

Metro Hartford Future CEDS: Eight Small-Scale Study Options

September 19, 2019

- 1. Workforce Vacancy Data Systems.** Commission a consulting firm to examine existing workforce and talent vacancy data systems in Connecticut and compare them to best practices. Analysis should look at higher education data, K-12 data, labor market data from DOL (including projections), reports from workforce training providers, reports from DECD, and others. The goal is to assess what we already have, and which gaps exist. A focus would be on an in-depth view of “middle skill” jobs. If a state level vacancy data system is completed shortly, scope would be to provide data for the metropolitan region. A great example of a comprehensive talent supply and demand study was done for the Allegheny Conference in Pennsylvania: <https://www.alleghenyconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/InflectionPoint.pdf>
- 2. Industry Sector Partnerships (ISP) or “Industry Clusters”.** Commission a consultant to examine the current situation in Connecticut of Industry Sector Partnerships (ISPs) and industry cluster organizations and compare the results to best practices and identify recommendations for improvement. Should include an inventory of current organizations, a summary of their organization and governance, a listing of their activities, and an examination of their effectiveness. The goal would be to determine the current level of employer engagement in the state and to determine how our ISPs compare to those in other states. Results of the study could inform a future ISP/cluster initiative. The Next Generation Industry Sector Partnerships organization works with over a dozen states to promote partnerships and provides training materials on how to get started: <https://www.nextgensectorpartnerships.com/>
- 3. Attraction and Retention of Workforce Talent.** Commission a study of best practices regarding attracting and retaining talent including post-secondary students as one focus. A key desirable outcome would be retaining college students who would otherwise leave after their studies are finished. Connecticut ranks poorly on college student retention and needs a stronger overall strategy for addressing the issue. Attraction, successful completion of degrees or credentials, and retention in post-secondary institutions is a key element to study. The goal is to learn about efforts in other states and how effective they are. This report would help inform decisions going forward. **Campus Philly** is a nonprofit

organization that fuels economic growth by encouraging college students to study, explore, live and work in the Greater Philadelphia tri-state region. It was founded in 2004 and has an annual budget of over \$1 million:

<https://campusphilly.org/about-us/>

- 4. Flexible Funding for Workforce Vacancies.** Rapidly filling vacancies in middle skill jobs is one critical issue for the Connecticut economy. Commission a study of flexible workforce development funding sources in other states with a focus on middle skill jobs. The focus of the study would be on funding that is dedicated to rapid workforce development but that is not tied to specific methods or providers. The study could also look at the aggregate amount of state funds dedicated to workforce development and training in Connecticut and key competitor states. Rhode Island's Real Jobs RI program uses flexible funding provided by a carve-out from unemployment insurance premiums. Scaled up to the CT population, a similar program here would be in the \$60-70 million per year range:

<http://www.dlt.ri.gov/realjobs/>

- 5. Best Practices in Workforce Talent Development.** Commission a study to perform a scan of best practices around the country and internationally. The study would look at innovative programs and compare them to existing similar programs in Connecticut. Issues of scale should be addressed as well. The goal is to determine the overall best practices, determine the gaps that exist in Connecticut, and determine which programs could be scaled up in line with best practices. Several examples follow. **Innovative IT training and financing.** Pursuit is a program in NYC for IT training using innovative funding: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/15/business/pursuit-tech-jobs-training.html> **Family living wage advanced manufacturing job training.** Largely for second chance trainees with high initial cost and a "money back guarantee" for employers. Twin Cities Rise: <https://www.twincitiesrise.org/> **Dual track vocational training system.** This is a system for high school students where they spend half of their time in employer settings learning skills. About 12 states have moved strongly in this direction according to the German American Chamber of Commerce.

- 6. Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Assistance Scan.** Commission a study of the current landscape of TOD assistance grant programs and technical assistance programs, along with the organizations offering them in the state of Connecticut. The purpose would be to identify the programs that currently exist and can be used to help plan or build TOD in Connecticut, assess the current scale of those programs, and identify gaps. The study should take a comprehensive look at all aspects of TOD, including: visioning; station area

planning; creating development concept plans; developing RFPs; structuring deals; seeking financing; and utilizing revenue generating tools such as TIF. The result should be a chart of responsibilities along with a listing of identified gaps (complete gaps as well as “scale” gaps).

- 7. Economic Impact Study of the Boston Rail Connection.** Commission a firm to study potential economic development impacts that are likely to occur due to the introduction of passenger rail service between Springfield and Worcester with connections to Boston and Hartford. The study would require a consultant with expertise in land use forecasting, transportation economic impacts, and TOD. The result would be a forecast of likely development and improvements to economic conditions in the corridor such as increases in employment, land values, residential development, and travel. This study would be used to advocate for implementing the service.
- 8. Identification of Five Initiatives to Accelerate Economic Growth in Connecticut.** Commission a study that will identify five potential initiatives with high likelihood of accelerating economic growth in the state. The study would be led by a firm or individual with extensive experience around the country or world. Ideally, the study would identify highly impactful initiatives that could then be more fully fleshed out in a follow-up study.
- 9. Study of Best Practices for Engaging the Philanthropic Community in Economic and Infrastructure Projects.** Connecticut has a large established philanthropic community that is devoted to improving conditions for the residents of the state. In some areas of the country, local leaders have developed initiatives that seek to engage the philanthropic community in projects that broadly improve local economic conditions in a coordinated manner. The philanthropic community’s access to patient capital can help boost development around transit stations, or jumpstart workforce development programs. Greater coordination can lead to larger-scale results that are ultimately more sustainable and impactful. The study would look at best practices from places that have succeeded at engaging their philanthropic organizations.