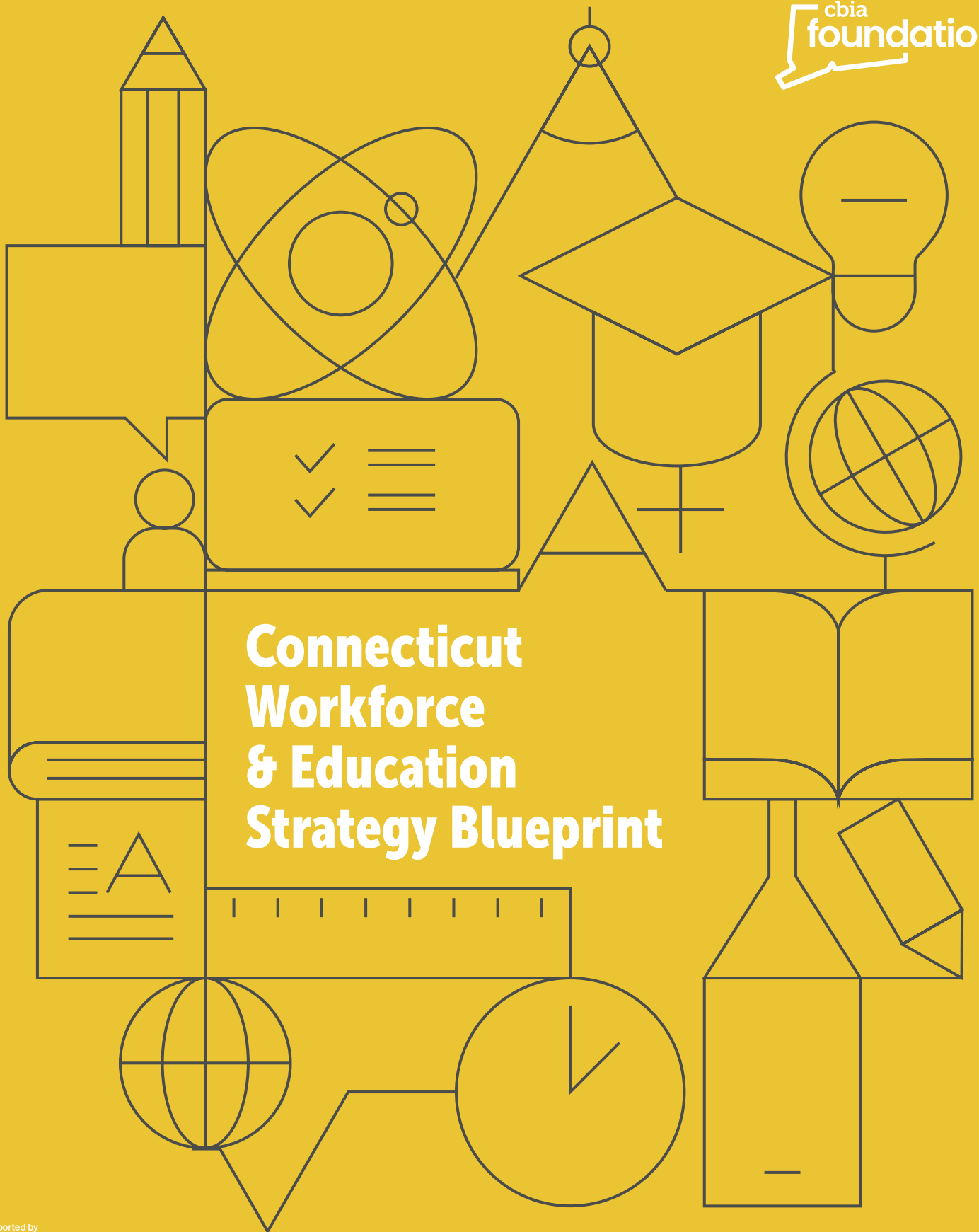
cbia foundation



Connecticut Workforce & Education Strategy Blueprint

Supported by

JPMorganChase

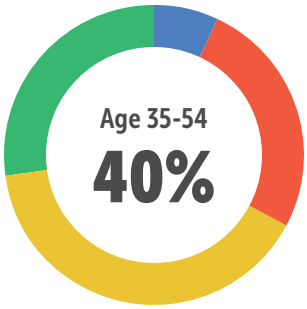
Table of Contents

This research was made possible through the support of JPMorganChase. Unless otherwise specifically stated, the views and opinions expressed in the report are solely those of the report's author and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of JPMorganChase or its affiliates.

INTRODUCTION

Connecticut's economic opportunity and competitiveness depend on a prepared workforce pipeline. The critical intervention point is grades nine through 12, where career trajectories take shape and students build connections to local employers and industries or else potentially drift toward disconnection.

Our report examines how well Connecticut's high school workforce programs align with the economy's current and future needs, and addresses the limitations of the current system that prevent these programs from maximizing their potential.



Connecticut Workforce by Age, 2024

- Age 14-21 (7%)
- Age 22-34 (26%)
- Age 35-54 (40%)
- Age 55+ (27%)

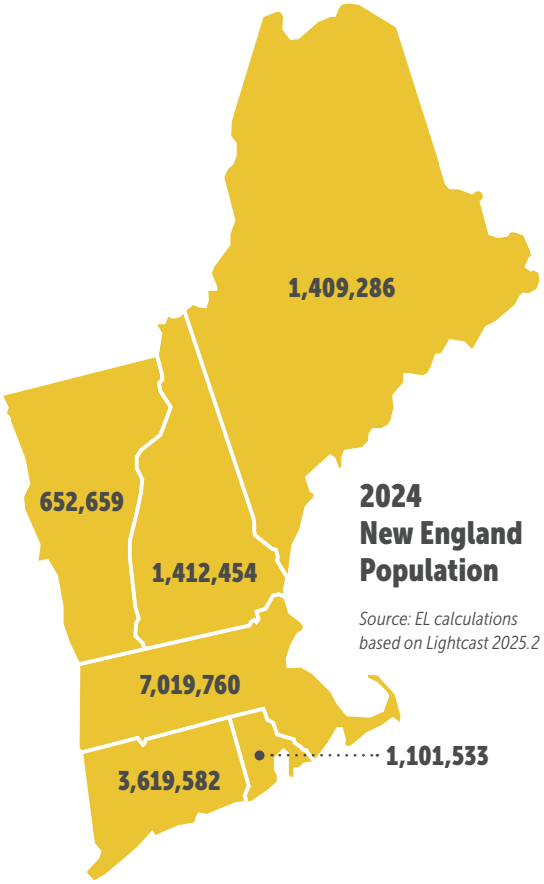
Source: EL calculations based on Lightcast

Why High School Matters

The economic case for focusing on high school is compelling. Over 55% of Connecticut's projected job growth through 2034 will be accessible to workers without a bachelor's degree—positions in healthcare support, advanced manufacturing, transportation, and the skilled trades that offer family sustaining wages and clear advancement pathways.

At the same time, Connecticut's workforce is aging rapidly. The state ranks 49th in the nation for workers aged 55 and older, with nearly 68,000 workers in office and administrative roles alone approaching retirement.

The growing demand for labor and faster retirements will generate great opportunities for young people prepared to step into these roles. Students who connect to local careers during high school are also more likely to remain in Connecticut, addressing the state's persistent out-migration challenge.



2024 New England Population

Source: EL calculations based on Lightcast 2025.2

Beyond economic challenges, Connecticut faces a crisis of disconnected youth that has persisted for years. According to the most recent DataLink CT data, approximately 57,000 young people aged 14 to 26 are currently disconnected from both education and employment. An additional 49,000 high school students exhibit risk factors—chronic absenteeism, falling behind on credits, behavioral incidents—that predict future disconnection.

Together, these figures mean one in five Connecticut young people are either disconnected or at risk of becoming so.

Research demonstrates that high school career pathway programs can address these challenges while producing lasting economic gains.

The MDRC Career Academies evaluation—a randomized controlled trial that followed students for eight years after their scheduled high school graduation—found that participants earned 11% more annually than their peers who were not admitted to the programs. The impacts were strongest for young men from disadvantaged backgrounds, who saw earnings increases of 17%,

translating to nearly $30,000 in additional earnings over the eight-year follow-up period.

The What Works Clearinghouse has identified career pathway programs as having strong evidence for improving both graduation rates and post-high school earnings, making high school workforce programs one of the few interventions with demonstrated long-term impacts on economic mobility.

Systemic Challenge

Connecticut is not lacking in programs, initiatives, or dedicated professionals contributing to workforce development, however coordinating these resources remains a challenge.

The state's 200-plus school districts vary in how they deliver career and technical education offerings, work-based learning partnerships, and pathway development.

Multiple delivery mechanisms operate in parallel—Connecticut Technical Education and Career System schools, comprehensive high school CTE programs, career pathways initiatives, dual credit programs, and various work-based learning programs—largely without systematic coordination and often muddied lines of responsibility.

The consequences of fragmentation emerged clearly in stakeholder forums conducted across Connecticut.

Employers described a system they struggle to navigate, lacking consistent points of contact and significant variation from town to town in who "owns" workforce development.

As one employer noted, attending job fairs and workforce meetings often means seeing "the same companies and people driving within a 20-minute radius of each other just to a different location and for a different organizational effort."

Faced with this complexity, many employers default to building their own pipelines rather than working through existing educational institutions—an approach that may serve individual companies but fails to build system-wide capacity.

Students and families face similar navigation challenges. There is often no comprehensive directory of local programs, different levels of support for career readiness across districts, and limited visibility into which pathways lead to which opportunities.

The fragmentation extends to scheduling and logistics: school calendars and class schedules vary significantly across districts such that regional employers struggle to offer work-based learning experiences to students from multiple schools.

A program that fits into a school's schedule in one district may be incompatible with the schedule in an adjacent district.

What This Report Does

The CBIA Foundation for Economic Growth & Opportunity received a grant from JPMorganChase to develop a Workforce and Education Strategy Blueprint for Connecticut. The initiative was motivated in part by a recognition that those investing in workforce development—whether philanthropic foundations, state agencies, employers, or federal programs—often face significant challenges realizing impact with their investments.

Fragmentation and duplication dilute resources across too many small-scale, disconnected efforts rather than building coordinated systems capable of operating at scale. JPMorganChase's support reflects a belief that Connecticut can do better, and that a clear-eyed assessment of the current landscape is the necessary first step.

To develop this report, the CBIA Foundation engaged Economic Leadership LLC to conduct research and analysis. The work included four stakeholder forums across Connecticut—in New Haven, Fairfield, New London, and East Hartford—gathering qualitative feedback from educators, employers, workforce development professionals, and community organizations.

Labor market analysis was filtered specifically for relevance to high school programs, focusing on occupations accessible without a bachelor's degree and sectors with significant hiring needs.

The research team reviewed existing programs and initiatives, evaluated efforts over the past five years, and examined prior recommendations that remain unimplemented.

The result is a gap analysis that identifies where the current system falls short, and a set of actionable recommendations designed to move Connecticut toward a more coordinated, effective approach.

Recommendations Preview

This report offers recommendations organized around four priorities:

1. **Reduce structural barriers to student participation.** The current system places significant obstacles between students and work-based learning opportunities. School schedules vary so widely that employers cannot efficiently offer experiences across district lines. Teacher certification requirements make it difficult for industry professionals to share their expertise in classrooms. State graduation and instruction requirements offer limited flexibility for extended workplace experiences. Addressing these barriers requires streamlining certification pathways for industry professionals and creating scheduling structures that accommodate meaningful work-based learning.
2. **Establish clear coordination mechanisms.** Connecticut needs designated single points of contact at both state and regional levels—individuals or offices with clear authority and responsibility for workforce development coordination. Regional Sector Partnerships should be empowered with sufficient funding and mandate to coordinate across districts rather than simply convene stakeholders. Duplicative programming that spreads resources thin should be consolidated, allowing investments to achieve scale rather than fragmentation.
3. **Build the information infrastructure for better decisions.** The state does not systematically inventory existing high school workforce programs, making it challenging to identify gaps or avoid duplication. Implementation of career readiness programming varies across districts, preventing meaningful comparison or accountability. Data systems do not adequately track outcomes from high school through employment, limiting the ability to identify what works. Creating this information infrastructure—program inventories, common definitions, and outcome tracking—will provide meaningful data policymakers can react to.
4. **Strengthen employer-education alignment.** Employers need structured, sustainable mechanisms to communicate their skills needs to educators. Intermediary organizations like ReadyCT—recognized nationally as a best practice model—can reduce the burden on individual businesses while ensuring employer voice shapes program development. Regional coordination of employer engagement can maximize the value of business input while minimizing the burden—ensuring that when employers invest time in advising on career readiness, their insights reach all relevant programs rather than a single school or district.

Each recommendation in this report identifies responsible parties and realistic implementation steps, recognizing that sustainable change requires both immediate policy adjustments and longer-term structural reforms.

SECTION 1: THE DEMAND PICTURE

Connecticut's Labor Market Outlook

After a decade of slow growth that saw Connecticut lag regional and national trends, current projections indicate a meaningful rebound ahead. Total employment is expected to increase by 6.7% between 2022 and 2032—ranking first among New England states and approaching the national average of 7.3% *(Lightcast 2025.2).* Realizing these gains will depend on having workers ready to fill open positions.

The state's labor market is already tight. As of December 2025, Connecticut reports an unemployment rate of 4.2%—below the national average of 4.4%. Job openings have consistently outpaced both hires and quits since 2021, with 68,000 unfilled jobs as of December 2025. Labor force participation has consistently declined in the post-pandemic period, from a period high of 66.5% in January 2022 to 64.3% in December 2025. In the 2025 Survey of Connecticut Businesses, 76% of employers reported difficulty hiring and retaining workers, with skills gaps identified as a key challenge *(CBIA).*

Replacing an Aging Workforce

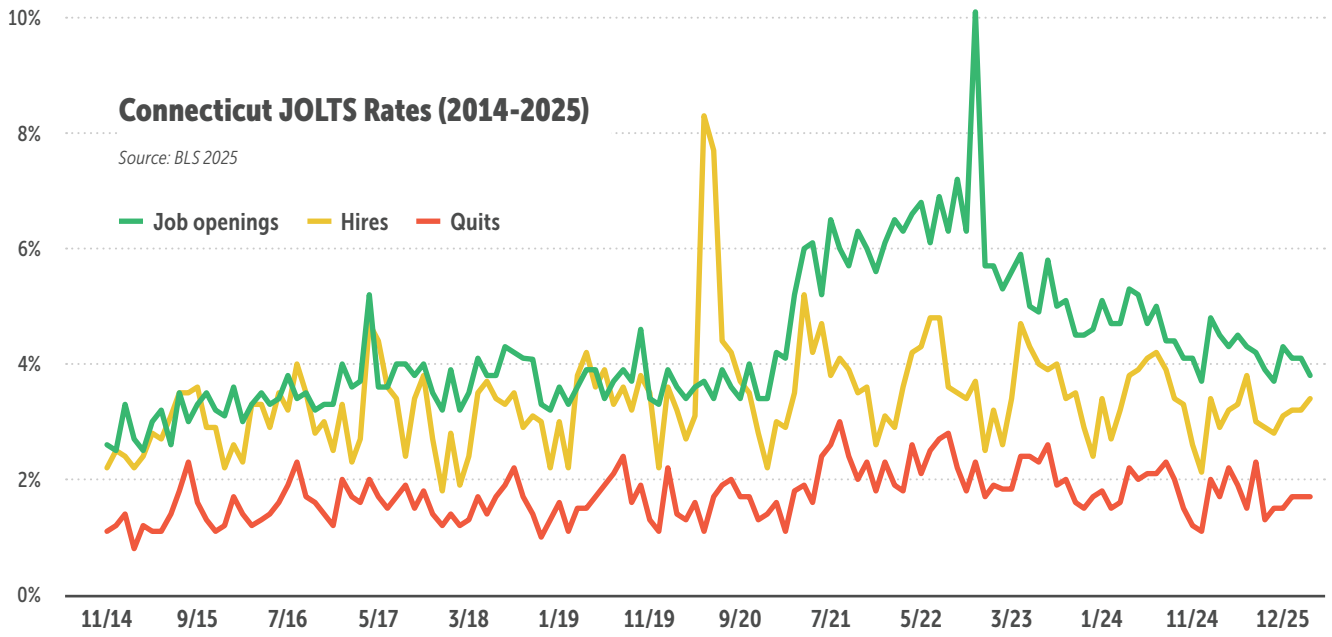
Perhaps more significant than growth projections is the replacement demand created by Connecticut's aging workforce. The state ranks 49th in the nation for workers aged 55 and older *(Lightcast).* At least one-third of workers in legal, building maintenance, production, office support, and engineering roles are approaching retirement age. Even in sectors like transportation and construction, one-quarter or more of the workforce is nearing retirement.

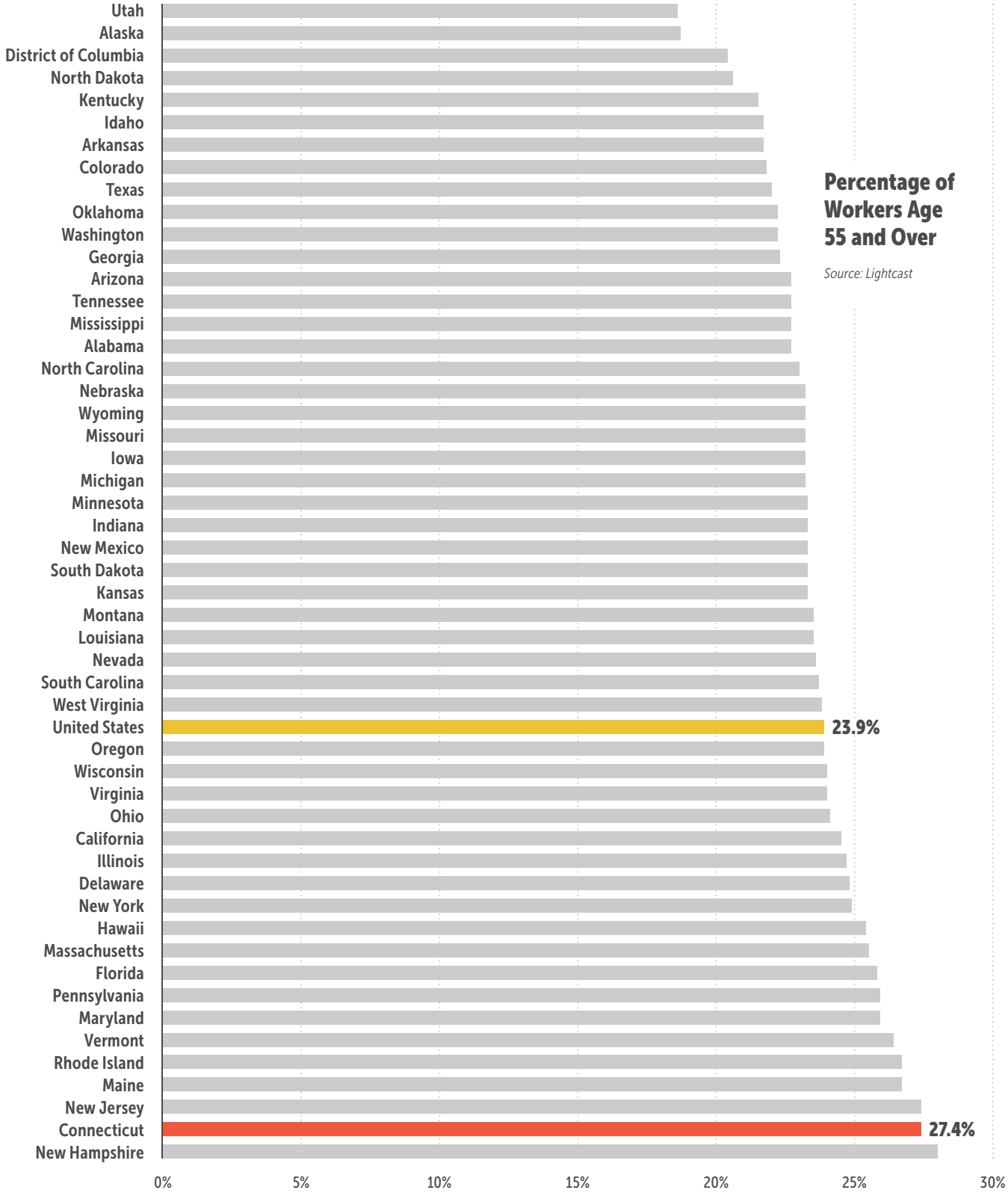
These demographics create immediate opportunities for young people prepared to step into vacating roles.

What the Economy Needs from High School Graduates

Connecticut's occupational projections can be organized into career clusters—groupings of related occupations that share common skills and knowledge—to understand how workforce demand aligns with educational program categories.

Using the Advance CTE National Career Clusters Framework crosswalk to map Standard Occupational Classification codes to career clusters reveals where high school programs can most directly address employer needs.




Utah
Alaska
District of Columbia
North Dakota
Kentucky
Idaho
Arkansas
Colorado
Texas
Oklahoma
Washington
Georgia
Arizona
Tennessee
Mississippi
Alabama
North Carolina
Nebraska
Wyoming
Missouri
Iowa
Michigan
Minnesota
Indiana
New Mexico
South Dakota
Kansas
Montana
Louisiana
Nevada
South Carolina
West Virginia
United States
23.9%
Oregon
Wisconsin
Virginia
Ohio
California
Illinois
Delaware
New York
Hawaii
Massachusetts
Florida
Pennsylvania
Maryland
Vermont
Rhode Island
Maine
New Jersey
Connecticut
27.4%
New Hampshire
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
Percentage of Workers Age 55 and Over
Source: Lightcast

Among the 131,102 annual projected job openings accessible to workers without a bachelor's degree, demand concentrates in six clusters.

Career Cluster	Annual HS-Accessible Openings	Share of Total
Hospitality, Events & Tourism	42,431	32.4%
Healthcare & Human Services	34,431	26.3%
Management & Entrepreneurship	29,745	22.7%
Marketing & Sales	21,568	16.5%
Supply Chain & Transportation	20,323	15.5%
Advanced Manufacturing	11,438	8.7%

Source: Connecticut DOL Occupational Projections 2022-2032, mapped to Advance CTE career clusters.

These six clusters account for more than 80% of high school-accessible openings. Hospitality alone—spanning food service, lodging, and tourism—represents nearly one-third of entry-level opportunities, driven largely by replacement needs as workers retire or change careers. Healthcare shows similarly strong demand, with positions ranging from medical assistants and nursing aides to pharmacy technicians and dental assistants.

Top Demand Occupations

The specific occupations with highest demand illustrate the breadth of opportunity for workers without bachelor's degrees.

Supervisory positions appear frequently and offer some of the highest wages, often exceeding $80,000—demonstrating that careers begun without a bachelor's degree can lead to management roles with family-sustaining incomes. Importantly, entering the workforce directly does not preclude further education—many workers in these fields pursue additional credentials, certifications, or degrees while employed, often with employer support.

Occupation	Avg. Annual Openings	Median Annual Earnings
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	2,050	$58,698
First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation/Serving	2,033	$49,483
Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	1,578	$53,581
Medical Assistants	1,395	$46,509
Sales Representatives (Services)	1,206	$70,782
Social & Human Service Assistants	1,086	$45,094
First-Line Supervisors of Production Workers	1,035	$82,805
Computer User Support Specialists	802	$68,806
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades	714	$85,051
Chefs & Head Cooks	666	$62,546

Source: Lightcast 2025.2

Understanding Dual-Track Clustering

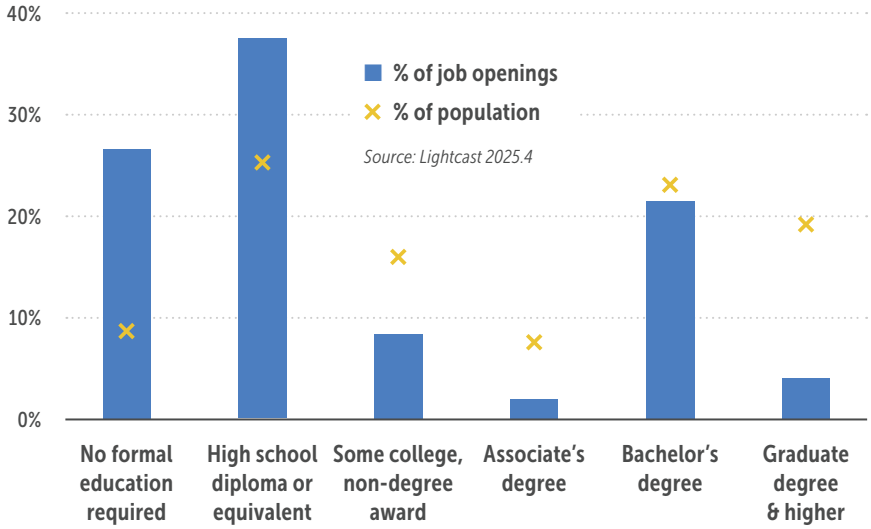
Clusters vary with respect to whether they are primarily preparing students for immediate work or further education. After analysis of the state labor department's projections, we bucket clusters into three categories:

1. **Workforce-Direct Clusters** (fewer than 40% of jobs require a bachelor's degree): These clusters commonly offer high school-to-career pathways. Hospitality (12% requiring BA-plus), agriculture (12%), transportation (16%), construction (19%), and manufacturing (22%) all have strong entry-level opportunities accessible with a high school diploma and short-term training.
2. **Dual-Pathway Clusters** (40%-70% require a bachelor's degree): Healthcare (52%), education (68%), financial services (45%), and management (48%) offer both tracks. A student can pursue

immediate employment as a medical assistant or continue to nursing school; enter bookkeeping or pursue an accounting degree.

3. **College-Preparatory Clusters** (more than 70% of jobs require a bachelor's degree): Digital technology stands out—95% of IT job openings require at least a bachelor's degree. High school IT programs build foundational skills for college-track careers, rather than immediate employment.

Connecticut Average Annual Job Openings vs. Educational Attainment, 2024



Cluster	% Requiring Bachelor's+	Classification
Digital Technology	95%	College-Prep
Arts, Entertainment & Design	71.2%	College-Prep
Education	67.8%	Dual-Pathway
Healthcare & Human Services	52.3%	Dual-Pathway
Management & Entrepreneurship	48.1%	Dual-Pathway
Financial Services	44.6%	Dual-Pathway
Marketing & Sales	38.7%	Workforce-Direct
Advanced Manufacturing	22.4%	Workforce-Direct
Construction	18.9%	Workforce-Direct
Supply Chain & Transportation	15.6%	Workforce-Direct
Hospitality, Events & Tourism	12.3%	Workforce-Direct
Agriculture	11.8%	Workforce-Direct

Source: Connecticut DOL Occupational Projections 2022-2032, education requirements by occupation.

This distinction matters for program design and evaluation. A high school IT program successfully launching students into computer science degrees is achieving its purpose, even if those graduates don't immediately enter the IT workforce. Conversely, a hospitality program should be evaluated against immediate employment outcomes, since the vast majority of jobs in that cluster are accessible without further education.

Regional Variation in Demand

Workforce demand varies across Connecticut's five workforce development areas, with implications for regional program priorities.

The Eastern region—home to General Dynamics Electric Boat and the defense manufacturing corridor—shows particular demand in transportation and advanced manufacturing.

The Southwest and South Central regions, with their concentrations of corporate headquarters and financial services, show stronger demand in management and marketing roles.

North Central, anchored by Hartford, has the largest absolute demand but also the most significant gaps between openings and program capacity.

These regional patterns suggest a one-size-fits-all approach to CTE programming may miss important local opportunities. A welding program makes more sense in the Eastern region than in Fairfield County; healthcare pathway programs are needed everywhere but especially in regions with aging populations and large hospital systems.

Region	Annual HS-Accessible Openings	Largest Demand Clusters
North Central	52,699	Hospitality, Healthcare, Management
South Central	35,800	Hospitality, Healthcare, Marketing
Southwest	34,936	Hospitality, Management, Marketing
Northwest	23,015	Hospitality, Healthcare, Education
Eastern	18,135	Hospitality, Transportation, Manufacturing

Source: Connecticut DOL Regional Occupational Projections 2022-2032

Training Requirements, Entry Points

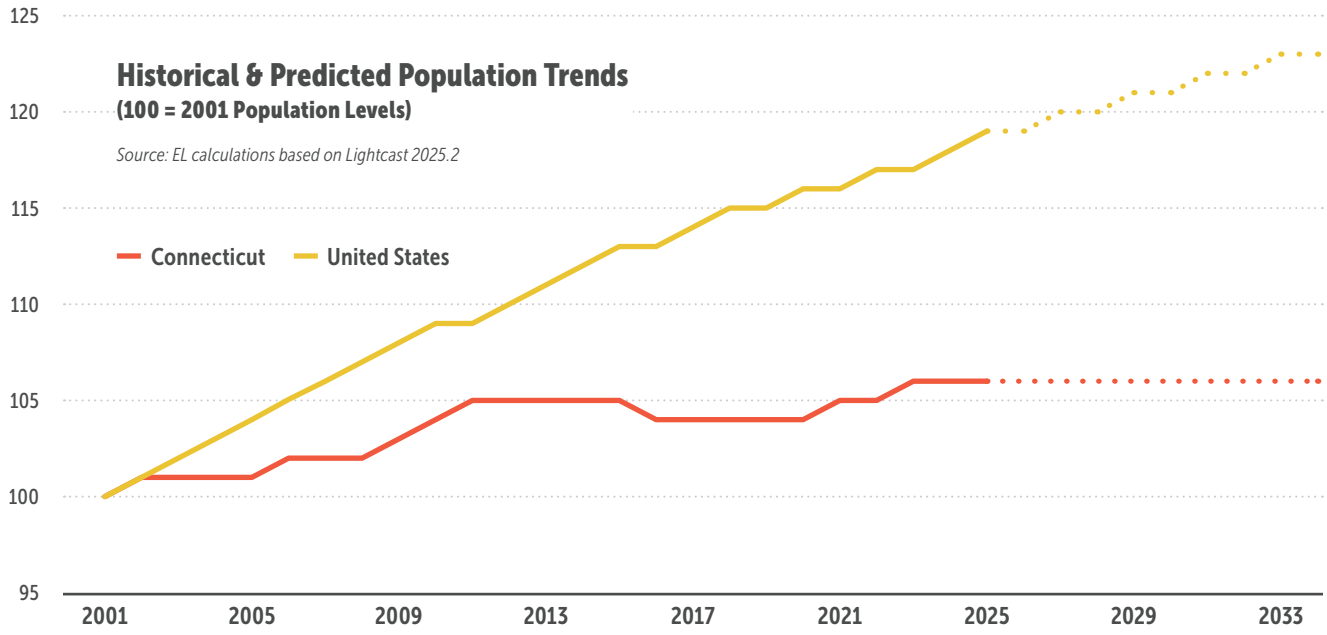
The good news for high school programs: most high school-accessible jobs provide employer-based training rather than requiring extensive pre-employment preparation.

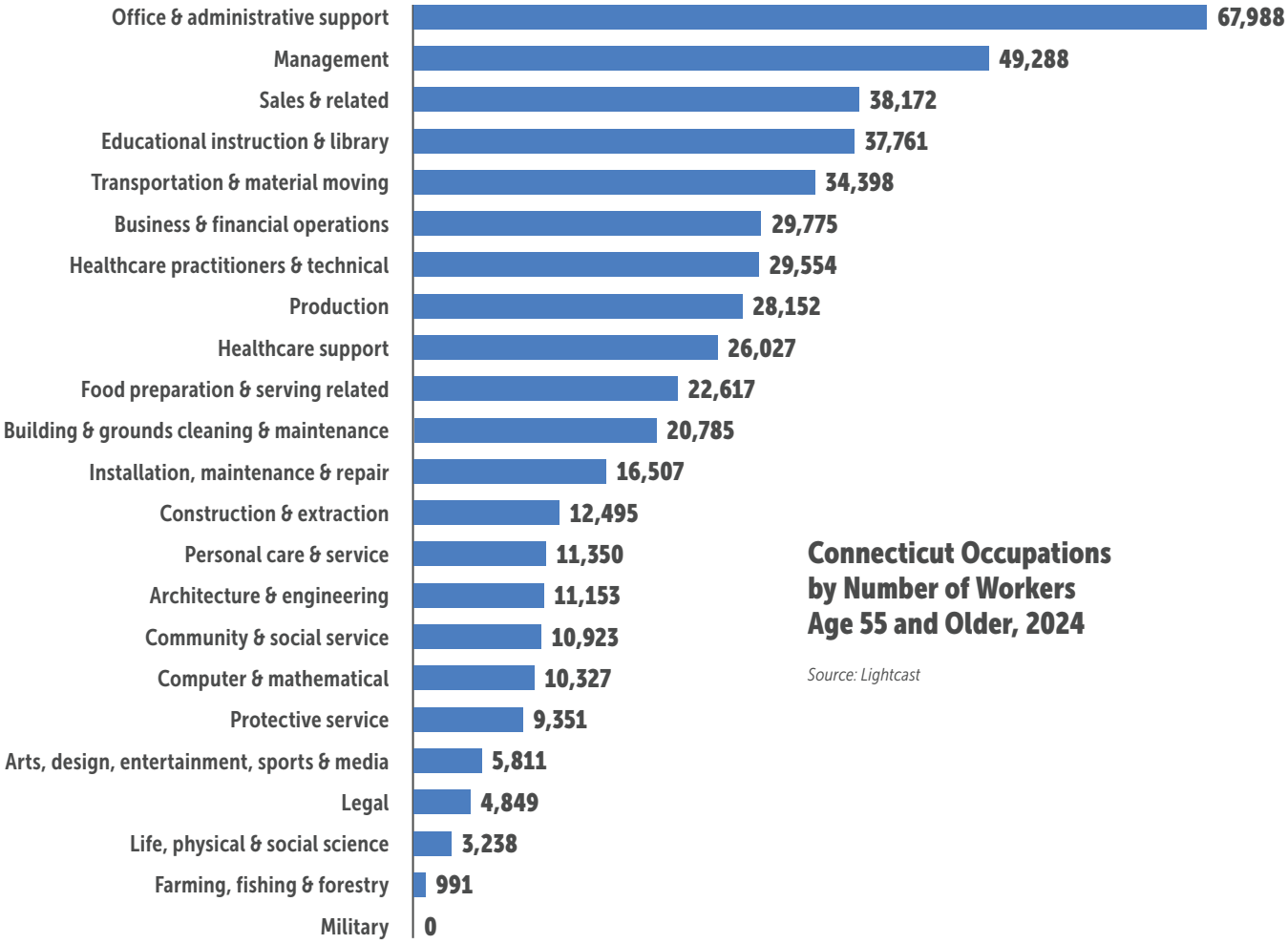
Training Type	Annual Openings	Share of HS-Accessible
Short-term OJT (< 1 month)	87,188	66.5%
Moderate-term OJT (1-12 months)	21,634	16.5%
None specified	16,783	12.8%
Long-term OJT (> 12 months)	3,146	2.4%
Apprenticeship	2,351	1.8%

Source: Connecticut DOL Occupational Projections 2022-2032

Two-thirds of high school-accessible jobs require only short-term on-the-job training. This doesn't mean high school preparation is irrelevant—employers consistently report that foundational skills, work habits, and career awareness make candidates more attractive and more successful.

But it does suggest that the primary value of high school workforce programs may be exposure, connection, and readiness rather than technical skill certification.





Connecticut Occupations by Number of Workers Age 55 and Older, 2024

Source: Lightcast

Nearly 90% of high school-accessible jobs require no prior work experience, indicating true entry-level opportunities for program completers. The 2,351 annual apprenticeship openings—concentrated in construction (1,247) and manufacturing (489)—represent pathways that combine employment with continued training.

Key Takeaways for Program Planning

1. **Volume is in hospitality and healthcare:** These two clusters alone account for nearly 60% of high school-accessible openings. Programs in these areas address the largest absolute demand.
2. **Replacement demand drives opportunity:** Connecticut's aging workforce means openings will materialize even without economic growth. Young workers prepared to step into these roles have greater opportunities.
3. **Not all clusters serve the same purpose:** IT and arts programs prepare students for college-track careers; hospitality and manufacturing programs can lead directly to employment. Both are valuable, but they should be evaluated differently.
4. **Regional differences matter:** The Eastern region needs manufacturing pipelines; the Hartford region needs healthcare workers; suburban Fairfield County needs different programming than New London.
5. **Employers will train—but they need prepared candidates:** Most entry-level jobs provide on-the-job training. High school programs add value through career awareness, work readiness, and connections rather than solely through technical instruction.

SECTION 2: CURRENT HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM LANDSCAPE

What Exists Today

This section examines career and technical education programs funded through the federal Perkins grant and reported to the Connecticut State Department of Education. This data captures a substantial portion of formal career-focused instruction in Connecticut high schools but does not encompass all career preparation activities. Work-based learning coordinated outside Perkins frameworks, employer-sponsored training programs, informal career exploration, and instruction funded through other mechanisms are not reflected in these figures.

Connecticut's Perkins-funded CTE system serves approximately 143,000 course enrollments across 174 schools. This enrollment figure represents total course-taking rather than unique students—a student taking three CTE courses appears three times in the data.

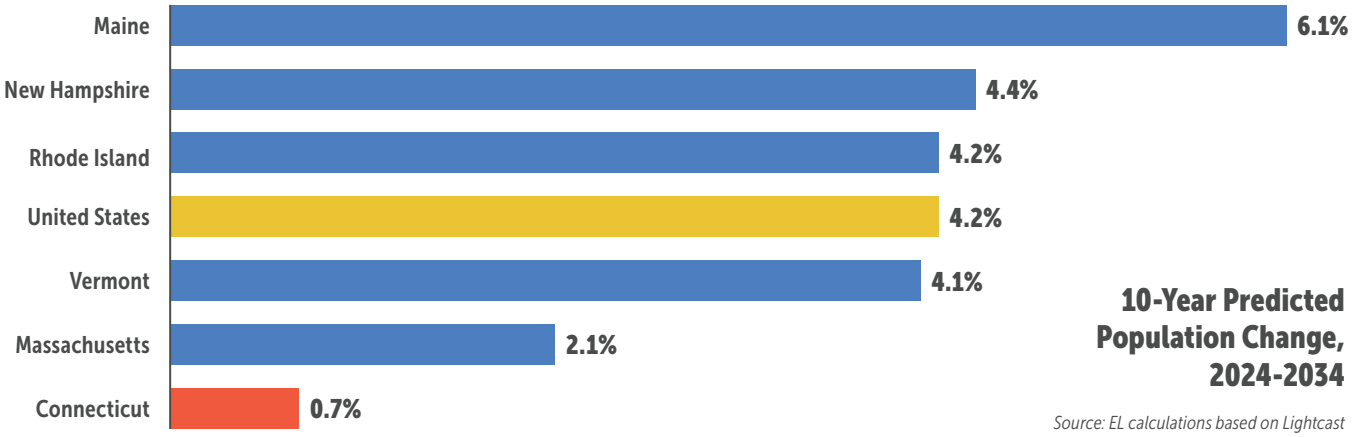
Accounting for multi-course enrollment and multi-year programs, the system likely serves 50,000-70,000 unique students annually. For context, Connecticut's total grades nine-12 public school enrollment is approximately 150,000 students, meaning CTE programs touch a significant share of high school students—though with varying depth of engagement.

Program Distribution by Career Cluster

Within Perkins-funded programs, current enrollment concentrates heavily in four clusters that together account for 62% of all reported CTE course-taking:

Career Cluster	Course Enrollments	Share of Total
Digital Technology (IT)	23,703	16.6%
Management & Entrepreneurship	22,440	15.7%
Hospitality, Events & Tourism	22,144	15.5%
Financial Services	19,936	13.9%
Construction	10,964	7.7%
Advanced Manufacturing	10,729	7.5%
Marketing & Sales	7,847	5.5%
Education	7,191	5.0%
Energy & Natural Resources	6,303	4.4%
Healthcare & Human Services	4,844	3.4%
Supply Chain & Transportation	4,428	3.1%
Agriculture	2,483	1.7%

Two clusters—arts, entertainment, and design and public service and safety—show zero enrollment in Perkins-reported data, although some coursework in these areas may be classified under other clusters or offered outside the Perkins framework.



10-Year Predicted Population Change, 2024-2034

Source: EL calculations based on Lightcast

Geographic Distribution

Perkins-funded CTE program availability varies across Connecticut's five workforce development areas.

Workforce Development Area	Schools with CTE	Total Enrollment	Avg. Clusters per School
North Central	47	35,876	5.2
Northwest	41	34,572	6.8
Southwest	29	29,187	6.1
South Central	32	28,162	5.4
Eastern	25	15,317	4.9

The Eastern region has the smallest CTE infrastructure relative to its workforce, with fewer schools and lower average enrollment despite significant employer demand, particularly from Electric Boat and related defense contractors.

Individual schools vary dramatically in their program focus. Technical high schools like J.M. Wright, Platt, and Emmett O'Brien show 60% to 70% of enrollment in priority workforce clusters (manufacturing, transportation, construction, and healthcare).

By contrast, 15 comprehensive high schools offer CTE programs exclusively in non-priority clusters like finance, IT, and business management, with zero enrollment in workforce-direct pathways.

Delivery Ecosystem

Connecticut's CTE programs operate through multiple delivery mechanisms that do not always coordinate effectively:

Connecticut Technical Education and Career System: The state's 17 technical high schools provide intensive, full-day career preparation with strong industry partnerships. These schools show the highest concentration of workforce-direct programming and the strongest alignment with employer needs. However, demand significantly exceeds capacity—public statements from CTECS officials indicate the system turns away a substantial portion of applicants each year, perhaps more than half. This unmet demand represents both a missed opportunity for students and a constraint on the state's workforce pipeline.

Comprehensive High School CTE Programs: The 157 non-CTECS schools offering CTE programs through Perkins funding vary widely in depth and focus. Some offer robust career pathways with work-based learning components; others provide primarily exploratory coursework. The concentration of enrollment in finance and IT at comprehensive schools—much of it in personal finance and creative media courses—suggests these programs may serve different purposes than CTECS offerings.

Regional Educational Service Centers: Organizations like LEARN in the Eastern region and CREC in the Hartford area provide some coordination functions, but stakeholder feedback suggests overlapping responsibilities and unclear authority limit their effectiveness.

Regional Sector Partnerships: These employer-led collaboratives could serve as coordination mechanisms but currently lack sufficient funding, mandate, or direction to drive regional program alignment.

The result is a system where individual schools make independent programming decisions, employers struggle to engage at scale, and students face widely varying opportunities depending on where they live and which school they attend.

What This Picture Doesn't Capture

The Perkins-funded program data analyzed here provides the most comprehensive available view of formal CTE instruction in Connecticut high schools, but it has limitations. Career exploration and preparation also occur through:

- **Work-based learning programs** coordinated directly between districts and employers, which may not be reported through Perkins
- **Industry partnerships** that provide training, mentorship, or credentialing outside formal coursework
- **Early college programs** that blend high school and postsecondary instruction
- **Magnet and inter-district programs** with specialized career focuses

A complete inventory of career preparation opportunities would require data collection beyond what Perkins reporting provides. The gap analysis in Section 5 should be understood as comparing Perkins-funded program output to workforce demand—the actual landscape of career preparation may be somewhat broader than these figures suggest.

SECTION 3: WHAT'S BEEN TRIED

Connecticut has not been idle on workforce development challenges. Over the past five years, the state has launched significant initiatives, invested substantial federal and state resources, and built new coordination structures. Understanding what has been attempted—and where results have fallen short of goals—is essential context for this report's recommendations.

Governor's Workforce Council

In October 2019, Governor Ned Lamont signed Executive Order #4, creating the Governor's Workforce Council to partner with the business community and reduce barriers among state government agencies.

The council includes 55 members from industry, government, K-12 education, higher education, unions, and community-based organizations. Six subcommittees meet quarterly, addressing priorities including skills-based hiring, quality jobs, and access barriers.

GWC's first strategic plan, released in 2020, recommended strategies in four key areas: business leadership in workforce development, education and training aligned to career pathways, equity and access for underserved populations, and data infrastructure for tracking outcomes.

In April 2025, GWC released an updated strategic plan, Work Forward: Pathways for Growth, outlining strategies to build an equitable, inclusive workforce system adapted to current economic conditions.

What it accomplished: GWC established high-level coordination across state agencies and created visibility for workforce issues at the executive level. It provided a forum for business and education leaders to identify shared priorities.

Where gaps remain: GWC operates primarily as an advisory and convening body rather than an operational entity with authority to direct resources or mandate alignment across agencies. Its recommendations depend on other entities—state agencies, school districts, and employers—to implement.

Office of Workforce Strategy

Established in 2020 as an executive branch agency, the Office of Workforce Strategy serves as staff to the Governor's Workforce Council and provides strategic guidance on workforce initiatives statewide. OWS is charged with implementing GWC's strategic plan and coordinating workforce investments.

OWS has advanced statewide workforce initiatives, including the WIOA State Plan for 2024-2027:

- **WIOA State Plan 2024-2027:** Submitted in collaboration with federal partners, this plan outlines strategies for assisting residents—especially youth and those with employment barriers—to obtain quality jobs.

What it accomplished: OWS created a dedicated state entity responsible for workforce strategy coordination, filling a gap in Connecticut's institutional landscape.

Where gaps remain: OWS coordinates rather than directs. It cannot compel alignment among 200-plus school districts, multiple state agencies, or independent training providers. Its focus is primarily on adult workforce development; high school programs remain largely under CSDE authority.

CareerConneCT

In mid-2022, OWS launched CareerConneCT, a $70 million initiative funded through the federal American Rescue Plan. The program sought to train and place 6,000 unemployed or underemployed adults in skilled positions in manufacturing, healthcare, IT, and other advanced fields. OWS awarded grants to 19 grassroots agencies across the state.

Outcomes through January 2025:

Metric	Result
Individuals enrolled	6,801
Training completion rate	82%
Completers employed	79%

What it accomplished: CareerConneCT demonstrated that significant government investment, channeled through community-based organizations, can move unemployed adults into quality jobs. The 82% completion rate and 79% employment rate among completers represent meaningful outcomes.

Where gaps remain: CareerConneCT focused on adult workers, not high school students. At approximately $10,000 per enrolled individual (or roughly $15,400 per completer who found employment), the program's cost structure raises questions about scalability without sustained government investment. The program's government funding ended in 2025, and the state has not established alternative funding streams. While successful at the individual level, the program did not address the structural coordination challenges in Connecticut's workforce system.

Good Jobs Challenge

Connecticut's Office of Workforce Strategy received $24 million through the U.S. Economic Development Administration's Good Jobs Challenge—the largest award of its kind nationally. The funding, available through June 30, 2025, supports Regional Sector Partnerships, training 2,000 workers from underserved communities in manufacturing, tech, and healthcare.

What it accomplished: The Good Jobs Challenge provided substantial resources for regional partnership development and demonstrated Connecticut's capacity to compete successfully for federal workforce funding.

Where gaps remain: Like CareerConneCT, this initiative focused on adult workforce training rather than the high school pipeline, although some RSPs have engaged in high school programming. The funding timeline creates pressure to demonstrate results quickly, which may limit long-term system-building.

Regional Sector Partnerships

Connecticut currently operates 14 RSPs, with 500-plus employers participating across manufacturing, healthcare, IT, bioscience, and transportation sectors. RSPs are employer-led coalitions that define and champion talent pipeline development with support from education, workforce, and economic development partners.

Notable RSP examples:

- **Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance:** Formed in 2022 and convened by the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board, EAMA has earned recognition as a national leader in industry-driven partnerships. Its Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative has placed more than 4,700 workers into employment since 2015.
- **Capital Area Tech Partnership:** Launched in 2021, bringing together tech companies in the Hartford region to address shared workforce challenges.
- **Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics Partnership:** The only TDL-focused partnership in Connecticut, launched in 2022.
- **Northwest HealthConnect:** Advancing healthcare workforce development in Northwestern Connecticut.

What they accomplished: RSPs created structures for employer voice in workforce development, moving beyond ad hoc engagement toward systematic input. The EAMA model demonstrates that sustained employer partnerships can produce substantial employment outcomes.

Where gaps remain: As stakeholder forums revealed, RSPs "lack sufficient funding and formal authority to drive alignment." They can convene and advise but cannot mandate program changes or resource allocation. The 14 RSPs vary in capacity and maturity, with some (like EAMA) showing strong results and others still developing.

ReadyCT and Intermediary Organizations

ReadyCT operates as a workforce intermediary, embedding staff in schools to design and deliver work-based learning opportunities. The organization has expanded beyond its Greater Hartford origins to serve schools in New Britain and Eastern Connecticut, now operating 18 pathways across multiple regions with plans for continued statewide growth. ReadyCT also supports the MfgSkillsforCT.com initiative, providing a centralized resource for manufacturing career pathways across the state.

The organization holds an advisory role in the Governor's Workforce Council and advocates for policy improvements including educator certification reform. ReadyCT's model has earned national recognition—the Littler Workplace Policy Institute identified the organization as a best practice example for intermediary-led workforce development in its 2024 report on addressing skilled labor shortages.

Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative: a collaboration between EWIB, EAMA, Connecticut State Community College, ReadyCT, and 12 participating high schools that delivers foundational manufacturing skills, industry credentials, OSHA 10 certification, college credits, and pre-apprenticeship hours. Since 2018, more than 100 students completing YMPI were immediately placed in manufacturing jobs.

What they accomplished: ReadyCT and similar intermediaries demonstrate that dedicated staff embedded in schools can create meaningful work-based learning experiences. The YMPI model shows how regional coordination can produce direct employment outcomes. Statewide reach and flexibility allow lessons learned to transfer across districts.

Where gaps remain: While ReadyCT has expanded beyond Greater Hartford into New Britain and Eastern Connecticut, true statewide coverage faces funding and capacity constraints. Scaling to serve all regions requires greater investment and sustained commitment to cross-district cooperation.

Unimplemented Recommendations

The 2020 Governor's Workforce Council strategic plan identified numerous priorities that remain only partially addressed:

Data and accountability:

- The state still lacks a comprehensive inventory of high school workforce programs
- Career readiness implementation varies across districts with no common definition or measurement
- Outcome tracking from high school through employment remains limited—the state can follow students into college but loses visibility on those entering the workforce directly

Structural coordination:

- Districts continue to make independent programming decisions
- No single entity has authority to coordinate the high school workforce pipeline across 200-plus districts
- Scheduling and logistics barriers persist across district lines

Employer engagement:

- While RSPs formalized employer input, forum participants noted that businesses still find the system difficult to navigate
- The burden of engagement falls disproportionately on large employers willing to invest in relationships; smaller businesses often cannot participate effectively

Why Progress Is Incomplete

Connecticut's workforce initiatives over the past five years have trained and placed thousands of workers, formalized employer partnerships, and created new coordination structures. Yet the fundamental challenges identified in stakeholder forums persist.

Several factors explain the gap between effort and systemic change:

1. **Adult focus:** Most major investments (CareerConneCT, Good Jobs Challenge) targeted adult workers rather than the high school pipeline. High school workforce programs remained largely outside of these initiatives' scope.
2. **Advisory rather than operational authority:** GWC, OWS, and RSPs can convene, recommend, and coordinate—but they cannot direct school districts, allocate educational resources, or mandate program changes.
3. **Time-limited federal funding:** CareerConneCT and Good Jobs Challenge depended on pandemic-era federal investments that sunset in 2025. The state has not established sustainable funding streams to continue successful programs.
4. **Scale vs. demonstration:** Programs like ReadyCT and YMPI show that coordinated approaches work, but they operate in limited geographic areas. Scaling successful pilots to statewide impact requires different strategies and resources.
5. **Fragmented accountability:** Different programs use different performance measures, making it difficult to assess system-wide results or compare approaches. Employment outcomes for participants remain hard to determine across funding sources.

The initiatives of the past five years demonstrate that Connecticut has the capacity, partnerships, and policy infrastructure to improve workforce outcomes.

What remains missing is the operational authority, sustainable funding, and systematic accountability to transform successful pilots into system-wide coordination.

SECTION 4: WHAT WE HEARD FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Between February and June 2025, we convened four regional forums with workforce development practitioners, educators, employers, and intermediary organizations. These conversations—held in New Haven, Fairfield, New London, and East Hartford—surfaced consistent themes about what works in Connecticut's workforce system, what doesn't, and what could be improved.

Coordination: Many Players, No Conductor

The most consistently cited challenge across all four forums was the lack of coordination in Connecticut's workforce development landscape. Participants described multiple organizations operating independently, often with overlapping mandates but unclear accountability.

"There is no coordinating entity for moving youth through a comprehensive pipeline."

"RESCs: overlapping responsibilities and a lack of clear authority mean regional partners are less effective."

"Too many cooks at the RSPs."

Several forums mentioned RSPs as potentially valuable coordination mechanisms, but participants noted they lack sufficient funding, direction, or formal authority to drive alignment across the state.

"RSPs could be a good home for advisory boards, if they were empowered with some funding."

"Give the RSPs a target to aim at in terms of what skills they need at their businesses so we can compare to the data we have from CSDE to see what gaps there are."

Scheduling: A Structural Challenge

The New London forum, in particular, highlighted scheduling as a significant obstacle to effective work-based learning. The structure of the high school day—built around academic course sequences—leaves limited room for meaningful employer engagement.

"The school schedule is the toughest part with work-based learning."

"When we do the internships, it makes it hard with scheduling too."

"Things happen ad hoc in districts because the legislative side of things is so stringent."

Often CTE programs are delivered in 50-minute blocks and on rotating schedules.

Meanwhile, employer partners operate on business hours that don't align with academic bells, making sustained work-based learning placements logistically challenging.

Teacher Pipeline: Certification Barrier

The challenge of finding qualified CTE instructors came up in multiple forums, particularly for technical subjects where industry experience is essential but education credentials are required.

"In order to teach a CNA course, you need to be an RN with two-four years of experience in a specific environment."

"What licensing areas can we eliminate? Career Tech Ed license? Cooperative Work Study license?"

The Fairfield County forum noted that a teacher certification task force is evolving to examine superintendent certification, however initial results from the task force suggest minimal movement on policy.

Meanwhile, employers have developed workarounds, but these are limited in scope and capacity.

Employer Engagement: Scale, Sustainability

Employers face their own challenges in engaging with the fragmented school system. Forum participants noted that building effective partnerships requires navigating 200-plus independent districts, each with its own structures and decision-makers.

"School-based points of contact need to be 12 months per year for employers to easily participate."

"Getting businesses involved requires a lot of humility."

"Businesses need to have more grit and perseverance on their workforce development efforts."

Electric Boat, one of the state's most active employer partners, described substantial investments in education outreach that have been "skyrocketing over the past few years." Yet even this major employer faces limits: they offer exposure programs to schools but noted that "every school wants this" and they can only serve so many.

Data and Definitions: Measuring the Wrong Things

The East Hartford forum surfaced concerns about how Connecticut measures career readiness—and whether existing data systems provide useful information.

"Creating a common definition of career readiness [is important]."

"Office of Higher Ed has a dashboard, so do lots of people, but no one looks at them." They added that existing dashboards suffer from maintenance and usability issues that limit their value.

Participants noted the absence of workforce outcomes in postsecondary tracking—meaning the state can follow students into college, but lose some visibility on those entering the workforce directly.

Several forums referenced the DataLinkCT system but expressed uncertainty about whether it was being used effectively.

CTECS High Demand, Limited Capacity

The Connecticut Technical Education and Career System emerged as a bright spot in stakeholder conversations. These schools consistently produce graduates aligned with workforce needs. However, participants in multiple forums noted the system's capacity constraints, with demand significantly exceeding available seats.

This capacity gap means that even students actively seeking technical education may not have access to it, depending on where they live and whether they can secure one of the limited spots.

Forum Themes Summary

The stakeholder forums revealed a workforce development system with committed practitioners, engaged employers, and genuine interest in improvement—but structural barriers that limit effectiveness:

Theme	Core Challenge	Stakeholder Perspective
Coordination	No clear authority across districts	"Too many cooks, no conductor"
Scheduling	Academic day structure limits WBL	"50-minute slots aren't enough"
Teacher Pipeline	Certification barriers for industry pros	"We can't find qualified instructors"
Employer Engagement	169 districts to navigate	"We need single points of contact"
Data & Definitions	No common career readiness measure	"Dashboards exist but aren't used"
CTECS Capacity	Demand exceeds supply	"Many applicants turned away"

These findings informed the recommendations in Section 7, which address the structural barriers stakeholders identified while building on the bright spots they highlighted.

SECTION 5: GAP ANALYSIS

Bringing together the demand picture from Section 1 and the program landscape from Section 2 reveals the magnitude of Connecticut's workforce alignment challenge. This section examines how well CTE enrollment aligns with workforce demand.

Methodology Note

Traditional workforce gap analysis attempts to calculate precise numbers of "missing workers" by comparing annual job openings to estimated program completers.

However, converting course enrollment data to completer estimates requires assumptions that cannot be validated:

- Course enrollments span all four high school grades, not just graduating seniors
- Students take multiple courses, creating duplicate counts in enrollment data
- Not all enrollees complete pathways or enter the workforce in their field of study
- Connecticut graduates only about 32,500 public high school students annually, placing an upper bound on possible completers

Rather ascribe a specific gap, this analysis adopts a directional approach comparing where students are enrolled relative to where jobs exist.

Directional Program Alignment

Comparing the share of CTE enrollment in each cluster to the share of workforce openings reveals significant directional misalignment.

Several directional patterns emerge:

1. **Healthcare is dramatically under-represented:** Despite comprising 16.3% of job openings—the second-largest cluster—healthcare accounts for only 3.7% of CTE enrollment (ratio of 0.23x).
2. **Transportation is severely under-represented:** Supply chain and transportation represents 9.6% of openings but only 3.4% of enrollment—a ratio of just 0.35x.
3. **Financial services and digital technology are over-represented:** These clusters account for 30% of CTE enrollment combined but only 7.7% of job openings. However, as discussed below and in Section 2, much of this enrollment serves purposes other than direct workforce preparation.
4. **Manufacturing is well-aligned:** Advanced manufacturing shows nearly proportional alignment (0.97x), with enrollment share matching demand share.

Cluster	Demand Share	Enrollment Share	Ratio	Direction
Hospitality, Events & Tourism	20.1%	16.8%	0.84x	Proportional
Healthcare & Human Services	16.3%	3.7%	0.23x	**Under-represented**
Management & Entrepreneurship	14.1%	17.1%	1.21x	Proportional
Marketing & Sales	10.2%	6%	0.58x	Proportional
Education	10.1%	5.5%	0.54x	**Under-represented**
Supply Chain & Transportation	9.6%	3.4%	0.35x	Under-represented
Advanced Manufacturing	5.4%	5.3%	0.97x	Well-aligned
Financial Services	4.4%	15.2%	3.44x	**Over-represented**
Construction	4.2%	8.3%	1.97x	Over-represented
Digital Technology	3.3%	15.1%	4.58x	**Over-represented**
Agriculture	2.2%	3.8%	1.71x	Over-represented

Sources: Connecticut DOL Occupational Projections 2022-2032; CSDE Perkins enrollment data. Note: Ratios below 0.5x indicate severe under-representation; above 1.5x indicate over-representation.

Adjusted Alignment

The gap percentages above may overstate alignment in finance and digital technology. When we examine actual course content rather than cluster classification, apparent alignment disappears:

Financial Services:

- Cluster enrollment: 19,936
- Personal finance/financial literacy courses: 12,490 (62.7%)
- Career-relevant courses (accounting, investments): ~6,300

Personal finance courses teach budgeting, credit management, and consumer skills—valuable life skills aligned with Connecticut's graduation requirements, but not career preparation for financial services occupations. When we count only career-relevant coursework, the finance cluster's apparent over-representation looks more muted.

Digital Technology:

- Cluster enrollment: 23,703
- Creative/media courses (graphics, video, games): 9,173 (46.2%)
- Technical IT courses (networking, cybersecurity): 515 (2.6%)

Nearly half of IT enrollment is in creative media production—courses that may better prepare students for arts and design careers than IT roles. Only 2.6% of IT enrollment addresses the technical skills most directly aligned with IT occupations.

Reclassification Impact:

When courses are reclassified by content rather than administrative category.

Approximately 14,778 course enrollments (10% of total CTE enrollment) are in courses that, while valuable, do not prepare students for careers in their classified cluster. The state's actual workforce alignment is weaker than enrollment figures suggest.

Cluster	Reported Alignment	Content-Adjusted Alignment
Financial Services	54% filled	16% filled
Digital Technology	85% filled	37% filled

Regional Alignment Patterns

Directional alignment varies across Connecticut's five workforce development areas. We compare each region's share of state CTE enrollment to its share of state job openings:

Region	% of State Openings	% of State CTE Enrollment	Ratio	Alignment
Northwest	14.0%	24.2%	1.73x	Over-enrolled
Southwest	21.2%	20.4%	0.96x	Well-aligned
Eastern	11.0%	10.7%	0.97x	Well-aligned
South Central	21.7%	19.7%	0.91x	Proportional
North Central	32.0%	25.1%	0.78x	Under-enrolled

Sources: Connecticut DOL Regional Occupational Projections 2022-2032; CSDE Perkins enrollment data

The **Northwest region** shows notably higher CTE enrollment relative to its share of state job openings (1.73x ratio), driven by strong technical high school presence in cities like Waterbury and Torrington.

The **North Central region**—home to Hartford and the state's largest employment base—shows relatively lower CTE concentration (0.78x) despite having the most schools. This region accounts for 32% of state job openings but only 25% of CTE enrollment.

Priority Cluster Concentration by Region

Examining where CTE enrollment is concentrated within each region reveals different strategic emphases. We define "priority clusters" as workforce-direct clusters with strong job growth: manufacturing, transportation, construction, and healthcare.

The Northwest region shows the strongest alignment with priority clusters (0.84x concentration ratio), meaning its CTE enrollment distribution nearly matches the demand distribution for these high-growth fields.

North Central shows the weakest priority cluster concentration (0.42x), suggesting opportunity for targeted expansion in priority clusters.

Total Higher Education Completions by Program, All Schools (2023)

Source: EI calculations based on Lightcast 2025.2

Higher education completions illustrate the mismatch. In contrast to high school programming, a significant number of postsecondary students are entering high demand fields like healthcare.

Region	% of Regional CTE in Priority Clusters	% of Regional Jobs in Priority Clusters	Concentration Ratio
Northwest	28.4%	33.9%	0.84x
South Central	18.6%	35.2%	0.53x
Southwest	17.2%	28.6%	0.60x
Eastern	16.8%	34.3%	0.49x
North Central	15.3%	36%	0.42x

Sources: Connecticut DOL Regional Occupational Projections 2022-2032; CSDE Perkins enrollment data

Under-Represented Clusters by Region

The same clusters tend to be under-represented across all regions, though the magnitude varies:

Cluster	Eastern	North Central	Southwest	South Central	Northwest
Healthcare	0.19x	0.22x	0.25x	0.21x	0.31x
Transportation	0.28x	0.31x	0.35x	0.33x	0.42x
Hospitality	0.72x	0.68x	0.75x	0.71x	0.85x
Marketing	0.51x	0.48x	0.55x	0.52x	0.61x

Ratio = regional enrollment share/regional demand share for each cluster. Values below 0.5x indicate severe under-representation.

Healthcare and transportation are under-represented in every region, though the Northwest shows somewhat better alignment. Hospitality approaches proportional representation in most regions but remains slightly underserved.

For healthcare, postsecondary completions remain high, suggesting we are primarily making up the gap between supply and demand at the college and credential level.

School-Level Variation

Within regions, individual schools vary dramatically in their alignment with workforce needs:

School Type	Avg. Priority Cluster Share	Range
CTECS Technical High Schools	60%-70%	50%-100%
Comprehensive HS with CTE	15%-25%	0%-72%

Distribution of Priority Cluster Enrollment:

- Six schools concentrate more than 50% of enrollment in priority workforce-direct clusters (manufacturing, transportation, construction, healthcare)
- 15 schools offer CTE programs exclusively in non-priority clusters (finance, IT, business management), with zero enrollment in workforce-direct pathways
- The remaining 150-plus schools fall between these extremes

Technical high schools in the CTECS system consistently show strong alignment with workforce-direct clusters, while comprehensive high schools vary widely—some offering robust career pathways, others providing primarily exploratory or college-prep coursework.

What Alignment Patterns Reveal

The directional analysis reveals several structural patterns:

1. **Directional mismatch:** Students are concentrated in clusters (finance, IT, business management) that together represent only 22% of job openings but account for 47% of CTE enrollment. Meanwhile, workforce-direct clusters (healthcare, transportation) representing 26% of openings account for only 7% of enrollment.
2. **Content mismatch:** Much of the enrollment in over-represented clusters (finance, IT) is in courses that serve general education rather than career preparation purposes. When adjusted for course content, this picture changes.
3. **Regional mismatch:** The North Central region has the largest economy (32% of state openings) but relatively weaker CTE concentration (25% of enrollment) and the lowest priority cluster alignment (0.42x). The Eastern region has the smallest CTE infrastructure despite adequate demand.
4. **Delivery system mismatch:** Technical high schools show strong workforce alignment but turn away half their applicants. Comprehensive high schools have capacity but often offer primarily college-prep or general education coursework.

These patterns are not failures of individual schools or programs but rather structural features of a system that lacks coordination mechanisms to align program offerings with workforce needs across school districts.

The directional signals indicate that healthcare, transportation, and other under-represented clusters warrant expansion, while the apparent strength in finance and IT largely reflects classification artifacts.

SECTION 6: OTHER STATE APPROACHES

Connecticut is not alone in grappling with workforce alignment challenges. Other states have implemented reforms that address many of the structural barriers identified in this report. This section highlights models with demonstrated outcomes that could inform Connecticut's approach.

Statewide Coordination: Delaware Pathways

Delaware's experience is instructive given its small size and multi-district system—characteristics it shares with Connecticut. Launched in 2015 as a governor-led initiative, Delaware Pathways brought together state agencies, business leaders, K-12, higher education, and philanthropy around a unified career pathways strategy.

Key innovation: The Delaware Office of Work-Based Learning was created specifically to support Delaware Pathways by serving as its implementation arm, centralizing employer engagement, vetting work-based learning experiences, and ensuring consistent quality across districts.

Relevance to Connecticut: The DOWBL intermediary model directly addresses the coordination challenges stakeholders identified in our forums. Rather than 169 districts independently seeking employer partners, a central broker could streamline engagement while ensuring quality.

Outcomes:

Metric	2015-16	2019-20	Change
Student participation	13% (1,850 students)	40% (16,000 students)	+207%
High schools offering pathways	N/A	42 schools, 157 programs	
Employer partners	N/A	240+ employers in 20+ industries	
Employer hire intent	N/A	85% likely to hire WBL students	

Source: Advance CTE Delaware Pathways Profile; Fordham Institute analysis

Youth Apprenticeship: Colorado CareerWise

Colorado CareerWise, modeled on Swiss apprenticeship programs, offers three-year paid apprenticeships beginning in high school. Students work two days per week in Year 1, increasing to three or more days by Year 3, earning wages plus high school and college credit.

Outcomes:

- Approximately 64% of CareerWise participants transition to postsecondary education, employment, or both ("options multiplier"), according to policy analysis
- Registered apprentices demonstrate higher completion rates than non-registered peers
- Employers report longer employee retention among apprenticeship participants compared to typical entry-level hires (*Source: Urban Institute CareerWise Case Study)*

Relevance to Connecticut: This model addresses scheduling barriers by restructuring the school week around employer realities. Major employers already engaged in WBL could serve as anchor partners for a Connecticut pilot.

Alternative Teacher Certification: Multiple States

The challenge of recruiting industry professionals as CTE teachers has prompted several states to create alternative certification pathways:

State	Model	Key Features
Washington	Business & Industry Pathway	No bachelor's degree required; industry experience substitutes (one of several pathways)
Arizona	CTE Certificate	High school diploma + 6,000 hours work experience; multiple pathways i.e. provisional, standard, subject specific
Wisconsin	UW-Stout Boot Camp	Two-year pedagogy sequence for experience-based educators; Wisconsin allows experience-based technical and vocational licensure statewide; UW–Stout's boot camp is one prominent preparation option within that framework.
South Carolina	Work-Based Certification	Five-year timeline; training while employed

Common elements:

- Work experience (typically five-six years) substitutes for degree requirements - Pedagogy training provided while candidates teach
- Mentoring by experienced CTE teachers
- Multiple pathways to accommodate different backgrounds

Evidence: Wisconsin's boot camp was found to be "effective in reducing vacant secondary CTE positions and helped candidates build confidence in the classroom through positive mentoring experiences." (*Source: New America; U.S. Department of Education CTE Teacher Pipeline Initiative)*

Relevance to Connecticut: Forum participants repeatedly cited CSDE certification inflexibility as a barrier. Washington and Arizona offer the most accessible models for industry professionals, while Wisconsin's mentoring emphasis addresses quality concerns.

Weighted Funding Formulas: Texas

Texas uses tiered funding weights that reward CTE program completion rather than simple course enrollment:

CTE Course Level	Weight Multiplier
CTE courses not in program of study	1.1x
Level 1-2 courses in approved program	1.28x
Level 3-4 courses in approved program	1.47x

This structure incentivizes schools to move students through complete pathways rather than offering scattered introductory courses. Funding follows students through grades seven through 12 based on contact hours. Program level classification is based on the number of instructional hours completed within an approved program of study, with higher weights assigned as students progress through multi-year pathways. (*Source: Texas Education Agency; Advance CTE Texas Case Study)*

Relevance to Connecticut: A tiered funding approach could shift incentives away from high-enrollment general courses (like personal finance) toward sustained pathway completion in workforce-direct clusters.

Credential-Based Accountability: Tennessee

Tennessee incorporates industry credentials into its accountability system through the Ready Graduate indicator. Students demonstrate career readiness by:

- Achieving benchmark on industry certifications, OR
- Earning B or better on six-plus hours of approved CTE dual credit

The state conducts biennial standards revision with industry input and has invested $41 million through multiple rounds of Governor's Investment in Vocational Education grants to create regional industry partnerships.

Outcomes:

Metric	2015-16	2022-23	Change
Dual-enrollment participants	25,000	42,000	+68%

Source: Advance CTE Pathways Tennessee; NASBE Tennessee Workforce Alignment

Relevance to Connecticut: Tennessee's approach offers a model for the Measure What Matters challenge stakeholders identified. A clear career readiness definition—tied to credentials employers value—could replace the current ambiguity across districts.

Employer Incentives: Ohio TechCred

Ohio reimburses employers up to $2,000 per industry credential earned by employees, with businesses eligible for up to $30,000 per funding round. The program targets technology-focused credentials taking one year or less.

Investment:

Fiscal Year	Appropriation	Target
2022	$33.3M	20,000 credentials/year
2023	$25M	20,000 credentials/year
2025	$25.2M	20,000 credentials/year

Source: Ohio TechCred; Ohio Legislative Service Commission

Relevance to Connecticut: While TechCred focuses on incumbent workers, the reimbursement model could be adapted to incentivize employer investment in high school work-based learning and credential programs.

Work-Based Learning Liability Solutions

Employer liability concerns represent a barrier to work-based learning expansion. Several states have addressed this through insurance solutions.

Relevance to Connecticut: Clear liability frameworks and reimbursement programs could reduce friction for employers considering work-based learning partnerships.

State	Policy Innovation
Nevada	Authorized districts to obtain insurance against student WBL liability
Arkansas	Statute permits state reimbursement (subject to appropriation) of employers' proportionate workers' comp premium costs for students in WBL
Florida	Clarifies workers' comp responsibility for paid vs unpaid WBL (district/college treated as employer for unpaid), and provides an application-based reimbursement process for eligible workers' comp premium costs (subject to appropriations/rules).
Nebraska	Developed a detailed liability framework specifying responsibilities by WBL activity type (unpaid internship, paid CTE program, job shadowing), reducing uncertainty for both schools and employers.

Source: Center for American Progress 50-State WBL Scan; Education Commission of the States

Extended Pathways: New York P-TECH

Pathways in Technology offers a six-year pathway combining high school, community college, and employer partnerships starting in ninth grade. Students earn a high school diploma in four years followed by a tuition-free associate degree, with ongoing mentoring and internships from employer partners who commit to considering graduates "first in line" for positions.

Outcomes (MDRC Evaluation):

- Young men: 13% earned associate degree vs. 3% in comparison group
- Higher ELA Regents scores
- More credits earned
- Particularly effective for academically low-performing students
- Operating costs comparable to regular high schools (*Source: NYS P-TECH Program; MDRC P-TECH Evaluation)*

Relevance to Connecticut: P-TECH's strong outcomes for disadvantaged young men—the population showing strongest wage gains in MDRC's Career Academies research—make it relevant to Connecticut's disconnected youth challenge. The model requires significant employer commitment and college partnership.

Cross-Agency Governance: Massachusetts

Massachusetts coordinates workforce development through a governor-level Workforce Skills Cabinet bringing together education, workforce, housing, and economic development agencies.

MassHire Workforce Boards provide regional work-based learning support, with Connecting Activities staff creating work experience opportunities and placing students.

Outcomes:

- Innovation Pathways students are twice as likely to complete state's core curriculum
- 95% attendance vs. 92% for comparison students
- 40% fewer disciplinary incidents
- Career Technical Initiative generates $2.18 per $1 invested (*Source: Massachusetts DOE; Advance CTE Massachusetts Innovation Pathways)*

Relevance to Connecticut: Massachusetts demonstrates how cross-agency coordination at the governor's level can align education and workforce priorities. The Workforce Skills Cabinet model could inform Connecticut governance reforms.

Lessons for Connecticut

These state examples suggest several patterns relevant to Connecticut's situation:

What works:

1. Dedicated intermediary organizations that broker employer-school connections at scale (Delaware DOWBL, Indiana OWBLA)
2. Governor's-level coordination across education and workforce agencies (Massachusetts, Delaware)
3. Alternative certification pathways that value industry experience (Washington, Arizona, Wisconsin)
4. Funding incentives that reward pathway completion over course sampling (Texas)
5. Clear career readiness definitions tied to industry-valued credentials (Tennessee)
6. Liability solutions that reduce friction for employer participation (Arkansas, Florida, Nebraska)

Common implementation requirements:

- Executive leadership (governor's-level buy-in for cross-agency coordination)
- Dedicated funding (significant state investment, often $25 million-plus annually for major initiatives)
- Legislative action (particularly for funding formulas and certification changes)
- Intermediary capacity (organizations to broker connections and manage complexity)

Small-state comparables: Delaware and Massachusetts offer the most directly transferable lessons given their similarity to Connecticut in size, governance complexity, and economic composition. Both demonstrate that fragmented systems can achieve coordination through intermediary structures and cross-agency governance.

SECTION 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis in this report suggests that Connecticut has the programs, partnerships, and policy infrastructure to build effective high school workforce pathways but lacks the coordination mechanisms, sustainable funding, and systematic accountability to operate at scale.

The recommendations below are organized around the four priorities previewed in the introduction, informed by stakeholder forums, gap analysis, and examination of successful approaches in other states.

Each recommendation identifies responsible entities and success metrics, recognizing that sustainable change requires clarity about who acts and how progress will be measured.

Priority 1: Reduce Structural Barriers to Student Participation

The Problem: The current system places significant obstacles between students and work-based learning opportunities. School schedules vary so widely that employers cannot efficiently offer

experiences across district lines. Teacher certification requirements make it difficult for industry professionals to share expertise in classrooms. State requirements offer limited flexibility for extended workplace experiences.

Recommendation 1.1: Create Alternative Certification Pathways for Industry Professionals

Expand adjunct teaching opportunities to include manufacturing, healthcare, and IT-related professionals. Allow documented industry experience (six-plus years) to substitute for degree requirements, with pedagogy training provided while candidates teach.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	CSDE (certification authority); Legislature (statutory changes if needed)
State model	Washington's Business & Industry Pathway; Arizona's CTE Certificate

Recommendation 1.2: Establish CTE Teacher Externship Program

Create a statewide program enabling current CTE teachers to spend time in industry settings, updating their skills and building employer relationships.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	CSDE; RSPs (employer coordination)
State model	Electric Boat COMPASS program; Wisconsin UW-Stout boot camp

Recommendation 1.3: Pilot Regional Schedule Coordination

Select one WDA to pilot coordinated scheduling for CTE and work-based learning. Participating districts would align block schedules and calendar breaks to enable regional employer partnerships.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	RSP (convening); participating districts (implementation); CSDE (flexibility waivers if needed)

Recommendation 1.4: Review Instructional Hour Requirements for Flexibility

Examine the 900-hour academic requirement to identify opportunities for flexibility that would accommodate extended work-based learning experiences while maintaining educational quality.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	CSDE; Legislature (if statutory change needed)

Recommendation 1.5: Address Work-Based Learning Liability Barriers

Develop clear liability frameworks and consider insurance or reimbursement mechanisms to reduce friction for employers offering work-based learning placements.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	Legislature; OWS (policy development)
State model	Arkansas/Florida workers' comp reimbursement; Nebraska liability framework

Priority 2: Establish Clear Coordination Mechanisms

The Problem: Connecticut's 200-plus school districts make independent programming decisions. No entity has authority to coordinate program offerings across district lines or align supply with regional labor market demand. Employers face no consistent points of contact and significant variation in who "owns" workforce development.

Recommendation 2.1: Establish Regional Workforce Navigators

Create dedicated navigator positions in each of Connecticut's five workforce development areas, housed within Regional Sector Partnerships or Regional Education Service Centers. Navigators would serve as single points of contact for employers seeking to engage with schools and educators seeking to connect with industry partners.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	Office of Workforce Strategy, in partnership with RSPs and RESCs
State model	Delaware DOWBL intermediary approach

Recommendation 2.2: Empower Regional Sector Partnerships with Funding and Mandate

Provide RSPs with dedicated state funding and formal authority to convene regional program planning, set enrollment targets for priority clusters, and coordinate work-based learning across district boundaries. RSPs should receive multi-year funding commitments to enable sustained relationship-building.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	Legislature (funding authorization); OWS (administration)
State model	Massachusetts Workforce Skills Cabinet regional coordination

Recommendation 2.3: Pilot Regional Program Sharing

Launch a pilot in one Workforce Development Area or RESC service area where adjacent districts share specialized CTE programs. Students from District A access manufacturing programs at District B; District B students access healthcare programs at District A. Address transportation, scheduling, and funding-follows-student challenges in a controlled environment before statewide expansion.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	OWS pilot administration; participating districts; CSDE for funding mechanism
State model	Connecticut already has inter-district magnet experience to build upon

Recommendation 2.4: Expand CTECS Capacity in Underserved Regions

Target CTECS capacity expansion in regions with the largest supply-demand gaps—particularly North Central and Eastern. Consider satellite programs (such as Bristol Technical Education Center), expanded admission, additional transportation support, or new technical high school development.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	CTECS; legislature (capital funding)

Priority 3: Build Information Infrastructure for Better Decisions

The Problem: The state does not systematically inventory existing high school workforce programs, making it challenging to identify gaps or avoid duplication. Career readiness implementation varies across districts with no common definition. Data systems do not adequately track outcomes from high school through employment.

Recommendation 3.1: Build a Statewide Program Inventory

Develop and maintain a publicly accessible inventory of high school workforce programs—including Perkins-funded CTE, work-based learning opportunities, early college programs, and industry partnerships.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	CSDE, with OWS collaboration
State model	Tennessee's program inventory linked to credential outcomes; MfgSkillsForCT

Recommendation 3.2: Develop Regional Supply-Demand Dashboards

Create annual dashboards for each WDA showing CTE enrollment by cluster compared to regional job openings. Dashboards should be publicly accessible and inform RSP priority-setting and district program planning.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	Connecticut DOL (labor market data); CSDE (enrollment data); OWS (dashboard development)

Recommendation 3.3: Establish Statewide Career Readiness Definition

Develop a common definition of career readiness tied to industry-valued credentials, with multiple pathways for students to demonstrate readiness. Integrate career readiness into school accountability systems.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	CSDE (accountability authority); Governor's Workforce Council (industry input)
State model	Tennessee Ready Graduate indicator

Recommendation 3.4: Implement Outcome Tracking From Enrollment Through Employment

Connect CTE enrollment records to wage records and postsecondary enrollment data through DataLinkCT or successor system. Enable tracking of whether CTE completers find employment in their field of study, pursue further education, or leave the state.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	OWS (data coordination); Connecticut DOL (wage records); CSDE (enrollment data); OHE (postsecondary data)

Recommendation 3.5: Audit Course Content Alignment

Require districts to audit courses classified within career clusters to ensure content prepares students for careers in those fields. Reclassify general education courses (e.g., personal finance for graduation requirements) appropriately.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	CSDE

Priority 4: Strengthen Employer-Education Alignment

The Problem: Employers need structured, sustainable mechanisms to communicate their skills needs to educators. The burden of engagement falls disproportionately on large employers; smaller businesses often cannot participate effectively.

Recommendation 4.1: Regionalize Perkins Industry Advisory Boards

Perkins funded programs already maintain local industry advisory boards, but feedback suggest these are largely procedural. Regional boards would help align programs to broader employer needs.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	CSDE (requirement); RSPs (employer recruitment and model development)

Recommendation 4.2: Establish Quarterly Employer Skills Surveys

Implement regular, standardized surveys of RSP member employers to identify evolving skills needs. Feed survey results into regional dashboard and program planning processes.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	RSPs (administration); OWS (survey design and aggregation)

Recommendation 4.3: Scale Intermediary Organizations

Invest in expanding proven intermediary models like ReadyCT to additional regions. Intermediaries broker employer-school connections at scale, reducing burden on individual businesses and schools.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	OWS (funding); philanthropy (matching investment)
State model	Delaware DOWBL; Indiana OWBLA

Recommendation 4.4: Create a Student and Family Portal

Develop a **user-friendly** digital platform where students and families can explore career pathways, identify available programs in their region, and understand connections between high school coursework and career outcomes.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	CSDE, with private sector web development partnership

Recommendation 4.5: Create Incentive Funding for Priority Cluster Expansion

Develop a competitive grant program for districts to expand programming in under-represented clusters—particularly healthcare, transportation, and manufacturing. Prioritize proposals with demonstrated employer partnerships and work-based learning components.

Element	Detail
Responsible entity	CSDE (administration); Legislature (appropriation)
State model	Texas tiered funding weights; Tennessee GIVE grants

Implementation Framework

These recommendations require coordinated action across multiple entities. The following framework outlines how implementation should proceed:

Governance:

- Governor's Workforce Council provides strategic oversight
- Office of Workforce Strategy coordinates cross-agency implementation
- CSDE maintains authority over K-12 programs and certification
- RSPs drive regional implementation
- CT DataLink and OWS manage data integration between agencies and publishes annual updates through OPM

Funding Strategy:

- Seek federal workforce development grants for pilot initiatives
- Request state appropriation for sustainable infrastructure, redeploy existing funds to effective programs (navigators, intermediaries, data systems)
- Leverage philanthropy for innovation and demonstration projects
- Align existing Perkins and WIOA funding with strategic priorities

Accountability:

- Annual progress report to Governor's Workforce Council
- Public dashboard tracking implementation milestones
- Three-year external evaluation of pilot initiatives

What Success Looks Like

If Connecticut implements these recommendations effectively, by 2030:

- **Students** will have clear visibility into available programs and career pathways, with work-based learning opportunities regardless of which district they attend
- **Employers** will engage through streamlined regional structures rather than navigating 200-plus school districts, with their input systematically incorporated into program planning
- **Educators** will have access to industry expertise through alternative certification pathways and externship programs, with clear outcome data to guide continuous improvement
- **The state** will see measurable movement toward alignment between CTE enrollment and workforce demand, with healthcare, transportation, and manufacturing pipelines strengthened

The recommendations in this report are ambitious but achievable. Other states with similar challenges—Delaware, Massachusetts, Tennessee—have demonstrated that coordination is possible.

Connecticut has the assets: engaged employers, committed educators, and policy infrastructure.

APPENDIX

Methodology

Data Sources

Labor Market Data

Occupational demand projections are drawn from the Connecticut Department of Labor's Occupational Projections 2022-2032, which provide 10-year employment forecasts at both statewide and regional (Workforce Development Area) levels. These projections include base employment, projected employment, growth rates, and annual openings (combining growth and replacement demand).

Supplemental labor market data, including historical trends, wage information, and real-time job posting analysis, were obtained from Lightcast 2025.2 dataset.

Career Cluster Framework

Occupations were mapped to career clusters using the Advance CTE National Career Clusters Framework crosswalk (October 2024 version), which assigns Standard Occupational Classification codes to 14 modernized career clusters. This crosswalk represents a consolidation from the previous 16-cluster framework:

- STEM occupations were distributed across manufacturing, digital technology, and energy clusters based on specific SOC codes
- Government and public administration and law/public safety were combined into public service & safety
- Agriculture and portions of natural resources were consolidated into agriculture and energy and natural resources

CTE Program Data

Program enrollment data were obtained from Connecticut State Department of Education Perkins grant reporting, accessed via the eGrantsManagement system. The dataset includes 3,784 course records across 174 schools, representing 143,114 total course enrollments for the most recent reporting year.

Key limitations of this data:

- Figures represent course enrollments, not unique students (a student taking three CTE courses appears three times)
- Data captures only Perkins-funded programs; work-based learning, industry partnerships, and other career preparation activities outside Perkins reporting are not included
- Course classifications reflect administrative categorization, which may not always align with actual course content. Data was captured by passing images of grant applications through OCR/AI software, which could lead to misreadings or miscalculations. We are confident these errors, should they exist, do not meaningfully alter the nature of conclusions drawn from the data.

Geographic Data

Town boundaries were obtained from the Connecticut Department of Transportation ArcGIS REST API. Workforce Development Area assignments follow the official Connecticut Department of Labor town-to-WDA mapping, which divides the state into five regions: North Central, South Central, Southwest, Northwest, and Eastern.

Analytical Framework

Dual-Track Classification

Career clusters were classified based on the educational requirements of their constituent occupations:

Classification	Criteria	Evaluation Approach
College-Preparatory	70%+ of openings require bachelor's degree or higher	Evaluate against total openings (programs prepare students for further education)
Dual-Pathway	40-70% require bachelor's degree	Evaluate against total openings
Workforce-Direct	<40% require bachelor's degree	Evaluate against HS-accessible openings only

This classification recognizes that different clusters serve different purposes. A high school IT program launching students into computer science degrees is succeeding, even if graduates don't immediately enter IT occupations. Conversely, a Hospitality program should show direct employment outcomes.

Directional Alignment Analysis

Rather than calculating precise "gap" numbers (which require assumptions about completion rates that cannot be validated), this analysis adopts a directional approach comparing enrollment share to demand share for each cluster:

- **Ratio = Enrollment Share ÷ Demand Share**
- Ratios below 0.5x indicate severe under-representation
- Ratios between 0.5x and 1.5x indicate proportional alignment
- Ratios above 1.5x indicate over-representation

This approach identifies where students are concentrated relative to where jobs exist without claiming false precision about worker shortages.

Course Content Reclassification

Analysis of course titles and descriptions revealed that some courses classified within career clusters do not prepare students for careers in those fields:

- **Financial Services:** 62.7% of enrollment (12,490 students) is in Personal Finance/Financial Literacy courses—valuable life skills aligned with graduation requirements, but not career preparation for financial services occupations
- **Digital Technology:** 46.2% of enrollment (9,173 students) is in creative media courses (graphics, video production, game design) that may better align with Arts & Design careers than IT occupations; only 2.6% (515 students) is in technical IT courses (networking, cybersecurity)

Content-adjusted alignment figures reclassify these courses appropriately, revealing that apparent strength in Finance and IT largely reflects classification artifacts rather than genuine workforce pipeline capacity.

Completion Rate Considerations

The analysis does not attempt to estimate program completers from enrollment data. Any such estimate would require assumptions about:

- Multi-year program duration (students appear in enrollment data each year)
- Attrition between enrollment and completion
- Students who complete programs but pursue further education rather than immediate employment
- Students who enter careers outside their field of study

Connecticut graduates approximately 32,500 public high school students annually, placing an upper bound on possible CTE completers regardless of enrollment figures.

Stakeholder Engagement

Forum Methodology

Four regional stakeholder forums were conducted during the summer of 2025:

Location	Focus
New Haven	South Central region workforce ecosystem
Fairfield	Southwest region; CSDE policy barriers
New London	Eastern region; Electric Boat engagement; CTEC capacity
East Hartford	North Central region; data systems; RSP coordination

Each forum convened participants representing employers, educators, workforce development professionals, intermediary organizations, and community partners. Forums used semi-structured facilitation to surface themes around:

- Current coordination mechanisms and their effectiveness
- Barriers to employer engagement with schools
- Scheduling and logistical challenges for work-based learning
- Teacher recruitment and certification
- Data availability and use

Quotes appearing in this report were documented during forums. Themes were identified through iterative review of forum notes, with priority given to challenges mentioned across multiple forums.

Limitations

This analysis has several important limitations:

1. **Perkins data scope:** The CTE enrollment data captures only Perkins-funded programs. Career preparation occurring through other mechanisms—employer-sponsored training, work-based learning outside Perkins reporting, magnet programs, early college—is not reflected.
2. **Enrollment vs. students:** Course enrollment figures overstate the number of students served due to multi-course and multi-year counting. Estimates of unique students (50,000-70,000) are approximations.
3. **Point-in-time data:** Both labor market projections and enrollment data represent specific time periods and may not capture recent changes in either employer demand or program offerings.
4. **Regional aggregation:** workforce development areas aggregate diverse local labor markets. Demand patterns in Hartford differ from those in surrounding suburbs, but both appear in North Central regional figures.
5. **Qualitative findings:** Stakeholder forum themes represent perspectives of participants, who may not be representative of all workforce development stakeholders in Connecticut. Forums were not designed as systematic surveys.

Prior Studies and Reports Reviewed

This analysis builds on substantial prior work examining Connecticut's workforce development challenges. The following reports informed our understanding of existing recommendations and implementation status.

Governor's Workforce Council Strategic Plan (2020)

The GWC's inaugural strategic plan established four priority areas: business leadership in workforce development, education and training aligned to career pathways, equity and access for underserved populations, and data infrastructure for tracking outcomes. Key recommendations included:

- Establishing Regional Sector Partnerships as "core leadership organizations" for business-led workforce alignment
- Creating data systems to track workforce outcomes over time
- Providing seamless pathways from K-12 through postsecondary to career
- Training and placing workers in priority sectors (manufacturing, IT, healthcare)

Implementation status: RSPs have been established (14 currently operating with 500-plus employer participants), but stakeholder forums indicate they lack sufficient funding and authority to drive alignment across independent school districts. Data infrastructure for tracking high school-to-employment outcomes remains incomplete.

Work Forward: Pathways for Growth (April 2025)

The GWC's updated strategic plan emphasizes skills-based hiring and multiple pathways to success. Key objectives include:

- Increase opportunities for high school students to gain early college and career experiences
- Build K-12 career pathways providing work-based learning for all students
- Continue sector training programs in healthcare, manufacturing, technology, financial services, infrastructure, and clean energy
- Partner with employers to upskill current workforce
- Expand skills-based hiring through Learning and Employment Records

Opportunity Connecticut: Reimagining Our Workforce, Economy, and Quality of Life (Fall 2024)

The CBIA Foundation's economic action plan, developed through analysis of 25-plus reports and 30-plus forums statewide, includes workforce and education recommendations:

- Update state report card system to recognize work-based learning programs (internships, apprenticeships, industry partnerships) alongside traditional college prep metrics
- Inventory and align postsecondary opportunities to help students and families identify in-demand skills programs
- Create coordinated, statewide effort to promote employer-needed skills

- Emphasize skills-based learning with multiple pathways to success
- Address 93,000 job openings with coordinated career pathway development

Implementation status: The Foundation reports progress on nearly two-thirds of recommendations, including energy, housing, and regulatory reform efforts. Education accountability changes recognizing work-based learning have not yet been implemented.

119K Commission: Young People First (October 2024)

This 120-page report from the commission on disconnected youth proposes 22 "aligned actions" across four pillars to reconnect 60,000 of Connecticut's approximately 119,000 at-risk and disconnected young people. Workforce-relevant recommendations include:

- **Aligned Action 3:** Revamp 2-1-1 system into user-friendly app connecting youth with services
- **Aligned Action 11:** Create outcomes-based Connecticut Career Accelerator Program for workforce pathways
- **Aligned Action 13:** Strengthen career-connected learning and education-to-work pathways
- **Aligned Action 15:** Expand transitional employment, apprenticeships, and summer opportunities
- **Aligned Action 16:** Launch Connecticut Youth Service Corps
- **Aligned Action 7:** Review K-12 funding formulas for equitable distribution based on student needs

The report proposes $545 million in additional annual K-12 funding and approximately $900 million in total annual investment, funded through reinvested savings, spending reallocation, and new revenue sources.

Implementation status: Legislative leaders have expressed interest in pursuing some recommendations in the 2025 session, particularly graduation standard reform and additional K-12 funding. The Career Accelerator Program and Youth Service Corps remain in proposal stage.

Building Tomorrow's Workforce: Equitable Education and Career Pathways for Opportunity Youth in Fairfield County (December 2023)

Commissioned by the Fairfield County Business Collaborative for Education Equity in partnership with McKinsey & Company, this study focused on Norwalk and surrounding communities.

Key findings and recommendations:

- 48% of Norwalk's workforce earns below livable wage ($42,000)
- Black and Latino youth disproportionately disconnected (35-38% not enrolling in college vs. 28% statewide)
- Recommends collaborative cross-sector approach with shared plan across nonprofits, employers, schools, and government
- Calls for expanded wraparound services, mentorship programs, and reduced hiring biases
- Estimates successful implementation could lift 9,600 opportunity youth from poverty, saving $3 billion in taxpayer costs

Implementation status: Local implementation efforts underway through Norwalk ACTS and partner organizations; no statewide policy changes resulting from report.

Connecticut's Unspoken Crisis (2023)

The Dalio Education report, researched by Boston Consulting Group, provided the foundational data for the 119K Commission:

- Identified 119,000 young people aged 14-26 either at-risk or disconnected from education and employment
- Documented approximately 57,000 currently disconnected, with 49,000 additional high school students exhibiting risk factors
- Estimated annual economic impact of $750 million if these youth remain disconnected
- Projected lifetime GDP reduction of $5.5 billion annually if crisis continues

Implementation status: Report catalyzed creation of 119K Commission and elevated disconnected youth as policy priority. Specific interventions remain largely in planning stages.

Common Themes Across Prior Reports

Several recommendations appear consistently across multiple studies, suggesting consensus on key challenges:

Recommendation Theme	Reports Citing	Our Report Section
Regional coordination mechanism	GWC 2020, GWC 2025 Opportunity CT, 119K	Priority 2: Coordination Mechanisms
Data systems for outcome tracking	GWC 2020, GWC 2025, 119K	Rec 3.4: Outcome Tracking
Work-based learning expansion	GWC 2025, Opportunity CT, 119K, FCCF	Recs 1.3-1.5: Structural Barriers
Career readiness definition/ accountability	GWC 2025, Opportunity CT	Rec 3.3: Career Readiness Definition
Skills-based/multiple pathways approach	GWC 2020, GWC 2025, Opportunity CT	Throughout recommendations
Cross-sector collaboration	All reports	Rec 2.2: RSP Empowerment
Program inventory/ navigation	Opportunity CT, 119K, FCCF	Recs 3.1, 4.4: Inventory and Portal

The persistence of similar recommendations across reports spanning 2020-2025 suggests that while Connecticut has achieved consensus on needed reforms, implementation has lagged. This report's recommendations build on this foundation while emphasizing the specific mechanisms—regional navigators, empowered RSPs, sustainable funding—required to translate recommendations into action. ■

CBIA Foundation | 350 Church St., Hartford, CT 06103-1126 | 860.244.1900 | 860.278.8562 (f) | cbiafoundation.org