaging significantly longer travel times than drivers. In response, state and regional partners are exploring new transportation solutions to improve access to jobs and economic opportunity. Current efforts include evaluating expanded rail connections between New London, Norwich, and Rhode Island, as well as piloting innovative "last-mile" transportation options designed to better serve rural communities and connect residents to employment centers.

Opportunity Youth. Eastern Connecticut faces a growing challenge in supporting "Opportunity Youth"—young people ages 14–26 who are disconnected from both school and work. State leaders have described this as an "unspoken crisis," affecting nearly one in five young people statewide. In parts of the Eastern Workforce Development Area, as many as 40% of young adults experience disconnection within the first year after high school, limiting their long-term education and career opportunities. Youth unemployment in Connecticut remains significantly higher than the overall state average, and disconnected youth face especially steep barriers to economic stability. Many lack a high school diploma or GED, experience poverty at disproportionately high rates, or face challenges related to disability, childcare, housing instability, or involvement with the justice system. Young parents, particularly women, often struggle to enter the workforce due to limited access to affordable childcare and supportive services. In addition to financial barriers, many disconnected youth lack access to professional networks, career guidance, and the foundational workplace skills employers increasingly value, such as communication, reliability, and teamwork. Concerns about losing essential public benefits when starting low-wage employment can also discourage workforce participation. Addressing these barriers will require coordinated investments in education, career pathways, supportive services, and youth engagement strategies that connect young people to long-term economic opportunity.

Location quotients. Location Quotients (LQs) are ratios that allow an area's distribution of employment by industry to be compared to a reference or base area's distribution. If an LQ is equal to 1, then the industry has the same share of its area employment as it does in the reference area. An LQ greater than 1 indicates an industry with a greater share of the local area employment than is the case in the reference area. The table shows LQs for industry sectors in the Eastern Connecticut WDA relative to Connecticut.

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Location Quotients for Industry Sectors in Eastern Connecticut Relative to Connecticut

Shading identifies LQs over 1.0. **Bold** indicates a higher LQ compared to 2018.

NAICS Code	Industry Description	LQ Relative to Connecticut	
		2018	2022
11	Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	2.84	**2.93**
21	Mining	3.05	**3.31**
22	Utilities	2.51	2.44
23	Construction	0.79	**0.83**
31-33	Manufacturing	1.37	**1.51**
42	Wholesale trade	0.59	**0.65**
44-45	Retail trade	1.07	**1.11**
48-49	Transportation and warehousing	1.18	0.90
51	Information	0.48	0.48
52	Finance and insurance	0.22	**0.23**
53	Real estate and rental and leasing	0.61	0.57
54	Professional and technical services	0.58	**0.60**
55	Management of companies and enterprises	0.40	0.33
56	Administrative and waste management	0.44	**0.49**
61	Educational services	0.52	**0.58**
62	Health care and social assistance	0.88	**0.89**
71	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	0.80	**0.83**
72	Accommodation and food services	1.30	1.30
81	Other services, except public administration	0.81	0.71
99	No classifiable establishments	0.60	**1.67**

Source: CTDOL, Office of Research analysis of Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) data

As of early 2026, the Norwich–New London–Willimantic labor market area was the only major metro region in Connecticut to add jobs, gaining 300 positions in February alone. The region's economy continues to be anchored by shipbuilding and maritime industries, led by General Dynamics Electric Boat. Ship and boat building remains Eastern Connecticut's strongest economic specialty, with employment concentration more than 21 times the national average in 2024. Growth in maritime occupations—including captains, marine oilers, and related trades—reflects expanding offshore wind development and regional ferry services. Construction-related occupations, such as cement masons and concrete finishers, are also in high demand due to increased housing development and infrastructure investment across the region. Tourism continues to play a major role in the regional economy as well. Tour and travel-related occupations remain highly concentrated in Eastern Connecticut, supported by the region's coastal attractions and tribal casino destinations in New London County.

Industry Projections. CTDOL projects that goods producing industries in the Eastern WDA will grow by 6,140 workers and represent 17.8% of the total workforce in 2030, up from 16.7% of total workforce in 2020. The table

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below shows industry projections for 2030 in Eastern Connecticut using the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).

Industry Projections (NAICS) in Eastern Workforce Development Area

Bold *denotes the top 10 industry sectors based on projected employment in 2030*

Shading denotes top 10 industry sectors based on numeric change and percent change 2020 vs. 2030

NAICS Code	Industry Title	Base Employment 2020	Projected Employment 2030	Numeric Change	Percent Change
0	Total All Industries	175,662	199,223	23,561	13.4
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1,466	1,908	442	30.1
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	161	204	43	26.7
22	Utilities	1,387	1,494	107	7.7
23	**Construction**	4,924	**5,590**	666	13.5
31	**Manufacturing**	22,836	**27,825**	4,989	21.9
42	**Wholesale Trade**	3,847	4,137	290	7.5
44	**Retail Trade**	18,528	**19,425**	897	4.8
48	**Transportation and Warehousing**	6,016	**8,219**	2,203	36.6
51	Information	1,547	1,662	115	7.4
52	Finance and Insurance	2,413	2,293	-120	-5.0
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,168	1,238	70	6.0
54	**Professional, Scientific and Technical Services**	6,200	**7,315**	1,115	18.0
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,208	1,303	95	7.9
56	**Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services**	4,345	5,051	706	16.3
61	**Educational Services**	25,282	**26,200**	918	3.6
62	**Health Care and Social Assistance**	26,546	**29,216**	2,670	10.1
67	**Self Employed and Unpaid Family Workers, All Jobs**	11,390	**13,099**	1,709	15.0
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,721	2,480	759	44.1
72	**Accommodation and Food Services**	20,466	**25,412**	4,946	24.2
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	3,456	4,108	652	18.9
91	Total Federal Government Employment	2,871	2,641	-230	-8.0
92	State Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	2,565	2,588	23	0.9
93	**Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals**	5,319	**5,815**	496	9.3

Source: CT DOL, QCEW data

Employment Industry by Town. The table shows town-by-town employment, worksites, average wages, and largest employment industry.

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Employment and Largest Employment Industry by Town

Bold *denotes top 10 towns by annual average employment; Shading denotes top 10 in the category*

Area Description	Number of Worksites 2023	2023-23 # Worksite Change	Ann. Avg. Employ. 2023	Ann. Avg. Emp. 2022-23 Change	Ann. Avg. Wage 2023	Ann. Avg. Wage 2022-23 Change
Connecticut	**148,541**	**5,769**	**1,668,107**	**25,599**	**$83,783**	**$2,543**
Ashford	138	16	647	45	$51,528	$4,249
Bozrah	92	0	1,393	-8	$59,643	$3,472
Brooklyn	262	-1	1,927	-10	$51,881	$2,661
Canterbury	118	5	662	21	$53,669	$5,701
Chaplin	49	0	292	12	$40,080	-$294
Colchester	465	10	3,912	78	$57,234	$1,229
Columbia	158	0	1,087	-4	$62,959	$1,268
Coventry	241	4	1,413	-1	$54,794	$1,671
East Lyme	688	24	5,491	218	$60,931	$3,697
Eastford	46	2	666	4	$89,610	$27,531
Franklin	103	1	1,272	19	$70,535	$876
Griswold	258	3	1,572	45	$54,255	$6,420
Groton	1,217	36	30,226	1,328	$98,361	$784
Hampton	45	6	204	-68	$57,503	$13,639
Killingly	592	13	8,744	69	$58,281	$1,659
Lebanon	142	0	1,322	52	$58,473	$3,895
Ledyard	376	7	7,448	259	$51,492	$957
Lisbon	106	5	1,640	22	$35,409	$1,173
Lyme	69	3	211	13	$96,714	-$3,456
Mansfield	414	3	11,938	128	$67,711	-$1,028
Montville	423	7	10,325	110	$53,401	$1,230
New London	999	26	12,821	114	$65,694	$1,601
N Stonington	158	6	1,493	79	$62,920	$753
Norwich	1,136	29	16,226	65	$61,950	$2,261
Old Lyme	350	8	2,344	47	$66,390	$869
Plainfield	415	18	4,504	-88	$49,671	$114
Pomfret	159	12	1,871	135	$53,662	$2,465
Preston	116	6	735	-46	$55,035	$1,849
Putnam	422	12	5,851	112	$56,362	$1,227
Salem	114	3	593	-7	$54,782	$2,955
Scotland	26	0	118	3	$35,974	-$1,041
Sprague	68	3	405	-10	$58,735	$431
Sterling	68	1	312	24	$62,072	$4,280
Stonington	937	17	8,013	229	$60,457	$2,810
Thompson	226	6	1,373	-9	$54,883	$5,997
Union	17	-1	131	3	$54,303	$1,461
Voluntown	61	1	314	-2	$45,155	-$108
Waterford	732	15	10,194	-40	$67,206	$3,207
Willington	141	4	1,889	13	$40,995	$1,381
Windham	668	12	9,703	-41	$56,127	$2,647
Woodstock	223	8	1,549	21	$61,290	$4,626

Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)

Occupational Projections. The table shows occupational projections for major occupational groups (level 1) organized by Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system codes. Occupational openings are the projected number of openings (positions) for workers entering the occupation. Openings are defined as the sum of net occupational employment change and occupational separations. Workers who change jobs within an occupation do not generate openings; no net change in openings occurs from this movement. Occupational separations are the projected number of workers permanently leaving an occupation (defined as the sum of labor force exits and occupational transfers). In most occupations, separations result in openings for new workers to enter the occupation, but in declining occupations, not all separations result in openings.

Major Occupational Group (SOC Level 1) Projections in Eastern Workforce Development Area

Bold *denotes the top 10 major occupational groups based on projected employment 2030*

Shading denotes the top 10 for annual change, annual exits, annual transfers, and annual openings.

SOC Code	Occupations	Base Employment 2020	Projected Employment 2030	Annual Change	Annual Exits	Annual Transfers	Annual Total Openings
00-0000	All	175,662	199,223	2,356	8,198	12,295	22,849
11-0000	**Management**	**10,583**	**12,232**	165	306	596	1,067
13-0000	Business & Financial Operations	6,699	7,576	88	194	418	700
15-0000	Computer & Mathematical	4,347	5,362	102	102	241	445
17-0000	**Architecture and Engineering**	**7,903**	**9,979**	208	193	404	805
19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science	1,940	2,254	31	45	154	230
21-0000	Community and Social Service	3,497	3,753	26	120	234	380
23-0000	Level Occupations	767	883	12	23	34	69
25-0000	**Educational Instruction and Library**	**16,259**	**17,196**	94	702	769	1,565
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, Media	2,068	2,402	33	85	145	263
29-0000	**Healthcare Practitioners & Technical**	**9,801**	**10,753**	95	257	312	664
31-0000	**Healthcare Support**	**8,757**	**10,061**	130	568	568	1,266
33-0000	Protective Service	3,079	3,300	22	153	199	374
35-0000	**Food Preparation & Serving Related**	**15,198**	**19,775**	458	1,286	1,784	3,528
37-0000	**Bldg & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance**	**7,278**	**7,955**	68	424	550	1,042
39-0000	Personal Care & Service	6,625	7,948	132	406	572	1,110
41-0000	**Sales & Related**	**15,062**	**15,708**	65	874	1,256	2,195
43-0000	Financial Clerks	2,851	2,779	-7	143	157	293
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	1,112	1,384	27	52	142	221
47-0000	**Construction & Extraction**	**7,311**	**8,664**	135	243	538	916
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	5,795	6,483	69	192	387	648
51-0000	**Production Occupations**	**8,668**	**9,376**	71	327	638	1,036
53-0000	Motor Vehicle Operators	5,626	6,986	136	318	386	840

Source: CT DOL, 2024_04_01 IWIP Eastern WDA Data Tables

The region's economy remains resilient, driven by strong demand in key industries despite ongoing challenges such as inflation and a tightening labor market. The area's concentration in defense manufacturing—

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particularly through General Dynamics Electric Boat—helped shield the regional economy from broader private-sector job losses experienced across Connecticut in 2025. Even as the national economy slowed, Manufacturing, Construction, and Healthcare added a combined 1,500 jobs in March 2026, reinforcing their role as the region's economic foundation. Leisure and Hospitality also continued its post-pandemic recovery, posting 6% growth in late 2025. Construction employment grew by more than 9% between 2024 and 2025, fueled by infrastructure investments and housing development. At the same time, employers continue to face workforce challenges. While some sectors, including retail and transportation, experienced modest declines, manufacturers, and healthcare providers report ongoing shortages of workers with the technical certifications and middle-skill training needed to fill critical roles. Rising housing and utility costs are also placing added financial pressure on workers and families across the region.

Worksite Size and Employment. 91% of work sites in the region employ 19 or fewer individuals, 9% employ between 20 and 249 individuals, and 1% of work sites employ 100+ individuals. The table shows the top 25 employers by size, town, and industry in the Eastern WDA.[2]

Top 25 Employers in the Eastern WDA, 2025

Employer	Town	Description	Employee Count
Foxwoods Resort Casino	Ledyard	Resorts	5,000 - 9,999 employees
General Dynamics Electric Boat	Groton	Ship Builders & Repairers (mfrs)	5,000 - 9,999 employees
Day Kimball Healthcare	Putnam	Health Maintenance Organizations	1,000 - 4,999 employees
Electric Boat Corp	New London	Engineering	1,000 - 4,999 employees
Lawrence + Memorial Hospital	New London	Hospitals	1,000 - 4,999 employees
Millstone Power Station	Waterford	Power Plants	1,000 - 4,999 employees
Pfizer Inc	Groton	Drug-Manufacturers	1,000 - 4,999 employees
William W Backus Hospital	Norwich	Hospitals	1,000 - 4,999 employees
York Correctional Institution	East Lyme	Government Offices-State	500 - 999 employee
Connecticut State	Montville	City Govt-Correctional Institutions	500 - 999 employees
Frito-Lay Inc	Killingly	Potato Chips Corn Chips/Snacks (mfrs)	500 - 999 employees
Learn Regional Edu Svc Ctr	Old Lyme	Educational Programs	500 - 999 employees
Lowe's Distribution Ctr	Plainfield	Distribution Centers (whls)	500 - 999 employees
UConn School of Engineering	Mansfield	Engineering Schools	500 - 999 employees
Windham Public Schools	Windham	Schools	500 - 999 employees
Davis-Standard LLC	Stonington	Plastics-Extruders (mfrs)	250 - 499 employees
Natchaug Hospital	Mansfield	Hospitals	250 - 499 employees
Sonalysts Inc	Waterford	Engineers-Consulting	250 - 499 employees
Staples Distribution Ctr	Killingly	Distribution Centers (whls)	250 - 499 employees
Thomas G Faria Corp	N Stonington	Gauges & Gages-Manufacturers	250 - 499 employees
United Abrasives Inc	Windham	Abrasive Products (mfrs)	250 - 499 employees
Walmart Garden Ctr	Putnam	Garden Centers	250 - 499 employees
Walmart Supercenter	Lisbon	Department Stores	250 - 499 employees
Walmart Supercenter	Windham	Department Stores	250 - 499 employees
Windham Hospital	Windham	Hospitals	250 - 499 employees

[2] Other large employers such as Mohegan Sun, UCONN Storrs and Eastern Connecticut State University operate in the LWDA and did not appear on this CTDOL Office of Research report.

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B. Provide an analysis of the employment needs of employers in those industry sectors and occupations.

The table shows projections for detailed occupations (level 4) in the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Development Area.

Top 20 Detailed Occupational Projections in Eastern Workforce Development Area by Annual Openings

Bold *denotes the top 10 occupations based on projected employment 2030*

Shading *denotes occupation within the top 20 of annual change or annual exits*

SOC Code	Occupations	Base Employment 2020	Projected Employment 2030	Annual Change	Annual Exits	Annual Transfers	Annual Total Openings
00-0000	All	175,662	199,223	2,356	8,198	12,295	22,849
35-3023	**Fast Food and Counter Workers**	**3,294**	**4,231**	94	365	398	857
41-2011	**Cashiers**	**4,804**	**4,738**	-7	406	457	856
35-3031	**Waiters and Waitresses**	**3,340**	**4,305**	96	281	456	833
31-1120	**Home Health and Personal Care Aides**	**4,982**	**6,059**	108	353	313	774
41-2031	**Retail Salespersons**	**4,202**	**4,561**	36	245	362	643
53-7065	**Stockers and Order Fillers**	**2,627**	**3,185**	56	165	284	505
37-2011	**Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners**	**2,963**	**3,234**	27	193	217	437
35-2014	**Cooks, Restaurant**	**1,749**	**2,779**	103	133	194	430
53-7062	**Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand**	**2,316**	**2,694**	38	110	218	366
53-3058	Passenger Vehicle Drivers, Except Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	1,879	2,547	67	146	110	323
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	2,421	2,427	1	114	191	306
25-9044	**Teaching Assistants, Postsecondary**	**3,005**	**3,166**	16	138	144	298
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	2,479	2,540	6	137	149	292
53-3033	Light Truck Drivers	1,926	2,405	48	89	147	284
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	2,612	2,463	-15	129	142	256
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	2,310	2,354	4	82	162	248
35-2021	Food Preparation Workers	1,169	1,386	22	100	118	240
37-2012	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,774	1,802	3	122	115	240
15-1256	Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	1,924	2,594	67	52	111	230
35-3011	Bartenders	935	1,299	36	51	135	222

Source: CT DOL, 2024_04_01 IWIP Eastern WDA Data Tables

The occupations with the highest annual change numbers that do not appear in the table for top 20 annual openings and have top 20 annual change include: Marine Engineers and Naval Architects (17-2121, annual change of 51); Electronics Engineers, Except Computer (17-2072, 42); General and Operations Managers (11,1021, 33); First Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers (35-1012, 31); Industrial Truck and Tractor Trailor Operators (53-7051, 31); Mechanical Engineers (17-2141, 27); and Hair Dressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists (39-5012, 22). Registered Nurses (29-1141) have 159 annual total openings with an annual change number of 9.

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The region's economy continues to be anchored by strong, high-growth industries with long-term stability. Defense and Advanced Manufacturing remains a cornerstone of the regional economy, driven by General Dynamics Electric Boat and contributing nearly $32 billion annually to Connecticut's GDP. Electric Boat's ongoing expansion is expected to generate thousands of new hires each year through 2026. Healthcare and Social Assistance remains the region's highest-demand sector, with more than 19,000 statewide job postings in March 2026 alone, particularly in long-term care and outpatient services. Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics is also expanding as supply chain investments and new distribution hubs increase demand for workers in shipping, inventory, and warehouse operations. At the same time, emerging industries are reshaping workforce needs across the region. An example relates to the "blue economy." The blue economy is a broader and more modern concept that focuses on the sustainable use of ocean and water resources to drive economic growth, innovation, and environmental stewardship. In addition to traditional maritime industries, the blue economy includes emerging sectors such as offshore wind energy, aquaculture, ocean technology, marine robotics, climate resilience, underwater sensing, and sustainable marine research. The blue economy emphasizes balancing economic development with long-term environmental sustainability and workforce growth. Meanwhile, the growing use of artificial intelligence is transforming professional services industries such as finance and insurance, increasing demand for workers with both technical and operational expertise.

C. Provide an analysis of the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs in in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

Eastern Connecticut employers continue to face strong hiring demand across several key industries, driven by the region's expanding shipbuilding, healthcare, logistics, and construction sectors. Major employers, including General Dynamics Electric Boat, are fueling long-term demand for skilled workers, while healthcare providers continue to face persistent shortages in nursing, behavioral health, and patient support roles. Fast-growing occupations also include software and engineering professionals, medical assistants, home health aides, social workers, CDL drivers, electricians, and other skilled trades.

To meet these workforce needs, employers are increasingly adopting "skills-first" hiring practices that prioritize demonstrated abilities, industry-recognized credentials, and short-term training over traditional four-year degrees. Across industries, businesses are seeking workers who can quickly enter the workforce with practical technical skills and continue building their qualifications over time through stackable credentials and on-the-job learning.

Technical skill needs vary by sector but increasingly include a combination of occupational expertise and digital competency. Manufacturers are seeking workers trained in machining, industrial maintenance, quality control, and workplace safety. Healthcare employers need workers with patient care, medical records, phlebotomy, and pharmacy support skills. Logistics and transportation employers require inventory management, shipping and receiving, and commercial driving skills. At the same time, employers across all industries are placing greater emphasis on digital literacy, automation, and the ability to work alongside AI-enabled technologies.

In addition to technical knowledge, employers consistently identify "durable" or human-centered skills as essential for long-term success and retention. Communication, teamwork, reliability, adaptability, time management, and problem-solving are among the most requested competencies across sectors. Employers report ongoing challenges finding workers who are prepared for workplace expectations and organizational culture, contributing to higher turnover and recruitment difficulties.

Regional workforce needs are also shaped by broader economic and social challenges. Transportation barriers, limited childcare access, and housing affordability continue to affect workers' ability to secure and maintain

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employment. Employers are increasingly exploring creative solutions, including transportation partnerships and flexible workforce supports, to improve employee retention and access to job opportunities. For individuals facing barriers to employment—including opportunity youth, justice-involved residents, and other underserved populations—additional supports are often needed to build workforce readiness. Expanding access to digital literacy, industry-recognized credentials, career coaching, and wraparound support services will be critical to helping more residents connect to in-demand careers and supporting the long-term workforce needs of the region's employers.

D. Provide an analysis of the workforce in the region, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region, including individuals with barriers to employment.

The region is experiencing strong demand for workers in key industries while also facing long-term demographic and workforce challenges. Manufacturing, healthcare, transportation, and logistics continue to drive regional employment growth, even as the region adapts to an aging population, slow population growth, and ongoing labor shortages. As of early 2026, the Norwich–New London–Willimantic Labor Market Area showed continued economic resilience, adding approximately 300 jobs in February and reaching more than 129,000 payroll positions. While unemployment rates have increased slightly from the historic lows seen in 2023, regional unemployment remains relatively low overall and generally aligns with the statewide rate of 4.8%. Labor force participation in Connecticut remains above the national average, although workforce participation declined in 2025 as many residents left the labor market due to retirement, caregiving responsibilities, and other economic pressures.

The region's labor market is increasingly shaped by a small number of high-demand industries. Healthcare and Social Assistance continues to generate the strongest job growth, while manufacturing remains a cornerstone of the regional economy through initiatives such as the Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative. Transportation, warehousing, and logistics are also expanding, creating new opportunities in commercial driving, distribution, and supply chain operations. At the same time, employers are increasingly adopting automation and AI-enabled technologies, driving demand for workers with stronger digital and technical skills.

Educational attainment and workforce readiness remain important regional challenges. More than one-third of the workforce has a high school diploma or less, and employers frequently report difficulty finding workers with the technical, digital, and communication skills needed for today's jobs. Connecticut's growing focus on "skills-first" hiring is helping expand access to employment opportunities by reducing degree requirements and emphasizing demonstrated competencies, credentials, and work-based learning.

Many residents continue to face significant barriers to employment and career advancement. Opportunity youth, justice-involved individuals, veterans, people in recovery, and low-income families often require additional support to successfully enter and remain in the workforce. Transportation limitations, childcare shortages, and the lack of affordable housing remain among the most significant structural barriers affecting both workers and employers across Eastern Connecticut. Addressing these challenges will be essential to building a stronger, more inclusive workforce and meeting the region's long-term economic needs.

E. Provide an analysis of the workforce development activities (including education and training) in the region, including an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of such services and the capacity to provide such services, to address the identified education and skill needs of the workforce and employment needs of employers in the region.

AJC-East workforce development activities benefit jobseekers, laid off workers, youth, incumbent workers, new entrants to the workforce, veterans, persons with disabilities, public assistance recipients, non-custodial parents, and employers. AJC-East enables customers to easily access the information and services they need

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through the One-Stop service delivery concept. The purpose of these activities is to promote and increase the employment, job retention, earnings, and occupational skills of participants. This, in turn, improves the quality of the workforce, reduces welfare dependency and unemployment, and improves productivity, competitiveness, and quality of life in the region.

Adults. Adults can access diverse services in response to their specific needs such as:

- *General Workshops*. Regional AJCs offer a wide array of no-cost workshops ranging from job search topics such as resume writing, behavioral interviewing techniques, and job search tactics to educational refreshers. The AJCs now offer virtual and in-person the "Careers, Training & You" workshops which provide a broad overview of WIOA services (and other AJC services).
- *General Employment Services*. Regional AJCs offer a range of services to assist jobseekers in their job search including: employer referrals and recruitment, job placement, referrals to support services or other providers and programs, as well as access to a computer lab and resource library equipped with printers, faxes, and phones. AJCs also offer advisory services through Career Advisors and specialized advisors for manufacturing, WIOA, JFES, financial aid, veterans, older workers, and workers with disabilities.
- *Human Services Integration Specialist (HSIS)*. Professional staff serve vulnerable AJC customers through a comprehensive approach that addresses not only customers' employment and educational needs, but also their basic needs to help customers achieve economic self-sufficiency. Staff conduct an in-depth interview, identify appropriate linkages to programs and services for which customers may be eligible, assist customers to apply for services, follow up to ensure that customers receive the needed services, and actively support each customer as they pursue their goals ~ with a focus on helping them learn to help themselves. Staff incorporate services for customers with disabilities, helping them navigate the challenges of seeking work.
- *TANF/Jobs First Employment Services (JFES)*. TVCCA administers the TANF/JFES program in partnership with EASTCONN. The program works with TANF recipients faced with barriers in their pursuit of education and employment, including learning disabilities, lack of basic skills, and English language deficiencies.

Dislocated Workers. Employment assistance for dislocated workers includes outreach, recruitment, certification, assessment, case management, employment plan development, job search assistance, referral to services identified in the employment plan, as well as client tracking to show implementation of the plan. Staff also assist clients with the provision of training services through Individual Training Account (ITA) vouchers, support service coordination, employment plan updates, job search assistance, and post-program follow-up. Staff provide case management services and a minimum of 12 months of follow-up for all registered clients. Additional activities may include: enrolling clients in OJT programs, facilitating AJC workshops, providing extensive outreach and recruitment, and providing partner services to unregistered core clients, including referrals, transportation certification, and enrollment. Staff also assist customers with job search support and placement activities and work closely with the Business Services Team on job placement activity.

Youth. Refer to Response G of this section for information about the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities.

Employers. EWIB provides services to its business customers through a partnership of CTDOL and the six area chambers of commerce. The Business Services Team (BST) that evolved from this collaboration responds to the ever-increasing needs of business customers. Business Services offer a core set of services, such as:

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- *OJT & Subsidized Employment*. OJT programs offer area employers a unique opportunity to hire screened applicants while saving a substantial amount of money on training costs. EWIB pays for OJT contracts. Employers receive reimbursements for 50%–75% of the employee's wages during a set training period. OJTs are possible in most occupations that require some level of technical skill. Most of these jobs are in advanced manufacturing or technology or are engineering related.
- *Incumbent Worker Training*. EWIB promotes Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) provided by CTDOL as well as through grant-funded programs for regional businesses that want to train their workforce. Training grants are awarded on a competitive basis, and priority is given to economically vital industries that employ workers in high-growth occupations or create opportunities for employees to advance along career ladders. IWT programs may include training designed to increase the basic skills of employees including, but not limited to, training in written and oral communication, math or science, or training in technical and technological skills. IWT grants are structured to flexibly meet the business's training objectives.
- *Other Business Services* offered by EWIB include: information on tax credits, labor market information, online training for current employees, electronic classified advertising, employer recruitment/job fairs, rapid response team/downsizing, and Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA).

F. Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area.

Employment assistance for dislocated workers includes outreach, recruitment, certification, assessment, case management, employment plan development, job search assistance, referral to services identified in the employment plan, as well as client tracking to show implementation of the plan. Staff also assist clients with the provision of training services through Individual Training Account (ITA) vouchers, support service coordination, employment plan updates, job search assistance, and post-program follow-up. Staff provide case management services and a minimum of 12 months of follow-up for all registered clients. Additional activities may include: enrolling clients in OJT programs, facilitating AJC workshops, providing extensive outreach and recruitment, and providing partner services to unregistered core clients, including referrals, transportation certification, and enrollment. Staff assist customers with job search support and placement activities and work with the Business Services Team on job placement.

G. Provide a description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area, including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities. The description and assessment must include an identification of successful models of such youth workforce investment activities.

EWIB's youth services and initiatives are developed and overseen by a Youth Committee comprised of Board members, partners, and community stakeholders who share a mission to promote, advocate for, and support collaborative opportunities that enable all the region's youth to acquire the necessary skills to transition into the workforce, further their education and training, and pursue their careers. EWIB youth initiatives and programs link closely to the local labor market needs and community youth programs and services, with strong connections between academic and occupational learning as evidenced by the Youth Manufacturing Pipeline and the Youth Healthcare Pipeline Initiatives that align with regional sector partnerships. Youth programs promote leadership development and citizenship through voluntary community service opportunities.

WIOA In-School Youth Program. EASTCONN, in collaboration with New London Youth Affairs and Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA), engages and prepares in-school youth (aged 16-19, a high school junior or senior who meet the WOIA eligibility guidelines and have barriers to employment) from the

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Windham, Danielson, Norwich, and New London areas. Youth with disabilities are served within EWIB's Out of School Youth Programs in coordination with ADS and other agencies working collaboratively.

The program provides a continuum of services using a case management model within a pipeline structure identifying career pathways for the delivery of year-round services. This program keeps youth in school while providing direction and focus toward the world of education and work after high school graduation. The year-round component of the program includes: a) Academic support, career assessment, and transition planning; b) Career exploration and labor market information in the form of career inventories, field trips, and job shadowing to explore emerging industry fields, along with visits to colleges, technical schools and businesses to promote further education; c) Job placement/internship/ work-based learning; d) Portfolios documenting all components of the program; e) Financial literacy, basic skills in reading and math; f) Life skills training; g) Mentorship; and h) Leadership and team-building skill development.

A paid internship experience represents an integral program component. The internship is a continuation of year-round activities and allows the participant to put into practice his/her year-long learning specific to a pipeline. Participants apply and are interviewed for individualized work site internships (up to 25 hours per week in summer and 6-15 hours per week during the school year) related to the youth's career ladder/pipeline interests, and foster work readiness skill development.

WIOA Out-of-School Youth Program. EASTCONN Adult Education, in collaboration with TVCCA, New London Adult Education, and Norwich Adult Education, delivers a comprehensive system of education, training, and individualized support to youth ages 17-24 who meet the EWIB certification criteria. Using a career ladder approach, which consists of learning designed to improve earning potential, youth realize enhanced education and employment opportunities to improve quality of life. Youth with disabilities are served within EWIB's Out-of-School Youth Programs in coordination with ADS and other agencies working collaboratively.

The program, based on a coordinated case management/education model, provides comprehensive assessment and a customized employment plan and services to facilitate the attainment of WIOA performance goals. Services include: education (including earning a high school credential if necessary), work-based learning, job search assistance, leadership opportunities, transitional assistance to post-secondary opportunities and employment, financial support for post-secondary trainings, and financial support to address barriers, as appropriate. Program sites are conveniently located in Willimantic, Danielson, Norwich, and New London. ADS and EWIB coordinate services for Out-of-School Youth with disabilities as appropriate, and when needed. New services or programs are presented at EWIB's monthly AJC Partners meetings with supervisors from all AJC partners.

Summer Youth Program. This short-term summer work experience for eligible youth aged 14-21 offers the opportunity to earn minimum wage for approximately five weeks of work experience. Employers commit to providing a learning-rich job experience and an evaluation.

Youth with Disabilities. The Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) serves on EWIB's Youth Committee and serves as a partner for youth with disabilities in the Eastern region. ADS and EWIB's In-School and Out-of-School Youth providers coordinate referrals and services based on the needs of the youth. ADS and EWIB also coordinate referrals for the Summer Youth Employment Program.

H. Identify gaps in service based on the above analyses.

Eastern Connecticut continues to face significant gaps in workforce, education, and support systems that limit the region's ability to meet growing employer demand and connect residents to economic opportunity. While strong job growth exists in manufacturing, healthcare, transportation, and skilled trades, many residents still face barriers that prevent them from accessing training, employment, and career advancement.

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- *Workforce and Talent Pipeline Gaps.* The region's aging population, slow population growth, and low unemployment rate have created a structural shortage of available workers. Employers across healthcare, manufacturing, and other critical sectors continue to report difficulty finding qualified candidates for high-demand occupations such as nursing, home healthcare, skilled trades, and advanced manufacturing roles. At the same time, many workers lack the digital, technical, and workplace readiness skills increasingly required in today's economy, particularly as employers adopt automation and AI-enabled technologies. A persistent "job-skill mismatch" also exists between employer expectations and workforce preparation. Businesses consistently report shortages in communication, reliability, teamwork, time management, and other professional skills essential for long-term retention and advancement.

- *Education and Training Gaps.* Educational attainment in Eastern Connecticut remains below statewide averages, contributing to shortages in middle-skill and technical occupations. Many residents lack access to industry-recognized credentials, digital literacy training, and clear career pathways aligned with regional hiring needs. Students, jobseekers, and workers often have limited awareness of available career opportunities and the education or training required to access them. For example, in healthcare, the region continues to experience significant demand for occupations requiring two- and four-year degree pathways, while limited training capacity, clinical placement constraints, workforce shortages, and insufficient pathway infrastructure challenge the region's ability to develop and sustain a robust healthcare talent pipeline. At the same time, regional workforce systems face growing uncertainty due to the expiration of major federal workforce investments. The anticipated loss of programs funded through initiatives such as Career ConneCT and the Good Jobs Partnership could reduce training capacity, limit regional coordination efforts, and create longer wait times for jobseekers seeking workforce services.

- *Barriers to Workforce Participation.* Even when training and employment opportunities are available, many residents remain unable to participate because of broader economic and infrastructure barriers. Limited public transportation, rising vehicle costs, shortages of affordable childcare, and a lack of affordable housing continue to restrict access to jobs and training throughout Eastern Connecticut, particularly in rural communities. These barriers disproportionately affect low-income families, parents, opportunity youth, justice-involved individuals, people with disabilities, veterans, and residents in recovery. Capacity and resources to serve these populations remain uneven across the region, limiting opportunities for many residents to fully participate in the workforce.

- *Youth and Future Workforce Gaps.* A significant number of young people in Eastern Connecticut remain disconnected from school or work, creating long-term risks for the region's future workforce pipeline. Fragmented coordination between schools, community organizations, and public agencies often leaves vulnerable youth without consistent pathways into education, training, or employment. Expanding career awareness, work-based learning, mentoring, and supportive services will be critical to engaging the next generation of workers.

Despite these challenges, the region also has a significant opportunity to strengthen workforce participation and economic mobility by expanding skills-first hiring, short-term credential programs, digital literacy training, and wraparound support services. Continued investment in Regional Sector Partnerships, workforce innovation, and coordinated supportive services will be essential to closing service gaps and building a stronger, more inclusive workforce system for Eastern Connecticut.

** * * * * End of Section 2 * * * * **

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SECTION 3. VISION, GOALS AND STRATEGIES

A. Identify the vision, goals and strategies adopted by the LWDB that align with Connecticut's WIOA Unified State Plan for PYs 2024-2027, and how these will affect the preparation of an educated and skilled workforce.

EWIB's vision and mission parallel Connecticut's strategic vision as shown in the figure.



EWIB centers its work around four goals.

1. Increase the impact and accessibility of core AJC programs and services.
2. Expand manufacturing & healthcare talent pools in response to industry need.
3. Expand and sustain manufacturing and healthcare RSPs to strengthen demand-driven workforce development.
4. Enhance, expand, and sustain manufacturing and healthcare youth workforce pipeline programs.

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EWIB empowers partners to drive economic growth and individual success through these core strategies:

- *Modernize Service Delivery*. Continuously improve accessibility, coordination, and customer experience across the American Job Center network.
- *Advance Equity and Reduce Barriers*. Strengthen partnerships that address employment barriers including housing, childcare, food security, and transportation.
- *Fuel Industry Growth*. Strengthen Regional Sector Partnerships that align workforce strategies with employer needs.
- *Support Priority Populations*. Design targeted pathways for returning citizens, individuals with disabilities, and opportunity youth.
- *Support Path-to-Work Transitions*. Connect public assistance recipients and disconnected workers to career pathways and employment services.
- *Scale Proven Training Models*. Expand high-impact models that build sustainable talent pipelines for regional priority industries.
- *Ensure Accountability and Performance*. Maintain strong stewardship of public funds through data-driven performance monitoring and continuous improvement.

The table shows how EWIB's goals align and support Connecticut's WIOA Unified State Plan pillars.

Core Career Services Providers by WIOA Category

Unified State Plan Pillar	EWIB Goals			
	Increase Access to and Impact of Core AJC Programs	Expand Manufacturing & Healthcare Talent Pools	Expand and Sustain RSPs	Expand and Sustain Youth Workforce Pipelines
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education & Career Pathways	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sector Training	✓	✓	✓	✓
Industry Leadership			✓	
Workforce Development System Alignment	✓		✓	
Data and Accountability	✓	✓	✓	✓

The EWIB goals align with the objectives around which strategic initiatives are organized in the Governor's Workforce Strategic Plan titled, *"Work Forward: Pathways for Growth"*: (1) drive growth, (2) build skills, and (3) expand access.

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B. Describe the process used to develop the LWDB's vision and goals, including a description of the participants in the process.

The CEO Council and the EWIB Board hold authority to approve changes to the EWIB vision and goals. The decision-making process occurs at a public meeting. The Board, through planning processes coordinated by its President/CEO, secures input from Board members and EWIB staff members, taking into consideration input from a broad range of public workforce development system customers, partners, and stakeholders.

C. Describe the local area's strategy to work with entities that carry out the core programs to align resources available to the local area to achieve the strategic vision and goals established by the local board. In addition, describe how the LWDB may be coordinating, streamlining, and aligning processes across regions.

EWIB's goals place a premium on collaborative models. To accomplish its goals and to support these collaborative models, EWIB focuses on factors such as partnerships, people, processes, and technology.

1. *Partnerships*. EWIB designs, structures, and resources local strategies to promote leadership, collaboration, performance, and accountability. This holds true for EWIB Board committees, the AJC partners via the Memorandum of Understanding, and the Regional Sector Partnerships.

2. *People*. EWIB recruits, hires, and trains key personnel to support the organization and works closely with contracted partners involved in the AJC or strategic initiatives to coordinate the appropriate levels of mentoring, coaching, supervision, and professional development training. The OSO plays a role in coordinating training across AJC partners.

3. *Processes*. EWIB incorporates best practices in planning, project management, and operational management that lead to improved access, better integrated service delivery systems, and ultimately better outcomes. Processes hold relevance to functional areas affecting EWIB's organizational apparatus, the AJC service delivery system, and strategic initiatives such as RSPs. EWIB regularly reviews and updates policies, procedures, and protocols across all its functional systems. EWIB and its OSO convene a regular AJC partners meeting. EWIB provides administrative "backbone" support for RSPs.

4. *Technology*. EWIB supports modernization and technology enhancements initiated by CTDOL, CT OWS, or related to other funding opportunities. The technology strategies address EWIB organizational improvements as well as AJC system improvements that support integrated service delivery or increase accessibility through online, on-demand, or hybrid offerings. As indicated, EWIB coordinates training to enable people to better use technology.

EWIB's approach includes sufficient room to support innovation and continuous improvement across each of these areas.

Efforts to coordinate, streamline, and align processes across regions include:

- EWIB Board, staff, and AJC partner personnel participate in committees and teams affiliated with the Governor's Workforce Council
- EWIB leaders participate as members in the Connecticut Workforce Development Council
- EWIB leaders participate in regular meetings with the Connecticut OWS on matters related to statewide or multi-region initiatives
- EWIB partners with peer workforce development boards and/or other AJC partners in funding opportunities as well as efforts to change policy and protocols affecting the public workforce development system

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- EWIB participates in and partners on statewide events and activities to improve the coordination and effectiveness of Regional Sector Partnerships

Recent examples to coordinate, streamline, and align processes across regions include EWIB's meaningful design, development, implementation, and/or sustainability support in efforts such as:

1. *Career ConneCT* is a statewide initiative modeled after EWIB's Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) that helps eligible people access and participate in short-term (typically 5- to 20-week) training programs that allows jobseekers to earn industry-recognized credentials and find entry-level employment in a high-quality career pathway. EWIB serves as the lead workforce board for the Career ConneCT manufacturing program.
2. The *Connecticut Statewide Accessible Workforce Services* project, a U.S. DOL Dislocated Worker Grant awarded to the Connecticut Workforce Development Council to include more features and functionality in translation services for non- or limited-English speaking populations and individuals with disabilities and add online chat functionality as an accessible "front door" to the AJCs.
3. The *Connecticut Workforce and High-Tech Industry Skills Partnership*, a statewide U.S. DOL funded H-1B project, taps new talent for information technology and retools the advanced manufacturing workforce.
4. The *Industry-Driven Skills Training Fund Program*, a statewide, DOL project funds training in high-demand industries to address critical workforce needs and support business growth. The program partners workforce boards with employers to design and deliver skills training aligned with real-time industry demand, serving both new hires and incumbent workers.
5. The *Connecticut Workforce Development Council* works collaboratively on issues such as communicating with legislators about WIOA Reauthorization, advocating for increased state funding for the expansion of the Connecticut Youth Employment Program, and identifying and overseeing multi-region or statewide funding opportunities and initiatives.
6. The *Annual Statewide RSP Summit*, coordinated by the Office of Workforce Strategy, offers an opportunity to network, collaborate, and share best practices with RSP industry partners, conveners, support organizations, and subject matter experts.

D. Describe service strategies the LWDB has in place or will develop that will improve meeting the needs of customers with disabilities as well as other population groups.

EWIB's mission calls to "coordinate a regional workforce development system that promotes economic vitality and equitable opportunity by preparing workers for in-demand, quality jobs on career pathways." This includes promoting equitable opportunities for individuals with disabilities as well as other underrepresented groups.

EWIB adheres to Universal Design Principles to support its client-centered AJC service delivery system. Specifically,

1. *Equitable use*. The AJC design appeals to all users, provides the same means of use for all users, avoids segregating or stigmatizing any users, and makes provisions for privacy, security, and safety available to all users.
2. *Flexibility in use*. The AJC accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities to support individual differences and to provide adaptability to the user's pace.

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3. *Simple and intuitive use*. The AJC design eliminates unnecessary complexity and aligns with expectations and intuitive approaches from users. It accommodates a wide range of literacy and language skills and capacity to concentrate.
4. *Perceptible information*. The AJC design incorporates different modes for redundant presentation of essential information, differentiates important elements such as directions, and helps support individuals with sensory limitations.
5. *Tolerance for error*. The AJC design minimizes or eliminates hazards that could have adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions. It supports safety protocols, equipment, and training exercises for AJC personnel.
6. *Low physical effort*. The AJC design can be used efficiently and comfortably with a minimum of physical fatigue through spacing, ergonomics, and other factors that consider repetitive motions.
7. *Size and space for approach and use*. The AJC design accommodates for differences in body types that may affect reach, manipulation, or use of facilities or equipment.

EWIB has created programs and services that are inclusive, informative, and accessible to its diverse customers, while creating more responsive AJCs. AJC East locations incorporate four specific areas of access: physical, informational, digital, and communication.

Featured Areas of Access at Eastern Connecticut AJCs

Physical	AJCs are accessible to individuals with mobility disabilities by providing access via ramps, accessible restrooms, and sufficient handicap parking.
Informational	All paper, printed, and posted materials at the AJCs use large font, and most are also posted/available in Spanish. Documents are also available in accessible formats upon request.
Digital	EWIB offers a range of online learning options to AJC customers as an alternative to classroom-based training or printed information. The use of online learning increases access to training by enabling AJC customers to learn at any time and any place with an internet connection.
Communication	The AJCs offer a video phone for individuals with communication barriers or who are hard of hearing, sign language interpreters (available upon request), and bilingual staff for on-site assistance. Documentation is available in alternative formats.

The AJC partners use a hybrid model to deliver services. EWIB will continue to use a hybrid service delivery model and offering customers the choice of remote and in-person services increases access to AJC services for residents across the region.

EWIB's website welcomes visitors and provides basic information regarding programs and services and contact information and acts as a portal to current training opportunities, and online resources such as CTHires. As a result of implementation of the Connecticut Workforce Development Council's U.S. DOL Dislocated Worker Grant titled, "Connecticut Statewide Accessible Workforce Services," EWIB upgraded its website to include more translation features and functionality for non- or limited-English speaking populations and individuals with disabilities.

All EWIB AJCs comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for equal access of both customers and staff members. EWIB supports and encourages all AJC partners to ensure fair and equal access

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to its service offerings, including equal physical and programmatic accessibility. AJCs provide jobseekers with access to a wide array of assistive technologies, adaptive software, and other resources to ensure equal access, including: a) Microsoft Office Accessibility Suite (Magnifier, Narrator, On-Screen Keyboard, High Contrast Screen Settings, Speech to Text recognition); b) Video phone; c) Adaptive equipment (CCTV magnifier, scanners for text to speech usage, headphones, large print keyboards); d) Documentation in Braille of the most-used AJC materials (at front desk) and large-print CTDOL desk aids/handouts; e) Language Line/Interpreters; and f) Handicap parking. EWIB coordinates access to professional development and training offerings that promote excellent customer service, client-centered service, and expedited access to the various assistive technologies and adaptive software available at the AJCs.

E. Describe how the LWDB's goals relate to the achievement of federal performance accountability measures to support economic growth and self-sufficiency.

EWIB's goals support the achievement of WIOA performance accountability measures.

Crosswalk of EWIB Goals and WIOA Performance Measures

	EWIB Goal			
WIOA Measure	1. Impact & Accessibility of core AJC services	2. Expand manufacturing & healthcare talent	3. Expand manufacturing & healthcare RSPs	4. Enhance manufacturing and healthcare youth workforce pipelines
ADULTS				
Q2 post-exit employment rate	✓	✓	✓	
Q4 post-exit employment rate	✓	✓	✓	
Median earnings	✓	✓	✓	
Credential Rate	✓	✓	✓	✓
Measurable skills gain	✓		✓	✓
DISLOCATED WORKERS				
Q2 post-exit employment rate	✓	✓	✓	
Q4 post-exit employment rate	✓	✓	✓	
Median earnings	✓	✓	✓	
Credential Rate	✓	✓	✓	✓
Measurable skills gain	✓	✓	✓	✓
YOUTH				
Q2 post-exit placement in employment/training/ed	✓	✓	✓	✓
Q4 post-exit placement in employment/training/ed	✓	✓	✓	✓
Median earnings	✓	✓	✓	
Credential Rate	✓	✓	✓	✓
Measurable skills gain	✓	✓	✓	✓

F. Indicate anticipated local levels of performance for the federal measures.

EWIB has and will continue to meet or exceed levels of performance for federal measures. EWIB has not yet negotiated local levels with the Connecticut Department of Labor.

G. Describe indicators used by the LWDB to measure performance and effectiveness of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), contracted service providers, and the one-stop delivery system in the local area.

EWIB procures four-year contract awards with WIOA service providers and AJC partners. These contracts contain performance measures that align to achieve levels of performance for the federal measures. EWIB regularly monitors its contracted service providers and the AJC delivery system to ensure the achievement of performance benchmarks.

* * * * * *End of Section 3* * * * * *

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SECTION 4. COORDINATION OF SERVICES

A. Coordination with Partner Programs and Services. Describe how individualized career services will be coordinated across programs/partners in the one-stop centers, including Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Education and Literacy activities and TANF. Specify how the local area will coordinate with these programs to avoid duplication and foster integrated services to improve service delivery for shared customers.

AJC partners including BRS, Adult Education and Literacy, and TANF/JFES work collaboratively to implement an integrated service delivery model and to coordinate individualized career services. AJC partners including BRS, EASTCONN (adult education, WIOA ISY & OSY services and TANF/JFES), TVCCA (TANF/JFES, WIOA Adult/DW), the One Stop Operator, transportation broker, community colleges, older worker services, and chambers of commerce comprise the AJC Partners group. Representatives from AJC Partners meet bi-monthly to communicate updates, share best practices, coordinate professional development, review performance data, and LMI, and to provide input on other policy, program, or process matters such as those that result in better customer service, improved customer access, better outcomes, and more effective use of resources.

B. Coordination with Economic Development Activities. Provide a description of how the local board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with economic development activities.

EWIB's governance structure includes a CEO Council and a Board of Directors comprised of individuals closely involved in economic development activities across the region. This includes elected officials, a senior advisor to the Council of Governments, the executive director of a regional economic development organization, and numerous executives from diverse industry sectors affected by economic development activities. These leaders, in addition to the EWIB President/CEO, monitor and identify issues and opportunities that may affect the local plan. EWIB's President/CEO remains apprised of the relevant Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plans designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region, and to the greatest extent possible aligns workforce investment activities to support economic development activities – including priorities for Regional Sector Partnerships. As indicated, EWIB partners with economic development organizations to attract additional resources into the region to advance economic development priorities.

Business growth represents economic development. EWIB provides services to its business customers through a partnership of CTDOL and the area chambers of commerce. The EWIB Business Services Team (BST) represents a product of this collaboration. The BST offers a core set of services, such as: OJT, subsidized employment, tax credits, LMI, incumbent worker training, online training for current employees, electronic classified advertising, employer recruitment and job fairs, a Rapid Response Team for assistance with downsizing, and Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA) services.

C. Coordination of Education and Workforce Development Activities. Describe how the LWDB will coordinate education and workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.

EWIB implements a demand-driven model that helps to inform career building strategies and sector-based training strategies most relevant to the region. Career pathway models identify educational requirements, occupational skill competencies, and industry-valued credentials relevant to occupations and industry sectors. EWIB uses multiple mechanisms of action to coordinate education and workforce activities. For example:

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- Board and committee level discussions involve representatives from education and industry discussing the changing education and training landscape and capacity in the context of current and future workforce needs.
- EWIB supports Regional Sector Partnerships led by industry leaders that involve educational partners with the intent to expand youth talent pipelines in those industry sectors.
- EWIB contracts with EASTCONN to engage high schools in career pathway awareness and career building activities and ultimately equip high schools to expand RSP youth talent pipelines.
- The AJC Partners group includes educational representatives that discuss opportunities for coordination, improved service delivery integration (e.g., FAFSA support), professional development training, and community events (e.g., career fairs, job fairs).
- EWIB regularly participates in strategic initiatives and collaborations with educational partners including CT State (Three Rivers, Quinebaug Valley campuses) and Eastern Connecticut State University as well as on Perkins Advisory Boards throughout the region.
- EWIB coordinates with partners who develop training programs (e.g., Three Rivers and Quinebaug Valley) to include stackable credentials (i.e., college credits) that allow participants to accelerate progress toward a college degree.

D. Coordination of Transportation and Other Support Services. Describe how the LWDB will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out under this title in the local area with the provision of transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate supportive services in the local area.

AJC partners provide publicly accessible services in a variety of formats (i.e., in-person, hybrid, on-demand). AJC physical locations can be accessed by public transportation. However, AJC partners recognize transportation barriers affect the customer base, particularly those traveling from rural areas or those without day care or funds to pay for transportation.

- Transportation to Work (TTW) exists to help customers get to work, to access childcare, and to complete job training. The partnership is comprised of transit districts, councils of governments, community agencies, and the State Department of Transportation. The program provides over 2,500 people (on average) per year with bus passes, van and taxi rides, mileage reimbursement, and car-based solutions (for instance, to assist with car repairs).
- EWIB's Rides for Jobs Program offers eligible individuals transportation services to and from: a) employment for up to 60 days; b) education and training; c) job search activities (e.g., applications, interviews, visits to AJCs); and d) childcare for work or educationally related purposes.

EWIB as well as the AJC Partners group connect with a diverse set of community resource partners that address a wide variety of support services such as transportation, housing stability, food security, healthcare access, substance abuse treatment and recovery, mental health services, and legal, among others. Information about community resource partners is made available through the AJCs. WIOA customers receiving intensive services may have formal referrals written into their individual plans and may include formal referrals.

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Sample Resource Network Partners

State Department of Social Services	CT Rides
State Department of Transportation	Access Community Action Agency
Eastern Connecticut Transportation Consortium	CT Department of Aging & Disability Services
Groton Adult Ed	Madonna Place
Job Corps	The WorkPlace Maturity Works Program
Mystic Area Shelter & Hospitality	New London Adult Education
Next Step	Norwich Adult Education
Reliance Health	Juvenile Justice CSSD
Thames Valley Council for Community Action	Community Health Resources
Alternative Incarceration Center	Covenant Shelter
Southeastern Council of Governments	State Department of Children and Families
Southeast Area Transit District	State Department of Labor
Windham Region Transit District	EASTCONN
Windham Regional Community Council	LEARN
Norwich Human Services	Northeast Council of Governments
Southeast Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence	Sound Community Services, Inc.
United Way	United Services
United Community & Family Services	

E. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services. Provide a description of plans and strategies for, and assurances concerning, maximizing coordination of services provided by the state employment service under the Wagner-Peyser Act and services provided in the local area through the one-stop delivery system to improve service delivery and avoid duplication of services.

CTDOL provides universal access to an integrated array of employment-related labor exchange services. These services, delivered both virtually and in person, include job search assistance, job referral, and placement assistance for jobseekers, reemployment services to unemployment insurance claimants, and recruitment services to businesses with posted job openings. Job seekers will be able to work on their résumés and cover letters, complete online job applications, research companies, review job postings and conduct any other business related to their job search. They will have access to copy machines, fax machines, free postage for mailing résumés and applications to employers and most importantly, in- person support from CTDOL and other AJC staff. In addition, staff with board-certified credentials from the Professional Association of Résumé Writers & Career Coaches (PARWCC) provide résumé preparation services. CTDOL participates in the AJC Partners group that supports an integrated service delivery model, continuous quality improvement processes, and overall coordination. EWIB will continue to embrace online learning and other innovations that improve service delivery and accessibility and avoid duplication of services.

F. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy. Describe how the LWDB will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out under this title in the local area with the provision of adult education and literacy activities under Title II in the local area, including a description of how the

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local board will carry out, consistent with subparagraphs (A) and (B)(i) of section 107(d)(11) and section 232, the review of local applications submitted under Title II.

EWIB partners with local adult education entities in a variety of ways. The New London Adult Education and Norwich Adult Education partnerships with EWIB have benefited adult learners through various programs. EASTCONN also provides strong evidence of this coordination.

EWIB and EASTCONN partner in a variety of ways: a) EASTCONN holds the lease to the AJCs located in Willimantic and Danielson; b) EWIB contracts with EASTCONN to operate the regional WIOA Out-of-School Youth Program. EASTCONN and EWIB, in collaboration with TVCCA, New London Adult Education, and Norwich Adult Education, deliver a comprehensive system of education, training, and individualized support to youth ages 17-24 who meet WIOA certification criteria. c) EASTCONN administers the EWIB Summer Youth Employment Program, which offers a short-term summer work experience for eligible youth ages 14-21; d) Through EWIB's WIOA In-School Youth Program, EASTCONN, in collaboration with New London Youth Affairs engages and prepares in-school youth from the Windham, Danielson, Norwich, and New London areas; and e) EWIB contracts with TVCCA – which partners with EASTCONN – to deliver case management and job development services for the EWIB JFES program.

G. Coordination with Other Local Areas or Bordering States. Describe any partnerships between one or more LWDBs and/or partnerships with entities in bordering states that address the workforce needs of the region(s).

EWIB collaborates with:

1. The four other Connecticut Workforce Development Boards to serve customers. This partnership includes statewide events and activities to improve coordination and effectiveness of RSP's. See Section 3C for more information.

2. Representatives from geographically adjacent WDBs in Massachusetts and Rhode Island on an as needed basis. EWIB recognizes that jobseekers and students migrate across state borders. EWIB seeks to align education and training activities to the greatest extent possible, including the use of reciprocal agreements and participation in joint approaches to attract additional resources to the region.

H. Cooperative Agreements. Provide a description of the replicated cooperative agreements (as defined in WIOA section 107(d)(11)) between the local board or other local entities described in section 101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29U.S.C 721(a)(11)(B)) and the local office of a designated state agency or designated state unit administering programs carried out under Title I of such Act (29 U.S.C. 721(a)(11) with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross-training staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts.

EWIB has a replicated cooperative agreement with the State Department of Aging & Disability Services (ADS) Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) aimed at enhancing the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals with barriers to accessing public workforce system services. Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) staff are co-located at the Montville Comprehensive AJC as well as at the affiliate AJCs in Danielson and Willimantic. ADS-BRS staff provide specialized advisory services and resources to eligible AJC customers with physical and/or mental conditions that have a significant impact on their ability to enter or maintain employment. ADS-BRS services offered at the AJCs help these individuals advance towards their employment goals. All AJC services, programs, and workshops are fully accessible to individuals with disabilities, as the AJCs offer teletypewriters (TTY) that enable customers with hearing or speech

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difficulties to communicate over a telephone line, big print keyboards, magnifiers for printed materials, adjustable tables for customers in wheelchairs, a sign language interpreter (available upon request), wheelchair-accessible restrooms, and handicap parking.

Human Services Integration Specialists (HSIS) at the AJCs serve vulnerable customers at the Montville Comprehensive AJC as well as the two Affiliate AJCs using a holistic approach that addresses customers' employment and educational needs as well as their basic needs.

* * * * * *End of Section 4* * * * * *

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SECTION 5. LOCAL ONE-STOP SYSTEM

A. General System Description. Describe the one-stop delivery system in your local area including the roles and resource contributions of one-stop partners.

A1. Is each of the required WIOA partners included in your one-stop delivery system? Describe how they contribute to your planning and implementation efforts. If any required partner is not involved, explain the reason.

The table shows that the local one-stop delivery system includes all required WIOA partners.

WIOA Required Partners in Local One-Stop Delivery System

WIOA Career Service	Provider	Type
Adult	TVCCA, EASTCONN	AJC / Contracted
Dislocated Worker	TVCCA, EASTCONN	AJC / Contracted
Out of School Youth	EASTCONN, TVCCA	AJC / Contracted
Adult Education & Literacy	EASTCONN, New London Adult Education, Norwich Adult Education, Groton Adult Education	AJC
Wagner-Peyser Act	Connecticut Department of Labor	AJC
Rehabilitation Act	BRS (co-located)	AJC

The Memoranda of Understanding (Attachment C) reflect AJC partners.

A2. Identify any non-required partners included in the local one-stop delivery system.

The table shows the non-required local one-stop delivery system partners that supplement the services provided by WIOA required partners. These partners connect to more localized community resource partners not shown in the table.

WIOA Non-Required Partners in Local One-Stop Delivery System

WIOA Career Service	Provider	Type
Transportation	Eastern Connecticut Transportation Consortium	Referral
Technology	Employment and Training Institute	Contracted
Workshops	Employment and Training Institute	Contracted
Training	CT State Three Rivers and Quinebaug Valley	Contracted
Special Projects	CT State Three Rivers and Quinebaug Valley	Contracted
Business Services	Northeastern Connecticut Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut	Contracted
Employment & Training	Connecticut Indian Council	Referral
Job Corps	Job Corps	Referral
Justice-Involved	Opportunities Industrialization Center	Referral
Summer Youth	Department of Children and Families, Department of Labor	Contracted

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A3. The LWDB, with the agreement of the chief elected official, shall develop and enter into a memorandum of understanding between the local board and the one-stop partners. Please provide a copy of any executed MOUs.

Attachment C contains the Memorandum of Understanding (signature pages only) between EWIB and the local one-stop partners.

B. Customer Access. Describe actions taken by the LWDB to promote maximum integration of service delivery through the one-stop delivery system for both business customers and individual customers.

B1. Describe how entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and one-stop partners, will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act regarding physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing needs of individuals with disabilities.

Please refer to Section 3, Response D.

B2. Describe how entities within the one-stop delivery system are utilizing principles of universal design in their operation.

Please refer to Section 3, Response D.

B3. Describe how the LWDB facilitates access to services provided through the local delivery system, including remote areas, through the use of technology and through other means.

Please refer to Section 3, Response D.

C. Integration of Services. Describe how one-stop career centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under this Act and programs carried out by one-stop career center partners.

EWIB utilizes CTHires, an online career services hub to support the operational and management needs of its One-Stop employment service delivery system under WIOA. CTDOL operates and maintains CTHires. CTHires integrates services and information across programs including Wagner-Peyser, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA), Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), and Veterans services provided by CTDOL. CTDOL, taking into consideration input from EWIB and other Connecticut LWDBs, collaborates with Geographic Solutions (the CTHires vendor) to enable technology-enabled intake and to enhance technology-enabled case management via CTHires.

D. Competitive Selection of One Stop Operator. Describe the steps taken or to be taken to ensure a competitive process that avoids potential conflict of interest for selection of the one-stop operator(s).

EWIB followed its public procurement policies and processes to promote a full and open competition for the selection of its One Stop Operator (OSO). The process involves disclosure and review of conflicts of interest.

E. System Improvement. Describe the steps the LWDB will take to ensure continuous improvement of the area's one-stop system.

EWIB applies a data-to-action approach to support performance management and accountability, innovation, and continuous quality improvement that results in EWIB meeting or exceeding federal and state performance benchmarks. EWIB organizes its performance and accountability activities around two core areas:

1. *Management Information Systems*. EWIB and its partners diligently track the performance of AJC programs and services through two Management Information Systems (MIS), CTHires and

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CTPerforms. CTHires records information every time a jobseeker or employer accesses a service and provides a valuable database for AJC partners to track program performance and inform executive decision-making. CTHires program administrators improve system features, functionality, and system integration as well as provide training to use reporting functions. CTPerforms supplements data sets unavailable in CTHires. For example, CTPerforms reports data on customer wage records, allowing AJC staff to track the progress of customers from before they enter the program until after they exit.

2. *Data and Information Sharing*. EWIB shares service utilization and performance data with its AJC partners individually and via AJC Partners meetings. The Business Services Team reviews LMI, service utilization, and performance data at its regular meetings. The AJC Partners celebrate achievements as well as identify any emerging areas of concern that may warrant closer review.

* * * * * *End of Section 5* * * * * *

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SECTION 6. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM SERVICES

A. System Description. Describe the local workforce development system. Identify the programs that are included in the system and how the local board will work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs to support alignment in provision of services, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.), that support the strategy identified in the State Plan under WIOA section 102(b)(1)(E). WIOA §108(b)(2).

Three AJCs serve as hubs for WIOA required and non-required partners to offer a range of in-person and virtual services that meet the workforce development needs of individuals and employers in the region. Anyone, whether jobseeker or employer, can come into any regional AJC to access a range of free services.

The AJCs provide the public with quality information about jobs, the dynamics of the labor market, available training and education opportunities, and connections to other public and private services. The AJCs coalesce available training, education, and employment programs into a single, customer-friendly system. A range of EWIB partners collaborate to provide seamless core services to jobseekers and employers to ensure utilization of the region's full menu of resources. Overseeing the AJCs remains the focal point of direct EWIB investment.

EWIB also collaborates with Career and Technical Education (CTE) providers, including Perkins-funded programs of study, to strengthen career pathways aligned with regional industry demand. Through partnerships with school districts, CT State Community College campuses, technical education providers, and employer-led sector partnerships, EWIB supports the alignment of workforce development, career exploration, work-based learning, industry-recognized credentials, and postsecondary training opportunities in manufacturing, healthcare, and other priority industries. These coordinated efforts help ensure students and jobseekers are connected to education and training pathways that lead to employment in high-demand occupations.

EWIB supplements WIOA basic and intensive services through other funding sources such as competitively acquired grants or philanthropic gifts and collaborates with regional partners to braid funding and align resources to meet employer demand. Since 2008, EWIB has increased its overall revenue from $5.9 million to $17 million. EWIB has accomplished this by increasing the efficiency of its operations and helping partners who deliver core services to expand their capacity. This approach allows each partner to work to their strengths and to coordinate and integrate services more effectively toward a shared outcome. This approach allows EWIB to "invest locally" and support local partners from the region.

B. Sub Grants and Contracts. Provide a description of the competitive process to be used that avoids potential conflict of interest to award subgrants and contracts in the local area for WIOA-funded activities and the services to be made available.

EWIB utilizes a competitive procurement process to award sub-grants and contracts for WIOA-funded activities. The procurement process includes disclosure and review of conflicts of interest.

C. Expanding Access to Employment. Describe how the local board, working with entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment, including how the local board will facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs, and improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credential.

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Expanding access to employment remains a goal of the statewide and local plan. Other sections of this plan describe a variety of ways in which EWIB expands access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly those with barriers to employment. Examples include:

- EWIB utilizes *online learning* as a flexible, accessible, and cost-effective training resource for AJC customers to improve their work readiness skills, refresh their basic skills, earn industry certifications, and even earn college credits. See page 27.
- All AJC services, programs, and workshops are fully accessible to *persons with disabilities*, and EWIB works with a variety of partners to enhance the provision of workforce development services to individuals with disabilities. See page 6.
- EWIB's *Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative* offers an innovative, short-term customized training program geared towards unemployed and underemployed workers unable to attend longer-term training due to immediate financial obligations and the likelihood of exhausting unemployment benefits.
- EWIB's *Healthcare Pipeline Initiative* provides opportunities for low-income, unemployed and under employed individuals to enter and advance along healthcare career pathways through work readiness and basic skills training, occupational training, person-centered case management, and other supportive services; work-based learning, and job placement assistance.
- CTDOL delivers *TAA programs* in collaboration with WIOA DW programs. Co-enrollment into WIOA DW helps customers in need of additional support services. Staff work together to provide the best services for the customer to be successful. EWIB and DOL maintain a formal agreement.

D. Key Industry Sectors. Identify how the LWDB plans to better align its resources to support and meet the training and employment needs of key industry sectors in the local area. Describe policies adopted or planned for aligning training initiatives and Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to sector strategies and demand occupations.

EWIB identifies two (2) priority industry sectors around which it organizes sector-based strategies: healthcare and manufacturing. EWIB serves as the backbone entity for industry-led regional sector partnerships (RSPs) in each of these industries and supports talent pipeline initiatives using a career pathway model that encourages lifelong learning and upskilling. These RSPs align with statewide industry sector priorities.

EWIB supports training and employment needs in emerging industry sectors such as offshore wind energy or skill competency areas that apply widely across many occupations and industry sectors such as technology skills. EWIB's current training policy supports training for occupations with strong labor market demand and/or high potential for growth. It prioritizes training in Manufacturing and Healthcare.

EWIB also recognizes the growing importance of artificial intelligence (AI) and related technologies across all industry sectors and supports the integration of AI-related skills into training strategies, including digital literacy and the use of AI-enabled tools, to ensure the workforce is prepared for an evolving, technology-driven economy.

E. Industry Partnerships. Describe how the LWDB will identify and work with key industry partnerships (Regional Sector Partnerships) where they exist within the local area, and coordinate and invest in partnership infrastructure where they are not yet developed.

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EWIB serves as the backbone entity for industry-led RSPs in manufacturing and healthcare. These RSPs receive financial support from a US Economic Development Administration Good Jobs Challenge grant awarded to CT OWS with implementation support in the Eastern Connecticut region led by EWIB. RSP industry and support partners assemble regularly as full groups and as action teams to accomplish objectives such as increasing industry engagement, hosting events such as career and job fairs, and strengthening career pathway education and training offerings in response to industry needs. EWIB is committed to sustaining and advancing these Regional Sector Partnerships beyond the Good Jobs Challenge grant period by identifying alternative funding sources, leveraging partner contributions, and continuing to support industry-driven collaboration and sector strategy implementation.

F. In-demand Training. Describe the process utilized by the local board to ensure that the training provided is linked to in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area, or in another area to which a participant is willing to relocate.

EWIB reviews economic and labor market information to identify priority industry sectors and in-demand occupations. EWIB inventories education and training provider capacity in these areas. RSPs use these inputs to inform discussions about education training needs and gaps and work collectively with education and training providers to expand and enhance capacity. For example, the Eastern Connecticut Healthcare Partnership identified a shortage of master's level licensed clinical social workers. RSP industry and educational partners established an education program in the region. Similarly, the RSPs continue to expand and deepen engagement of on-ramps and talent pipelines for manufacturing and healthcare through partnerships with high schools across the region.

G. Employer Engagement. Describe the strategies and services that will be used in the local area to:

1. **Facilitate engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations, in workforce development programs;**

EWIB implements a demand-driven model that helps to inform career building strategies and sector-based training strategies most relevant to the region. Career pathway models identify educational requirements, occupational skill competencies, and industry-valued credentials relevant to occupations and industry sectors. EWIB uses multiple mechanisms of action to coordinate education and workforce activities. The primary mechanisms of action to engage employers include: AJC Business Services Teams, contracts with chambers of commerce, and RSPs. EWIB's industry-led board includes representatives from in-demand industry sectors. Refer to Section 4.C for additional information.

2. **Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area.**

EWIB serves as the backbone organization supporting industry-led RSPs. EWIB contracts with local chambers of commerce to support Business Services. AJCs assist in coordinating business services and outreach – including Rapid Response services. EWIB's industry-led board includes representatives from diverse industry sectors.

3. **Better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development.**

EWIB's governance structure includes a CEO Council and a Board of Directors comprised of individuals closely involved in economic development activities across the region. This includes elected officials, a senior advisor to the Council of Governments, an executive director of a regional economic development organization, and numerous executives from diverse industry sectors affected by economic development activities. Refer to Section 4, Response B for more information.

Business growth represents economic development. EWIB provides services to its business customers through a partnership of CT DOL and the area Chambers of Commerce. The EWIB Business Services Team (BST) represents a product of this collaboration. The BST offers a core set of services, such as: OJT, subsidized

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employment, tax credits, LMI, incumbent worker training, online training for current employees, electronic classified advertising, employer recruitment and job fairs, a Rapid Response Team for assistance with downsizing, and Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA) services.

4. Strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs.

CTDOL participates as a core AJC partner and the AJCs facilitate access to unemployment insurance programs through in-person and virtual services. AJC partners receive cross training on all partner services and have developed a desk aid to help guide customers to appropriate services based on needs and eligibility criteria of programs.

H. Priority for Services. Describe the local policy and procedures that have been established to give priority to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient in the provision of individualized career services and training services in the Adult program.

EWIB identifies several priority populations for WIOA ADW individualized career services and training services:

- Veterans and eligible spouses
- National Emergency Grant (NEG) participants
- Recipients of TFA and/or food stamps/non-custodial parents
- Low-income individuals including individuals with a disability whose own income meets the requirements (even if their family income does not meet the requirements)
- Basic skills deficient individuals, including those with limited English proficiency
- Unskilled and semi-skilled dislocated workers
- Residents of the EWIB service area
- Workers dislocated from businesses in the EWIB service area
- Displaced homemakers

All customers have access to the American Job Center and basic career services. Individuals who need more than minimal staff assistance or seeking training to obtain or retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency must register to receive individualized career services. Customers must register for individualized career services that include any staff assessment of participant skills, education, or career objectives. These intensive services assist participants in: a) deciding on next steps in job search, training, and related services, including job referrals; b) identifying their own barriers to employment; and c) accessing other related services to enhance their employability and individual employment-related needs.

I. Training Services. Describe how training services will be provided and monitored, including if contracts for training services are to be used, how such contracts will be coordinated with the use of ITAs.

EWIB provides training services for customers through ITAs or other grant supported training activities. EWIB provides training services to its customers based on an individualized assessment of the customer's current job skills, job readiness, employment and training needs, financial, social, and supportive needs, labor market demand, and potential for successful completion. The customer's Employment Plan provides the justification for all planned services, including the appropriate combination of training and other services for the customer to achieve their employment goals.

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Customers interested in training attend a "Careers, Training and You" workshop that provides information on how to research in-demand occupations, training options, and funding availability. WIOA case managers support enrollment of customers into training services as well as the use of any direct participant expenses (i.e., training, support services) and document progress. Section 5.K describes ITAs.

J. Customer Choice. Describe processes utilized by the local board to ensure customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are to be provided.

All customers have access to the One-Stop system and basic career services including information about career pathway options and available education and training resources. Eligible individuals receive the information they need to make informed choices about their own employment future, and the training to support their decisions, as well as with effective career services, case management, and career planning. Training services can be provided to an individual who, after an interview, evaluation, or assessment, and career planning, has been determined to: a) be unlikely or unable to obtain/retain employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than previous employment, through career services alone; b) be in need of training services to obtain/retain employment leading to economic self-sufficiency or wages comparable to or higher than previous employment; and c) have the skills and qualifications to successfully participate in the selected program of training services.

K. Individual Training Accounts. Describe the process and criteria for issuing Individual Training Accounts (ITAs).

A. Describe any ITA limitations established by the board.

Customers must enroll as a WIOA customer and have completed an individual employment plan (IEP). The customer's IEP provides the justification for all planned services, including the appropriate combination of training and other services for the customer to achieve their employment goals.

EWIB assumes fiscal responsibility on behalf of the customer up to the pre-approved amount authorized in the ITA. EWIB's ITA policies include:

- The funding level and duration of ITAs is determined on a case-by-case basis and limited to the needs identified in each customer's Employment Plan, contingent on the availability of resources from the funding source. The maximum amount of an ITA is $4,500, including any supportive services allocated ($5,500 cap for Advanced Manufacturing only). Funding caps may be waived at EWIB's discretion based on need.
- Priority population policies apply to ITA applicants.
- ITAs are issued for training in the priority industries of manufacturing and healthcare. Funds for non-priority industries correspond to funding availability and labor market demand. Individuals may document such relevancy if not supported with published data.
- An ITA (non-OJT) may only be issued for training provided by an institution that is on the State's eligible training provider list (ETPL). ITAs allow customers to choose the training provider that best meets their needs.
- ITA awards take into consideration other customer needs and barriers. Customers must document efforts to source other funding options prior to the ITA request; WIOA funds must supplement other sources of training grants.

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B. Describe any exceptions to the use of ITA

EWIB determines the funding level and duration of ITAs on a case-by-case basis. EWIB limits the use of ITAs to the needs identified in each customer's Employment Plan, contingent on the availability of resources from the funding source.

L. Enhancing Apprenticeships. Describe how the LWDB will enhance the use of apprenticeships to support the local economy and individuals' career advancement. Describe how job seekers are made aware of apprenticeship opportunities in the area's career centers.

EWIB's commitment to registered apprenticeship aligns directly to national and state work-based learning strategy priorities including expansion of Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) opportunities in traditional and non-traditional industry sectors. EWIB, AJC partners – especially Business Services Teams, and RSPs promote RAPs as a career pathway option. RAPs include industry-valued certifications and related technical instruction that counts toward post-secondary education credits. EWIB continues to expand pre-apprenticeship programs, particularly in priority industry sectors, and attract funding to support expansion of RAPs. For example, the Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative is approved by CTDOL as a certified pre-apprenticeship program which dovetails with Electric Boat's RAP.

M. Other Program Initiatives. Describe the services to be provided that may include the implementation of initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies career pathway initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other initiatives in the support of the board's vision and strategic goals described in Section III. WIOA §134(c)C.

EWIB implements other program initiatives in response to industry needs and availability of resources directly within the region (e.g., use of chambers of commerce for business services) or available through partnerships and collaborative efforts across regions. Recent examples include:

1. *Career ConneCT* helps eligible people access and participate in short-term (typically 5- to 20-week) training programs that allows jobseekers to earn industry-recognized credentials and find entry-level employment in a high-quality career pathway.
2. The *Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative* provides no-cost, short-term training programs to unemployed and underemployed workers unable to attend longer-term training. Industry and educational partners design and implement course curriculum. The process includes hands-on training to develop industry-valued competencies related directly to job openings.
3. The *Connecticut Workforce and High-Tech Industry Skills Partnership*, a U.S. DOL funded H-1B project, targets the IT and Advanced Manufacturing sectors with an emphasis on entry-level IT and Incumbent worker Training (IWT) for current manufacturing workers.
4. *The Industry-Driven Skills Training Fund Program*, A statewide, U.S. DOL initiative supports training in high-demand industries to address critical workforce needs and support business growth. The program partners workforce boards with employers to design and deliver skills training aligned with real-time industry demand, serving both new hires and incumbent workers.

N. Service Provider Continuous Improvement. Describe the LWDB's efforts to ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services, including contracted services providers and providers on the eligible training provider list, through the system and ensure that such providers meet the needs of local employers, workers, and jobseekers.

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EWIB makes four-year awards to its One-Stop service providers. EWIB renews the contract each year during the award period contingent on performance and funding availability. EWIB regularly monitors its One Stop Operator and all its contracted service providers and the AJC delivery system to ensure the achievement of performance benchmarks. EWIB works closely with underperforming contractors to remedy performance issues.

The OSO assists EWIB in strengthening data capture from AJC customers and using a data to action approach to support continuous improvement. Examples include:

- Deploying secret shoppers to AJC locations and events. Secret shoppers share findings and suggestions with AJC partners and contractors.
- Improvements to the quarterly AJC performance dashboards. The AJC partners review and discuss patterns and trends and explore options to improve service delivery access and/or customer experience.
- Improvements in automated data collection of customer experience through paper and web-based surveys for general customers (e.g., orientation participants, returning customers) or special initiatives (e.g., MPI).
- The OSO facilitates specific efforts to strengthen AJC partners including professional development (e.g., mental health) and development of a resource inventory and desk aids to help customers access and engage in the needed services irrespective of where the customer entered the system.

EWIB and select AJC partners ensure that the Eligible Training Provider List includes options relevant to the training needs and accessible to regional customers.

O. Youth Program Design. Describe the design framework for youth programs in the local area, and how the 14 program elements required in §681.460 of the proposed WIOA regulations are to be made available within that framework.

EWIB contracts with EASTCONN who partners with TVCCA , New London Adult Education and Norwich Adult Education to serve out-of-school youth and with New London Youth Affairs and TVCCA to serve in-school youth. EWIB's WIOA Youth programming provides or connects youth participants to the required 14 program elements. Access to each program element varies in relation to the nature and type of resource partners available in local communities. The youth service providers tap into the extensive resource networks (Section 4, Response D).

1. **Definition of the term "a youth who is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society." Describe how the local board defines whether a youth is unable to demonstrate these skills well enough to function on the job, in their family, or in society and what assessment instruments are used to make this determination. 20 C.F.R. §681.290.**

EWIB defines as basic skills deficient any youth who scores below 236 in the CASAS in either reading or math.

2. **Definition of "requires additional assistance." Describe how the local board defines the term "requires additional assistance" used in determining eligibility for WIOA-funded youth programs.**

When determining eligibility for WIOA-funded youth programs, EWIB applies the term "requires additional assistance" to low-income youth who require additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment.

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P. Rapid Response. Provide a description of how the LWDB will coordinate workforce development activities in the local area with rapid response activities.

Members of the EWIB Business Services Team (BST) participate in the Rapid Response Team (RRT) convened by CTDOL along with WIOA vendors that provide WIOA services. Whenever a plant closing or large-scale layoff occurs in Eastern Connecticut, EWIB BST members, CTDOL staff, and representatives of other state agencies (e.g., ADS/BRS, DECD, SDE/ABE, DSS) work together to help dislocated workers get back on their feet. The RRT may conduct "Early Intervention" sessions prior to layoffs where employees can learn about unemployment benefits, job search assistance, and training opportunities. The RRT shares information about community services and local agencies that provide help, advocacy, and support to dislocated workers and their families.

* * * * * *End of Section 6* * * * * *

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