



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

GOVERNOR NED LAMONT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

February 27, 2023

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Office of Workforce Strategy*

Proposed Adjustments to Fiscal Years 2024-2025 Budget

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative Exum, Representative Paris and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Kelli Vallieres, and I am the Chief Workforce Officer for the State of Connecticut. I appreciate this opportunity to appear before you concerning Governor Lamont's proposed FY 2024-2025 budget adjustments for workforce development.

Our mission at the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS) is to coordinate workforce development programs across Connecticut, to serve as the staff to the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC), and to serve as the primary advisor to the Governor on workforce development policy. The success of our office hinges on our ability to successfully work across business, the regional Workforce Development Boards (WDB), education and workforce training providers, government agencies, and community-based organizations to drive the development and implementation of strategic initiatives related to workforce development.

Notable Accomplishments To-Date

1. OWS launched **CareerConneCT**, a \$70M grant program funded through state ARPA dollars and focused on providing short-term, industry-aligned, certificates to individuals who are unemployed or underemployed. This program will train 6,000 individuals for quality jobs in growing industries including advanced manufacturing, IT, healthcare, bioscience, infrastructure, and clean energy over the next three years. We made 19 awards to five workforce boards and 12 community-based organizations that are responsible for providing individuals with training and supports such as transportation and childcare. As part of this effort, we developed the CareerConneCT portal as a single entry-point for broad recruitment, data collection and reporting. The portal includes a "skills inventory" (assessment), connection to a career coach, training opportunities and jobs. To ensure we reach individuals in all areas of the state, we are implementing a YOU media campaign in English and Spanish, created



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to align with the Hearts and Minds manufacturing campaign. Officially launched in November and further expanded in December, to date the CareerConneCT Splash page has been visited by more than 77,000 unique visitors, while the Portal has logged 3,459 users. Of that, 2,842 are actively participating in seeking services. During the initial soft launch from approximately September to December 2022, 148 residents were enrolled in programming with 62 employed or placed into employed apprenticeships.

2. Over the last two years, we have built 11 **Regional Sector Partnerships (RSPs)** in Healthcare, IT/Data Enabled, Bioscience, and Manufacturing that are collaboratively addressing local employers and job seekers' needs. RSPs are coalitions of employers who define and champion an agenda for developing talent pipelines in target industries with support from a coordinated team of partners in education, workforce development, and economic development, to collaboratively advance the industries' competitiveness. Each RSP is led by set of companies in a geographic area in a particular industry and co-convened by regional WDBs and economic organizations such as a chamber of commerce. The RSPs have collectively brought another 300 companies, along with education and nonprofits, to work together to define key workforce needs and develop regional programming to meet those needs; building out apprenticeship, internship, career pathways, and work together to solve some of the social needs like transportation and childcare.
3. Based on our work with the Regional Sector Partnerships, the federal Economic Development Authority allocated \$500 million through the **Good Jobs Challenge** to collaborative skills training systems and programs, prioritizing efforts to reach historically underserved populations and areas, veterans and military spouses, and individuals in reentry and recovery. From 500 applications, 32 awards were made; OWS received \$23.9M, the largest award in the nation. Our project, "Strengthening Sectoral Partnerships Initiative", supports 10 Regional Sector Partnerships (RSPs – 4 manufacturing, 3 healthcare, 2 IT and 1 bioscience). Through the RSPs, we will train and place over 2,000 people – particularly historically underserved populations, areas, and communities – in quality, in-demand jobs on career pathways in three priority sectors: Manufacturing, Information Technology (IT), and Healthcare. Programs will launch in the 2nd and 3rd quarters of 2023 and will continue for 3 years.
4. OWS coordinated with agency and higher education partners at DPH, CSCU, and CCIC to operationalize \$35M in state ARPA funds to launch **CT Health Horizons**, with the goal of increasing the nursing and social work pipeline, with a focus on diversifying the workforce. Connecticut State Colleges & Universities (CSCU) is the fiscal sponsor and program manager, working with UConn and The Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC); OWS is providing strategic oversight and capacity support. Grants will soon be announced covering three areas:



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- Tuition Support: to incentivize low-income and minority students to enter accelerated and cost-effective nursing and social work programs.
 - Faculty Support: to expand seat capacity and train an influx of nursing and social work students.
 - Innovative Programs: to promote employer-driven programs to support entrance into careers in nursing and social work
5. OWS assisted in the development and implementation of the **Tech Talent Accelerator**, a \$1 million investment of DECD state-bonded, Tech Talent Funds to help close the "skills gap" by expanding education for emerging and in-demand fields such as cybersecurity, virtual modeling, software development, and digital analytics. The Business Higher Education Forum (BHEF) and the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) are managing the initiative by aligning community college public, and private university coursework with the skills demands needed. In July 2022, seven awards were announced – six to public institutions and one system award was made to CSCU to create regional cohorts between two-year/four-year institutions. Institutions are working now to develop skills profiles that reflect key knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for regional employers; to propose adaptable solutions using regionally tailored KSA's that meet needs quickly; to embed existing or all-new industry-recognized credentials into four-year degree programs to increase the available workforce; and to build stackable pathways from other programs such as CSCU-AWS or YearUp. Institutions also were tasked with working with business to include wrap-around support like networking, mentorships, internships, apprenticeships.
6. The Business Roundtable, an association of CEOs nationwide working to promote a thriving U.S. economy and expanded opportunity for all Americans through sound public policy, recently selected Connecticut as the first of only 10 states to create a **Workforce Partnership Initiative** to further build out a sustainable workforce development system.



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General Fund Overview

AGENCY SUMMARY

Personnel Summary

	FY 2023 Authorized	FY 2024 Change From FY 2023	FY 2024 Total Recommended	FY 2025 Change From FY 2024	FY 2025 Total Recommended
General Fund	0	10	10	0	10

Financial Summary

	FY 2023 Estimated	FY 2024 Baseline	FY 2024 Total Recommended	FY 2025 Baseline	FY 2025 Total Recommended
General Fund					
<u>Common Appropriations</u>					
Personal Services	0	279,008	1,317,872	282,131	1,336,510
Other Expenses	0	0	35,000	0	35,000
TOTAL-General Fund	0	279,008	1,352,872	282,131	1,371,510
TOTAL-ALL FUNDS	0	279,008	1,352,872	282,131	1,371,510

The Governor's proposed FY 2024-2025 budget recommends funding necessary to support the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS) and to reflect it as its own budgeted agency.

Specifically, funding of \$470,000 and three current positions will be reallocated from the Governor's Office to OWS, six current positions - two durational, three that are split funded between General Fund and federal funds, and one position previously funded out of cannabis related revenue are being made permanent in the General Fund. In addition, the budget provides funding for one new position.

These positions will provide consistency and stability to the OWS as it continues to operationalize the Governor's Workforce Council Strategic Plan. A portion of the team will be dedicated content experts in improving and operationalizing the state strategy including our Chief Workforce Officer, while a smaller portion of the team provides necessary back-office support in areas such as legal and fiscal support.

The OWS will also utilize \$35,000 annually in Other Expense funding to support the operations of the office. This includes general operational fees, equipment, and necessary travel.

The resources recommended in the Governor's proposed budget will provide OWS with the necessary funds to carry out our mission and to make important investments in developing a high-quality, industry-aligned, workforce that is immediately focused on getting people back work. Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.