

# GREATER NEW HAVEN AND VALLEY LABOR MARKET ANALYSIS FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

This section offers recommendations for the workforce development ecosystem, and employers. Potential action steps are also provided.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ECOSYSTEM

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### 1. DEVELOP A ROBUST COMMUNICATION/MARKETING STRATEGY THAT REACHES EVERYONE.

**BACKGROUND:** Training programs reported not being at full capacity since the pandemic. Job seekers reported two main pathways to learning about work opportunities: searching on Indeed and asking friends. Few job seekers we spoke with mentioned any training programs offered by the Workforce Investment Boards, nonprofit organizations, or the new opportunities the Governor's Workforce Council and the Office of Workforce Strategy set forth.

#### POTENTIAL ACTIONS

- Develop recruitment strategies that reach job seekers "where they are" – in the community, places they frequent, and grassroots canvassing, so that the gap between training programs, job seekers, and employers is closed.
- Strengthen marketing about CT-specific job search portals such as Career ConneCT or CT Hires. These portals also offer skills assessments, training programs, and other support.
- Ensure that titles and positions use terminology that the general public understands. Some job titles are not commonly understood and can deter applicants.

### 2. STRENGTHEN COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND TRAINING ORGANIZATIONS.

**BACKGROUND:** Job seekers, training programs, and employers all reported that there are no guaranteed jobs once an individual has completed training. This has left training graduates discouraged and takes training programs and employers "off the hook."

#### POTENTIAL ACTIONS

- Improve/strengthen partnerships between training programs and employers so that there are direct pipelines to employment for training graduates.

### 3. DEVELOP NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

**BACKGROUND:** Many job seekers go to friends to learn about job opportunities; however, others reported not having a formal network they can go to. Job seekers expressed how difficult networking can be when you do not have a relationship with executive-level individuals.

#### POTENTIAL ACTIONS

- Develop "informal events" where job seekers and employers can meet. For many job seekers, the traditional resume-interview model is not effective. Creating space for informal networking opportunities can help those challenged by the conventional job search process.
- Create alternative pathways for job seekers to learn about employment opportunities, such as through social media.

### 4. SUPPORT JOB SEEKERS THROUGHOUT THEIR FIRST YEAR OF EMPLOYMENT

**BACKGROUND:** Training programs tend to offer supportive or wraparound services during training and less support during the individual's employment. The decrease in support can be challenging. Programs extending support past the training period had greater outcomes.

#### POTENTIAL ACTIONS

- Offer support around navigating workplace standards, company cultures, and self-advocacy so that individuals are more successful in the new environments.
- Develop training that offers stacked credentialing so individuals can continuously improve their skills.
- Invest in creative solutions against transportation barriers, such as shuttles to work.

### 5. EVALUATE THE RELEVANCE AND QUALITY OF TRAINING PROGRAMS

**BACKGROUND:** Our interviews exposed a mismatch between industry needs and training programs. While efforts ensure training programs meet employers' current needs, job seekers and employers highlighted that more work must be done.

#### POTENTIAL ACTIONS

- Strengthen the assessment of training programs meeting industry needs by increasing the frequency or strengthening key performance measures so that course correction can occur in a timely manner.
- Assess additional employers' workforce needs and develop a strategy to meet those needs; for example, there is a need (from employers) for administrative personnel, but there are not

many training opportunities for administrative roles. In addition, employers need IT professionals to have specific skills beyond the basics currently available.

## 6. INVEST IN QUALITY TRAINING PROGRAMS THAT LEAD TO EMPLOYMENT

**BACKGROUND:** Community-based organizations struggle with tracking the ratio between outreach and enrollment. This presents a vulnerability in understanding where the problems are regarding enrollment. Furthermore, some programs are not at capacity, while others could train more individuals if they had funding. A tracking mechanism can address some of these vulnerabilities.

### POTENTIAL ACTIONS

- Track outreach activity to assess performance on outreach efforts. Track the process from outreach to participation, graduation, and obtaining employment.
- All training programs should provide a stipend during training to offset living expenses. Advocacy efforts should focus on this.
- Research programs that have the capacity to train more individuals but lack funding. Assess their quality and employment rate (post-graduation) and fund.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

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### 1. RECONSIDER THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

**BACKGROUND:** All of the job seekers who participated in listening sessions for this labor market analysis reported discrimination as a barrier. Employers can use this information to examine their processes and ensure equitable practices.

### POTENTIAL ACTIONS

- Create outreach efforts that reach job seekers where they are. Listing openings on websites may not reach some groups given the digital divide and the lack of technology skills individuals may experience.
- Redesign the application process so that it takes into consideration different cultural norms. Hiring processes tend to be based on interviews; consider skill assessment or competency for training.
- Assess your current recruitment process. Is it too complicated? Does it bias one group over another? Consider a less complex and simpler process.
- Make career pathways explicit to attract job seekers. Ensure your company has processes for equitable career growth by assessing the opportunities and processes for growth.
- Recognize past jobs, skills, and education by assessing or connecting with past international employers.

### 2. OFFER BENEFITS NEEDED BY TODAY'S WORKFORCE

**BACKGROUND:** Today's workforce is different compared to past generations. Changes in the economy, way of life, and our complex environment affect how individuals show up for work. To

attract and retain candidates, create innovative practices that will increase trust, engagement, and loyalty.

#### POTENTIAL ACTIONS

- Ensure your medical healthcare plan includes mental health and dental benefits. Allow employees to attend medical (including therapy) appointments during working hours with no penalty.
- Hire a translator or offer onsite English as a Second Language (ESL) classes so that individuals do not have to go from the workplace to evening classes.
- Offer transportation benefits such as rideshare stipends. Many jobs are located in areas that are difficult or impossible to reach by public transportation. But the expense of a car is prohibitive for workers. Employers have an opportunity to lower transportation costs and increase employee attendance and punctuality by providing transportation solutions such as shuttles or vouchers for ride share apps (Uber, Lyft, etc.).
- Offer work schedules that allow caretakers to be home after school, attend medical appointments, and/or enroll in training or ESL classes.

### 3. TAP INTO YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AS A RETENTION STRATEGY

**BACKGROUND:** Job seekers are searching for organizations that value them and whose values align with theirs. Employers reported challenges with retention. Creating a values-driven organizational culture can help with employee citizenship, thus reducing turnover.

#### POTENTIAL ACTIONS

- Offer informal opportunities for individuals to network among colleagues and executives. Develop a robust training and mentorship program for individuals who do not meet all the job requirements.
- Embrace a culture of values that includes trust and making employees feel valued.

### 4. EVALUATE AND ADDRESS DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES

**BACKGROUND:** Every group of job seekers cited discrimination as a barrier to obtaining employment.

#### POTENTIAL ACTIONS

- Develop a task committee, including Human Resources (HR) or a designated leader, to review, audit, and address discriminatory practices. Make changes based on recommendations.
- Review your employment practices (the committee could do this) and highlight where changes can improve inclusion. Make recommendations. Initiate changes.
- Audit your personnel demographics, such as race/ethnicity, gender, mode of transportation, and compensation. Continue to track these numbers. Create goals for diversity and address

gaps and vulnerabilities.

- Develop a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) committee that is staff led and includes HR personnel. Task the committee with assessing practices and providing recommendations for inclusive and equitable practices and policies.
- Celebrate different cultures through company events.
- Develop clear policies around returning citizens and medical cannabis to ensure consistent practice across all applicants.