OLR RESEARCH REPORT

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OLR BACKGROUNDER: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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This report provides a broad overview of the state's workforce development system. Please visit the embedded links for further details on a particular aspect of the system.

SUMMARY

The state's workforce development system is comprised of several entities which work to coordinate and provide workforce development services to the state's employees. Largely organized under the federal Workforce Investment Act's (WIA) umbrella, the system offers career counseling services, short-term employment training, adult education, and post-secondary education at a variety of locations. In Connecticut, WIA-related planning and training occurs through the Connecticut Employment Training Commission (CETC), the Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC), the regional workforce investment boards, and "one-stop" delivery offices known as CTWorks Career Centers.

The state's Department of Labor also provides several workforce development services, some under WIA and some through the state's own initiatives. Lastly, the state's education system, particularly its technical high school system and community colleges, offer many workforce training and career development opportunities.

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WIA

The federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 established several requirements for states receiving federal workforce development grants, including requirements to create (1) statewide and local workforce investment boards to plan and administer workforce development programs, (2) "one-stop" delivery systems that provide employment and training related services in centralized locations, and (3) federally funded programs aimed at helping youth, adults, and dislocated workers obtain employment. For more information about WIA, see: http://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/wia/act.cfm and http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/wia.htm.

State Workforce Investment Boards and State Plans

WIA requires a state receiving federal workforce development grants to establish a state workforce investment board to assist the governor regarding a number of activities. The board develops a 5-year strategic plan submitted to the U.S. secretary of labor, advises the governor on developing a statewide workforce investment system, and assists the governor in reporting to the secretary of labor and monitoring the statewide system. The board's plan must describe the workforce development activities to be undertaken in the state; how the state will implement WIA's key requirements; and how special populations, including welfare recipients, veterans, and individuals with multiple barriers to employment, will be served. The plan must also incorporate state plans on delivering employment services through the "one-stop" locations.

Local Workforce Investment Boards

WIA also requires the creation of local or regional workforce investment boards. These boards administer and oversee the federal and state resources that support the regional network of "one-stop" delivery systems and education and training investments in their regions. Board membership consists of representatives from private-sector businesses, labor, education, and the public sector. Each board member is appointed by a consortium of chief elected officials representing the municipalities served by the board.

The board is responsible for developing a local workforce development plan, designating local "one-stop" operators, designating eligible providers of training services, negotiating local performance measures, and assisting in developing a statewide employment statistics system.

"One-Stop" Delivery Systems

WIA requires each local workforce investment board to establish a one stop delivery system to provide core employment-related services and access to other federally funded employment and training services, with at least one physical center in each local area. Core services include (1) job search and placement assistance; (2) career counseling; (3) providing labor market information on job vacancies, skills necessary for occupations in demand, and relevant employment trends; (4) assessing an individual's skills and needs; (5) providing information on available services and programs; and (6) providing follow-up services to assist in job retention.

Funding Streams and Program Requirements

WIA provides funding streams targeted at three populations: youth, adults, and dislocated workers.

Eligible youth must be ages 14 through 21 with low-income and either:

1. deficient in basic literacy skills;
2. a school dropout;
3. homeless, runaway, or foster child;
4. pregnant or a parent;
5. an offender; or
6. in need of additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment.

Youth programs must include an objective assessment of each youth's skill levels and service needs, a service strategy, preparation for postsecondary educational opportunities or unsubsidized employment (as appropriate), strong linkages between academic and occupational learning, and effective connections to intermediaries with strong links to the job market and employers.

Funds for adult and dislocated worker programs must be used at the local level to provide core services through the "one-stop" system, as well as to provide intensive services and training. Core services funded by the adult funding stream have no eligibility requirements. Funds for dislocated workers must be used exclusively for services to such workers.

Intensive services include comprehensive assessments, development of individual employment plans, group and individual counseling, case management, and short-term prevocational services. Training services can be provided to individuals who (1) are eligible for intensive services but unable to obtain or retain employment through such services, (2) have the skills and qualifications to successfully participate in a selected program, (3) select programs that are directly linked to local employment opportunities, and (4) are unable to obtain other grant assistance or need assistance above the levels provided by other grants. Authorized training includes occupational skills training, on-the-job training, entrepreneurial training, skill upgrading, job readiness training, and adult education and literacy activities in conjunction with other training.

In general, WIA requires that training payments are provided through the use of an individual training account (ITA) assigned to each participant. Specifically, the "one-stop" system provides participants with a list of eligible training providers and related performance information. The participant chooses a program that best meets the participant's needs and the training provider's payment is arranged through the participant's ITA.

CETC AND OWC

Connecticut's statewide workforce investment board under WIA is the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission. CETC provides workforce-related policy and planning guidance to the governor and General Assembly and promotes coordination of the state's workforce-related investments, strategies, and programs. Appointed by the governor, its members represent the state's businesses, employers, key state agencies, regional and local entities, organized labor, and community-based organizations. CETC's most recent Strategic Five-Year State Workforce Investment Plan can be seen at http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/2012WIAPlan.pdf. It's 2012 Annual Plan can be seen at http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/OWC/CETC/2012AnnualPlan.pdf.

The Office of Workforce Competitiveness provides staff support and technical assistance to the CETC. It also serves as the governor's principal workforce development policy advisor, with a broad goal to

ensure that the state's workforce can support economic growth. OWC works with multiple partners to align resources; coordinate employment, education, and training programs; and promote strategies to meet projected job growth needs. OWC also oversees several workforce development initiatives, such as the state's STEP UP program, the jobs funnel initiative, and the State Energy Sector Partnership. Additional information on OWC and its workforce development initiatives can be found at: http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/OWC/index.htm.

LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARDS & ONE-STOP OFFICES

As required under WIA, local workforce investment boards (WIBs) are responsible for the oversight, strategic planning, and policy making related to the workforce development activities provided through local one-stop offices. WIB membership includes representatives of community-based organizations, state and local organized labor, state and municipal government, human service agencies, economic development agencies, community colleges, and other educational institutions, including secondary and post-secondary institutions and regional vocational technical schools.

There are five WIBs in Connecticut:

1. the Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board (Eastern region) http://www.ewib.org/;

2. Capital Workforce Partners (Hartford, New Britain and North Central region) http://www.capitalworkforce.org/index.shtml;

3. Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board (Waterbury, Torrington, Danbury, and Northwest region) http://www.nrwib.org;

4. Workforce Alliance (New Haven and South Central region) http://www.workforcealliance.biz/; and

5. The WorkPlace, Inc. (Bridgeport, Stamford, and Southwest region) http://www.workplace.org.

"One-stop" offices (known as CTWorks Career Centers) provide a broad array of services for businesses and job seekers, including job search and career workshops; business seminars; computer labs and resource libraries; and copying, mailing, and faxing services. In addition, customers can receive labor market information, career counseling, skills assessment, job development and placement assistance, job training and tuition assistance, and supportive services such as child care and transportation for qualified individuals.

The state has 17 CTWorks offices located throughout the state. The offices offer numerous workforce development programs, although enrollment and availability can be limited by funding and vary by location. Programs include:

1. Jobs First Employment Services, which provide TANF (temporary assistance to needy families) recipients with occupational or educational training to find and secure employment before the expiration of federal benefits;

2. the YouthWorks program, which provides occupational training, life skills training, counseling, job placement, and job retention services programs for people ages 16 to 21;

3. the Bridgeport Environmental Job Training program, which offers classroom and hands on preparation for careers in environmental remediation;

4. the Green Jobs Funnel program, which offers green construction training;

5. Health CareerRx Academy, which provides training and support for a career in the healthcare field; and

6. Incumbent Worker Training programs, which provide funds for incumbent workers to develop skills to enhance career growth, avert layoffs, and potentially increase wages.

For additional information specific to each office and the programs available there, see: http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/ContactInfo/CTWorks/Directory.htm.

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

The Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL) conducts a number of workforce development activities. It is responsible for oversight, strategic planning, policy making, and monitoring of WIA services statewide. Within DOL, the WIA Administration Unit addresses these responsibilities and works with the local Workforce Investment Boards to ensure provision of service that is compliant with federal and state requirements. The WIA Administration Unit also oversees the coordination and implementation of national emergency grants (NEGs), incumbent worker training grants, and summer youth employment programs. For additional information on DOL's WIA responsibilities, see: http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/wia/wia.htm.

DOL administers the state's apprenticeship programs by providing technical assistance, monitoring, and consulting services to qualified employers who participate in recognized apprenticeship programs. Based on a contract between the apprentice and employer, an apprenticeship consists of on-the-job training and related classroom instruction. DOL recognizes apprenticeships in hundreds of different trades. For additional information on the state's apprenticeship system and apprenticeship opportunities, see:
http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/appren/appren.htm.

The department's Office of Research administers the Connecticut Career Resource Network (CCRN) to promote improved career decision making by students and other individuals. CCRN publishes *Connecticut Career Paths*, which contains information on the projected job openings for the near future, education and training requirements for them, and their earning potential. It also includes information on the knowledge base and fundamental skills that employers often look for in job candidates. CCRN sponsors *Connecticut Learns and Works* conferences and publishes a newsletter, *CCRN Update*. The latest edition of *Career Paths* can be downloaded at:
http://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/pubs/CareerPaths2010-2012.pdf.
The "CCRN Update" can be downloaded at:
http://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/ccrn.asp.

DOL also adminsters the Training and Education Planning System (TEPS) website (http://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/TEPS/Default.aspx), which is designed to help identify skill shortages or surpluses in the labor market. TEPS is primarily intended for educational administrators, workforce development training providers, employment counselors, and school career counselors to help identify and recommend enrollment in

programs that may offer greater opportunities for employment. State planners and policy makers can use it when considering workforce development and economic development initiatives.

EDUCATION SYSTEM

The state's workforce development system also involves the state's education system. The state's technical high school system includes 17 fully accredited diploma-granting high schools which offer programs for grades 9-12. These require students to meet the same academic competencies as all the state's students while simultaneously completing a trade technology course of study to earn trade technology endorsements upon graduation. Students can choose from seven career clusters: (1) tourism, hospitality, and guest services management; (2) construction; (3) manufacturing; (4) transportation; (5) computer technologies; (6) health technology; and (7) arts, audio/video technology, and communications. For additional information on technical high school student programs, see: http://www.cttech.org/.

The technical high schools additionally offer training programs for adult students at selected school sites. The programs provide training for a career as a licensed practical nurse (LPN); dental assistant; certified nursing aide (CNA); medical assistant; surgical technologist; and aviation/aircraft maintenance technician. They also provide adult apprenticeship and extension courses. For additional information on technical high programs for adult students, see: http://www.cttech.org/AdultED/index.htm.

The state's community colleges offer credited academic courses aimed at career-specific associate degrees (e.g. bookkeeping, business administration, or graphic design) and non-credit workforce development courses which generally lead to a certification (e.g. alternative energy transportation technology, clean water management, laser and fiber-optic technology). Through initiatives like the "Health Care Academy," SOAR (sustainable operations: alternative and renewable energy), SMART (manufacturing and related technologies), and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), the community colleges offer programs targeted at providing job skills and career advancement training in specific fields. For addition al information on community college programs, see: http://www.commnet.edu/services/.

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