

PROJECT ABSTRACT

A PROJECT OVERVIEW OF THE GREATER NEW HAVEN AND VALLEY LABOR MARKET ANALYSIS

ABSTRACT

At the beginning of 2023, The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven and Valley Community Foundation partnered with Blakely Consulting to undertake a study that would advance the Foundations' work in promoting equitable economic development in their region. The goal of this project was to understand the need for middle skill jobs in the region, highlight occupations that provided promising employment opportunities, identify pathways for residents in the area, and meet the needs of local employers. More importantly, we sought to understand why this problem has not been solved yet. With employers demanding more workers and potential workers sitting out of the labor market, clearly there is more than a skills mismatch at work.

We undertook over 40 listening sessions and interviews with job seekers, employers, job training programs, and intermediaries to understand the problem, to highlight promising solutions, and identify opportunities for innovation.

We found misunderstandings at every level of the system. Employers are not committed enough to addressing their labor shortages to fully partner with training providers or to fund their own training programs. Training providers bring trainees to the last step but leave them to connect with employment on their own. Racism, gender discrimination, and other forms of bias also play a part. Women of color and English language learners are much more likely to encounter employment barriers.

Systemic barriers such as lack of transportation and lack of care infrastructure (the policies, resources, and services that help families meet their caregiving needs) will require innovative employer commitments. Regarding transportation, for example, employers may consider providing shuttles between offices and central locations. In the long term, public-private partnerships may provide sustainable transportation networks connecting workers to opportunities across the region.

Child-care and other forms of care infrastructure prevent many workers from engaging in the workforce. This is a particular issue for workers with less formal education and especially for women of color. Workers who do not perform a typical 9-5 day face a critical lack of affordable and flexible childcare.

Our recommendations for workforce development practitioners include focus and innovation on marketing and outreach, providing support beyond the first job placement, and developing rigorous internal evaluation processes that allow for adaptation to changing environments. Our recommendations to employers include identifying sources of discrimination in their recruitment,

hiring, and retention processes, reinventing their recruitment processes, and updating job characteristics such as work hours and benefits to better meet the needs of today's workers.

Understanding the challenges and opportunities in the Greater New Haven and Valley region required multiple approaches. This project involved examination of data from public sources, both national and local, as well as multiple interviews and focus groups. An outline of the project elements is included.

INCLUDED REPORT DOCUMENTS

LITERATURE REVIEW: The Literature Review utilizes national and regional research studies to highlight best practices when connecting workers to middle skill jobs. This document reviews the landscape, emphasizes the need for middle skill workers and jobs, documents the effects of the pandemic, and highlights the most effective practices in the field.

LABOR MARKET ANALYSIS: The Labor Market Analysis compiles documented population demographics and labor market statistics for the regions of Greater New Haven and The Valley. This report pulls publicly available data from the United States Census and research from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. It analyzes regional demographics, family and household criteria (such as housing and earnings), labor force status and participation, unemployment, employment, and large regional employers. Lastly, it focuses on minority and disadvantaged groups by race/ethnicity and gender where possible. The report highlights data published in the winter of 2023.

INDUSTRY OVERVIEW REPORT: The Industry Overview Report compiles data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The overview describes the contributions of each supersector (aggregations of sectors) to the region's economy, based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). The industry overview includes an employment data overview of the HealthCare and Social Assistance, Retail Trades, Education Services, and Manufacturing industries in comparison to the United States. It also includes the largest regional employers.

TARGET OCCUPATION STUDY: The Target Occupations Study takes a more granular view of the specific occupations that meet our criteria of:

1. Not requiring a 2- or 4-year degree
2. Paying a living wage.

The report focuses on 8 occupations and includes Average Salary and Benefits Expectations, Required Qualifications, Training and Career Advancement Opportunities, Relevant Industries/Similar Role Types, and Opportunities for Growth in the occupation.

REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT REPORT: The Regional Workforce Development Report is a qualitative report examining major workforce development and labor market learnings from Workforce Development Practitioners, Job Seekers, and Employers in the region of interest. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with local workforce practitioners, employers, and job seekers to understand the barriers to employment and opportunities in the field.

This report also includes a subsection on understanding the Cliff Effects/Benefits Cliff: the abrupt and significant changes in an individual's benefits or financial status that occur when they reach certain income thresholds.

CASE STUDIES: The three case studies examine three unique promising practices in the field and how they have effectively addressed barriers to accessing the labor market and building a strong workforce development pool. The three case studies include VCU Health, the Manufacturing and Technical Community Hub (MATCH), and BioLaunch, a program of the Connecticut Center for Arts and Technology (ConnCAT).

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS: The final recommendations are based on our qualitative research as well as labor market research and literature. We provide recommendations for the workforce development ecosystem and employers operating in the system.

APPENDICES:

METRICS FOR LONG-TERM TRACKING WORKBOOK: Using our recommended methods, we focus on measures of labor force participation and utilization, especially for minority and female workers.

COMMENTS ON METHODOLOGY: The methodology employed for the project involved a clear focus on equitable and inclusive processes. The Methodology comments highlight the strategies implemented to center inclusion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: There were many contributors to the success of the Labor Market Analysis. The acknowledgement expresses appreciation.