
Tech Talent Accelerator 3.0 Informational Webinar

April 17 & 24, 2026



Agenda

- ▶ Welcome!
 - ▶ Key Partners
 - ▶ TTA Overview
 - ▶ Announcing TTA 3.0's Innovation Grant: Expanding the Opportunity
 - ▶ Benefits of Participating in TTA
 - ▶ Q&A
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The Business-Higher Education Forum is a national network connecting pioneering corporate and higher education leaders to identify emerging skills and **co-develop pathways that address talent gaps.**



Our mission is to build the inclusive higher education paths that align to the workforce of future

We focus on three goals critical for economic mobility & competitiveness:



Increase the number of learners and earners completing with high-value skills, credentials aligned to employer needs



Expand access and adoption of work-integrated learning models that inclusively connect and prepare talent



Scale and implement with regional networks and leaders

Mission: The New England Board of Higher Education advances equitable postsecondary outcomes through convening, research and programs for students, institution leaders and policymakers.

Vision: Our vision is that everyone in New England will have lifelong access to affordable, high-value postsecondary education.

Strategic Priorities:

- **Affordability:** Advance innovative, strategic alliances to increase affordability and financial sustainability.
 - **Equity:** Expand equity-focused practices throughout postsecondary education.
 - **Alignment:** Expand connections between postsecondary education and high-demand talent needs.
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Tech Talent Accelerator 1 & 2

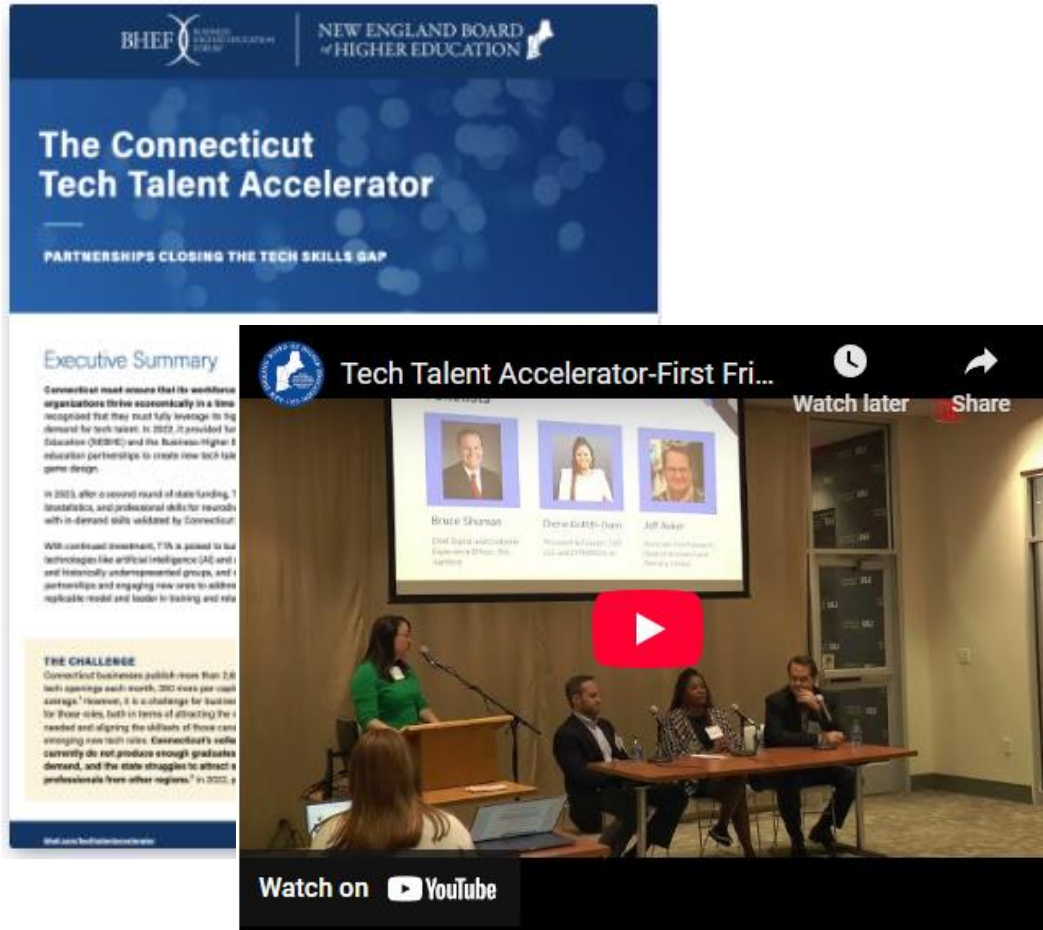
An accelerated solution to ensure Connecticut's workforce is competitive in a time of rapid technological change

The **Business-Higher Education Forum** and The **New England Board of Higher Education** developed and launched the Tech Talent Accelerator in 2022 with support from the Office of Workforce Strategy.

TTA is designed to:

- Develop and sustain **high impact partnerships** between business and higher education;
 - Convene businesses to **identify in-demand skills, credentials, and hiring needs**;
 - **Increase the supply of tech workers** in Connecticut with in-demand skills and credentials; and
 - Provide **technical assistance to higher education institutions** so they can rapidly:
 - **Create new short-term training programs** that lead to good tech jobs, and
 - Enhance existing curricula with **industry-recognized credentials** and validated knowledge, skills, and abilities.
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Learn More About TTA



BHEF BUSINESS-HIGHER EDUCATION FORUM | **NEW ENGLAND BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

The Connecticut Tech Talent Accelerator

PARTNERSHIPS CLOSING THE TECH SKILLS GAP

Executive Summary


Connecticut must ensure that its workforce organizations thrive economically in a time recognized that they must fully leverage its big demand for tech talent. In 2022, it provided for Education (BHEF) and the Business-Higher Education partnerships to create new tech-tal game design.

In 2023, after a second round of state funding, 100,000 students, and professional skills for research with in-demand skills outlined by Connecticut.

With continued investment, TTA is poised to use technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and 1 and historically underrepresented groups, and 1 partnerships and engaging new ways to address applicable needs and better training and re-

THE CHALLENGE

Connecticut businesses produce more than 2.8 million jobs each month, 200,000 more per month average. However, it is a challenge for business to those roles, both in terms of attracting the needed and aligning the skillsets of those coming from both sides. Connecticut's workforce currently do not produce enough graduates demand, and the state struggles to attract a professionals from other regions." in 2022.

Watch on  YouTube

- Visit BHEF's website to explore case studies highlighting Tech Talent Accelerator 1.0 and 2.0 and Community of Practice resources.

[Connecticut Tech Talent Accelerator | BHEF](#)

- Read our early insights from the Pilot Grant phase on our BHEF blog:

[Early Signals from a Regional Talent Ecosystem: Learning from the Connecticut Tech Talent Accelerator 3.0 | BHEF](#)



Tech Talent Accelerator 3.0

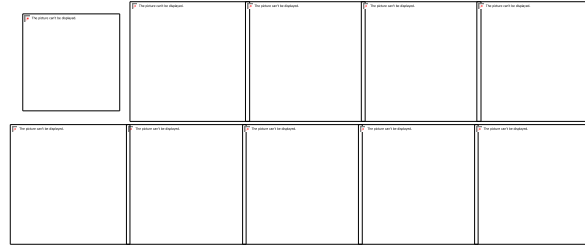


Today, 1 in 27 jobs in Connecticut request AI skills, up from 1 in 70 a year ago.

2026

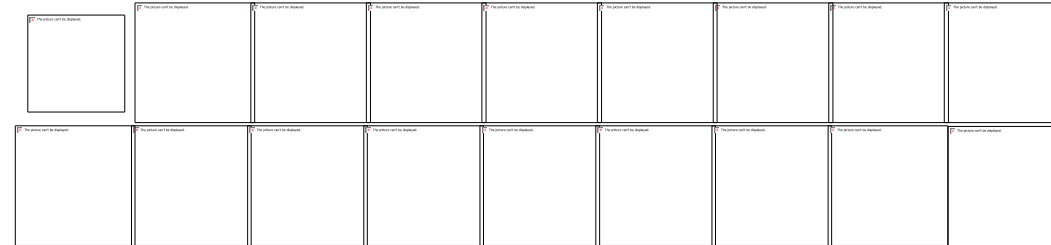
(Jan-Feb of 2026)

1:27 Jobs are AI-Enabled



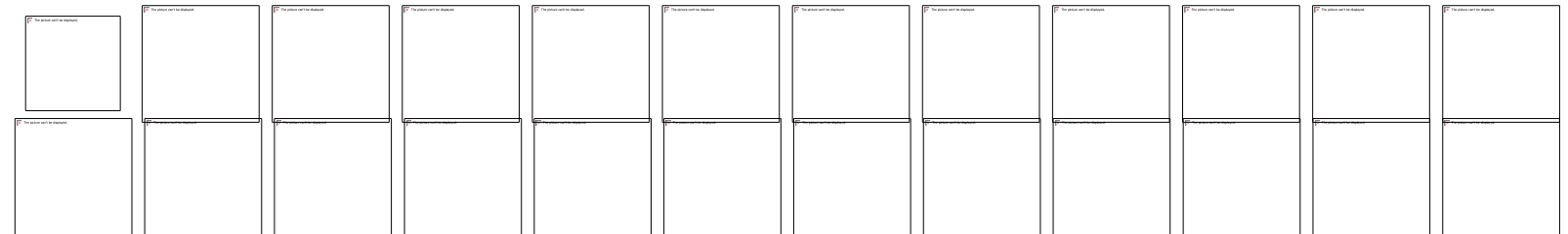
2025

1:52 Jobs are AI-Enabled
40% Increase from year prior



2024

1:70 Jobs are AI-Enabled



Across CT's top industries seeking AI-enabled talent, the top in-demand roles are cross-cutting occupations that span traditional technology and business functions.

| Occupation | Total AI-Enabled Job Postings | Finance and Insurance AI-Enabled Job Postings | Professional Services AI-Enabled Job Postings | Manufacturing AI-Enabled Job Postings | Information AI-Enabled Job Postings |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Software Developer / Engineer | 1,018 | 165 | 581 | 103 | 93 |
| Data Scientist | 491 | 108 | 104 | 60 | 37 |
| Artificial Intelligence Engineer | 764 | 161 | 257 | 97 | 39 |
| Data Engineer | 287 | 110 | 100 | 7 | 11 |
| Database Architect | 287 | 55 | 258 | 26 | 16 |
| Product Manager | 259 | 39 | 234 | 33 | 32 |
| Data / Data Mining Analyst | 198 | 36 | 140 | 18 | 12 |
| Computer Systems Engineer / Architect | 489 | 102 | 551 | 62 | 24 |
| Business / Management Analyst | 229 | 49 | 579 | 14 | 15 |
| Marketing Manager | 150 | 16 | 165 | 24 | 37 |
| Project Manager | 139 | 9 | 918 | 7 | 10 |
| Researcher / Research Associate | 88 | 7 | 21 | 9 | 5 |

Section: Landscape Analysis Source: Lightcast
 Note: Based on total AI job postings in Connecticut over past year (Aug 2024-Aug 2025), for any occupation from employers in the specified industry.

Across the next two years, the Tech Talent Accelerator will...

CT AI Skills Model

Validate and publish in demand AI competencies:

- 1) Landscape analysis of AI skills demand across occupations and industries
- 2) AI competency maps for curriculum alignment



YEAR 1

YEAR 2

Pilot Grantees

Pilot AI-Focused Business-Higher Education Partnerships:

- 1) Small initial cohort of grantees
- 2) Accelerate and expand programs focused on building AI talent
- 3) Generate and test best practices
- 4) Embed quality WBL in talent pipelines

Innovation Grantees

Scale Innovative Partnerships and Practices:

- 1) Larger cohort of grantees
- 2) Apply AI competencies to new program development
- 3) Embed quality WBL in talent pipelines

Strengthening CT's Workforce by Advancing Key Priorities

- 1. Reskill/Upskill the Tech Workforce for AI Competencies:** Develop short-term postsecondary programs focused on reskilling and upskilling workers AI-enabled roles in high-demand industries.
- 2. Align Postsecondary Training Programs with Industry AI Needs:** Embed industry-recognized credentials and validated KSAs into postsecondary pathways leading to AI-enabled roles in high-demand industries.
- 3. Create Pathways to AI Skills for Secondary Students:** Develop dual enrollment pathways and or short-term secondary programs aimed at preparing secondary students in the programming and development of AI technologies.
- 4. Expand Work-Based Learning Opportunities:** Integrate experiential learning models that meet learner and employer needs and goals, providing additional feedback loops between the classroom and workplace and strengthening the state's AI talent pipeline.

Note: Every TTA program does not need to do all four things. We are not awarding standalone WBL grants. Applicants are invited to submit supplemental proposals that build a WIL component onto a proposed Pilot Grant project.

Innovation Grant Projects

In the Innovation Grant phase of TTA 3.0, applicants are invited to propose projects that ***introduce new and innovative industry-aligned partnerships, pathways, and delivery models*** for learners and workers to access AI-enabled jobs in Connecticut. Examples of supported initiatives include, but are not limited to:

Employer-driven AI upskilling: Partner with a regional manufacturer to co-develop a short, non-credit AI upskilling program for engineers focused on practical applications such as predictive maintenance, production optimization, or data analysis using real operational scenarios.

Stackable credential with industry certification: Collaborate with regional employers to develop a credit-bearing certificate in AI for Cybersecurity Professionals that embeds an industry-recognized credential (e.g., the CompTIA SEC AI+ certification), enabling learners to build applied AI skills for security contexts while earning both academic credit and a leading-edge cybersecurity credential.

Experiential learning through industry-aligned coursework: Partner with a technology company to design a new sequence of credit-bearing courses that integrate real-world AI-enabled projects across multiple classes. Students work with company mentors, use real or simulated company datasets, and apply AI tools to solve authentic industry challenges throughout the program. The business partner then hires 5 students into their summer internship program.

Eligibility & Available Funds

We invite Connecticut-based **2- and 4-year independent and public postsecondary institutions** to apply for TTA 3.0 Innovation Grants.

We encourage institutions from Central and Western Connecticut, as well as CT State community college campuses to apply.

Total funds available: \$1.1 Million

Number of awards: Expected minimum of 15 and maximum of 24

Award range: Applicants can request up to \$75,000 per Innovation Grant project.

Work-Based Learning (WBL)

We encourage applicants to address **Priority 4: Expanding Innovative Work-Based Learning Models** in their applications.

10 bonus points will be awarded to proposals that address or incorporate Priority 4. All proposals will be scored out of **100 points**.

Potential WBL Models

- *Low-intensity:* Job-shadowing; site visits, industry panels; micro-projects
- *Moderate-intensity:* Employer-led capstone; industry-driven project; microinternship
- *High-intensity:* Internship; co-op

WBL Project Expectations

Considered WBL projects will:

- Offer **paid or credit-bearing opportunities** for learners.
- Include support from business partners to provide a high-quality experience for learners, including a 1:1 wage match by partners for paid activities.
- Be connected to classroom learning while equipping learners with durable, industry-relevant skills accessible in the workplace.

Work-Based Learning (WBL) Resources

The [BHEF WIL Resource Hub](#) contains the following resources that will be most useful to TTA 3.0 Innovation Grant applicants:

- [WIL Diagnostic Tool w/Instructions](#) - This educational resource and diagnostic tool can help applicants generate WIL model recommendations and understand the factors that influence successful WIL models.
- [Faculty WIL Champion Profile](#) - This resource identifies the role faculty play in developing successful, sustainable, and relevant WIL opportunities.
- [Defining and Delivering Quality in Work-Integrated Learning](#) - This resource provides an overview of the core markers of quality WIL and how creative partnership models can lead to more quality WIL.

Allowable Funds Uses

Innovation Grant Funds may support:

- Faculty and/or staff stipends to create curricula and instructional materials related to programs, courses, curricula, support resources, credentials, and certificates.
- Course, credential or certificate implementation costs, including funds to offset fees for students related to Industry-Recognized Credential (IRC) assessments.
- Internal and external convenings with employers or other partners to support program planning and implementation.
- Support for faculty or staff to attend professional development related to the proposed project.
- Qualified consultants.
- Course or program marketing.
- Project staff travel.
- Other costs related to grant planning, credential development and implementation.
- Student compensation for their participation in WBL experiences (note: any student compensation must be matched at least 1:1 by a business partner).
- Costs associated with utilizing experiential learning platforms (e.g. Riipen, Parker Dewey, etc.).

Additional Notes:

- Other justified program activities may be proposed
- ***Indirect costs are not allowed***

Award Criteria – Key Themes

Strategic Alignment & Impact

- Alignment with at least one TTA 3.0 priority area
- Labor market data demonstrating demand and future relevance for AI skills in CT.
- Clear expected outcomes, impacts, and their measurement.

Business and Industry Partnership

- Current or future hiring needs of business partner
- Strong commitment from at least one CT-based business partner
- Employer contributes expertise, hiring, or WBL opportunities

Work-Based Learning (WBL) - If Applicable

- How the proposed model blends learning with work experience.
- AI knowledge/skills gained through WBL that the classroom alone cannot provide

Program Design and Pathways

- Demonstration of how the grant will catalyze a new AI skills-focused initiative, program, or partnership
- Connection to further postsecondary programs, stackability, credit transfer, and/or aligned degree pathways.

Feasibility and Sustainability

- Ability to complete the project and begin instructing learners before the end of the grant period
- Ability to leverage other funding (i.e., federal, state, institutional) to sustain the program or partnership

Ways to Partner with Businesses

1. Academic Engagement

- Curriculum development/feedback
- SMEs as adjunct professors
- SMEs as guest lecturers

2. Student Engagement

- Leadership reception or hosted meal with students
- Career fair participation
- Job shadowing

3. Recruiting and Hiring

- Priority or guaranteed resume review for open positions
- Priority or guaranteed interviews
- Priority hiring

Benefits of Participation: Technical Assistance

During the proposal development process and during the grant period, applicants and grantees may contact BHEF and NEBHE for assistance that includes:

- Access to regional labor market data including metrics on job openings, in-demand AI skills and hiring demand, top employers, and required credentials.
- Access to the Preliminary AI Skills Model for proposal crafting purposes and industry alignment.
- Assistance in identifying prospective business partners and industry subject matter expert (SMEs) for partnership and proposal development.
- Access to experts in Connecticut and around the United States to better understand AI knowledge and skill requirements, in-demand industry recognized credentials, experiential learning platforms or training for faculty or learners
- Information on curriculum mapping tools, models, and case studies.
- Project promotion and amplification via social media, press and events.
- Feedback on proposal concepts.

Benefits of Participation: Community of Practice

A core feature of TTA is a robust Community of Practice that meets regularly to:

- Build a strong network of innovative and responsive higher education and business partners
- Coalesce on shared challenges, co-create solutions and learn from peers
- Tap into national experts and initiatives that help advance grantees' projects and partnerships
- Deep dive into strategies and topics on high-impact business-higher education partnerships

Outcomes Data Collection

- Grantees will be required to engage in data collection activities to help the project team understand key aspects of programs, who is being served by programs, and the short-term impacts on learners:
 - Number and names of higher education institutions engaged in project design
 - Number and names of business partners engaged in project design
 - Number of AI skills programs developed
 - Number and type of new AI credentials developed, and if those credentials stack to other credentials
 - Number and type of existing AI credentials (i.e., Industry Recognized Credentials) adopted into programs
 - Number and characteristics of learners (i.e., race, gender, graduate/undergraduate, adult learner status, dual enrollment status) enrolled in grantee projects
 - Number and names of higher education institutions engaged in implementing grantee projects
 - Number and names of business partners engaged in implementing grantee projects
 - Number and type of AI credentials earned by students and by faculty
 - Number of work-based learning opportunities offered by partner businesses
 - Number of TTA learners who interned with, were hired by, and/or promoted by Connecticut employers.

Outcomes Data Collection

- Grantees will provide outcomes data through two activities:
 1. Participate in surveys and interviews conducted by BHEF/NEBHE
 2. Survey the learners served by their program
- Once funded, grantees get access to a secure SharePoint site where detailed instructions, survey templates, and data collection tools will be provided to help grantees securely and seamlessly provide data on their programs

Application Information

1. Download the RFP and applications from [Innovation Grant Page](#) at bhef.com.
2. Complete application(s) -- you may provide your responses in the downloadable Word document. Please put your institution or PI's name in the file name.
3. Complete the Budget Request Form.
4. Secure at least one Letter of Support from a business partner.
5. Compile your documents and email them to techtalentaccelerator@bhef.com by **11:59pm on June 12, 2026**.

Key Dates

04/24/2026 – FAQ published

06/12/2026 – Proposals due

08/07/2026 – Grantees selected, notification of awards

09/01/2026 – Grant period begins

08/31/27 – Grant period ends

Q&A

Reminders

- Look out for our FAQ resource coming on 4/24
- Share our Business Partner Interest Form with companies that may want to engage in TTA 3.0
- Reach out to us with questions or for assistance at techtalentaccelerator@bhef.com
- Submit your proposals by 11:59pm on 6/12 to techtalentaccelerator@bhef.com



Thank you!

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