

CWCT



campaign for a working connecticut

Promoting Industry Partnerships and Sector-Based Strategies to Increase Connecticut's Competitiveness

In today's workforce, vocational training and post-secondary education are becoming increasingly important for securing employment that provides sufficient wages. Across Connecticut, additional training or certification is required by a growing number of professions and approximately 66% of jobs created by 2018 will require at least some post-secondary education.ⁱ Without health skills such as reading, math and English proficiency, jobs with high wages, health benefits and room for advancement can be out of reach for Connecticut's workers.ⁱⁱ



Not all jobs requiring post-secondary education demand a four-year degree. These occupations, typically referred to as "middle-skill" jobs, require training beyond high school such as an associate's degree, occupational certification or an apprenticeship. As of 2012, 15% of Connecticut's workforce consisted of low skilled jobs; 49% middle-skilled; and 36% high-skilled. While Connecticut currently has an oversupply of workers prepared for high-skilled jobs, only 39% of workers had the requisite skills of middle-skill professions. The growing discrepancy between available employment options and worker proficiency has created a significant middle-skills gap within Connecticut's workforce. In the absence of workers with job-ready skills to meet employer needs, positions go unfulfilled.



While Connecticut's unemployment rate as of July 2014 had dropped to 6.6 percent – the lowest in over 5 yearsⁱⁱⁱ – statistics often neglect to acknowledge the large number of people that have been forced to take some form of marginal employment that is not sufficient to provide for the needs of their families. Furthermore, a large amount of newly created jobs are low skill and do not offer livable wages.



Through major investments, Connecticut leaders have seen immediate results in the Subsidized Training and Employment Program (Step Up) and Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program. Recent data shows the Step Up program has allowed 689 employers to hire 2,552 new workers, while the Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program has provided valuable work experience for 5,000 of Connecticut's youth. Another avenue for addressing the skills gap is Connecticut's Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) program, which offers funding to businesses to train their existing employees.^{iv}



To minimize the existing skills mismatch, more than half the states in the country have taken steps to form industry partnerships that employ sector-based strategies, a mechanism to focus scarce resources on industries that are major job providers in an area as well as focus comprehensively on workforce skills required in a regional economy. Sector strategies aim to address skill gaps, provide a means to engage directly with industry across traditional boundaries, and better align state programs and resources serving employers and workers. Paired with support services such as transportation and childcare, these strategies will strengthen the state's workforce competitiveness.

The Campaign for a Working Connecticut is calling on the state legislature to make a substantial investment in partnerships in key areas such as healthcare, manufacturing and energy/construction. Through the implementation of sector-based strategies and education, training and wage subsidies, the state can bridge the existing gap between the needs of employers and the skills of Connecticut's workforce.

The CWCT shares an aligned vision: to promote the state's economic competitiveness through the development of sustainable, effective workforce solutions to increase worker's skills and advance families to self-sufficiency. The CWCT works to accomplish this goal through a unique and diverse state-wide coalition, which includes education and training providers, workforce investment boards, advocates and chambers of commerce.

For more information about the Campaign for a Working CT, contact Alice Pritchard at 860.247.6090 ext. 107 or apritchard@cwealf.org.

Visit the website at <http://www.cwealf.org/cwct/>

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ⁱ *The Basic Economic Security Tables for Connecticut*, Wider Opportunities for Women, 2012.

ⁱⁱ *The Basic Economic Security Tables for Connecticut*, Wider Opportunities for Women, 2012.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The State of Working Connecticut 2014*, Connecticut Voices for Children, 2014.

^{iv} Hansen, L. *Incumbent Worker Training Programs in Connecticut and Neighboring States*. Hartford, CT: Office of Legislative Research, 2012.