

All RSP Summit
Health Care and Manufacturing
Sept 24, 2024, Minutes

Building a Stronger Workforce: Highlights from the Regional Sector Partnership Summit

The recent Regional Sector Partnership (RSP) Summit brought together industry leaders, educators, and workforce advocates to share insights and updates on initiatives aimed at strengthening the workforce in Northwest Connecticut. Patrick Donnelly, Director of Workforce Programs at the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board (NRWIB), opened the event with gratitude for the ongoing collaboration among the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), local Chambers of Commerce, and industry leaders.

Celebrating Success Stories

Donnelly highlighted the creation of videos documenting the success stories across the three RSPs: Northwest HealthConnect, Architecture, Engineering and Construction (AEC), and NorthwestCT Manufacturing. These videos serve to inspire and inform stakeholders about the impact of their collaborative efforts.

There were three industry speakers that shared their experience and updates \

NorthwestCT Manufacturing: M.E.T.A.L. Curriculum Launch

George LaCapra, CEO of UniMetal Surface Finishing and a board chair of NRWIB, provided an update on the manufacturing sector. He emphasized the necessity of the M.E.T.A.L. (Mastering Electroplating Through Applied Learning) curriculum launched at the Manufacturing Alliance Service Corporation (MASC). The coalition of local manufacturers recognized a gap in existing training, which often failed to address the specific needs of the metal finishing industry—a \$35 billion sector in the U.S. and a \$2 billion industry in Connecticut.

The new curriculum includes eight comprehensive modules covering topics such as OSHA regulations, lean practices, and electroplating techniques, with a focus on training unemployed or underemployed individuals. The training sessions, scheduled for Q1 of 2025, will take place at MASC in Waterbury.

Northwest HealthConnect: Inspiring Future Healthcare Leaders

Kim Mitola, Director of Human Resources at Hartford HealthCare, shared updates from Northwest HealthConnect, a consortium of local healthcare providers. This initiative has successfully launched internship programs across eight work sites, providing high school students with \$500 stipends to explore various career pathways in healthcare. Additionally, a speakers' bureau has engaged over 350 students across nine high schools, featuring professionals from diverse backgrounds, including paramedics and behavioral health specialists. Mitola noted the strong support from local chambers of commerce in promoting these initiatives.

AEC RSP: Building Pathways to Success

Beth Dupont, Chief HR Officer at O&G Industries, discussed the collaborative efforts within the AEC RSP. Acknowledging key contributors Melissa Roy and Maria Loitz, Dupont highlighted a summer internship program hosted in partnership with the CT Concrete Council. To promote careers in AEC, they are also constructing a skatepark at the new Torrington High School campus, demonstrating the importance of logistics and planning in construction projects.

Keynote Address: The Importance of Collective Impact

John Melville, CEO of Collaborative Economics, delivered a compelling keynote address, emphasizing the need for industry champions to come together at a regional level. He noted that while addressing significant challenges can be daunting, the collective effort yields tangible benefits, including keeping young talent local and creating opportunities for livable wages.

Melville urged participants to engage their colleagues within their organizations, advocating for a mindset of collective impact. He stressed that successful RSPs focus on building relationships rather than creating competition, and he called for proactive succession planning to ensure long-term sustainability.

Closing Remarks: A Collective Responsibility

In her closing remarks, Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Chief Workforce Officer at CT OWS, reminded attendees that the initiative transcends individual organizations. She celebrated Connecticut's receipt of \$24 million in funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration's Good Jobs Challenge—an achievement greater than those of larger states like California and Texas.

The RSP Summit highlighted the power of collaboration across sectors and the commitment of industry leaders to foster a skilled workforce for the future. As partnerships continue to evolve, the focus remains on creating sustainable pathways for students and job seekers alike, ensuring a vibrant economic future for Northwest Connecticut.

In attendances: representees from: Ability Beyond, American Electro, CCAT, CT Concrete Promotions Council, CT State, Charlotte Hungerford, Collaborative Economics, Inc, Conn Step, Connect Design, LLC, Corporate Construction, Inc, Danbury Schools, Dept of Labor, EdAdvance, Empowered Herbals, LLC, Fascia's Chocolates, Fuel Cell, G.A. Wenzel Milling Co., Greater Danbury Chamber, H-O Products, KW Construction, Kimchuk, Leading Edge Construction, Lesser Evil, Lindsay Vrabely Marketing, MASC, McCall, Malta House - Norwalk, Marion Manufacturing, McCall, McMullin Manufacturing, Metal Finishing, Montagno Construction, ND Corp, NRWIB, NVCOG, NW CT Chamber, National Healthcare, Network Interiors, New Milford High School, North West Cog, Nuvance Health, O & G Industries, Office of Workforce Strategy, PMC, Patriquin Architects, Plainville Plating, RD Associates, ReadyCT, Salas & O'Brien, St, Mary's Hospital, Summit Plating, TBICO, Tecton Architects, The Modern Woman, The Siemon Company, Town of Bethel, Turner Construction Company, UCONN Waterbury, UniMetal, Unimetal, Unipharmus, WANHO, Waterbury Chamber, Waterbury Hospital, Western CT State University, Whyco Finishing Technologies, LLC.