



NRWIB WIOA Local Plan 2020-2024 Modification

I. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

1. Chief Elected Official(s)

1. Identify the chief elected official(s) by name, title, mailing address, phone number and email address. A complete listing of the current Chief Elected Officials is attached in Appendix A.

2. 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.

The local area includes more than one unit of general local government and therefore in accordance with WIOA Sec. 107 (c)(1)(B), an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) among the Municipalities is in place that defines how the parties will carry out the roles and responsibilities of the CEOs.

3. Describe the following:

- i. The nomination process used by the CEO to elect the local board chair and members;
- ii. The term limitations and how the term appointments will be staggered to ensure only a portion of membership expire in a given year;
- iii. The process to notify the CEO of a board member vacancy to ensure a prompt nominee;
- 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 WIOA regulations;
- v. The use of technology such as phone and Web-based meetings that will be used to promote board member participation;
- 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; and,
- vii. Any other conditions governing appointments or membership on the local board.

The IGA (attached in Appendix B) sets forth the following: The nomination process used to appoint local board members, the term limitations and duration of term appointments; The process to notify the CEO of a board member vacancy to ensure a proper replacement; The proxy and alternative designee process that will be used when a board member is unable to attend a meeting and alternative designee as per the requirements at §679.110(d)(4) of the WIOA regulations and; The policy for the use of technology for participation, such as phone and web-based meetings, that will be used to promote the board member participation.

The Bylaws of the Local Workforce Development Board (Appendix C) articulate the detailed committee structure, as well as the process to ensure that 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



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

Utilizing the regional Council of Government structure, the CEOs of the region were invited to participate in the development and review of the initial Local Plan. During the development of the initial plan, a public hearing was held on August 25, 2020. On June 1, 2022 the NRWIB posted a draft version of the modified local plan to its website to solicit public comment via email; notice of public comment solicitation includes: posting on the Board's LinkedIn and Facebook pages and other social media outlets, legal notices in regional newspapers and a blast email sent to all Lead Elected Officials of the 41 municipalities in our region.

2. Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB)

1. Provide a matrix identifying LWDB members including the category each member represents and the term of service.

See Appendix D.

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

The LWDB was involved in the development, review and approval of the initial plan as follows: Established an Ad Hoc Planning Committee of Board members; Convened strategic planning sessions of LWDB members, workforce partners and other interested parties to discuss priorities in relation to state plan and; Once the plan was drafted, an Ad Hoc Committee reviewed the draft and provided input. After the Ad Hoc review and changes, the Draft plan was forwarded to the Full LWDB and released for further comment.

The locally elected officials (LEOs) were provided access to the modified plan on June 1, 2022 and invited to provide comment(s). The NRWIB will have the Board approve the plan at its quarterly meeting.

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

See Appendix E.

3. Local Administrative Entity and Grant Sub Recipient

1. Identify the administrative entity.

As is set forth in the Intergovernmental Agreement, the City of Waterbury is the grant recipient.

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

The entity designated to receive and distribute the grant funds acting as the local fiscal agent is the 501(c)3 Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board, as is articulated in the Intergovernmental Agreement.

4. One-Stop System

1. General System Description

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

The local one-stop system is composed of three (3) AJCs, each certified: one comprehensive center in Waterbury and two affiliate sites in Danbury and Torrington. All three centers house case management services for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) clients and business services to employers.



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

The current entity selected to operate the local one-stop centers is the Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce.

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

d. Career Resources, Inc. (CRI) currently provides all career services under the consortium agreement with staff located at the three offices in Waterbury, Danbury, and Torrington. CRI was selected through a competitive procurement process. 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.

NRWIB has separated the duties of the career service provider from those of the one-stop operator. All career services as outlined in the WIOA Regulations are provided by Career Resources, Inc. These include both basic and individualized career services and follow-up services. Services range from labor market information and information on partner programs to comprehensive skills assessment, career planning and the development of individual employment plans. Training will be made available to participants after assessment and evaluation determines that the individual requires training in order to obtain employment or remain employed. At this time, it is not anticipated that any career services would be contracted out to other service providers.

e. Describe the roles and resource contributions of one-stop partners.

The NRWIB has Memoranda of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreements with several partners. The Manufacturing Alliance Service Corp. agrees to assist with the provision of job training services. The Workplace Services for Veterans Families partnership allows for the joint promotion of coordinated service delivery for veterans and/or their families. MOUs have been executed with Naugatuck Valley Community College and Northwestern CT Community College to ensure the delivery of relevant employment-related workshops and training while making efforts to eliminate unnecessary content duplication, increase efficiency and reduce any perceived confusion among customers.

New Opportunities, Inc. (NOI) assists with the provision of referrals to and coordination of activities with other programs and services, including programs and services within the one-stop delivery system, and in appropriate cases, other workforce development programs. NOI also provides the Meals on Wheels, Head Start, Weatherization and Fuel Assistance programs to which we refer eligible customers.

Connecticut Dept. of Labor and NRWIB work together to provide seamless delivery of services to regional jobseekers and employers. Department of Aging and Disability Services agrees to provide consultation, technical assistance and support services to the One Stop service region including disability awareness, employer accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and guidance on the use of assistive technology that is available at the American Job Centers for individuals that require alternate modes of communication. The Connecticut Department of Social Services agrees to coordinate services in the implementation of a workforce development system that is committed to a customer-focused comprehensive delivery system and ensures the needs of adults, youth, and dislocated workers and individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities, are addressed, including access to technology and materials, are made available through the American Job Center.



The NRWIB works with the Connecticut State Board of Education to provide College and Career Pathways programs under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and align such programs with the occupational and industry demands described in the WDB's Local WIOA plan. New Haven Job Corps assists with the provision of training in career skills that may include business technology, construction trades, culinary preparation, plumbing and carpentry, service and technical industries and water/wastewater certification. This is a brief summary of the resources contributions these partners provide; for a comprehensive understanding of partner roles please refer to Appendix F for copies of executed Memoranda of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreements.

Other service delivery partners include the Community Action Programs (CAP) throughout the region and other community-based organizations. The NRWIB also contracts with the Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce, Waterbury Regional Chamber, Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce and Resource Development Associates to increase business access to services and resources available throughout the AJCs.

- f. Provide copies of executed Memoranda of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreements.

See Appendix F.

- g. Identify any non-required partners included in the local one-stop delivery system and respective contributions.

Manufacturing Alliance Service Corp and Ice the Beef.

2. Customer Access

- a. 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.

Business Customers: In order to promote maximum integration of services, the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board has staff dedicated to the Business Services Unit which is a systemwide coordinated effort. The mission of this team is to provide assistance to registered Connecticut businesses regarding programs and services which will support them throughout their business cycles. The Business Services Unit comprises multiple partner agencies, local chambers, and other interested parties.

The Business Services Specialist provides the following: Coordination of recruitments held in the American Job Center offices; Assistance to employers in posting their jobs to the CTHires website; Connects employers to CTDOL Career Fairs; Business consultations and assessments; Customized Labor Market Information to employers; Onsite employer visits to determine their needs; Information on tax credit and tax incentive programs; Manufacturing Innovation Fund Incumbent Worker (MIF IWT) contracts; Information on the Shared Work and Rapid Response programs to employers who may be contemplating or engaging in laying off workers and; Assistance to Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology.

Regional Sector Partnerships:

- Healthcare: The NRWIB launched a healthcare partnership in March 2022. The goal is to focus on industry-identified priorities such as expansion and improvements of local education and training programs, campaigns to promote awareness and interest in healthcare careers, and regulatory and other changes to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare. At present, the



Healthcare RSP is comprised of eight co-chairs, led by a team of the region's top healthcare executives. The convening team consists of the Danbury, Waterbury, and Northwest Chambers of Commerce. To broadly represent industry the Northwest region, our partnership consists of co-chairs from healthcare facilities located in Danbury, Torrington, and Waterbury. Co-chairs include Presidents, Vice Presidents, and CEOs from Danbury & New Milford Hospital (Nuvance Health), CT Institute for Communities, StayWell Healthcare, the City of Waterbury Department of Public Health, Access Rehab Centers, Geer Village Senior Community, McCall Center for Behavioral Health, and Community Health Centers, Inc. Representation from facilities in all four corners of Northwest Connecticut affords an equitable and inclusive to adequately address the needs of the healthcare industry in our region. The partnership is also supported by a team of public and non-profit partners. Their role is to promote the benefits of healthcare careers to target audiences, as well as to provide local education programs with insights on the latest industry trends and curriculum changes needed to train new manufacturing and healthcare talent.

- Manufacturing: The Manufacturing Regional Sector Partnership was assembled in February of 2021. It has since launched an industry-led, community-supported recruitment campaign that will include the development and distribution of compelling content (e.g., video testimonials, brochures) through in-person school visits, company tours, virtual and in-person events, and social media channels. The ongoing campaign will have several elements, each customized to a specific target audience: youth under 18, older youth ages 18-25, local manufacturing program graduates, adults over 25, permanent part-time workers, and older workers. The goal of these efforts are: to substantially increase youth interest in manufacturing as a career, strengthen the talent pool, and to increase the number of career-changing adults who choose manufacturing. The Manufacturing Regional Sector Partnership focus is set on two priority areas: Talent Image and Recruitment, and Talent Development.

Individual Customers: The NRWIB provides an integrated delivery service to customers by co-enrolling participants in partner programs that provide the maximum level of services available. These efforts are based on a multitude of factors, namely, the participant's specific barriers to employment. Objectives include: Increasing multiple opportunities for career exploration and planning; Grow work-based learning and employment opportunities through employer engagement that lead to viable career pathways; Support retention in and completion of secondary and post-secondary credentials, including non-traditional training opportunities; Map existing and potential workforce partners to ensure service alignment and coordination; Develop programs that will enable youth, especially those who are disconnected, to successfully enter career pathways and; Leverage resources, funding, and services across the workforce development system to provide comprehensive services.

- b. 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.

Entities within the one-stop delivery system (including the One-Stop Operator and one-stop partners) will comply with the American with Disabilities Act by implementing the following policies, procedures, protocols, and practices:



Programmatic Accessibility of Facilities, Programs, and Services: The AJCs will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by promoting inclusion, choice, and accessibility. Job Center staff assure that jobseekers with disabilities have programmatic access to all services. The resources offered at the AJCs include: Information about the ADA and practical ways of applying its provisions; Promotion of the blending, leveraging, and braiding of resources in way that benefits jobseekers with disabilities; Providing information to staff and customers regarding reasonable accommodations; The wealth of workshops and seminars available through the job center; Assisting customers in convening Integrated Resource Team efforts; Increased use of the career resources area; Awareness and utilization of the job center's assistive technology; Information about the array of resources outside the job center; Referrals to appropriate service providers; Referrals to the national Job Accommodation Network; Asset development resources; Customized Individual Training Accounts; Provision of supportive services and; Coordination and implementation of the Social Security Administration Ticket To Work program

Physical Accessibility of Facilities, Programs, and Services: The AJC's offer physical accessibility, including: Automatic entrance door, wide doorways; Parking reserved for persons with disabilities; Customer accessible bathrooms / accessible drinking fountain; Service Guide Dogs are welcomed and; Adjustable wheelchair access computer station.

Technology and Materials for Individuals with Disabilities: The AJCs offer the following and will continue to improve assistive technology resources: Magnifier, Zoom Text, and Scan and Read Pro; Dragon-speak software; Sign language and oral interpreters; Flatbed scanner (perfection 4490); Talking Typing Teacher; J.A.W.S. and; Lexington Expert Trackball Mouse.

Technical Assistance to All Staff: AJC staff are provided with technical assistance, resources, and collaborative services to assist them in working with jobseekers who have a disability.

Section 188 of WIOA: Key components of the AJC's compliance with Section 188 (Re: non-discrimination) of WIOA are: Equal Opportunity Officers have been designated by both the Workforce Development Board and the Department of Labor; The AJC's general marketing and recruitment materials (including photos and ad copy) mention people with disabilities as one of the groups served and contain positive images of persons with disabilities; The AJC makes every effort to provide universal access, reasonable accommodations, reasonable modifications to its program, and programmatic, architectural and communication accessibility; The Center honors its obligation not to discriminate based on disability; Staff at the AJC do not stereotype persons with disabilities when evaluating their skills, abilities, interests and needs, taking into consideration the availability of reasonable accommodations, reasonable modifications, and auxiliary aids and services; The Center provides reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities; It is made clear that disclosure is voluntary and information regarding disability will be kept confidential and maintained in a separate file; Staff working with persons with disabilities obtain permission from the individual before discussing information about his or her disability with other staff and other agencies; All discussions between staff and customers are conducted in a manner that ensures the preservation of confidentiality; Core services include providing or planning (including referral to other entities) for the provision of benefits counseling for persons with disabilities, particularly those individuals currently receiving/eligible for SSI or SSDI benefits and Medicaid or Medicare; Reasonable modifications are made to eligibility criteria for intensive and training services to ensure that individuals with disabilities have an opportunity to benefit from such services that is as effective as that provided to customers who do not have a disability; The center administers programs



and activities in the most integrated setting appropriate; The center provides programmatic and architectural accessibility for persons with disabilities; The center and the board have established complaint processing procedures and have made customers aware of them

Collaboration with the Department of Aging and Disability Services: NRWIB has established a Partnership Plus agreement with the Department of Aging and Disability Services. Both entities frequently refer clients back and forth and collaborate in streamlining services. The Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) and the AJCs collaborate for in-service training and ADS/Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is co-located in Waterbury. Both entities emphasize inclusion, choice, and integration. Furthermore, the regional ADS Director is a member of the WDB. The NRWIB has partnered with ADS to offer a two-day (8-hour) Work Readiness boot camp. Facilitated by Career Navigators, the boot camp addresses a number of soft skills that have been noted as “lacking” by every engaged employer.

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

The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board has contracted with Digicon for services to provide an online application portal through our website; this has enabled the board to collect applications for our Connecticut Youth Employment program. WIOA Adult and WIOA Dislocated Worker services are available through virtual submission of both the pre-application and eligibility documentation on CTHires. Provision of these services has ensured the board is able to continue providing innovative solutions to complex social challenges such as closing the opportunity divide, reducing unemployment, and eradicating poverty in the virtual world that has been created as a result of the pandemic crisis. Efforts continue to develop processes and procedures to provide these services across all programs. A Post Pandemic Crisis Management team has convened to expand virtual accessibility across all programs and assure access to online platforms by providing support services in terms of technology, equipment, and connectivity.

Considering events due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the NRWIB has implemented virtual eligibility determination capabilities via CTHires and our website. These measures have ensured ease and convenience for customers while allowing the agency to remain in compliance with WIOA federal guidelines and regulations. Virtual WIOA Information sessions are hosted twice a week with customers registering for them through the NRWIB’s website or by direct call. Virtual information sessions are also being conducted for each of the WDB’s durational grants. Potential participants who are interested in moving forward with enrollment are given explicit instruction regarding how to fill out the pre-application and securely upload eligibility documentation (e.g., driver’s license, birth certificate, etc.). The NRWIB intends to maintain these virtual features as part of its standard method of operation.

Technology limitations can pose a challenge in the NRWIB region. To address this barrier, NRWIB staff will host in-person information sessions throughout the region in local libraries, community colleges, community health centers, faith-based organizations, soup kitchens, food pantries, homeless shelters, Center for Human Development, hospitality centers, sober houses, rehabilitation centers, police activity league organizations, city halls and high schools. The Director of Strategic Planning is also working with the Manager of Communications to implement a comprehensive outreach and recruitment plan that will further the board’s attempt to “meet people where they are” to include radio, Spotify, YouTube, print and other multimedia. The NRWIB has also partnered with the other four workforce boards in the state in a grant called CT SAWS; through this program we will be able to increase outreach to marginalized



communities. This will include statewide, regional and local outreach campaigns to increase awareness of workforce system services among marginalized populations with all levels of digital literacy and access.

Client hardware and accessibility needs also present a challenge. Each career center is equipped with computers to enable online job search and access to online employment applications. Many residents lack the resources to bring the internet into their homes and rely on the technology in the AJC's and their cellular devices. In many cases, computer literacy to navigate both the CT Hires and other online sites is a barrier. When surveyed, jobseekers identified CT Hires (25.5%) and participation in workshops for career exploration, resume development, interviewing skills, etc. (21.5%) as the services most utilized in their visit.

To bring those services home, the NRWIB has and will continue to provide customers and program participants with the technology needed (i.e., Chromebook, laptop, tablet, internet) to ensure access to online application processes.

3. Integration of Services

- a. 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.

As the NRWIB continues its Career Navigator-driven approach in its AJC, it is strengthened by an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system. In the meantime, a model of train-the-trainer has been adopted. Currently, NRWIB utilizes the state-wide web-based case management system, CT Hires, operated by Geographic Solutions. CT Hires contains four of the six core programs within it, including: WIOA Adult, WIOA Dislocated Worker, WIOA Youth, and Wagner-Peyser programs. This system also currently has within it the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program. CTDOL has expanded the management information systems for the core programs interoperable to include the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES), Foreign Labor Certification program, and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit programs.

NRWIB was eager to provide input and support to CTDOL during expansion planning and development of CTHires to adapt to a virtual experience. The system now provides for electronic intake and data collection across multiple agencies and programs which has (1) improved service delivery to individuals by enabling data to be collected through an online portal and shared by service providers and (2) fostered communication and collaboration amongst service providers.

4. Competitive Selection of One-Stop Operator

- a. Describe the steps taken to ensure a competitive process for selection of the one-stop operator(s). Provide the name of the operator selected and contact info.

On January 18, 2021, the NRWIB released a Request for Quotation to procure a One-Stop Operator for the region. Legal advertisements were published in the Danbury News Times, the Torrington Register Citizen, the Waterbury Republican American, and the Hartford Courant on January 18, 2021. The procurement was open for 30 days. The NRWIB received two proposals in total, and the second proposal was deemed non-responsive by the committee. Upon review and discussion, the One-Stop Committee selected the Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce for recommendation to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors met on 06/10/2021 and voted to move forward with the selection.



The one-stop operator staff person from Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce is Pamela LaRosa, who can be contacted by phone at 860-482-6586, or by email at pam@nwctchamberofcommerce.org.

5. System Improvement

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

Customers – Integrated Service Delivery: pertains to the delivery of NRWIB services to customers in a manner that braids the resources and services of workforce partners to seamlessly address the training and employment needs of system customers- both jobseekers and business. The key components of Integrated Service Delivery include co-enrollment of customers, organization of staff around functions and customers' needs, functional leadership, and supervision to support functional teams, continuous quality improvement based on customer data and feedback.

For staff, this means the customers (jobseekers and employers) and their needs are at the forefront, every customer is everyone's customer, staff development and training to support transition to new roles under functional teams, meeting customers where they are physically and in the career development process and serving as navigators to ensure customers access the services they need from various partners.

Under Integrated Service Delivery, customers will experience: "value-added" interaction during each visit and seamless transition between staff/programs and/or services.

Business Services: The NRWIB serves as the convener of industry representatives from the targeted industry sectors: Manufacturing, Healthcare, Information Technology, Construction, Human Services, Retail Trade, Transportation & Warehousing, and Accommodation & Food Services. We convene a robust business service unit that consists of business intermediaries (Chambers of Commerce) and AJC partners (Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Education). These representatives understand most what is needed from service providers, how the WDB and other workforce entities can do more to prepare workers for their jobs, and understand their emerging skill needs.

Following the lead of the Governor's Workforce Development Council, the NRWIB is engaged in regional sector partnership models and is currently coordinating with its three major regional Chambers of Commerce in developing a core team whose mission will be to bring these partnerships to an active and impactful existence. Further detail regarding these efforts can be found in Part II. Sec. 3 of this Plan.

Strong collaboration exists among workforce partners and those business intermediaries; continuous improvement and honing a more strategic plan when working with businesses is a constant focus of the NRWIB. The board recently submitted an application to the Office of Workforce Strategy for Career ConneCT dollars. The strategy and goal of this program is to provide residents with job training that will prepare them for a career in some aspect of Clean Energy. According to CT Department of Labor Market Information and feedback gathered from industry employers this sector is in-demand, both by employers and residents, in the Northwest Region. Our goal is to partner with each of Connecticut's workforce development boards, local training providers, community colleges, and community-based organizations to deliver comprehensive training and support services on a statewide level.

Staff Training: In an effort to assure continuous improvement, training for peer-to-peer collaboration and networking between agencies is ongoing. Additional training will help build relationships and improve referral processes. Staff knowledge of partner agencies' services and their availability to clients, is



paramount to help clients navigate the system efficiently and effectively co-enroll customers. Understanding timelines for each process is critical, so customers have reasonable expectations.

The NRWIB continues to pride itself in its delivery of a customer-centric case management approach to WIOA programs. The Career Navigator (formerly known as Case Manager) leverages his/her skills in strengths-based assessments and motivational techniques to help the customer overcome barriers to improvement. The results of the approach have led to:

- Career Navigators developing customer-centered service plans by partnering with clients;
- Clients gaining access to more coordinated and integrated services; and
- Clients making progress toward self-sufficiency through employment/income, housing, childcare, and life skills.

WIOA Career Navigators are trained in building a customer-centric case management practice. Core trainings are delivered and multiple coaching sessions for the staff and supervisors are provided.

II. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

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

The Northwest Development Area encompasses 41 municipalities and has experienced economic changes over the last five years, including since the initial creation of this plan in 2020. As detailed in Table 1, sectors with the greatest share of jobs at the 2-digit NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) in the region include Health Care and Social Assistance; Government; Retail Trade; Manufacturing; and Accommodation and Food Services. Each of these sectors, with the exception of Health Care and Social Assistance, experienced significant declines in employment over the last five years – no doubt due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Projections into 2026 indicate a slow growth of these top sectors (+1,727 jobs). Health Care and Social Assistance is projected to add the most jobs of any sector in the region through 2026 (+3,764 jobs), followed by Transportation and Warehousing (+925 jobs); Accommodation and Food Services (+842 jobs); and Educational Services (+694 jobs).

Earnings across sectors in the region range from \$29,3593 (Accommodation and Food Services) to \$188,067 (Utilities). Industry LQ provides a measure of how “concentrated” an industry is in a region compared to the nation, with a measure of 1.00 indicating the same concentration as the nation. In this analysis, LQs greater than 1.25 are considered to be threshold for identifying a sector as relatively strong for the region’s economic base, bringing financial capital into the region rather than circulating local dollars in the economy. The only sectors that meet that threshold are Educational Services (1.61); Health Care and Social Assistance (1.47); and Other Services (Except Public Administration) (1.26).

Table 1: Top 10 Sectors by Employment Size in Northwest Development Area, 2-Digit NAICS

NAICS	Description	2016 Jobs	2021 Jobs	'16-'21 Jobs Change	2026 Jobs	'21'26 Jobs Change	Avg. Annual Earnings	2022 LQ
62	Health Care & Social Assistance	40,607	42,007	1,401	45,772	3,764	\$71,351	1.47
90	Government	30,176	27,838	(2,339)	27,580	(258)	\$95,505	0.81
44	Retail Trade	28,580	26,180	(2,399)	24,632	(1,549)	\$49,732	1.20



31	Manufacturing	22,280	20,870	(1,410)	19,797	(1,073)	\$101,879	1.20
72	Accommodation & Food Services	17,265	14,545	(2,720)	15,387	842	\$29,359	0.90
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	12,938	11,847	(1,090)	12,176	329	\$40,807	1.26
23	Construction	10,340	10,302	(37)	10,173	(129)	\$87,747	0.96
56	Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services	10,559	9,976	(583)	10,010	34	\$57,321	0.79
54	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	9,619	9,174	(445)	9,282	108	\$137,427	0.66
61	Educational Services	8,409	8,942	534	9,636	694	\$66,053	1.61

Source: Emsi 2022.1; Connecticut Department of Labor

Diving deeper, Table 2 identifies the top 15 NAICS industries in the region at the 5-digit NAICS level. The top NAICS industries include Restaurants and Other Eating Places (13,001 jobs); Education (Local Government) (12,485 jobs); General Medical and Surgical Hospitals (9,777 jobs); Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals (6,634 jobs); and Supermarkets and Other Grocery (except Convenience) Stores (6,040 jobs). Of the top 15 NAICS industries, only six experienced positive job growth over the last five years, with Services for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities experiencing the largest job growth (+2,576 jobs). As the region rebounds from the COVID-19 pandemic, more of these NAICS industries are projected to have job growth with the most significant growth stemming from Services for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities (+2,437 jobs) and Restaurants and Other Eating Places (+1,037). It is important to note that both of these NAICS industries have average earnings well below the top 15 NAICS industries' average annual earnings of \$66,377. Average annual earnings for the top 15 NAICS industries range from \$28,075 (Restaurants and Other Eating Places) to \$137,302 (Offices of Physicians).

NAICS industries with significantly high LQs, or those that are very concentrated in the region, include Elementary and Secondary Schools (2.42); Department Stores (2.28); Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Facilities) (2.22); Services for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities (1.80); Supermarkets and Other Grocery (except Convenience) Stores (1.61); General Medical and Surgical Hospitals (1.43); Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools (1.35); and Offices of Physicians (1.28).

Table 2: Top 15 NAICS Industries by Employment Size in Northwest Development Area, 5-Digit NAICS

NAICS	Description	2016 Jobs	2021 Jobs	'16-'21 Jobs Change	2026 Jobs	'21-'26 Jobs Change	Avg. Annual Earnings	2022 LQ
72251	Restaurants and Other Eating Places	14,831	13,001	(1,829)	14,039	1,037	\$28,075	0.98
90361	Education (Local Government)	13,653	12,485	(1,167)	12,661	175	\$95,933	1.17
62211	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	9,384	9,777	393	10,437	660	\$91,396	1.43
90399	Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	7,466	6,634	(832)	6,413	(221)	\$105,868	0.84
44511	Supermarkets and Other Grocery (except Convenience) Stores	6,219	6,040	(179)	5,753	(286)	\$40,157	1.61



62412	Services for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities	2,795	5,371	2,576	7,809	2,437	\$31,780	1.80
62111	Offices of Physicians	4,788	4,924	136	5,179	255	\$137,302	1.28
62311	Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Facilities)	6,035	4,523	(1,512)	3,810	(713)	\$55,611	2.22
61111	Elementary and Secondary Schools	3,829	4,003	174	4,173	170	\$69,933	2.42
61131	Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools	3,362	3,817	455	4,214	396	\$66,938	1.35
81411	Private Households	3,149	3,397	248	3,716	319	\$28,810	2.07
45221	Department Stores	3,471	2,969	(503)	2,595	(374)	\$31,595	2.28
90299	State Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	3,310	2,938	(372)	2,752	(186)	\$115,521	0.91
90261	Education (State Government)	2,832	2,739	(93)	2,698	(41)	\$60,412	0.73
56132	Temporary Help Services	2,573	2,216	(357)	1,900	(316)	\$36,326	0.57

Source: Emsi 2022.1; Connecticut Department of Labor

The top occupations in the region at the 2-digit SOC (Standard Occupational Classification) level include Office & Administrative Support (26,411 jobs); Sales & Related (19,725 jobs); Educational Instruction & Library (16,699 jobs); Food Preparation & Serving Related (16,150 jobs); and Transportation and Material Moving (15,669 jobs). The top two occupations experienced job declines in the last five years and are projected to continue declining into 2026. It is also worth noting that these occupations have the largest number of average annual openings, suggesting that employers are unable to fill the demand for these jobs (both occupations have similar average hourly wages ~\$22-\$23).

Healthcare Support Occupations account for nearly 60% of the job growth projected into 2026 (+2,092 jobs) but has the third lowest average hourly wage. The NRWIB is aware that this statistic may prove to be detrimental for employers seeking Healthcare Support workers over the next five years and will collaborate with employers to prepare and address this challenge through the use of its RSP collaboration.

Table 3: All Occupations in Northwest Development Area, 2-Digit SOC

SOC	Description	2021 Jobs	% Job Change '16-'21	% Job Change '21-'26	Avg. Annual Openings	Avg. Hourly Earnings
43	Office & Administrative Support	26,411	(10%)	(4%)	3,505	\$22.92
41	Sales & Related	19,725	(11%)	(5%)	3,292	\$22.57
25	Educational Instruction & Library	16,699	(3%)	3%	1,820	\$32.42
35	Food Preparation & Serving Related	16,150	(16%)	5%	3,656	\$15.51
53	Transportation & Material Moving	15,669	(2%)	4%	2,537	\$18.77
29	Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	15,455	2%	5%	1,246	\$45.25
11	Management	14,076	4%	2%	1,470	\$68.14
31	Healthcare Support	13,456	7%	16%	2,299	\$16.58
51	Production	13,090	(10%)	(6%)	1,960	\$22.69
13	Business & Financial Operations	9,344	8%	(<1%)	1,069	\$40.94
37	Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	8,499	(7%)	3%	1,391	\$18.06
47	Construction & Extraction	7,902	1%	(<1%)	1,071	\$29.54
49	Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	7,071	(1%)	(<1%)	884	\$27.21



39	Personal Care & Service	6,568	(11%)	6%	1,414	\$17.88
21	Community & Social Service	4,929	(1%)	8%	656	\$28.32
15	Computer & Mathematical	4,417	(1%)	1%	445	\$45.19
33	Protective Service	3,900	(1%)	(<1%)	558	\$29.72
17	Architecture & Engineering	3,306	1%	(2%)	385	\$43.96
27	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, & Media	2,473	(19%)	4%	387	\$34.27
19	Life, Physical, & Social Science	1,474	1%	7%	193	\$42.82
23	Legal Occupations	1,377	5%	(2%)	119	\$56.89
45	Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	699	(12%)	9%	140	\$14.20
55	Military-only	456	(<1%)	(2%)	56	\$17.78

Source: Emsi 2022.1; Connecticut Department of Labor

Table 4 details the top 15 occupations in the region at the 5-digit SOC code. The top occupations by job count in 2021 include Home Health and Personal Care Aides (6,892 jobs); Cashiers (6,494 jobs); Registered Nurses (5,222 jobs); Retail Salespersons (5,153 jobs); and Fast Food and Counter Workers (4,129 jobs). Average hourly wages for these top occupations range from \$13.24 (Cashiers) to \$77.02 (General and Operations Managers).

Occupational job openings among the top 15 occupations in the Northwest Development Area are most concentrated in the top 2 occupations: Home Health and Personal Care Aides (1,321 openings) and Cashiers (1,349 openings). Annual Replacement Jobs represent the number of people estimated to be retiring or permanently leaving that particular occupation. Again, Home Health and Personal Care Aides and Cashiers are among the top occupations with the greatest number of replacement jobs (Fast Food and Counter Workers has the second highest number of annual replacement jobs). These occupations are also among the lowest paid occupations in the region. This regional trend mirrors that of labor market trends statewide and nationally: low-paying jobs are getting harder and harder to fill.

Table 4: Top 15 Occupations by Employment Size in Northwest Development Area, 5-Digit SOC

SOC	Description	2021 Jobs	% Job Change '16-'21	% Job Change '21-'26	Avg. Hourly Earnings	Annual Replacement Jobs
31-1128	Home Health & Personal Care Aides	6,892	18%	29%	\$14.46	878
41-2011	Cashiers	6,494	(4%)	(7%)	\$13.24	1,239
29-1141	Registered Nurses	5,222	1%	4%	\$40.94	269
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	5,153	(22%)	(6%)	\$16.50	823
35-3023	Fast Food & Counter Workers	4,129	(22%)	7%	\$13.43	999
37-2011	Janitors & Cleaners, Except Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners	3,889	(7%)	3%	\$17.98	536
11-1021	General & Operations Managers	3,795	(6%)	0%	\$77.02	317
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	3,555	(12%)	(3%)	\$19.27	435
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	3,380	(8%)	(4%)	\$16.97	439
53-7065	Stockers & Order Fillers	3,376	2%	4%	\$15.62	500
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	3,343	(6%)	(6%)	\$19.83	438
43-6014	Secretaries & Admin. Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, & Executive	3,308	(21%)	(5%)	\$23.94	413
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	3,281	2%	2%	\$17.63	302
53-7062	Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers, Hand	3,267	10%	4%	\$16.04	414



35-3031	Waiters & Waitresses	3,030	(21%)	4%	\$15.56	716
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Source: Emsi 2022.1; Connecticut Department of Labor

The NRWIB has also placed an emphasis on placing workers in emerging “green” jobs in the local area. CT DOL recently created *Green Jobs Career Lattices* in nine clusters (as identified in Table 5).¹ Various number of occupations make up each cluster, therefore greater focus is based on the percent change of each cluster over the last five years and the next five years.

From 2016-2021, the greatest percent change of green jobs in the local area was within the Government and Regulatory Administration cluster (+14%). Both Agricultural and Forestry and Research, Design, Consulting, and Supportive Services experienced the greatest percentage decline over the last five years (-7%). Only Agricultural and Forestry is projected to grow by more than 1% over the next five years in the local area. Other green clusters are projected to grow by 1% or decline by 1% with the exception of Government and Regulatory Administration, which is projected to experience a 2% decline in jobs over the next five years.

Table 5: Emerging Green Jobs in Northwest Development Area

Green Jobs Cluster	2021 Jobs	'16-21 Jobs Change	'21-'26 Jobs Change	Annual Openings
Agricultural & Forestry	4,393	(7%)	2%	468
Energy Efficiency & Storage	6,824	(<1%)	<1%	716
Environmental Protection & Waste Reduction	444	(3%)	1%	59
Government & Regulatory Administration	429	14%	(2%)	447
Green Construction	5,164	6%	1%	663
Manufacturing	10,829	4%	(1%)	1,447
Renewable Energy Generation	6,856	4%	1%	762
Research, Design, Consulting, & Supportive Services	27,644	(7%)	(1%)	3,783
Transportation	4,103	4%	1%	488

Source: Emsi 2022.1; Connecticut Department of Labor

To develop a pipeline of talent in these clusters, the NRWIB has created specific programs. For example, the *Environmental Remediation Job Training Program* prepares jobseekers for a career in protecting the environment. Environmental remediation involves the removal of pollution and contaminants from soil and water in our environment. Other programs are focused on manufacturing and construction.

Manufacturing Your Future focuses on addressing the shortage of skilled workers in the manufacturing sector. The *Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative* develops workforce pipeline programs for training qualified, entry-level workers for job placement with manufacturers and employers experiencing sustained workforce shortages. Additionally, NRWIB’s *Construction Job Training*, part of the Northwest Construction Careers Initiative, aims to connect residents who have expressed interest in construction career opportunities with programs in OSHA and pre-apprenticeships in plumbing, HVAC, and sheet metal work.

2. Provide an analysis of the employment needs of employers in those industry sectors and occupations. The NRWIB surveyed businesses across the region to assess the employment needs of employers across various sectors. The most significant recruitment challenge for employers is a lack of an appropriate skilled

¹ <https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/green/default.asp>



workforce, followed by competition for skilled workers and a lack of job-specific technical skills. The most significant talent retention challenge for employers is the competition for skilled workers followed by a lack of soft skills and a lack of an appropriate skilled workforce.

The greatest concern exhibited by employers related to the regional workforce that they trust the workforce system to address is a lack of interested candidates, followed by an aging population. While these are concerns unique to Northwest CT, they do focus on the challenge of “how do we replace our exiting workforce?” Positive indicators that businesses are open to a stronger relationship with the workforce development system include the many services businesses utilize at the AJCs (job fairs, interview rooms, job postings, mass recruitment events, training funds, etc.).

The NRWIB has recognized these challenges and will work with local education and training partners to (1) develop customized training curricula that meets the skill needs of employers and (2) strengthen upskilling awareness opportunities so that industry partners maintain a pipeline of talent. The continued regional sector partnership model, which will be expanded into other sectors, will serve as a catalyst for this change.

3. 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.

Data collection from regional job postings of employers reveals the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of employers in the Northwest Development Area. Table 6 identifies the technical skills needed to meet the employment needs of those in-demand sectors and occupations. This data was validated by employers in an online survey which remained open for 30 days for this plan’s modifications.

Among the top in-demand sectors (2-digit NAICS) and in-demand occupations (2-SOC), the top technical skills as they appear in job postings are as follows:

Table 6: Technical Skills Needed for In-Demand Sectors & Occupations in Northwest Development Area

Target Sectors	In-Demand Occupations	Technical Skills
Accommodation & Food Services	Fast Food & Counter Workers; Food Service Managers; First-Line Supervisors of Food Prep & Serving Workers; Waiters & Waitresses	<i>Restaurant Operation; Food Services; Food Safety & Sanitation; Food Prep</i>
Construction	Sales Reps, Wholesale & Manufacturing, Except Technical & Scientific Products; Construction Managers; Highway Maintenance Workers	<i>Construction; Warehousing; Accounting; HVAC; Hand Tools</i>
Green Jobs	Retail Salespersons; Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers; Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	<i>Merchandising; Warehousing; Selling Techniques; Auditing</i>
Health Care & Social Assistance	Registered Nurses; Home Health & Personal Care Aides; Nursing Assistants; Medical & Health Services Managers	<i>Nursing; CPR; Caregiving; Housekeeping; Basic Life Support; Personal Care</i>
Manufacturing	Sales Reps, Wholesale & Manufacturing, Except Technical & Scientific Products; Operations Research Analysts; Production Workers	<i>Pharmaceuticals; New Product Development; Finance; Process Improvement</i>
Retail Trade	Retail Salespersons; Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers; Stockers & Order Fillers	<i>Merchandising; Warehousing; Selling Techniques</i>
Transportation & Warehousing	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers; Light Truck Drivers; Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers	<i>Truck Driving; Warehousing; Flatbed Truck Operation</i>



Source: Emsi 2022.1

The top in-demand common, or soft skills among all occupations in the region’s in-demand sectors include Communication (30%); Customer Service (26%); Management (20%); Sales (20%); Operations (19%); and Leadership (14%).²

When surveyed, businesses expressed more concern with not finding applicants with the necessary technical skills than not finding applicants with the necessary soft skills. They frequently noted that applicants desired higher wages and more benefits than what is offered, which impacted their decision to recruit and retain talent. Especially in office environments, job seekers prefer remote work options, contrary to what employers currently offer.

4. 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.

Population decline has been a challenge for the Northwest Development Area. Over the last five years, the region experienced a decline of over 7,000, or 1%. The greatest percentage decline of any age group was individuals 5 to 19 years and 35 to 54 years (-10%), a troubling statistic considering latter is prime working-aged individuals and the former considered the talent pipeline to replace retiring workers. Population decline is also projected for the region over the next five years. The only age cohort that has experienced positive growth from 2016 and through 2026 is 65 years and over. It is worth noting that Litchfield County, which constitutes most of the Northeast Development Area, had 392 confirmed fatalities due to COVID-19 (as of 04/01/22), fifth most of the eight counties in Connecticut.³

Table 7: Population by Age in Northwest Development Area, 2016-2021-2026

Age Cohort	2021 Population	2016-2021 Change		2021-2026 Change	
Under 5 years	28,161	(312)	(1%)	(2,278)	(8%)
5 to 19 years	98,651	(10,395)	(10%)	(3,423)	(3%)
20 to 34 years	96,615	2,839	3%	(1,538)	(2%)
35 to 54 years	139,046	(14,645)	(10%)	(7,853)	(6%)
55 to 64 years	84,910	1,732	2%	(7,845)	(9%)
65 years and over	108,555	13,772	15%	14,677	14%
Total	555,938	(7,010)	(1%)	(8,261)	(1%)

Source: Emsi 2022.1; Connecticut Department of Labor; U.S. Census Bureau

Though the Northwest Development Area experience a population decline over the last five years, so has the State of Connecticut. However, the rate of population decline in the region was more significant (-1.2%) than the State (-0.7%).

Table 8: Population Change Comparison: 2016-2021

	2016 Population	2021 Population	2016-2021 Population Change	
Northwest Development Area	562,948	555,938	(7,010)	(1.2%)
Connecticut	3,579,830	3,553,958	(25,872)	(0.7%)
United States	323,071,755	331,820,028	8,748,273	2.7%

² Emsi 2022.1 – Emsi collects job postings from various sources then processed/enriched to provide information such as standardized company name, occupation, skills, and geography.

³ <https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/q5as-kyim>; CT Department of Public Health



Source: Emsi 2022.1; Connecticut Department of Labor; U.S. Census Bureau

Constituting nearly 70% of the region’s population, White individuals make up a majority of population in the Northwest Development Area. The second largest race/ethnicity is Hispanic with 17.19% followed by Black (7.45%), Asian (3.77%), Two or More Races (1.66%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (0.15%), and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (0.04%). Although the region’s population remains more than 69% White, increases in diverse populations could indicate a need for more diverse community resources better serve those populations.

Table 9: Race/Ethnicity in the Northwest Development Area

Race/Ethnicity	2016 Population	2021 Population	% of 2021 Cohort	Population Change (2016-2021)	
White	411,456	387,705	69.74%	(23,751)	(6%)
Hispanic	86,313	95,567	17.19%	9,254	11%
Black	34,463	41,411	7.45%	6,948	20%
Asian	20,419	20,934	3.77%	515	3%
Two or More Races	9,386	9,252	1.66%	(134)	(1%)
American Indian or Alaskan Native	666	820	0.15%	155	23%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	245	248	0.04%	3	1%

Source: Emsi 2022.1; Connecticut Department of Labor; U.S. Census Bureau

The average poverty rate of the 41 municipalities that make up the Northwest Development Area was 5.86%, lower than the state poverty rate (9.9%) and national poverty rate (11.4%). Median household income is over \$17,000 more in the region than in the state and nearly \$30,000 more than the nation.

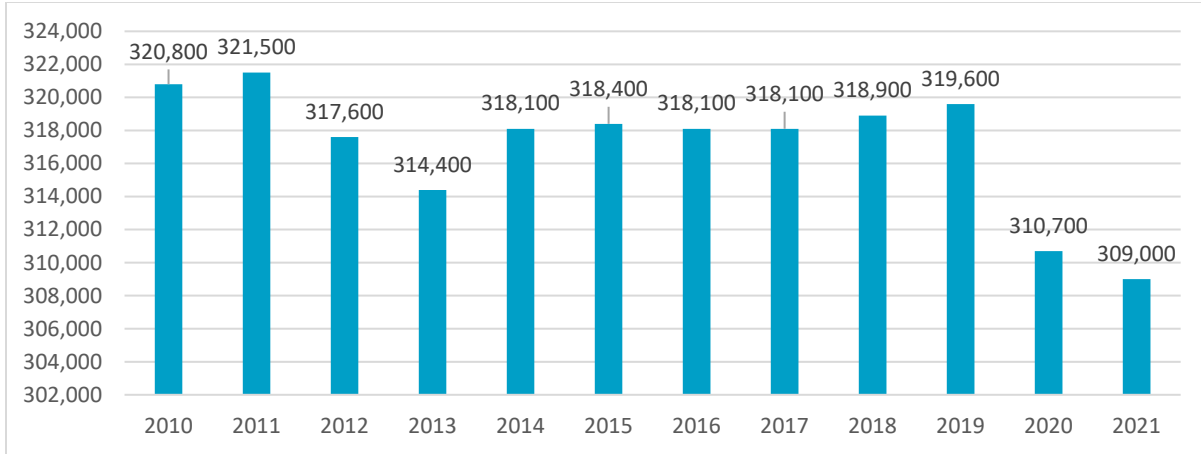
Table 10: Poverty Rate & Median Household Income

Region	Poverty Rate	Median Household Income
Northwest Development Area	5.86%	\$95,452
Connecticut	9.90%	\$78,444
United States*	11.40%	\$64,994

Source: CTData.org; U.S. Census Bureau 2015-2019; *U.S. Census Bureau 2016-2021

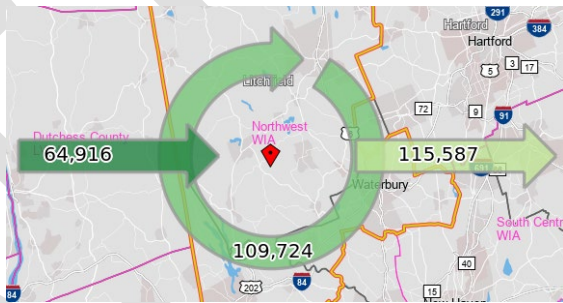
The size of the labor force in the region over of the last ten years peaked in 2011 (321,500) and has fluctuated around 318,000 from 2014-2019. Once the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020, labor force in the region experienced a sharp decline. From 2020-2021, the regional labor force size continued to decline by 1,700.

Figure 1: Labor Force Statistics in Northwest Development Area, 2010-2021



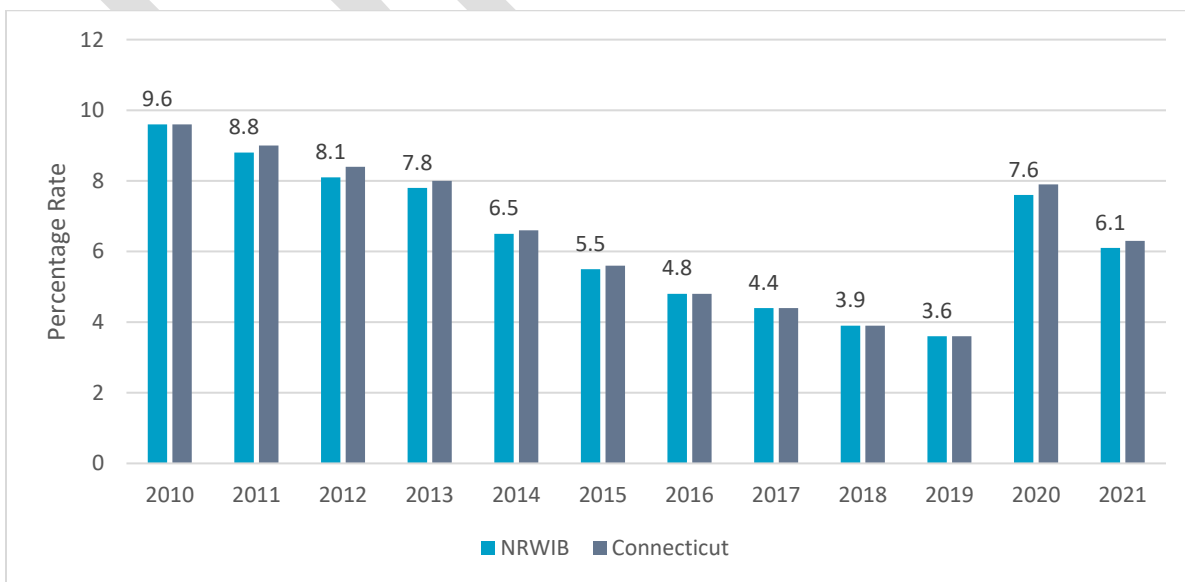
Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Office of Research

Overall, the NRWIB Region is a net exporter of workers. In 2019, nearly 65,000 people commuted into the region for their primary job. In the same year, over 115,000 lived in the region but worked elsewhere, for a net commuter loss of 50,671 workers each day. Approximately 109,000 workers both live and work in the region. The State is also a net exporter of workers, with 110,501 flowing into the State and 145,528 workers crossing out state lines for work, resulting in a net commuter loss of approximately 35,027 workers.



Unemployment in the region from 20010-2021 peaked in 2020 at 7.6% during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to that event, regional unemployment was on a steady decline since 2010, mirroring the statewide unemployment trend.

Figure 2: Unemployment Rates in Northwest Development Area



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Office of Research

The region has a lower percentage of individuals with some college and beyond compared to statewide statistics. (61.67% vs. 63.72%). However, the region has a higher percentage of individuals with a four-year degree or higher than the nation at 36.23%.

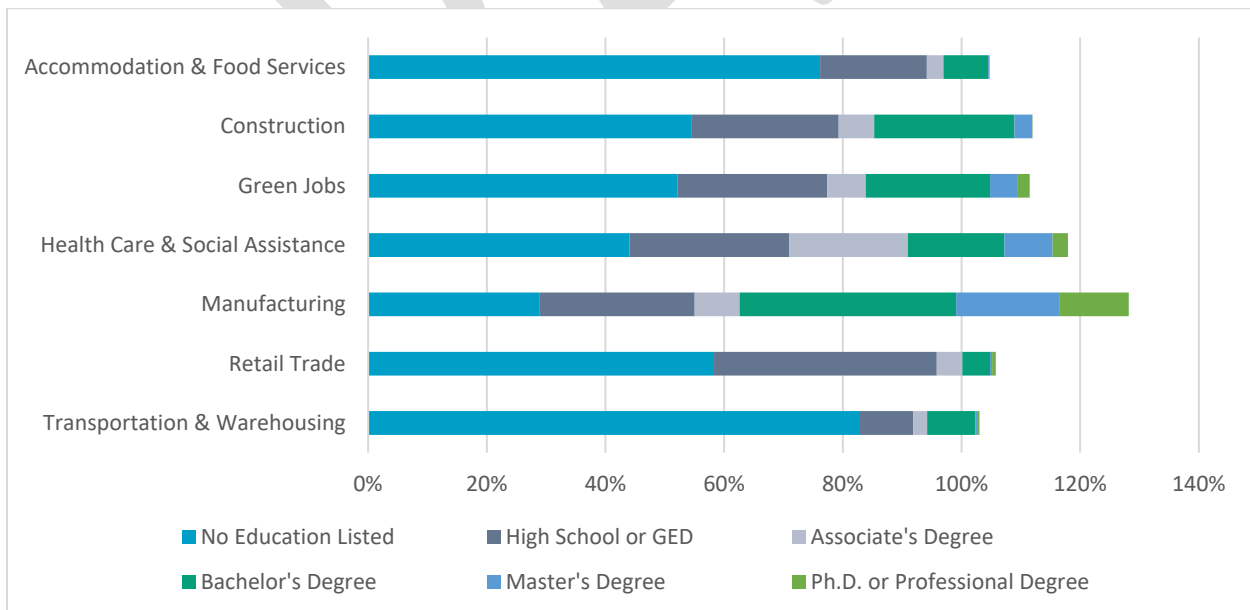
Table 11: Educational Attainment

Region	Less Than High School Diploma	High School Diploma, GED, or Equivalent	Some college, no degree	Associate's degree	Bachelor's degree or Higher
Northwest Development Area	10.30%	28.03%	17.41%	8.03%	36.23%
Connecticut	9.36%	26.91%	16.75%	7.72%	39.25%
United States*	11.47%	26.67%	20.30%	8.64%	32.92%

Source: CTData.org; US Census 2015-2019; *United States data collected from 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 3 identifies the education requirements as noted by employers in job postings for the Board’s top in-demand sectors and occupations. A majority of employers from the manufacturing cluster, which has the second highest average annual wage of any cluster in the region, require workers to have a four-year degree or higher. This cluster is significant in terms of employment size and reveals just how important skilled workers are to the cluster. Upskilling individuals from low wage, low skill sectors like Accommodation and Food Services and Retail Trade will be a critical strategy for NRWIB as it looks to recruit talent for sectors that require shorter-term education and training requirements like the Green Jobs cluster and Construction.

Figure 3: Education Requirements for In-Demand Sectors & Occupations as listed in Job Postings



Source: Emsi 2022.1

When surveyed, job seekers with barriers to employment cited a lack of education/training as the greatest challenges to finding meaningful employment, followed by a lack of childcare, lack of transportation, and



fear of losing benefits. The NRWIB will continue to match these job seekers with entry-level employment opportunities in target sectors. As detailed in Figure 3, many of the job postings for the region's target sectors do not list an education requirement. Those that do largely require a high school diploma and some college experience. By identifying on and off ramps for these career pathways for individuals to continue working while earning a credential or degree, identified barriers can be overcome leading to economic self-sufficiency.

5. 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.

To assist the NRWIB with the drafting of its initial strategic plan, a stakeholder meeting was conducted with regional training providers along with its workforce partners. These sessions shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities in the region as outlined below:

Mitigated Pandemic Client Flow:

- Outreach- Conducted through the use of social media, flyers, and other forms of recruitment through the use of our Communications Dept.
- Referral –All customers wishing to receive services under WIOA will express their interest to register for an information session via email: info@nrwib.org or by calling 203-574-6971. In-person, walk-in registrations for the information session will also be accepted. The customer will then receive an email invitation to attend a virtual information session.
- Online Information Session – Customers seeking to receive job training and/or job placement assistance under WIOA are required to participate in the virtual WIOA Information Session. During the Information Session, the presenting staff member discusses WIOA eligibility requirements and the assessment process. Attendees are also given instruction regarding CTHires registration and filling out the online WIOA Pre-application along with uploading their eligibility documentation. Individuals also receive directions on how to access the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) which lists the approved training programs that are available. Upon receipt of the information provided, customers move to the next phase of the process where they are scheduled for an intake/eligibility appointment with their assigned Career Navigator.
- In-person Information Session- For those unable to attend virtual information sessions, the NRWIB will host in-person information sessions throughout the region in: local libraries, community colleges, community health centers, faith-based organizations, soup kitchens, food pantries, homeless shelters, Center for Human Development, hospitality centers, sober houses, rehabilitation centers, police activity league organizations, city halls and high schools.
- Intake/Eligibility Determination – During the intake appointment, the Career Navigator will complete the paperwork required to determine eligibility for the customer to receive services under WIOA (Most-in-need criteria is completed for Dislocated Workers prior to the intake appointment). CASAS testing (math and reading assessment) is scheduled for the customer to determine a baseline and identify any potential basic-skills deficiencies. Following eligibility determination, the customer is ready to move on to mapping out their prospective career path and training plan during which the customer will complete their career assessment.



Job Training: Within the region, there are many programs that have proven to be successful and that offer lessons learned or elements that can be adapted to other strategies in the region. Coordinating and leveraging WIOA dollars through these programs provide additional funding resources for the region. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative: Manufacturing Your Future.** The Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative (ACI) was created to develop workforce pipeline programs to train qualified entry-level workers for job placement with manufacturers and employers in other industry sectors in the state that are experiencing sustained workforce shortages. The NRWIB's Manufacturing Your Future program provides separate training programs by creating pipelines for: (i) students in the 11th or 12th grade and (ii) young adults 18 years of age or older who are not currently enrolled in 11th or 12th grade. This program focuses on addressing the shortage of skilled workers in the manufacturing sector. This regional partnership comprises the following entities: Manufacturing Alliance Service Corporation, Northwestern CT Community College, Naugatuck Valley Community College, CT Technical High Schools, Torrington H.S., Danbury H.S., New Milford H.S. and Waterbury high schools along with sixteen employers throughout the northwest workforce region (which includes Waterbury, Torrington, and Danbury), and several business associations and chambers of commerce. Training programs available include (but are not limited to): Introduction to Manufacturing (7 weeks), Introduction to Machinist (30 weeks), Fundamentals of Manufacturing Technology, Engineering Drawing Specifications (8 weeks) and Manufacturing Process/Precision Machining (8 weeks).
- **Transitional employment funded through WIOA** provides short term employment experience for those with limited work history. It is primarily geared toward the ex-offenders who need to build not only their resume but skills and coping mechanisms as they return from incarceration.
- **The Northwest Construction Careers Initiative** strives to reach out to area residents in the interest of recruiting individuals for career opportunities in the construction building trades. The system brings together community-based organizations, direct-services providers such as the American Job Center in Waterbury, the local school system, the building trades, and other community groups to achieve specific goals.
- **Ticket to Work:** The Ticket to Work program allows individuals receiving social security benefits to keep those benefits while they explore employment, receive vocational support, and gain work experience. Ticket to Work is a good fit for people who want to improve their earning potential and are committed to preparing for long-term career success.
- **Older Worker Virtual Training Program:** This program is designed to provide low-income people who are age 55+ with access to job skills training virtually. By providing them with laptops and internet hot spots, this program connects people who cannot get to job training sites in person, for example, those who live in rural areas or are caring for family members. Participants are also paired with a training consultant to enroll in online courses and update their skills. Then, they are connected with a job developer to help find and secure employment.
- **Connecticut Workforce & High-Tech Industry Skills Partnership (CTWhisp):** This program offers a variety of IT career training at schools such as Naugatuck Valley Community College and Patrick's Academy. The program consists of short-term IT course clusters aligned with industry certifications and supportive services. Clusters include Networking, Programming, Systems, Software and Project Management. Each IT cluster has been mapped to Microsoft and/or



CompTIA certifications. The course clusters are offered free of charge to eligible CTWHISP participants. Additional services include enrollment assistance, academic advising, and employment services. In addition to gaining skills and stackable credentials, participants at NVCC will earn between 9-12 college credits that may be used towards a degree.

Business Services: The NRWIB serves as the convener of industry representatives from the targeted industry sectors: Manufacturing, Healthcare, Information Technology, Construction, Human Services, Retail Trade, Transportation & Warehousing, and Accommodation & Food Services. We convene a robust Business Services Unit that consists of business intermediaries (Chambers of Commerce), AJC partners (Voc-Rehab, Adult Ed). These representatives understand more about what is needed from service providers, how the WDB and other workforce entities can do more to prepare workers for their jobs and understand their emerging skill needs.

Strong collaboration exists among workforce partners and those business intermediaries, but as always continuous improvement and honing a more strategic plan when working with businesses will be a focus of the NRWIB. The state has a well-rounded, diverse database detailing job openings that are available and skills needed, developing a well-defined strategy to connect employers with available talent is needed.

Special Populations: Several populations are at risk of slipping through the cracks in northwest Connecticut. These include:

- Ex-Offenders – The NRWIB has representatives who serve on the Danbury, Waterbury, and Torrington Re-Entry Collaborative Roundtables. These roundtables are a collaboration of state, federal and local organizations that convene monthly to identify needs and address gaps in services for individuals returning to the community from incarceration. These grassroots efforts are working together to affect change in policy by successfully fostering re-entry with the elimination of barriers in our community, region-wide. Many ex-offenders in the state are paroled to the halfway houses in Waterbury, but when they finish parole, their home is not in the area they are from originally. Addressing this disconnect is a focus of these groups. Typically, ex-offenders are from other parts of the state. This raises challenges in ensuring they receive continuous services. Existing models for ex-offenders need to be promoted. One such model that the NRWIB will continue to focus on is placing these individuals in transitional jobs that allow them to build work history and develop skills. A full description of NRWIB’s approach to transitional jobs is included later in this plan (Section III, Question 4).
- Persons with Disabilities – the NRWIB has committed to providing career services, in conjunction with local school systems, to youth with disabilities. Individuals between the ages of 18-64 who receive Social Security benefits because of a disability are informed about the Ticket to Work program, a free and voluntary program that helps Social Security beneficiaries go to work, finding a path for a career. Enrolled in the Social Security Administration’s Ticket to Work program as an Employment Network, the agency has developed an excellent track record of working with persons with disabilities. A benefit specialist is available to help answer questions and solve problems relating to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Services are free and confidential.
- English Language Learners – The number of languages spoken within the region poses a resource/capacity challenge to NRWIB. There are limited staff with the capacity to work with all



the non-English speakers. The NRWIB also intends to hire an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher to help these individuals with classes to be conducted virtually.

Partnerships between Agencies & Providers: Partners within the region truly value the connections they have with each other. Strong communication exists among workforce system partners within the region. In addition to day-to-day communication, regular partner meetings are held in each AJC. Statewide partnerships meet quarterly, and local meetings are held monthly with CTDOL, Department of Social Services (DSS), case management, the VETS unit, and the Business Services unit to discuss issues ranging from programmatic to operations issues. Additionally, JFES has a partner meeting with all those involved in JFES, CTDOL, local DOL, Department of Social Services (DSS), Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), and case management to discuss what is working and the tasks that need to get completed.

Partnerships with Education: Partners from the high school-based programs, community colleges, and adult education had very positive things to say about the WIOA process. There are several strong examples of programs helping low-income (WIOA eligible) clients access post-secondary education and enter the job market. These programs included:

- The WAVE program at Naugatuck Valley Community College (OSY) focuses on the importance of intrusive advising—reaching out to out-of-school youth students to ensure they understand the process, file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), are attending and doing well in classes, and connecting them to resources. Students are mentored by staff. After completing the program (which results in an Associate degree), they are encouraged to pursue a four-year degree or enter the workforce.
- Naugatuck Valley Community College also has an in-school program for students in 8th grade that follows them through four years of high school with mentoring and tutoring, which results in 85% of students attending college. GEAR-UP, a national grant funded by the U.S. Dept. of Education service over 1500 students in the region.
- Northwestern Connecticut Community College uses a cohort model for a semester. This allows students to take courses together to build a sense of community. The college also still has a primary advisor in addition to an academic advisor who works closely with the student, reducing the length of the program by a semester. Students receive credit-bearing coursework and are mentored individually and collectively by staff. This model incorporates service-learning which is required to engaging other students.
- The NRWIB works closely with its community and technical college partners as well as education leaders in the K-12 and Adult Education systems. Fostering these strong relationships is integral to identifying key partners to integrate into the local workforce system. The NRWIB and college leadership are interconnected through board membership. The NRWIB has a seat on its board for a representative of the Connecticut State Community College system and a representative from the CT State Department of Education (Adult Education). The NRWIB intends to deepen its partnership with secondary and post-secondary providers in the region, some promising practices for collaboration include: career exploration, co-location, shared planning, service referrals, curricula development leading to industry-driven career pathways and implementation of virtual digital literacy and ESL classes.
- The NRWIB Future Bankers' Camp is designed to motivate and tap into the talent of high-achieving students from low-income areas, providing them a clear and promising career path in



the financial services industry. In partnership with the Center for Financial Training, area public schools, and local banking institutions, the Future Bankers' Camp helps improve math, communication, and financial literacy skills in high school juniors and seniors. Upon completing the four-week program (two weeks of classroom lessons, two weeks of real world experience), students are provided entry-level training and an upward mobility career path. Students are taught about the roles of a bank teller and customer service representative as well as the basic skills accompanied with these positions, including professionalism, work ethic, critical thinking, teamwork, written and oral communication, etc. Students who complete the camp and pass the test receive the American Bankers Association (ABA) Bank Teller Certificate or the Customer Service Rep Certificate – a widely recognized industry credential for entry level employment.

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

Initiating Assistance from WIOA: A customer's experience with the NRWIB and staff begins with an initial welcome where they will experience high value, relevant and efficient services. Once staff engages their customer, their focus should turn to discovering why they are seeking services and how to best assist them in meeting their needs. Staff are equipped with the skills necessary to help customers who may not be clear on exactly what their needs are and at asking the right questions to help the customer identify which of NRWIB's integrated services will advance their employability, training and/or education objectives. Current promising practices identified by jobseekers include:

- The referral process from other agencies or when a company's workforce is reduced seems to work properly
- The orientation session is perceived as informative.

The issuance of WARN notices allows staff to mobilize services. For adults, the referral and recruitment efforts are primary to the initial introduction to WIOA services.

Service Delivery Opportunities: Through focus groups conducted with jobseekers over the last years, NRWIB was able to identify opportunities to fill gaps and/or make improvements to its service delivery strategy. The opportunities identified are outlined below.

- Participants felt they often had to complete the same paperwork repeatedly and wondered why there was not a central system to access their data versus having started new with each group/agency/program. This issue is under study at a statewide partner level.
- Focus group attendees reported the WIOA verification process takes a long time as well as the approval to take courses. Under WIOA this frustration is removed as the Career Navigator can place a participant directly into a relevant and meaningful career service to address their needs quickly and efficiently. Dislocated Workers and Adults are encouraged to take an active role in their case management process, making it a "partnership".
- With the use of assessment tools there is an opportunity for AJC staff to play a more integral role in helping jobseekers explore potential careers, understand in demand occupations, and define the transferrable skills customers possess. Currently, jobseekers' skills and career paths are being identified through a variety of ways – sometimes on their own and sometimes with AJC staff. Most recently, digital literacy classes have been provided at the AJC to improve jobseekers' computer skills.



- Jobseekers reported they could benefit from additional guidance navigating the process of identifying and selecting training. Customers struggle with understanding where they can take classes for industry certifications and when those classes will be offered. This issue is born out of the complexities currently governing the ETPL.

After identifying these service delivery opportunities, NRWIB has defined a course of action to address the gaps and/or make improvements where needed, specifically, the customer-centric case management approach. This model was implemented in the AJCs throughout the region. Staff now takes a “deep dive” approach with each participant to assure success and satisfaction.

7. 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.

The region has a strong group of entities providing workforce activities to youth. The NRWIB partners closely with Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC) and Northwest Connecticut Community College (NCCC) to support programs for Out-of-School Youth (OSY).

At Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC), the Workforce Achievers Value Education (WAVE) program is implemented to ensure high risk students are served through a strongly knit program that assists them in completing education and career pathways. With funding from WIOA, the WAVE program not only provides academic project-driven classes to participants, but also demonstrates the value of the skills they are learning through relevant paid and unpaid internships, certificates, and projects. NRWIB and NVCC work collaboratively to ensure area youth succeed in the workplace and help students develop real world skills.

Northwest Connecticut Community College partners with NRWIB to provide the Team Success Program. Team Success is a mentoring scholarship program that is available to students entering NCCC between the ages of 16 and 24, particularly those who face barriers that prevent them from pursuing higher education, job training, or support services. The program provides a network of support along each student’s path to obtaining a credential that helps them develop confidence and competences in academic, professional, and social skills.

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

Through the analyses previously described, NRWIB has identified the following gaps in service and opportunities to enhance workforce services in northwest Connecticut:

- The region should continue to develop its sector-based strategies. With a strong foundation in sectors like Manufacturing, a well-developed regional sector partnership model for each industry will help provide a more strategic approach to business services and long-term career pathways in the region. Data from this approach can then be used to counsel students and jobseekers toward career paths that lead to meaningful employment.
- Services provided to jobseekers with disabilities have suffered from gaps throughout the region; the NRWIB has sought to address those concerns through the Disability Employment Initiative Youth Program which provides the population with access to a Benefit Specialist at the AJC and funding for paid work experiences.



- More cross-training among staff will help streamline referrals, improve consistency, and ensure customers have access to the comprehensive suite of services available to them. Cross-training should include all WIOA partners, Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS), DSS, and JFES, at minimum. This will be done informally throughout the year and formally by setting up training twice a year for all new hires and as a refresher for all others every six months to cover any gaps. The Integrated Resource Teams (IRT) will provide the AJC and its partners with quarterly meetings to discuss functional, case management level program issues.
- Workforce system partners need to have a strategy to connect customers to supportive services in an intentional and strategic way. For example, some jobseekers would benefit from childcare while they are seeking work. Additionally, public transit needs to be more accessible and available to more consumers. The Governor's Workforce Development Council is formulating a strategy to address these barriers.

III. LWDB VISION, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES

1. Identify the vision, goals and strategies adopted by the LWDB and how these will affect the preparation of an educated and skilled workforce.

The **vision** of the NRWIB is to promote and foster regional economic development by providing quality employment and training services to employers, job seekers, and youth, aligned with the State's overarching goals serving as a framework for the ongoing development and continuous improvement of the workforce development system.

The following goals and strategies were designed to support ongoing development in our region's workforce.

- **Goal 1:** Expand regional economic development and business growth by assuring employers have access to a skilled workforce required to be competitive in the marketplace, primarily in key industry sectors that drive the region's economy.
 - **Strategy 1.1:** Continue to grow Manufacturing and Healthcare Sector Partnerships and launch a green jobs sector partnership and others based on industry demand.
 - **Strategy 1.2:** Engage additional workforce system and community-based partners in response to the diverse and ever-changing needs of industry and sector partnerships.
- **Goal 2:** Strengthen our pipeline for talent development by increasing youth and adults' exposure to career opportunities and related education and training so they are prepared to enter the workforce as confident, responsible, productive employees upon completion of post-secondary and/or stackable credential training.
 - **Strategy 2.1:** Continue to expand career pathways for each of the targeted sectors and other industry sectors as needed.
 - **Strategy 2.2:** Support consistent processes and procedures for career exploration in the region's schools, colleges, American Job Centers, and community-based organizations.
 - **Strategy 2.3:** Strengthen and improve mechanisms for regular communication and collaboration around career and supportive services.
 - **Strategy 2.4:** Assist businesses with connecting with training providers to implement solutions utilizing the regional sector partnership model.
 - **Strategy 2.5:** Support pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships in target sectors.



- **Goal 3:** Promote continuous improvement of the current workforce by developing the necessary skills and credentials within the regional workforce with an emphasis on addressing basic skills deficiencies to maintain and advance career paths that promote economic self-sufficiency.
 - **Strategy 3.1:** Connect basic skills training and education to career pathways to ensure individuals persist and see tangible outcomes.
 - **Strategy 3.2:** Incorporate digital literacy into strategic to increase individuals' basic skills.
 - **Strategy 3.3:** Ensure equitable access of career services to all individuals in the region.
 - **Strategy 3.4:** Implement a series of professional and work readiness workshops for adults that are integrated as individuals work with their Career Navigators.
 - **Strategy 3.5:** Improve the coordination of client referrals through the use of integrated resource teams with all partner agencies.

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

On 05/09/2022, the NRWIB Executive Leadership Team participated in a strategic planning session, facilitated by an outside consultant. Prior to the session, the consultant surveyed regional businesses, job seekers, and front-line staff to assess the challenges and opportunities that exist in Northwest Connecticut and how they should be leveraged to inform this plan's goals and strategies. The consultant summarized the survey findings and shared the results with the NRWIB Executive Leadership Team.

A meeting agenda was prepared for the strategic planning session which included NRWIB's existing vision and goals along with key survey findings from businesses, job seekers, and front-line staff. As the NRWIB Executive Leadership Team developed and modified its vision and goals, it referenced the goals defined in the State WIOA Unified Plan for alignment. The finalized version of this plan's modified vision and goals are as defined in Section III.1.

3. Describe strategies to work with entities that carry out the core programs to align resources available to the local area and to achieve the strategic vision and goals established by the local board.

To achieve the strategic vision and goals, as defined in Section III.1, the NRWIB will work with partners from state agencies, adult education providers, literacy agencies, vocational rehabilitation, and post-secondary institutions. NRWIB will streamline access and increase availability of the multitude of federal, state, and local programs. The One-Stop Operator will take the lead in the coordination of partner services. The NRWIB will serve as a convener and broker and will continue to facilitate the implementation and deliver of a broad array of initiatives that focus on the region's priorities. This includes the Connecticut Advanced Manufacturing Initiative and the Advanced Manufacturing training programs set up locally at Naugatuck Valley Community College, the Apprenticeship CT Initiative in partnership with Manufacturers Alliance Service Corp (MASC).

The NRWIB, industry-partners and MASC responded to employer demand for training in Plastics Manufacturing, through the Apprenticeship CT Initiative Plastics 2.0 program which launched in the fall of 2020. MASC also provides 240 hours of nationally certified training in the precision parts manufacturing of Computerized Numerical Control (CNC). Similarly, the same efforts will be directed through the Northwest Construction Career Initiative, the region's Job Funnel program and careers in healthcare by leveraging the HPOG program model.



4. 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.

The last two years magnified the challenges with technology-driven service delivery. While it can be an efficient and useful practice, the NRWIB quickly discovered that customers have limited access to technology and connectivity, and in some cases, limited knowledge on how to use virtual services. Meeting customers with disabilities, as well as other population groups, where they are will provide an equitable service delivery model for all.

As recommended by job seekers and businesses alike, the NRWIB will aim to enter into an agreement with public libraries to establish one-stop delivery services, which will creation another option for bringing workforce services into local communities in Northwest CT.

The NRWIB will also work with the region's faith-based and community-based organizations to identify leaders who can serve as champions to promote workforce trainings, employment opportunities, and workshops to hard-to-reach populations. Setting up a booth and/or kiosk at local grocery stores and malls have the potential to cost-efficiently market the workforce development system more broadly to individuals who would not normally visit an AJC.

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

Each of the goals established by the NRWIB are designed with the intent that outcomes for participants are aligned with the attainment of the federal accountability performance measures. By assuring the continued training and development of a competent workforce to support the five industry sectors that dominate the region's economy, continued economic growth for both industry(s) and individuals will be realized. Addressing the fact that 1 in 4 households have earnings above the Federal Poverty Level but below a basic cost of living threshold requires additional attention when adopting a self-sufficiency standard.

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

The NRWIB intends to co-enroll as many participants as possible, documenting all barriers to employment. This will greatly increase the numbers in performance measures and will likely have a negative impact on performance; however, the intent is to improve the coordination of programs. The NRWIB will continue to manage performance levels, based on the statistical regression model, that reflect the economic conditions of the region and allow for successful attainment of the negotiated performance levels. Ongoing discussions with both State and Federal DOL must consider the loss of population in CT, the middle skills gap in filling job openings and the impact of legislation under consideration by the Connecticut General Assembly on the business climate in the state. Current Performance levels are attached.

7. 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.

The NRWIB uses a comprehensive program monitoring tool to measure the effectiveness of the American Job Center delivery system. Each partner's ability to contribute to the system in a manner that increases the likelihood of a positive outcome for every participant is vital to the overall success of the system. Assuring the programs and services meet the needs of each participant, each contracted service



provider (not ITA vendors) is reviewed annually to measure the program content, delivery of the content and satisfaction of enrollees. A similar fiscal tool is used to assure that all dollars allocated within the workforce delivery system are managed with prudence and provide the most efficient and effective delivery of services. For contracted service providers, NRWIB utilizes the FutureWorks tracker (in real time) to measure completion rates, credential/ certificate attainment rate, entered employment rates and earnings. This unique tool allows for a timelier view of participant performance allowing for adjustments in strategies to achieve the negotiated performance levels if needed as well and provide for continuous improvement of the providers and the delivery.

IV. COORDINATION OF SERVICES

1. Coordination with Partner Programs and Services

Describe how WIOA Title I 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 LWDB will coordinate with these programs to prevent duplication and improve services to customers.

During the initial orientation and intake process, all customers (WIOA/TANF) will be asked to self-identify special needs and/or requirements as it relates to Vocational Rehabilitation or to other forms of disabilities. Through the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) testing process, required for all TANF and Adult participants and DW participants who do not have a high school diploma, basic skills deficiencies will be determined and addressed through referrals to Adult Education partners and Literacy remediation partners. A coordinated referral system that begins with an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) comprised of representatives of each partner will be in place to assure appropriate services are provided to each participant. This group will consist of two levels – administrative IRT and programmatic IRT. The administrative IRT will consist of a representative from each partner that has entered into an Infrastructure Funding Agreement with the NRWIB. The purpose of convening on a quarterly basis will be to provide the partners with the opportunity to speak freely about what may or may not be working on an administrative level (i.e., budgetary matters). The programmatic IRT will consist of Career Navigators and Case Managers from the various programs that offered through the AJC and its partners. This group will convene on a quarterly basis to discuss functional, case-management level program issues. Monthly IRT meetings will review the ongoing status of each referred customer to assure timely client flow up to and through job placement and follow up. With partners onsite at least once a week, referral to customers has been much more seamless. The team approach will prevent the duplication of services to participants and streamline their travel through the system. A referral system to outside agencies (non-partner) for services that may be needed to address other underlying barriers will be developed and implemented. The Board has started efforts of referring customers to 2-1-1 for utility assistance, food, housing, childcare, elderly care, after-school programs, and crisis intervention and to the Department of Aging and Disability Services for additional assistance to overcome barriers.

The American Job Center operational leadership provided strategies for planning and implementation of service delivery. An example includes coordinating services to address shared workforce concerns through co-enrollment of programs, regional adult education meetings, workforce roundtables with CTDOLE and NRWIB, and a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) feature on CT Hire to share information and alleviate duplication of services. In addition, the NRWIB recently released two television advertising campaigns to promote the services available at the AJC.



2. Coordination with Economic Development Activities

Provide a description of how the LWDB will coordinate workforce development activities carried out in the local area with economic development activities.

The local workforce development system has a strong tradition of cooperation among partners and coordination of effort across agencies in providing services to business customers. The Northwest Region hosts a Business Services Team that is made up of staff from the CTDOL and NRWIB, the Greater Waterbury Chamber of Commerce, Resource Development Associates, the Danbury Chamber of Commerce and Northwest Chamber of Commerce, BRS, Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), JFES, Adult Education and other stakeholders and partners. The comprehensive Waterbury AJC organizes Business Services functions to serve business customers in a single, unified, coordinated team structure. The local Business Services Team reaches out to communicate with all local economic development officials to develop a working relationship that allows for the coordination of workforce activities with economic development plans, including strategies for business retention, business growth and recruitment of new businesses to the region. A single point of contact will maximize communications and the delivery of services. Some of those services include posting job openings in the CT Hires databank, promotion of funding programs (like the Manufacturing Innovation Fund) designed to assist employers (e.g., access to On-the-Job Training funds, transitional jobs, subsidized work experience, and job-matching and recruitment events).

Business Services Team participants will use the CT Hires system. They will meet on a regular basis to share information and coordinate strategy. Businesses seeking services and support will be reviewed to ensure their eligibility and appropriateness. The appropriate use of social media will also be utilized.

3. Coordination with Education and Workforce Development Activities

Describe how the LWDB will coordinate education and workforce development 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.

The NRWIB provides a framework to bridge the skill gaps that may exist within its workforce. Aligning the local labor market demands with appropriate training and education programs, the NRWIB will coordinate its sectors strategies by convening industry, with secondary, post-secondary and apprenticeship providers. This will assure that in-demand, industry-recognized credentials are available to meet the needs of industry while promoting career pathways for jobseekers in the region.

Using the regional sector partnership model, the NRWIB will collaboratively identify workforce needs and support industry-driven career pathways. The NRWIB, in partnership with K- 12 leaders, Adult Education providers and post-secondary partners, will facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment in programs to improve access to activities leading to a recognized credential. Career pathways are an effective strategy to assist jobseekers and workers in gaining marketable skills and industry-recognized credentials. The career pathways strategy encourages greater collaboration of partners in the local workforce development system and can be adapted for youth, adults, and individuals with disabilities as well as a range of individuals facing unique challenges and barriers to employment. This collaborative approach and effort ensure the avoidance of duplicative services while providing efficient and meaningful benefits to our customers.



Labor exchange and immediate job placement are critical roles for the workforce development system, but employers have emphasized the need for the NRWIB and its partners to take a longer-range view and expand emphasis on ongoing worker skill development along career pathways, particularly for entry-level and lower-skilled workers. The NRWIB and its secondary and post-secondary education partners will work with employer groups in targeted sectors to map occupational progressions along career pathways and the education and credential requirements for advancement. Educational programming assets in the region will be reviewed to determine gap areas as well as areas of potential over-supply or mismatches.

Critical components of the development of career pathways-focused programming are the integration of shorter-term, modular training models that use work as the central context for learning; the integration of “bridge” education, such as Adult Education, as part of (rather than prerequisite to) technical training; the incorporation of stackable credentials that can be earned relatively quickly to incrementally increase workers’ labor market competitiveness; and the provision of supportive services at critical education and work transition points. Equally important is the reorientation of AJC staff serving both jobseekers and employers to this longer-range skill and career development view and ensuring that they have the training and knowledge to support both customer groups in this work.

Employers have also emphasized the value of employer-driven, workplace-based training models. While not discounting the need for classroom-based training, companies need workers who are well-versed in both the culture and competency expectations of their workplaces. Classroom training alone does not necessarily prepare students to be effective employees. The NRWIB will continue to enhance investments in employer-driven work-based training for both youth and adults, including work experience, internships, on-the-job-training, incumbent worker training, customized training, and Registered Apprenticeships. The NRWIB has begun collaborating with local labor unions to drive this effort. Doing so may have a significant impact upon other themes mentioned in this report, such as the need to expand youth career exploration, reduce worker turnover, and improve soft skills development. Within local high schools, the NRWIB has worked school counselors and has created a Registered Pre-apprenticeship Universal Banker program in the high schools. This program has targeted youth and established partnerships with local banking institutions to teach students about financial planning and provide them with the basics to begin a career in the financial services industry.

It is important to note that expanding work-based training opportunities will require that employers in the region put “skin in the game” and offer training sites and training mentors.

Adult basic education services in the regional workforce system also integrate the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 funding. Through the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Bureau of Adult Education, the NRWIB receives funding to support infrastructure costs within in the AJCs. NRWIB will utilize a portion of these dollars to increase access to technology in the job centers that will support individuals’ career exploration, planning and development along identified career pathways. New technology has been installed in the training room, including updated computers, a projector, wireless internet, and more. ABE has leveraged these resources by utilizing the training room twice a week to host classes and the National External Diploma Program. As the top-rated service utilized by jobseekers at the AJC (54.9%), the resource area and training room will continue to be a vital resource toward helping customers obtain meaningful employment.



4. Coordination with Transportation and Other Supportive Services

Describe how the LWDB will coordinate workforce development 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.

The vast geographic area of the region and the lack of public transit in the rural northwest complicates the ability to meet the needs of industry and jobseekers alike. Public transit routes, once in play have been cut compounding the already significant barrier of transportation. Where possible, the NRWIB provides bus passes and gas cards to eligible participants in an attempt to mitigate this primary barrier. Used for access to training programs as well as employment opportunities, this is a supportive service that does not adequately address the needs of the system. The NRWIB has partnered with Uber and Lyft to provide job seekers transportation to and from interviews and/or other job-related activities. The NRWIB is also collaborating with the Office of Workforce Strategy and the other four workforce boards in the state to expand transportation supports to include: car-based solutions, mileage reimbursement, provision of a bicycle and other innovative ways to assist participants. Other supportive services such as work gear, uniforms, health screening (physicals, vaccinations) and childcare are prioritized on an individual participant need basis. A lack of childcare resources is a significant barrier to employment throughout the region but organizations such as Care 4 Kids have provided critical assistance to those impacted. The barrier of childcare has been further complicated and compounded by COVID-19. Many parents once relied on their children being in school during the day so they could participate in job training and/or job search activities. There are efforts underway, being made by the Office of Early Childhood Education, to increase the number of family childcare centers which may help mitigate the crisis that has been compounded by COVID-19. Other supportive services less often engaged include license fees reimbursement (TWIC card, OSHA cards, union cards). The NRWIB does not make needs-based payments, but has implemented stipend payments leveraging philanthropic dollars.

Supportive services may include:

- Transportation assistance such as gas vouchers or cards – not to exceed value of \$50.00 per month, taxi fare and bus passes – while enrolled and attending training. Attendance verification is required.
- Uniforms, required footwear and equipment (as required by training vendor) separate and distinct from the cost of the training program as published by the ETPL list.
- Specialized assistance not otherwise specifically listed herein required to participate in services or accept or retain employment with actual documentation of expenses. These requests will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Supportive services cannot exceed, in the aggregate, \$5,000 for any one customer enrolled in WIOA program activities.

Customers have consistently raised the issue of transportation as a barrier to worker training, employment, and retention. In more urban areas, public transportation- particularly evenings and weekends - often does not align with students' and workers' childcare, work, and school schedules. It does not effectively link workers from where they live to where they work and train. In rural areas of the state, qualified workers are disconnected from available jobs in more metropolitan areas due to personal transportation challenges and lack of public transportation resources. Several local industries, specifically healthcare, human services, and construction/trades, have stated that lack of a personal vehicle (with



valid license, insurance, and registration) is a significant barrier to employment in these industries. A formal, statewide plan to address transportation barriers needs a champion to move the needle and address this issue along with increasing the number of family childcare centers.

A lack of available and affordable childcare resources was also cited as a significant barrier to worker training, employment, and retention, particularly among employers in the healthcare and human services sectors. Expanding availability of on-site childcare at training locations and workplaces is clearly desired, as is addressing childcare affordability issues.

Connecting and expanding these supportive services networks for students, jobseekers, and workers will require the commitment and collaboration of multiple regional partners, particularly community-based and human services partners with direct oversight of or influence upon these resources. NRWIB can play a lead role in bringing partners together and facilitating this conversation, and in bringing its own supportive service assets to bear.

5. Coordination with 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.

The NRWIB prides itself on the lack of duplication of services as it has a close and productive partnership with its Wagner-Peyser CT DOL staff. Monthly partner meetings, coordinated calendars of workshops, and shared staffing of the AJC are just a few examples of the strategies in place that maximize the delivery of a wide range of services through the one-stop system. A coordinated reception area in each one stop assures the seamless delivery of services to all clients, communication among partners, especially the DOL. This coordination is key to streamline services, avoiding duplication and maximizing the resources available. During partner meetings, other agencies communicate and coordinate with the Board and DOL which also assist with the prevention duplicating efforts and services.

6. Coordination with Adult Education and Literacy

Describe how the LWDB will coordinate workforce development 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 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.

The NRWIB will coordinate with local adult education and literacy providers to review all applications to provide adult education and literacy activities under Title II for the local area. In doing so, determination of whether such applications are consistent with the local plan is assured. NRWIB will make recommendations to promote alignment. With respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and other individuals (such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination), the Board staff will play an active role through the One-Stop Committee. The NRWIB has identified and hired an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher who teaches classes, held at the AJC. Except for temporary suspension during the pandemic, digital literacy and ESL classes are also available at the AJC.



The Northwest Region Adult Education providers, in partnership with the NRWIB and CT Association of Adult and Continuing Education (CAACE) is leading a statewide initiative to educate and empower our community. This initiative provides adult learners access to a free high school completion program along with English Language programs. The goal of this initiative is to encourage residents to return to school and receive their high school diploma or improve their English language skills through an annual “No Excuse – March for Education”. This unique, annual march will provide a local, state, and national platform focused on the programs and services of adult education.

The NRWIB will also coordinate with regional adult education providers to implement a “Rethinking Rethink Adult Education” program. This program will target individuals with barriers to employment in need of a high school diploma or improved English skills and provide them education to fill the needs of manufacturing employers seeking a qualified workforce. This partnership will serve the employment needs of Adult Ed learners residing in all towns within northwestern Connecticut, focusing on those areas with the most concentrated employment needs.

7. 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 with employers and other efforts of cooperation, collaboration and coordination.

See Section I.2.b, regarding individuals with disabilities.

V. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM SERVICES

1. System Description

Identify the programs that are included in the system and how the LWDB will work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs to support alignment in provision of services.

Career Resources, Inc. delivers WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker program activities through the AJC system via one comprehensive and two affiliate centers. Career services are provided to a wide range of job seekers, with specialty programs directed to returning veterans and individuals with disabilities. Services include career coaching, guidance on job search techniques, skill and interest assessments, advice and support through peer groups, individual employment planning, and job development and placement. Occupational training is provided through access to Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). Business Services Teams engage employers and provide recruitment and hiring assistance, as well as access to an array of training resources for incumbent workers and new hires. Post-pandemic efforts have allowed for the provision of virtual access to services through Career Edge and CTHires.

Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) services and CRI’s services are co-located in all 3 AJCs, with Waterbury serving as the primary comprehensive AJC and Danbury and Torrington serving as affiliate one-stops. The AJCs are hubs from which jobseekers can be referred to sector-focused programs in targeted sectors such as Manufacturing, Healthcare, Information Technology, Human Services, Construction,



Transportation & Warehousing, Retail Trade and Food & Accommodation Services. Job Developers from organizations such as Dept. of Aging and Disability Services and Adult Education providers attend the Regional Business Service team meetings in each region. AJC staff will be familiar with these targeted sector initiatives and programs and capable of making informed referrals to them. In some situations, targeted sector programs may be co-located at an AJC. Accessible printed information will be available to jobseekers concerning these programs.

2. Sub Grants and Contracts

Provide a description of the competitive process to be used to award subgrants and contracts in the local area for WIOA-funded activities and the services to be made available.

Most services will be provided by CRI. Training services outside of those offered on the ETPL will be competitively procured using the NRWIB Fiscal Policy and Procedures.

3. Expanding Access to Employment

Describe how the LWDB, 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 a recognized postsecondary credential.

In order to expand access to employment, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment, the NRWIB will work with its core and non-core partners to ensure a diverse array of career services, training services, and supportive services exist within the region. NRWIB has identified the expansion of apprenticeship models as a key strategy for improving access to employment that concurrently prepares individuals with the skills needed for employment and addresses business needs. NRWIB will work with businesses, business intermediaries such as the chambers of commerce, and organized labor to develop new apprenticeship models in the region's target industries. NRWIB will also leverage its OJT policy, transitional jobs strategy, and customized training solution to expand individuals' access to employment.

4. 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.

Changes in the labor market due to the COVID-19 pandemic shifted the NRWIB's key industry sectors to Health Care & Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Manufacturing, Accommodation & Food Services; Construction; and Green Jobs. Manufacturing and Construction are projected to experience a slight decline in jobs over the next five years (retiring workforce, technology, etc.) but the average annual wages for these jobs are higher than other sectors.

To support the training and employment needs of these key industry sectors, the NRWIB has created specific programs:

- **Construction Job Training** – the Northwest Construction Careers Initiatives offers northwest CT residents the opportunity to pursue a career in the construction and building trades. Job training



and employment possibilities include OSHA 10, OSHA 30, Hazwoper Certifications, CORE curriculum, pre-apprenticeships in plumbing, HVAC, and sheet metal work.

- **Environmental Remediation Job Training** – this training program prevents environmental tragedies from occurring by training northwest CT residents in a 4-week program OSHA/EPA laws and regulations, OSHA Hazwoper training, confined space entry, safety awareness, personal protective equipment and respirators, lead and asbestos abatement, and lead renovation.
- **Healthcare Training** – the NRWIB currently offers training programs in Patient Care Technician, Central Sterile Processing, Emergency Medical Technician, and Certified Nurse’s Aide. These careers offer on/off ramps for career pathway advancement.
- **Manufacturing Your Future** – focuses on addressing the shortage of skilled workers in the manufacturing sector. The Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative (ACI) develops workforce pipeline programs for training qualified, entry-level workers for job placement with manufacturers and employers experiencing sustained workforce shortages. Training partners include the Manufacturing Alliance Service Corporation, Northwestern CT Community College, Naugatuck Valley Community College, CT Technical High Schools, Torrington High School, Danbury High School, New Milford High School, Waterbury High School, 16 employers throughout the region, and several business associations and chambers of commerce.

The NRWIB has limited funding for ITA’s and with this declaration, will prioritize the issuance of ITAs to regional residents first, while following its Priority of Service as outlined in the Client Flow and Registration Policy. The following factors are to be considered by the Career Navigator when developing an Individual Employment Plan with participants: Communication with Career Navigator in a timely manner and; Appropriateness of requested training as it related to current industry sector/labor market demand; Career Navigator recommendation.

Funding for ITAs will not exceed \$4,000 per customer; however, programs identified as meeting annually “priority labor market demands,” as determined by the Board, will receive consideration for additional funding.

5. Industry Partnerships

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

NRWIB will leverage its existing relationships with industry partners and its history of building successful industry partnerships in manufacturing to grow and/or launch new partnerships, based off of the regional sector partnership model, throughout the region.

NRWIB has promoted apprenticeship and OJT programs throughout the region. On the first and third Thursday of each month, the Northwest Construction Careers Initiative offers residents apprenticeship training opportunities for plumbing, HVAC, sheet metal, OSHA Hazwoper certification, and lead and asbestos abatement licensing. The Manufacturing Alliance Service Corporation (MASC) provides hands-on machine training, at the Technical Training and Conference Center in Waterbury. The NRWIB, in partnership with industry representative and MASC, has launched a Plastics Program offering hands-on training utilizing state-of-the-art industry equipment. Nationally certified training in the precision parts manufacturing industry is provided to enrollees through classroom and hands-on training. At the AJC, employers of every size can participate in the “new” OJT program.



The NRWIB will also work with industry partners to develop partnerships that support the Green Jobs sector. With in-demand occupations that cross-over other sectors, this partnership can sharpen in-demand skills training, developing a pipeline of talent.

6. In-demand Training

Describe the process utilized by the LWDB to ensure that 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.

Labor exchange and immediate job placement are critical roles for the workforce development system. But focus group employers emphasized the need for the NRWIB and its partners to take a longer-range view and expand emphasis on ongoing worker skill development along career pathways, particularly for entry-level and lower-skilled workers. To ensure that training provided is linked to in demand industry sectors, the NRWIB and its secondary and post-secondary education partners will work with employer groups in its targeted sectors to map occupational progressions along career pathways and attached education and credential requirements for advancement. Educational programming assets in the region will then be reviewed to determine gap areas as well as areas of potential over-supply or another mismatch. The NRWIB will validate all in-demand sectors using current Labor Market Information.

Critical components of the development of career pathways-focused programming are the integration of shorter-term, modular training models that use work as the central context for learning; the integration of “bridge” education, such as Adult Education, as part of (rather than prerequisite to) technical training; the incorporation of stackable credentials that get be earned relatively quickly to incrementally increase workers’ labor market competitiveness; and the provision of supportive services at critical education and work transition points. Just as important is reorienting AJC staff serving both jobseekers and employers to this longer-range skill and career development view and ensuring that they have the training and knowledge to support both customer groups in this work. NRWIB will ensure these components are woven into its strategies for in-demand training.

Furthermore, NRWIB annually identifies in-demand occupations that then are prioritized by the Board. Programs meeting annually defined “Priority Labor Market Demands” as determined by the Board receive consideration for additional funding through ITAs. Such consideration must be approved by the Board of Directors. For PY 2022-2023, the Board deemed the following to be industries with significant labor market demands: Healthcare, Manufacturing, Construction/Construction Related, Information Technology and CDL.

7. Employer Engagement

Describe the strategies and services that will be used in the local area to:

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

Input provided by small employer and employers in in-demand sectors revealed an expressed interest in joining an industry partnership and advancing/advocating for apprenticeship programs. Employers recognize that in order to back fill their talent pipeline, due to an existing workforce due to retirement, increased career awareness and promotion to young, diverse talent is needed. The NRWIB will support these strategies by (1) a marketing campaign geared toward improving career awareness to job seekers *and* their families, (2) facilitating wage surveys by industry to align market demand with cost of living, and (3) regularly convening employers to respond to their “in the moment” workforce needs.



B. Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area; and

The northwest region hosts a Business Services Team that is made up of staff from the CTDOL, NRWIB, the Greater Waterbury Chamber of Commerce, Resource Development Associates, the Danbury Chamber of Commerce and Northwest Chamber of Commerce, BRS, Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), JFES, Adult Education and other stakeholders and partners. By maintaining regular communication and engagement with these groups, the NRWIB can proactively address and support business’ needs rather than being reactive.

In PY 2022-2023, the NRWIB will launch a recruitment campaign to invite more representatives to the Business Services Team so that it includes diverse perspectives and backgrounds, with the goal to create a more equitable and inclusive local workforce development system.

C. Better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development.

NRWIB has convened economic development partners to gather their feedback on the most common cross-industry workforce challenges and other concerns shared by companies currently in the region or potentially interested in locating in the region.

The Waterbury AJC will strengthen Business Services functions to serve business customers in a single, unified, coordinated team structure. The local Business Services Team will reach out to communicate with all local economic development officials to develop a working relationship that allows for the coordination of workforce activities with economic development plans. A single point of contact will ensure efficient communication and delivery of services. Some of those services include:

- Posting in the CT Hires databank of all job openings for which recruitment support is provided;
- Promotion of funding programs designed to assist employers such as the Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF);
- Access to On-the-job Training funds;
- Transitional Jobs;
- Subsidized work experience; and
- Provide job-matching and recruitment events.

8. 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.

The NRWIB’s Priority of Service policy is outlined below.

Priority of Service	
Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veteran and eligible spouses • Low income adults (i.e. TANF/WtW- Below 70% of poverty guidelines) • Customers that are employed and below the 100% LLSIL (Lower Living Standard Income Levels) with at least one barrier to employment. • Training based on DOL Labor Market Occupations in Demand



Dislocated Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veterans and Eligible Spouses • Most In Need Criteria • Training based on DOL Labor Market Occupations in Demand
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Below 70% of poverty guidelines • Youth in need of GED or High School diploma • Parenting youth • Youth who are basic skills deficient • Youth with educational attainment that is one or more grade level below the grade level appropriate to the age of the youth • Youth with disabilities including learning disabilities • Youth who are homeless or runaway youth • Youth who are offenders <p><i>*As allowed under Section 129 (c)5(H) the board chooses to identify a youth participant who resides in a single parent family as an additional barrier in the eligibility criteria.</i></p>

9. Training Services

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

Adult: An adult is defined as an individual 18 years of age or older. Unemployed customers unable to obtain employment through Career Services and employed customers who need assistance to retain or upgrade employment, must be determined eligible and registered before receiving Training Services.

Dislocated Worker: Dislocated workers must be certified by CTDOL prior to individualized career services. Dislocated workers unable to obtain employment through career center services and under-employed dislocated workers who need assistance to retain or upgrade employment must be determined eligible and registered before receiving WIOA Services

10. Customer Choice

Describe processes utilized by the LWDB to ensure customer choice in the selection of training programs. A customer may select any WIOA-approved education and training program in the state, as listed on the current ETPL, if the participant meets all other criteria relating to initial and subsequent eligibility for such educational and/or training services. Individuals seeking WIOA funded assistance have the freedom of “customer choice” in selecting the educational and training program that best fits their personal and career needs.

11. Individual Training Accounts

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

A. Describe any ITA limitations established by the board.

The NRWIB has limited funding for ITAs and with this declaration, will prioritize the issuance of ITAs to region residents first, while following its Priority of Service as outlined in the Client Flow and Registration Policy. The following factors are to be considered by the Career Navigator when developing an Individual Employment Plan with participants: Communication with Career Navigator in timely manner; Appropriateness of requested training as it relates to current industry sector/labor market demand; Labor



market demand status of previous training (if any); Attendance records from previous training (if any) and; Career Navigator recommendation.

B. Describe any exceptions to the use of ITAs.

Funding for ITAs will not exceed \$4,000 per customer. However, programs identified as meeting annually defined “Priority Labor Market Demands” as determined by the Board will receive consideration for additional funding. Such consideration must be approved by the Executive Director or designee. Customers receiving an ITA shall not be eligible for further ITA funds until 24 months after the date of exit from the prior training. Requests for additional training vouchers will be reviewed and awarded on a case by case basis.

12. 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.

Through the Northwest Construction Career Initiative, an arm of the NRWIB, and in partnership with the local building trades, participants interested in apprenticeship currently have access to a variety of pre-apprentice and union-based apprenticeship training opportunities. However, the NRWIB seeks to expand the role of apprenticeship training in its seven key industry sectors.

Working with the Office of Apprenticeship, the NRWIB has submitted documentation to expand apprenticeships in the field of Information Technology (as part of the targeted sector strategy in this industry) and is confident that employers within this growing sector will register with the Office of Apprenticeship Training. Through the CT WHISP grant, the NRWIB provides a no-cost customizable training to participants for careers in the information technology industry. Students earn industry credentials and are able to receive supportive services throughout the program. The NRWIB will also work with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) to develop and implement an apprenticeship program in early childhood development.

The NRWIB has also worked with the Office of Apprenticeship to register its Future Bankers program as a Registered Pre-apprenticeship program. The goal of this initiative is to provide students with a clear and promising career path in the financial services industry. It is a collaborative effort of the Center for Financial Training, area public schools, and local financial services institutions.

To further promote apprenticeships throughout the region, NRWIB will encourage both employers and jobseekers to consider participating in pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship efforts. At orientation sessions and during individual employment planning, the opportunity for apprenticeship training will be promoted to participants. Wage subsidy and related instruction reimbursement will be offered, and competency/performance reimbursements will be available to applicants.



13. 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.

The NRWIB will provide other services in support of the Board's vision and strategic goals. These services include but are not limited to the implementation of the On the Job Training (OJT) program. On-the-Job Training (OJT) has a proven track record in Northwest Connecticut of helping unemployed workers gain new skills to find and retain employment. NRWIB is and will continue its efforts to increase the utilization of OJT throughout the region. To increase consistency among OJT providers, NRWIB has developed minimum standards and widely accepted protocol for implementation of the program.

To promote OJTs, NRWIB outreaches directly and indirectly to employers and jobseekers. Specifically, for businesses, the Business Services staff have integrated OJT into their suite of services offered to and promoted to businesses during their outreach and encourage partner organizations (e.g., chambers of commerce, community colleges) to do the same. This minimizes the chance of multiple staff contacting one employer about the program. NRWIB has also added a Business Services Specialist to better and more directly serve employers. The NRWIB utilizes intermediaries such as regional chambers of commerce and the Smaller Manufacturer's Association to outreach to individual employers.

14. 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.

The NRWIB will rely upon guidance from CT DOL on methods to ensure continuous improvement of eligible providers of services as this relates to contracted service providers and providers of eligible training providers. The NRWIB has additional staff dedicated to maintaining the Eligible Training Provider List; we intend to increase efforts regarding outreach and recruitment to increase the number of vendors and programs made available to our customers.

15. 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 WIOA regulations are to be made available within that framework.

All prospective bidders for out-of-school youth programs must address all fourteen youth elements in their proposals and whether these elements are provided within the context of their design or provided through referrals as deemed appropriate. This includes:

1. Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction, leading to completion of secondary school, including dropout prevention strategies;
2. Alternative secondary school services;
3. Occupational skill training with a focus on a recognized post-secondary credential and in-demand occupations;
4. Paid and unpaid work experiences, including internships and job shadowing; summer employment opportunities that are directly linked to academic, occupational skills training;
5. Integrated education and training for a specific occupation or cluster;
6. Leadership development opportunities, which may include community service and peer-



centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social behaviors during non- school hours;

7. Supportive services;
8. Adult mentoring for the period of participation and a subsequent period, for a total of not less than 12 months;
9. Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation;
10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral;
11. Financial literacy education;
12. Entrepreneurial skills training;
13. Services that provide labor market information about in demand industry sectors and occupations; and
14. Post-secondary preparation and transition activities.

A. 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.

The NRWIB utilizes the CASAS reading and math testing to determine a youth’s levels and ability to compute, read, write, and speak English. For youth with special needs, special accommodations are made for testing. Based on a youth’s raw/scale scores, any youth needing to reach the next educational functioning level are provided with basic skills remediation by the respective vendor or may be referred to the local Adult Education. The NRWIB also provides access to Work Keys “Keytrain” modules for the purpose of self-paced remediation.

B. 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.

The NRWIB has defined transportation as required additional assistance and at intake this determination is made, and each youth will complete a self-attestation (note attached self- certification). Each contracted vendor may utilize funding under support services for gas vouchers, bus passes and the like; while other vendors will leverage other funding streams to provide this support service.

16. Rapid Response

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

The NRWIB has adopted Connecticut’s Rapid Response policy issued under AP-16-1 to wit: The policy outlines the total process from the time the Rapid Response Unit (RRU) learns of a layoff until all workers, when possible, have received Early Intervention services. It also includes general guidelines for Rapid Response. The full Policy appears in Appendix H.

Core WIOA program activities in the NRWIB will be aligned as partners build upon existing inter- agency relationships and program collaborations.

VI. RESPONSE TO COVID-19

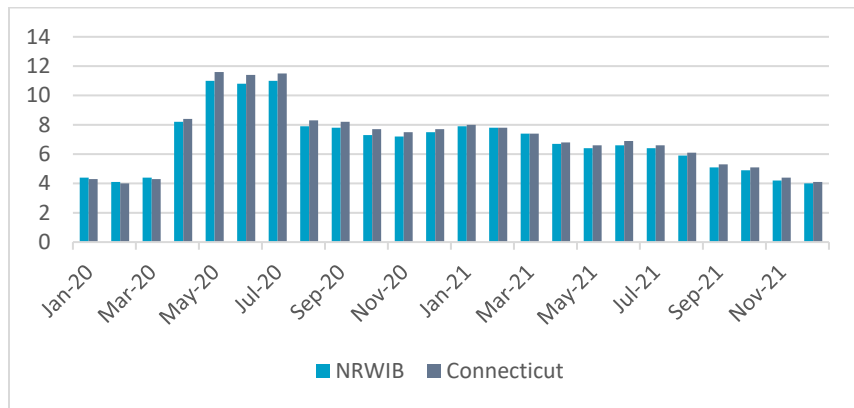


Please address the following in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

1. Describe the economic and workforce impact this event has had on your local area.

The COVID-19 public health emergency impacted regional economic and workforce trends in the Northwest Development Area. The regional unemployment rate was slightly higher than the State unemployment rate at the beginning of the pandemic (Jan-March 2020) but remained slightly lower than the State unemployment rate through the end of 2021.

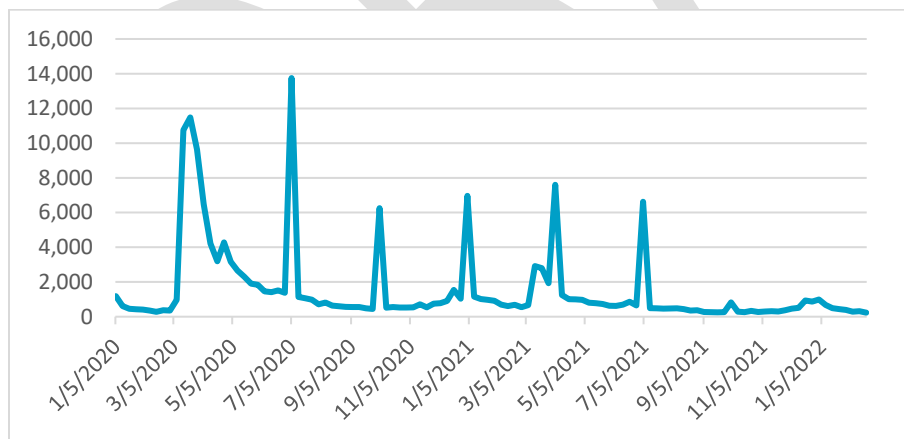
Figure 4: Unemployment Rate in Northwest Development Area During COVID-19 Pandemic (2020-2021)



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor, Office of Research

During the week of July 5, 2020, the number of initial unemployment insurance (UI) claims filed in the region peaked at 13,749. Just one week earlier, only 1,373 UI claims were filed – a 901% increase. Since this spike the number of initial UI claims filed in the region has hovered around 1,000/week with exceptions during COVID spikes in October 2020, January 2021, April 2021, and July 2021.

Figure 5: Initial UI Claims Filed in Northwest Development Area, 2020-2022



Source: CT Dept. of Labor Office of Research, as of March 2022

The following WARN notices also illustrate the negative impact of the COVID-19 virus.

Table 12: WARN Notices in the Northwest Development Area, 2020-2021

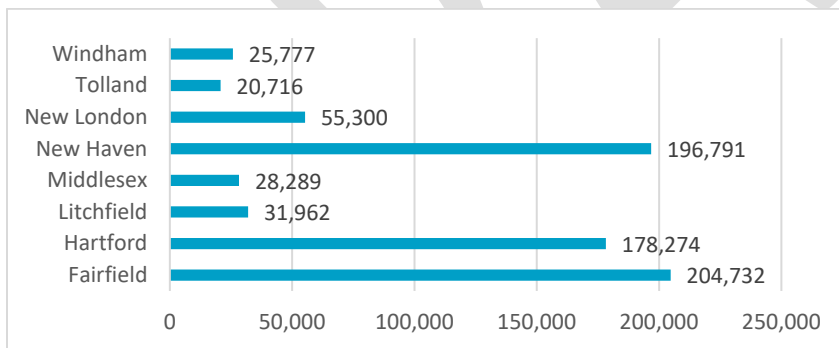


WARN Date	Name of Affected Company with Layoffs due to COVID-19	Location(s) of Layoffs	Number of Affected Workers
11/30/2020 - Rec'd 11/30/2020	Le Tote, Inc.	Danbury	Not Provided
10/20/2020 - Rec'd 10/21/2020	Compass-One Healthcare Food and Nutritional Services (Morrison Healthcare) and Environmental Services (Crothall Healthcare)	Torrington	72
10/1/2020 – Rec'd 10/1/2020	Le Tote, Inc.	Danbury	28
8/31/2020 – Rec'd 8/31/2020	Avis Budget Car Rental, LLC	Danbury	12
7/15/2020 – Rec'd 7/15/2020	Aptar Group, Inc.	Torrington	59
5/15/2020 – Rec'd 5/18/2020	Franklin Products, Inc.	Torrington	129
4/24/2020 – Rec'd 4/24/2020	Bloomin' Brands	Danbury	702
4/23/2020 – Rec'd 4/27/2020	Crowne Plaza	Danbury	78
4/2/2020 – Rec'd 4/7/2020	Scholastic Book Fairs, Inc.	Danbury	87
4/1/2020 – Rec'd 4/3/2020	Connecticut Eye Consultants	Danbury	124
3/31/2020 – Rec'd 4/3/2020	Primark	Danbury	116
3/25/2020 – Rec'd 4/6/2020	Mayflower Inn Spa	Washington	98
3/23/2020 – Rec'd 3/24/2020	Crowne Plaza	Danbury	56

Source: CT Department of Labor (as of 4/18/22)

COVID-19 cases across the state impacted the availability of talent and forced many businesses in the region to adjust work conditions, including temporarily closing operations. The region, which encompasses parts of Litchfield, Hartford, New Haven, and Fairfield counties accounted for a significant number of identified COVID-19 cases.

Figure 6: COVID-19 Cases by County



Source: CT Department of Public Health, April 2022

2. Describe any new service delivery strategies and partnerships you have implemented or have plans to implement following this crisis.

The Board recognizes the value of engaging existing and new partners to get the regional labor force back to work amid the pandemic in a safe, healthy, proactive manner. As part of the CareerConneCT grant, the NRWIB will utilize its established and collaborative relationships with the following organizations:

Workforce Alliance – Primary Partner. Assist, as needed, in the development and implementation of statewide Green Energy Efficiency program; The Workplace- Primary Partner. Assist, as needed, in the development and implementation of statewide Green Energy Efficiency program; Eastern Workforce Investment Board- Primary Partner. Assist, as needed, in the development and implementation of



statewide Green Energy Efficiency program; Capital Workforce Partners – Primary Partner. Assist, as needed, in the development and implementation of statewide Green Energy Efficiency program; CT Dept. of Labor – Provide assistance with recruitment and referrals; CT State Colleges & Universities – Coordinate with lead applicant and other partners to reduce or eliminate duplication of services. Provision of skillsets in varying fields of Green Energy sector that will lead to in-demand, industry-recognized credentials; Aging and Disability Services – Provide assistance with recruitment and referrals.; New Opportunities, Inc. – Provide feedback on progress and suggestions for improvement by contributing comment on the grant’s progress and input in terms of resolving problems or potential areas of weakness within its implementation. Promote training opportunities to the community through aggressive outreach and recruitment strategies. Participate in the review, revision, adoption and/or creation of grant program components; Community Action Agency of Western Connecticut – Provide assistance with recruitment and referrals; Adult Education Providers – Assist with referrals, academic and employability skills instruction, ESL and high school completion, as needed; Efficiency for All – Assist, as needed, with curriculum development. Provide assistance with recruitment and referrals. Job placement assistance, as requested; Bridge to Success – Provide assistance with recruitment and referrals and; Career Resources, Inc. – provide work readiness training along with assistance with recruitment and referrals.

3. Describe any new related training and supportive services needs you have identified in your region and highlight any plans to address these needs.

The NRWIB will implement the CareerConneCT program which is aimed at helping unemployed people, historically marginalized groups, and students prepare for high-demand, high-quality careers. CareerConneCT is focused on (1) Reskilling and Upskilling, (2) Inclusiveness and Effectiveness, and (3) Mutual Success among students, workers, education, economic development, and other community partners.

During the pandemic, the NRWIB recognized that virtual service delivery and trainings were critical as individuals remained quarantined. This led to the Connecticut Older Worker Virtual Job training Program. This program is designed to provide low-income people who are age 55+ with access to job skills training virtually. By providing them with laptops and internet hot spots, this program connects people who cannot get to job training sites in person, for example, those who live in rural areas or are caring for family members. Participants are also paired with a training consultant to enroll in online courses and update their skills. Then they are connected with a job developer to help find and secure employment. Applicants must have basic computer skills, and must reside in Waterbury, Danbury, Torrington and the other 38 towns in the Northwest workforce region.

4. Describe the steps and partner coordination that will be taken to reopen the American Job Centers in your region to staff and customers.

The NRWIB has been open to the public.