

An abstract graphic on a dark blue background featuring a complex network of white lines and dots, resembling a molecular structure or a data network, with some nodes highlighted in a lighter blue.

Workforce Development Transition Committee Follow-Up

November 30th, 2021

Methodology

Mayor Elect Simmons' team provided the below framing question:

*In order to **reduce Stamford's 6% unemployment rate**, Mayor-Elect Simmons wants to advance workforce development initiatives. This includes, but is not limited to, **establishing a job training program** to provide unemployed individuals with skills training and expanding programs for high school students to gain **work-based internships and learning opportunities**. She also wants to ensure we are training our workforce for **21st century jobs** and collaborating between educational partners and industry needs.*

Following a brainstorming session, each workforce development transition committee member responded to six questions to elucidate potential strategies for the team. All insights and takeaways were synthesized from feedback taken from those responses.

Question 1

How do you propose the Simmons Administration should prioritize the policy goals in this area, and on what timeframe?

Themes

- 1 Reduce the 6% ASAP
- 2 Understand supply and demand of job ecosystem through surveys and gap analyses
- 3 Build an inventory of education and training programs
- 4 Think locally
- 5 Align partners and resources

Understanding the jobs ecosystem allows us to identify existing gaps and then marshal resources to effectively address them

Testimonials:

1 Develop a **community outreach program** to get unemployed workers into **job centers**. Need to alter the stigma of being unemployed. Work with the State in their CareerConneCT initiative to **reskill workers in short-term training programs** to fill vacation jobs.

2 We need to determine which **occupations and skills are in-demand in Stamford**, determine which employers are hiring for those occupations, and **design training programs specific to those employer demands**

3 Understanding the ecosystem is job one. I suggest a **complete inventory of all education, training and development programs** related to work and workforce development.

• First 30 days:

- Work with **Stamford employment agencies, community organizations, and American Job Centers** to outreach to the community
- Support OWS initiative to **build a digital job matching service** (*with complimentary human element*) for employers with vacancies and jobseekers with applicable skills

• First 60 days:

- Understand the full job ecosystem by **surveying employers, inquiring what vacancies they have, credentials they need, and categorizing jobs** into short/medium/long-term training required
- **Build an inventory** of all education, training and development programs available to Stamford residents
- **Leverage RSPs** (regional sector partnerships) in IT, manufacturing, and healthcare to connect to more employment opportunities
- Establish **career advising and survey opportunities for basic skills assessment** to ensure people are placed in the right program

• First 100 days:

- Perform a **jobs gap analysis, and develop job training proposals for CareerConneCT** to fill those gaps for the unemployed
- **Identify and align resources** with employers, unions, non-profit, education, and other partners
- **Develop career training and work based learning opportunities** for students in after-school programs
- Map secondary to post-secondary sequence in career development

Question 2

Which goals are achievable in the first 100 days of the Administration?

Themes

- 1 Mapping the jobs landscape
- 2 Applying for CareerConneCT funds
- 3 Building a job matching service
- 4 Expanding internship opportunities
- 5 Aligning education strategies for high schools and community colleges

We can reduce the level of unemployed and underemployed workers by leveraging a digital jobs portal and funding from CareerConneCT

Testimonials:

1 Ideally, within 100 days you could come up with a working group to **identify programs across the country worth replicating**, committed industry partners, **hire someone to lead the work and announce any initial blueprints** of the plan or at least a theory of action.

2 If we can **identify jobs that require little to no training** (entry level computer skills, soft training skills), we should **cross walk that with current openings**. I have **50 entry job openings that can be done by almost anyone** if applicants would just apply for them.

3 The Construction Building Trades currently have **programs to establish internships and learning opportunities**. We **set up job fairs and career day at high schools** and show the students what else is out there besides college. These programs have been very successful in New Haven, Hartford, etc.

Ideas & next steps:

- Work with Indeed to **set up a portal to identify in-demand jobs** and the **associated training programs** that are aligned to those jobs
- Work with the different local non-profits to get into the community to **raise awareness about this new portal**
- Work with companies to institute **skills-based hiring practices**
- Make **amendments to the UI** form that an individual completes to ask what industries and career paths they are interested in
- Submit **CareerConneCT proposals**
- **Market CareerConneCT training programs**
- Establish **internship and externship programs for Summer 2022** by working with AdvanceCT and Stamford Partnership
- Determine how to **braid funding sources** at the municipal, state, and federal levels

Question 3

Which goals will require legislation to move forward? Which items can be advanced through the actions of the Administration alone? What is the fiscal impact of these legislative or executive actions?

Themes

- 1 Amendments to UI or unemployment benefits questionnaire
- 2 Expand union participation especially with building trades
- 3 Regionalization efforts or collaborations spanning multiple districts
- 4 Reimbursements for professional teach-in programs
- 5 ARPA funding

While most goals can be advanced through the administration alone, those that include ARPA funding or regional partnerships may require legislation

Testimonials:

1

Is there a way to **require companies that want to do business in Stamford to take part in Stamford's Workforce Development**? For example: offering internships, pre-apprenticeships, job-shadow days, company tours, career talks, etc?

2

The Career ConnecCT proposal utilizes ARPA dollars that can be leveraged further if **the City of Stamford wishes to use its ARPA dollars for job training like Bridgeport has**. Bridgeport provided grants to nonprofits like Career Resources and the Workplace to develop programs targeted at the Reentry population, homeless people, and opportunity youth.

3

From an education perspective, I believe we should be able to **reimburse hospitals 100% if the Hospital provided Clinical educators to teach in programs several days per month**. For example, a nursing instructor at a college is not compensated nearly as much as a nurse educator at the hospital. I am confident that educators would love the opportunity to teach in a college program if they were made whole.

• Low fiscal impact:

- Ensure unemployed people are **informed of career opportunities** while filing for their weekly UE benefits
- **Hire a firm to survey the residents** to get the information on these individuals that are the 6% out of work

• Medium fiscal impact:

- **Government reimbursements for salaries of professionals** participating in teach-in programs, and to hire additional part-time professionals to back fill the educators that are teaching in collage
- **Partnering with Indeed to develop a portal to map the jobs landscape**

• High fiscal impact:

- Funding from the legislature for the **development of career pathways programs in high schools**
- Use of **ARPA dollars for CareerConneCT job training, after school programs, WBL, and incumbent worker training upskilling** linked to job opportunities
- Regional sector partnerships and cross-district collabs



Legislation required



No legislation required

Question 4

Are there specific challenges you can identify with regard to achieving the Simmons Administration's goals, and how would you suggest addressing those?

Themes

- 1 Employer engagement + business relationships
- 2 Skills-based hiring
- 3 Change management and city-wide organization
- 4 Program recruitment, enrollment, and assessment
- 5 Breaking the certificate and associate degree stigma

Challenges to implementation span private sector engagement, program recruitment and assessment, and general change management leadership

Testimonials:

1

Specific challenges could be from **not having relationships with businesses** and within SPS would be to **gain an understanding of curriculum**. Both can be solved by using her cabinet and also BoE connections.

2

Again, I think this is the sort of work that can **require normally siloed institutions to break down their walls**. Without a steady and committed leader at the helm of such initiatives, things fall apart. It all sounds good, even to senior leadership. but when you get into the nitty gritty, it comes down to asking people to change how they have done things in the past and change management is hard

3

Skills-Based hiring is important. Suggest collaboration with OWS and the business community to try things. **65%** of all jobs posted are listed as requiring degrees, but this is likely not the case. Furthermore, only **35%** of the population has degrees (much less in the urban core). **We need to make Skills-Based hiring a key tenet for an inclusive workforce strategy.**

Ideas & next steps:

- **Market the job training programs to the target populations** and make sure that there is a **strong assessment process** in place so that the program participants have the supports necessary to complete the program and obtain employment (***assessments are required for CareerConneCT proposals***)
- **Engage employers** so that the job training programs have employer hiring commitments (***employer engagement is required for CareerConneCT proposals***)
- **Educate the community** on job prospects and associated credentials. **Change the stigma around certificate and associate degree programs**. Many students express interest in a trade but parents often push 4yr degree programs because they believe that is the key to success.
- **Bring local corporate partners together and ask them to take a hard look at their hiring practices**. Requiring a bachelor's degree for occupations where it is not really necessary simply contributes to the widening income inequality in CT.
- **Model skills-based hiring practices internally** within the Stamford city government as an example for the broader business community

Question 5

What examples of success from other states, countries, or the private sector in this policy area should the Administration study?

Themes

- 1 Apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and work-based learning
- 2 PPPs (Public Private Partnerships)
- 3 Career Pathways & Dual Enrollment
- 4 Short-term training programs
- 5 Retention of human capital

Numerous examples of successful workforce development programs worth studying already exist within Connecticut, the US, and abroad

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Testimonials:

The **Connecticut State Building Council** has had great successes in the state by **incorporating workforce development into Project Labor Agreements**. Where an agreement is entered into with a municipality the Building Trades hold careers where **local folks are introduced to all of the thirteen apprenticeship departments**. We also offer pre apprentice opportunities for residents. Once the pre apprentices complete the forty-hour certificate program they are enrolled into Building Trades apprentice programs. **After enrollment they are placed on the job under the Project Labor Agreement.**

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- **Apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and WBL:**
 - Examples - PTech, Colorado, Germany, Switzerland VET (Vocational Education and Training System), North Carolina
- **Public Private Partnerships:**
 - Examples – Greater Washington Partnership
- **Career Pathways & Dual Enrollment:**
 - Examples – North Carolina, Tennessee. Community College CTE programs, California
- **Short term training programs:**
 - Examples - Manufacturing Pipeline (Eastern Connecticut), HealthCare (Futuro Health-CA), Rhode Island Jobs initiative
- **Retention of human capital:**
 - Examples - Amazon

Question 6

Are there any other issues/considerations you would like to highlight regarding this policy area?

Themes

- 1 Funding for student internships
- 2 Alignment with GWC and OWS
- 3 Staying consistent with the big vision
- 4 Keeping an equity lens

Balancing simplicity with equity poses a major risk with implementation of workforce policies



Testimonials:

1

Other concerns I have in regard to this policy area is the amount of funding that the YSB receives to have student internships. The YSB is in a loop of having to always chase money to host student internships and training. If the YSB had consistent funding we could service many more students. When students achieve success it is a success for the entire family and the entire community benefits.

2

Keep it simple and stay aligned with GWC and OWS.

3

We must be disciplined in addressing the specific barriers to employment faced by different populations.



Ideas & next steps:

- **Develop a strategic plan** for the city of Stamford and make sure each subsequent policy decision is in lock-step with that strategic plan
- Research methods **to hold employers accountable to equitable hiring practices**, and potential employees **accountable to honoring job offers** if they are currently unemployed

Policies on quality credentials and stackable credentials have a huge impact on equity and social mobility

“ Testimonials:

This is more of a state level issue, but when thinking about social mobility, stacking and bundling credentials can make a huge difference. For example, everyone across the country needs bus drivers right now. But a CDL doesn't lead anywhere. Same goes for a CNA in nursing-- those might be the jobs that are urgently needing to be filled, but until those are credentials that can lead somewhere else, you're going to perpetuate the same social mobility and equity problems.

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Research & Resources:

- This [collaborative report](#) between Walmart and McKinsey discusses the **future of work across different community archetypes**
- [YouthForce Nola](#)-- this sort of program could be an early political win. It forays less into credits and credentials but is a great **partnership model that could be emulated**.
- [Maryland Youth Apprenticeship Program](#)-- through the Department of Labor, these are **work hours for juniors and seniors**, not course credits
- [Chattanooga and Volkswagen](#) are provide a solid example for a **city-level case study on economic development**, existing infrastructure, and collaboration between economic development at the state level, k-12, [post secondary and industry](#)
- Orgs/companies that 'upskill' their workforces with great success: **Goodwill and United Way**